

Guidelines for enhanced sustainability among tourism SMEs

The TOURISME project's approach and lessons learnt

The logo for the TOURISME project features the word "TOURISME" in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters "TOUR" are white and set against a red square background. The letter "I" is white and set against a purple square background. The letter "S" is white and set against an orange square background. The letters "ME" are blue and set against a larger purple square background. The entire logo is centered on a background of several overlapping, semi-transparent colored rectangles in shades of green, pink, orange, and purple.

TOURISME

Improving Sustainability of Tourism SMEs Through Knowledge Transfer, International Cooperation and Multi-Stakeholder Engagement



Co-funded by the COSME programme of the European Union



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Abbreviations

B2B Business-to-Business

B2C Business-to-Customer

SME Small and Medium Enterprise

WP Work Package

D Deliverable

GDP Gross Domestic Product

NACE Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community

EU The European Union

1. PREFACE

These Guidelines are drafted with the objective to challenge and provoke a mindset change among SMEs active in the tourism sector. Specifically, this publication wants to make these SMEs rethink their practices, activities, operations and approaches and make them more environmentally friendly by modifying them through adopting new practices and improving the environmental performance of existing ones. Primarily addressing SMEs categorised as tour operators, travel agencies and short- and long-term accommodations, these Guidelines present an approach which could be considered as an example of a good practice developed by the TOURISME project, contributing to the aforementioned objectives, rather than an approach to be taken for granted or as an universal solution for this complex challenge – after all, an efficient environmental management is a skill that has many different dimensions, contexts and needs to represent a mixture of those, taking into consideration cultural and economic, factors, characteristics of the destination and territory of interest and much more.

The Guidelines build on the work that the project consortium has been doing over the last years including the initial assessment of SMEs' current understanding of what good environmental management means to them, identification of opportunities and barriers for improving it, development of tailor-made training and capacity building activities and finally, implementing and evaluating the solutions. These guidelines will allow SMEs beyond those who were direct beneficiaries of the project, to understand the underlying reasons for a more than necessary improvement of certain tourism activities and processes, liaisons between tourism and environmental footprint and enable them to recreate some of the TOURISME solutions in order to improve their environmental performances and adapt them to their local tourism patterns.

Over the last three years, TOURISME supported SMEs by taking up existing and inventing new practices in various fields of environmental management – mobility, resource use, sourcing, energy and water management and more. By applying different research, exercises, capacity building methodologies and processes during the project's lifetime, the project helped understanding the key links between tourism and sustainable environmental management and tried to turn them into an added value to sustainable tourism in general.

The reader of these Guidelines will be walked through different phases of the project, from **key relevant figures and trends in tourism**, through defining and creating **possibilities for capacity building** in the field, to **expected outcomes** of such strategies.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON ENVIRONMENT

The tourism industry is a vital part of the EU’s economy and accounts for 10% of its GDP¹, not only bringing certain financial gains but also employing a rather large share of people – 9.6% of all the employees in non-financial businesses. If the number of these employees is expanded to car and other rentals, travel agencies and tour operators and accommodation this share increases to 11.8%².

Looking at the TOURISME beneficiary countries – France, Italy, Spain, and Cyprus – one can easily see why tourism plays an even bigger role in those countries in terms of economy, employment and more. The latest Eurostat’s data, although from 2019 and prior to the pandemic, show the importance of tourism in selected beneficiary countries (except France which had no data). Cyprus, Spain, and Italy occupy three out of the first seven places in terms of persons employed in total tourism industries and in selected tourism industries as share of those employed in non-financial business economy³.

What the TOURISME project, as supported by the COSME programme of the European Union, had as its objective from the very beginning was putting the spotlight on SMEs as potential change makers and drivers toward more sustainable tourism processes. This is why understanding tourism processes in the first place was an important prerequisite to assess and rate its impact on resource management.

This brings us to the 65 beneficiary SMEs that were awarded and signed a Third-Party Beneficiary Agreement with the project to receive funding support. Important to mention is the diversity of these SMEs as they represented various destinations which differ not only in location, size, and other similar characteristics but also in the type of tourism they have, the way people arrive to these destinations and the tourism intensity in general. However, one thing they had in common, were the tourism activities they were active in. Specific NACE⁴ codes were in fact chosen for the project’s purposes:

I5510	<i>Hotels and similar accommodation</i>
I5520	<i>Holiday and other short-stay accommodation</i>
N79	<i>Travel agencies, tour operator reservation service & related activities</i>

¹ European Parliament, 2022

² Eurostat, 2019

³ Persons employed in total tourism industries as share of those employed in non-financial business economy (Eurostat, 2019)

⁴ The Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community

2.1 The response of SMEs to the increased need of environmental sustainability in tourism

Trends in SMEs perspective

The TOURISME project ran a survey targeting SMEs and their relations to circular economy principles and environmental management practices. 226 responses were collected which gave a good starting point for assessing SMEs views on circular economy and sustainable tourism in general. The survey, conducted in 2021, showed that SMEs in the tourism industry, like elsewhere, are aware of the existence of the circular economy principles and their benefits. When looking at particular practices and aspects of adopting circular economy principles we can observe a couple of different tendencies and draw conclusions for those. Figure 1 below displays the feedback received from 256 SMEs and their reflection on the status of adopting environmental management and circular economy principles.

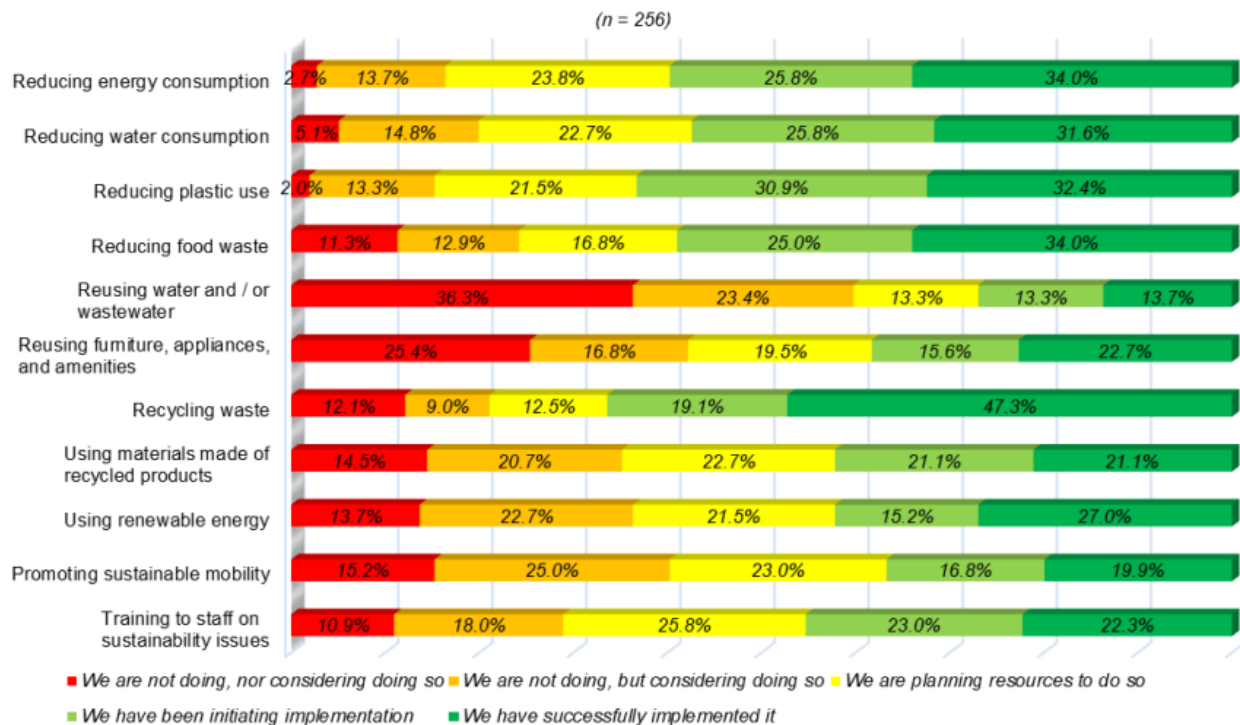


Figure 1. Status of adopting circular economy solutions

The tendencies we can clearly distinguish are the following:

1. **Low hanging fruits and existing solutions** – reducing energy consumption, water consumption, and the use of plastic or food waste are the most common solutions for tourism

environmental management. These practices have been existing for the last several years and more and more solution providers are on the markets. When translated into financial gains, they have a quick pay-back time related to the investment because water use, energy consumption and waste collection costs are easy to monitor and can be considered as a quick win. We can clearly see that they all have nearly the same level of adoption which makes them the first level instance measures for SMEs who are embarking on the journey of improving environmental management. This is a positive sign for SMEs who have not yet started to rethink their environmental footprint. Whether an accommodation whose budget surely depends on these costs or a tour operator or agency which wants to enrich its offer to tourists who are looking at such practices, these are simple measures to adopt especially because solutions exist on the market. Any audit applied to operations and supply chain analysis could easily identify these measures as contributors to better key performance indicator improvements (water use per person, energy consumption per night, waste generation per guest or a combination of those indicators in function of a time determinant).

2. **Need of extended and improved collaboration with public authorities** – aspects like recycling waste, mobility or even use of energy from renewable resources often require reaching out to local and regional authorities who oversee regulating the fields of waste management, mobility, and energy strategies. We can see in the results that these aspects attract a lot of attention yet are still in the “considering doing so” or “planning resources to do so” area. This is certainly a sign that public authorities and SMEs need to collaborate more for a mutual benefit – SMEs to take advantage of available support schemes, solutions, and know-how on one side and the public authorities to harvest additional contributions towards their strategies, targets and objectives by tapping into the vast potential more sustainable tourism activities offer. This can be considered as the next step for SMEs towards improved environmental management, especially after being self-aware of the impact and having tackled the low-hanging fruits themselves or with their direct contractors or suppliers.
3. **The clear lack of circular economy solutions** – when we look at aspects like reusing water/wastewater, reusing furniture, appliances and similar, using recycling products or even training the staff about environmental issues, we can see an even lower level of adoption. It is not surprising because these aspects require proper implementation of circular economy solutions, meaning cooperation between local actors in this field. The cooperation in this field can be as extensive as reaching out to academia, to socially responsible companies, to reuse, repair and upcycling communities, organisations who have vulnerable and socially disadvantaged target groups and more. In order to achieve this level of adopting circular economy solutions, an SME would need to do a proper exercise which would map various actors along the circular economy value chain who could have two different roles:
 - Providers of circular economy good and services
 - Recipients of goods and services reinstated in circular economy

SMEs perception of barriers and drivers towards sustainability

Another survey, which reports on drivers for adopting circular economy solutions, shows coherent results and further validate previous observations. One can see that meeting the expectations from customers, improving relations with the local community, and improving the SME's image play an important role and serves as motivation for advancing in this field, right after improving the SMEs' environmental performance. Further observations of the results show that sustainable business models can be grouped as secondary drivers. They contribute to internal benefits which are reflected in costs, achieving a standard or a certificate, improving employee satisfaction, meeting various requirements and compliance with relevant legislation or gain additional financial gains and become more competitive. All results above prove the need for better environmental management in SMEs.

When looking at barriers, the results indicate two types of conclusions. One clearly points at support needed for SMEs to advance in the field of environmental management. The other one further confirms that motivation and potential exists but is untapped. What they have in common is that both of them confirm the need for extensive cooperation both between SMEs locally, regionally and internationally, as well as cooperation with solution providers, academia, public authorities and more.

1. Apart from the lack of funds, SMEs are unable to deal with this demand on their own. Lack of skilled personnel, lack of environmental expert and lack of information about potential partners should be taken as an alarming need for public authorities, business incubators, development agencies, as well as academia, experts and similar stakeholders to put their knowledge base on disposal to SMEs. While SMEs do want to improve their environmental performances, they often do not have enough capacities to do so. SMEs are therefore invited to pick up contacts with relevant knowledge providers and join existing initiatives and cooperation projects available. While large corporations and multinationals can afford internal expertise, local SMEs are labelled that way because their personnel are limited and includes staff essential for the operations and often does not include environmental managers or similar jobs. External interventions are therefore essential.
2. The fact that time and space are not necessarily considered as a major barrier confirm the potential that exists and that is untapped. The fact that 65 SMEs joined this project shows that the employed staff can afford extra time to be trained and coached on environmental topics and that they have the space and room for adding additional operations or activities which would enhance their environmental performance.



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MORE**

For those who would like to even more indicators and current trends, we invite them to consult the project's [scientific article on this topic](#).

3. UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS, POTENTIALS AND CHOOSING RELEVANT APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

This particular chapter looks at the initial phases of improving the environmental management among SMEs and the suggestions for both SMEs and eventually those supporting the process, such as business incubators, development agencies or other knowledge providers.

3.1 Setting the baseline and understanding potential

TOURISME first approached SMEs with a preliminary assessment of their environmental performances (beside general data and information about number of staff or turn over) in order to set an appropriate baseline scenario able to be compared to eventual improvements. This was done through a call for funding open to eligible SMEs.

Current environmental performances

SMEs and other organisations active in any industry should be aware of their environmental performance. This also applies to tourism SMEs. Before starting a process like the one we are covering with these Guidelines, SMEs should prepare an overview of various key performance indicators, especially those linked to the aspect of environmental management which would be the subject of improvements – waste, energy, mobility, water management or something else.

Such data, either qualitative or quantitative would allow the SMEs or external experts who are assisting them to compare them with existing databases or compare them to similar industries and activities. Such process would allow the identification of hotpots and low hanging fruits and quick gains. Such analysis can also allow the process to indicate critical issues which would need to be eliminated. After all, a sound and responsible, as well as financially sustainable environmental management is also reflected in having as little reactive interventions as possible.

Table 1. Non-exhaustive list of potential key performance indicators

Waste	Water	Energy	Mobility	Governance
Amount of waste per guest or night	Periodical (seasonal, monthly ...) water consumption in function of occupancy	Periodical (seasonal, monthly ...) energy consumption in function of occupancy and average temperature	Feedback or survey from guests or clients (in case of tour operators)	Overview of green certificates or standards already applied
Share of residual waste in total waste generated	Average water consumption in different parts of the facility (kitchen, rooms, washing area ...)	Share of renewable energy in the total energy	The soft mobility offers to guests or clients	Survey or feedback from employers (on their knowledge of environmental topics, their opinions ...)
Food waste per person or night		Average energy efficiency of appliances across the facility (washing area, kitchen, rooms ...)		Share of environmental sustainability provisions in various operational documents (e.g., procedures)

Table 1 above shows a non-exhaustive list of potential indicators to be taken into consideration when designing the baseline scenario. These indicators can easily be expanded to a plethora of others in order to cover CO₂ footprints or water footprints of products used for providing tourism services (food, stationery, furniture, textile), recycling rate per waste stream (bulky waste, textiles etc.), presence of green procurement practices (supplier selection, stock management, share of environmentally friendly products).

Of course, such indicators alone would not give a perfect picture so they should be coupled with a simple checklist which would give a bigger picture of already applied good practices. The TOURISME project included a checklist which was requested to be filled in by SMEs in order to assess their existing good practices and differentiate different aspect of environmental management. Such checklists could include a multitude of individual steps which lead to better environmental management, such as presence of double gazed windows, individual energy or water metres, home composting units, food waste prevention (doggy bags for guests or food donations) and more.

Expected environmental performances and objectives

Setting realistic and reasonable expectation is as important for such processes as for any other processes elsewhere. After all, SMEs must be aware of their own potential and capacities – both human and financial and other crucial limitations and put those in an appropriate timeframe, too. It is impossible to say how long an improvement process should take, therefore SMEs must make a difference between quick gains, short-term and long-term improvements.

When launching the call for funding, the TOURISME project wanted the SMEs to state and define their own ambitions and objectives which allowed the experts to understand how to formulate the support schemes. Furthermore, the project asked SMEs to clearly indicate envisaged improvements in different fields of environmental management,

The checklist and key indicators used in the project for the selection of SMEs, as well as the form for describing ambitions and objectives, are presented as Annex I to these Guidelines. It is noteworthy that most of the SMEs involved in the TOURISME project that have obtained environmental certifications have indicated as a primary value of this process the definition of checklists compatible with their internal processes and indicator monitoring capabilities.

Finally, the above explained methodology was applied to the recruitment process of the beneficiary SMEs which were later ranked according to different objectives of the project.



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The summary of results and the baseline scenario was very similar to the general survey which was explained in Chapter 2, so we will not repeat it here, but rather redirect the readers to the relevant publication: [Benchmarking Sustainability of Selected SMEs](#).

3.2 Selected capacity building and cross-sectoral schemes

The design of the TOURISME transnational and cross-sectoral support schemes integrated the findings from the survey described in Chapter 2 and the baseline assessment of the selected beneficiary SMEs. Another important contributor to these schemes, yet to be explored in these Guidelines was the [Compendium of Good Practices](#) which is a significant collection of existing good practices and indicators and which provides guidance on how to replicate and implement them.

The TOURISME support schemes were built around three core activities, involving face-to-face or hybrid **trainings** for capacity building and knowledge transfer, **matchmaking** events for transnational and cross-sectoral cooperation as well as knowledge exchanges, and training and mentoring to promote the implementation of **environmental certifications**.

Trainings and capacity building activities



These activities combine conventional teaching approach with a one-way knowledge providing combined with participative and practical sessions when facilitation or co-creation techniques are applied.

When it comes to defining training topics, the importance of having them tailor-made to address the SMEs need is worthwhile highlighting as it gives an additional motivation for SMEs to properly follow the capacity building phase. Overall, the partners delivering the training support schemes followed a common approach enriched by tailor-

made content, practical exercises, and interactive learning. The common framework and pillars for project countries were:

1. Introduction of concepts and frameworks of sustainable tourism;
2. Sharing and discussion of good practices including those addressed in the TOURISME Compendium, experiences and case studies on sustainable tourism to help SMEs establish their sustainable path and strategy to start implementing or modifying certain habits and processes to reduce their environmental impact; and
3. Provision of knowledge on environmental certification and eco label schemes.

Based on the TOURISME experience, in these Guidelines we can outline that training can be more successful and relevant for SMEs when considering a balance between theoretical content and practical information and specific case studies to keep participants' motivation and engagement high and allow them to put into practice gathered knowledge. Good practices collected and analysed by TOURISME during the initial phase of the project and accessible on the project's website can be transferred to SMEs during the trainings. Moreover, study visits and practical case studies are interesting activities to associate with theoretical knowledge in order to visit sustainable tourism businesses and talk directly to experienced entrepreneurs who have been facing similar constraints and problems, both in urban and rural contexts.

In addition, sharing practices among the same SME participants of a training using facilitation and interactive techniques like workshops, focus groups, brainstorming and similar appeared to be a highly valuable experience. Peer learning was an important aspect of the TOURISME process to enhance sustainability awareness and implementation for all parties involved. A key aspect to consider for training actions is therefore to work on the achievement of positive group dynamics where participants are motivated to get to know each other, work together, and share ideas and experiences for enhanced sustainability.

Finally, looking back at the training topics and the relevant programmes and modules, the TOURISME project training activities could be summarised with the following words, as presented in the WordCloud in Figure 2.



Figure 2. WordCloud representing the most common subjects and topics during the 16 different training sessions

TESTIMONY

“The training sessions were interesting and provided us with information needed to identify the situation of our company in regards with environmental sustainability. From now on we want to prioritise environmental sustainability apart from social and economic sustainability.”

Viaggi e Miraggi, Italy

Lessons learnt through TOURISME capacity building activities

While the content that was chosen, the balance of practical and theoretical knowledge and the teaching model that was applied met the expectations and received praise from the beneficiary SMEs, the practical implementation of these training modules resulted in valuable conclusions and lessons learnt which we would hereby like to translate into further suggestions for successful training modules. They are all based on the experiences from the training modules.

Bringing SMEs to a level playing field in terms of previous knowledge and awareness

The training organiser should work together with the trainers to prepare some reading material or visual content to be shared with the beneficiaries prior to the training session itself. It would allow the beneficiaries to arrive to the session with at least some previous knowledge which would enable them to follow the module from its beginning.

Dealing with SMEs with different level of knowledge

A proper and thorough baseline assessment and benchmarking phase could prevent such issues from happening. The phase we previously described, could result in better grouping of SMEs which would allow them to follow coaching and teaching on topics more appropriate to their existing

knowledge and thus achieve improvements more suitable to their capacities. Grouping would also enhance peer-to-peer learning among peers of similar knowledge and capacities. Group could easily be divided in pioneers, progressing and frontrunners.

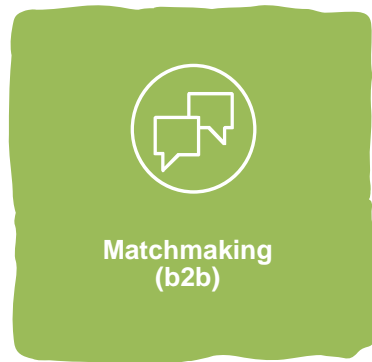
Dealing with SMEs belonging to different types of businesses

Based on the experience of TOURISME, having different industries at the same place to meet and exchange ideas is important for new partnerships, symbiosis, but when it comes to business specific topics and training modules, one should assess to split participants based on the type of tourism activity they perform in order to provide more tailored knowledge. The different groups could easily attend different activities – one business group going for a study visit while the other is in the “classroom” and vice versa.

Balancing the amount of theory with the practical sessions

The training sessions should allow the SMEs to experience the learnings, expose them to specific case studies and good practices. This would keep their motivation to progress, as well as future engagement and provide outlooks for implementing the acquired knowledge. In the case of TOURISME, the practical sessions included study visits, discussion with experienced entrepreneurs and business owners.

Matchmaking of SMEs



Business matchmaking is a method to identify and connect (match) companies and people with common business interests, complementary services, expertise, technologies or business strengths. The goal is to create cooperative connections and realize business opportunities that mutually benefit both parties.

It is one of the most efficient ways to find, meet, and talk to new collaboration partners in short, one-to-one talks either onsite or online. Matchmaking events have an abundance of added values especially if combined with interactive practical sessions, study visits, workshops and similar as in that case they enhance one’s learning, inspiration, motivation and determination, among other added values. event.

TESTIMONY

“In Madrid we had the opportunity to meet highly competitive and successful companies and the activities and presentations have allowed us to deepen in practical aspects examined during the training sessions. The ECOMONDO event in Rimini was also an excellent opportunity to know how the market is oriented towards sustainable products and services.”

VI.VI' Di Massimo Violini, Italy

In the TOURISME case, the beneficiary SMEs could gain deeper knowledge and contacts through face-to-face interactions and sharing of best practices. The matchmaking support scheme entailed one-on-one meetings with other business peers in a process of exchanging information and experiences as well as ideas on new technologies and innovative solutions and discussing future project proposals and collaborations.

Of course, the matchmaking events allowed us to draw conclusions and suggest them as replication potentials, too. While such events were highly appreciated by SMEs, due to their nature of meeting a lot of peers during a short period of time, we observed certain suggestions for replication.

Lessons learnt through TOURISME matchmaking activities



Compatible and matching profiles

Prior to the matchmaking event itself, SMEs should be realistic when creating and setting up their profiles or descriptions. The matchmaking organiser could look at adding qualitative or quantitative indicators or description for each profile – this would enable different SMEs to find other SMEs that might meet their needs and expectations from the matchmaking.



Achieving a diverse group of different businesses and profiles

Connections within companies with complementary similar profiles can result in nice exchange of experiences and comparisons but one of the key added values and follow ups can easily miss out. Matchmaking should create partnerships, b2b cooperations based on supply and demand. Therefore when organising a matchmaking event, the organiser should not hesitate to also extend the invitations and the platform to a set of stakeholders along the value chain – suppliers of environmentally friendly products for hotels, tourism service providers for more sustainable tour packages and many other solution providers. After all, the presence of such stakeholders and teaming up with them is what would make businesses more sustainable.

Enhance networking opportunities for finding funding

TOURISME itself did include funding opportunity, being a cascade grant intself. Nevertheless, many other projects, foundations, public authorities have funding opportunities for businesses to improve their environmental performance. These opportunities can differ in terms of financing (e.g., loan, grant) and focus area (e.g., mobility, energy saving and energy efficiency). Inviting the funders or organising financing-specific matchmaking would contribute to the overall process.

Diversifying the programme and methodology

What the TOURISME matchmaking events showed is that diversifying the methodologies and formats lead to better exploitation of the opportunities and occasions of having many various SMEs in one place. The project combined speed dating, field visits, guided tours, co-creating sessions and other formats what contributed significantly to the beneficiary SMEs' satisfaction with the matchmaking events.

Business Matchmaking vs. Networking

For the project's purposes, a guide was drafted with recommendations and scenarios for the organisation of matchmaking events. It dealt with the different types of sessions (conferences, workshops, stand areas), the methods of participation and interaction, the partners involved according to the recruitment process and SME profiles. It also reflected on the logistics and resources needed for their organisation, including references to sustainable matchmaking events that reduce pressure on the environment and natural resources via concrete actions from the venue to the catering and the reduction of waste to show visible evidence of environmental commitment to participants that they are expected to improve their own company's sustainability performance.

TESTIMONY

“During these meetings, I had the opportunity to discuss with companies that had already taken the steps to obtain labelling as a green key. I was able to learn about all the topics covered and take advice and recommendations. These exchanges have been essential in our sustainable tourism journey. This allowed us to centralize our ideas, our actions, and our point of view to get the best out of them.”

Val de Roland, France



Access to environmental certifications



Access to
environmental
certifications

Environmental certification plays an important role on several levels: it allows SMEs to assess their environmental performances or expose them to external audits and assessments in order to understand the largest potential for improved environmental management. As proven by the TOURISME experience, the fact that environmental certificates are targeting various aspects of environmental management enables SMEs to define a strategy to achieve greater environmental impacts and set up KPIs and other indicators to guide them and help evaluate their efforts.

Another key objective of the TOURISME project was encouraging the beneficiary SMEs to take up various environmental certification schemes and in order to achieve this objective, the project also had financial support scheme on disposal for interested SMEs.

Environmental or “green” certifications are valuable programmes that can help companies demonstrate their sustainable products, services and practices to employees, customers, partners, authorities and investors. In short, environmental certification is a form of environmental regulation and development where a company can voluntarily choose to comply with predefined processes or objectives set forth by the certification service. As said above, these are voluntary processes, and thus seen as a form of corporate social responsibility allowing companies to address their obligation to minimise the harmful impacts to the environment by voluntarily following a set of externally set and measured objectives.

The third support scheme envisaged by TOURISME was thus related to environmental certifications to facilitate understanding and access to different EC initiatives promoting sustainable tourism, such as EU ecolabel and/or different national and international environmental certifications such as Green Key. This was carried out, on the one hand, through training sessions, and, on the other hand, through tailored mentoring and advisory services to interested tourism SMEs. The combination of training support to provide SMEs with the right knowledge and financial support to access certifications that are usually expensive proved to be a successful approach. Funds provided by TOURISME under this scheme was used to sustain costs related to individual advisory services on environmental certifications from experts, consultants, and/or certification providers, as well as costs of new certification/standardisation or maintenance of certification.

Thanks to the knowledge gathered in training and matchmaking support schemes, companies were able to establish their own path for the access to environmental certifications, or their maintenance in other few cases. Mentoring and consulting services through dedicated financing allowed the definition of the key steps to set up the right processes at internal level and to prepare the certifications’ applications and audits. At the same time, training and capacity building established

the knowledge base for SMEs' individual certification paths and allowed companies to share valuable experiences with peers and other stakeholders.

Before the project experience, only one selected accommodation had adopted ISO 14001 and four could count on the EU Ecolabel. On the other hand, the results indicating the willingness to access certifications were more encouraging as 90% of the beneficiary accommodation SMEs wanted to access them, as well as 77% of the travel agencies and tour operators. Thanks to the TOURISME experience, **a total of 26 SMEs has managed to achieve an environmental certification** (or are in the latest steps for achieving that). Some even have managed to obtain more than one certification. Countries-wise

Based on the collected data, Figure 3 below shows a breakdown of the different obtained labels. These labels can be further divided into section. While Green Key and Travelife are specifically made for hotels and accommodation in general, the majority of obtained labels fall under more overarching labels which cover a more complex and holistic environmental management, such as Green Tourism, Ecolabel and Biosphere. It was encouraging to see more SMEs taking up more complex labels. When it comes to national labels, the same pattern was observed, as the labels included Agriculture Biologique (2 SMEs) and Biorismo (1) in France, Legambiente turismo (1) in Italy and Sostenibilidad turistica (1) in Spain, which are all labels targeting a variety of businesses and operations.

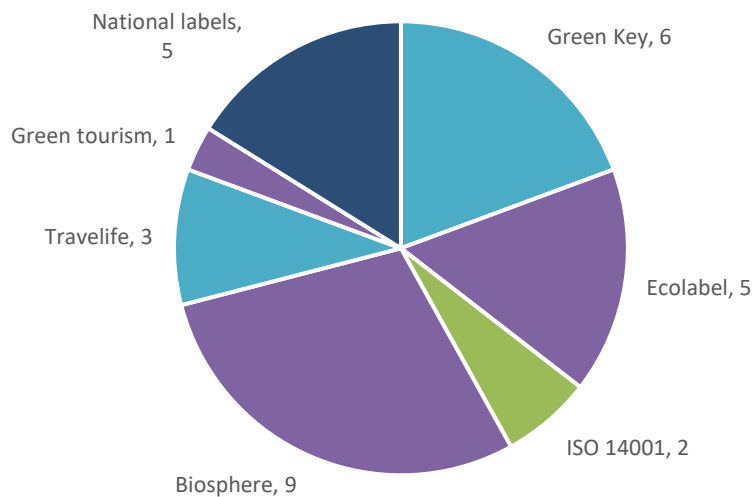


Figure 3. Acquired labels during the TOURISME project (light blue for hotels and accommodations, purple for overarching labels, green for international standards and dark blue for national labels)

TESTIMONY

“This recognition highlights my commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism practices. As a tour guide in Mallorca, I have always been passionate about preserving the island’s natural beauty and cultural heritage for future generations. That’s why I have worked tirelessly to incorporate sustainable practices into my business operations and promote sustainable tourism to my clients. As a responsible tour guide, I believe that it is essential to educate travellers about the importance of sustainable tourism and encourage them to make responsible choices during their visit to Mallorca. I am very grateful for the opportunity I’ve had. In no other context would I have been able to travel across Europe to learn more about sustainable tourism. During the trainings and matchmakings, I made some valuable friends and met many new clients. Thank you for giving me such an opportunity!”

Pilar Echegaray; Palmawithpilar, Mallorca – awarded with the BiosphereTourism seal

The process varied for each SME, largely depending on their type of economy activity and their previous knowledge and experience in the processes of sustainability and certification schemes. Human resources and the size of businesses also played an important factor. The case of travel agencies was more challenging since there were no specific environmental certifications specifically adapted to the activity they conduct.

In order to reflect further on the labels themselves, these Guidelines want to look at the most common choices of the TOURISME beneficiary SMEs.

A question for travellers looking for trustworthy eco-labels is whether the eco-label has been endorsed by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). GSTC manages global standards for eco-friendly travel and tourism and acts as the international accreditation body for sustainable tourism certification. GSTC does not directly certify any products or services but provides an accreditation program through its partner ASI/Assurance Services International to accredit Certification Bodies. It is the largest independent international interest group for sustainable tourism.

Certification Bodies that observe the criteria in their certifications or provide equivalent specifications may be endorsed by the GSTC. So far, GSTC has recognised 26 eco-labels. In these guidelines we will focus on those which are of an interest for the target audience and showcase some of the most common ones, which were also put forward to the TOURISME project’s beneficiary SMEs.



Green Key is a voluntary eco-label for hotels, hostels, campsites, holiday parks, small accommodations as well as conference centres, attractions, and restaurants. The Green Key award is based on compliance with strict criteria in the areas of environmental management (water conservation, energy efficiency, waste management, cleaning, etc.) and sustainability education of (staff, guests, suppliers, etc.).



Travelife is an internationally recognized accommodation sustainability program. The Travellife certificate contains a range of criteria that assess accommodation performance in the areas. These areas include human rights and health, labour practices, community engagement, and environmental impacts, such as energy efficiency, as well as water and waste management.



BiosphereTourism is a full management and positioning system for a destination, company, or tourism product, through accompaniment and advice on continuous improvement towards the “Horizon 2030”. This certification guarantees an adequate long-term balance between the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions of a destination. It reports significant benefits for the entity itself, society, and the environment.



Green Tourism promotes greener ways for businesses and organisations to operate, by offering our members advice on reducing energy use, saving water, efficient & eco-friendly waste disposal, ethical buying, staying local & seasonal, minimising food miles, promoting biodiversity, adopting a smart, sustainable outlook from top to bottom.



Probably the most famous one in the European context is the **EU Ecolabel** which was one of the most targeted among the beneficiary SMEs. This certification system, considers the entire life cycle of the product (from the extraction of raw materials to the production, packaging and transport, use and recovery and disposal phase) and is subjected to final external certification by an independent public body. The EU Ecolabel can be applied to goods and services intended for distribution, consumption or use on the EU market for which the relevant criteria have been defined and published, in the form of European Commission Decisions.



ISO 14000 is a family of ‘standards’ with the standard **14001** related to environmental management that exists to help organizations (a) minimize how their operations (processes, etc.) negatively affect the environment (i.e. cause adverse changes to air, water, or land); (b) comply with applicable laws, regulations, and other environmentally oriented requirements; and (c) continually improve in the above.

Furthermore, a number of national labels were targeted, such as:



The French **Agir pour un Tourisme Responsable** has developed an external evaluation system for the commitment of travel operators wishing not only to act for responsible tourism but also to demonstrate their commitment. Committed travel operators are therefore invited to provide proof of the actions actually

implemented for responsible tourism and then to have this proof verified by a competent and independent guarantee body.



Agriculture biologique is a French quality label created in 1985 and based on the prohibition of the use of products derived from synthetic chemistry. It identifies products from organic farming. Property of the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the AB brand is defined by it and promoted by the French Agency for the Development and Promotion of Organic Agriculture.



The French **BIORISMO** label aims to stimulate, inform and propose a process of progress through a repository of indicators promoting actions for biodiversity in the tourism and hotel-camping-catering sector.



The **Legambiente Turismo** ecological label was established in 1997 as a project by Legambiente, one of the most important environmental associations in Italy, with the aim of allowing tourist and hospitality businesses that adopt measures to reduce the impact of their activities on the environment to become part of a network recognized in Italy and abroad.



The CST standard is a technical tool, whose objective is to strengthen sustainable tourist activity in Costa Rica. It is a recognition of the excellent management of companies and organizations that work actively to mitigate the impact resulting from their operations. The certification empowers the strength of social, cultural, environmental, economic and development work in tourist destinations.

Of course, a plethora of other labels exist, both national and international, covering individual SMEs and tourism goods and services, as well as entire processes and management of those.

Considering that the Biosphere label received the most attention among the SMEs, we talked to the SMEs who obtained it. Biosphere has a platform where companies complete the information on the activities they carry out and sustainable actions linked to the 169 goals of the 2030 Agenda. To do so, they have more than 400 registered activities, with the possibility of adding new activities that adapt to the characteristics of each company. The platform offers two different distinctions:

- **Biosphere committed**, which 7 Spanish companies have acquired, which involves the first steps to start their journey of continuous improvement towards sustainability and is easily achieved by demonstrating initial efforts in sustainability.
- **Biosphere certified**, which has been achieved by two Spanish companies. This certificate recognises the efforts and continuous work together with the development of a plan by the companies for the management of corporate sustainability, with which the company

contributes to the fulfilment of the 17 SDGs, the 169 goals of the 2030 Agenda and the three areas of sustainability. To obtain it, it is necessary to achieve and demonstrate an optimal level of sustainable efforts, which an external auditor will examine to determine whether the company's sustainability work has been recognised as Biosphere Certified.

Furthermore, another conclusion from the certification phase, linked to Biosphere in particular was that SMEs found the Biosphere certification tedious and sometimes complicated process, thus all Spanish SMEs contracted external consultancy services to help them with the whole process. This is why 7 of the companies are still working towards certification. Only two travel agencies have achieved certification. In relation to other certifications, according to some SMEs that tried to get ISO 14001 certification, they found it too complicated to adapt to small accommodations, so they decided to opt for other types of certifications.



**READ
MORE**

Further information on the guidance document used to establish common framework for the training support scheme is available of the project's website and is titled as "[Transnational and cross-sectoral schemes](#)".

TESTIMONY

"Open spaces, simple lines, designer furniture, architectural lights, warm or tart colors, plain or vegetal patterns, elegantly highlight the Marie-Antoinette listed staircase, the beams and the vaulted room of the 16th century heritage from this old building. The property, opened for the first time in 1924, has been belonging to the same family for 5 generations. Our DNA drives us to always seek for improvement and have a positive impact on our environment. That is why, naturally, Duo decided to engage its team and guests in a sustainable development approach.

There are so many sustainability labels on the market that we weren't sure which one is the most suitable and recognized for the hospitality sector. Being part of the TouriSME program helped us discover all the labels and choose the right one – the Green Key"

. Irina Bolocan; Operation Manager, Duo Hotel, Paris – awarded with the Green Key

4. THE TOURISME PARADIGM: RECAP

The last nearly 3 years of the TOURISME project and other like-minded projects we met certainly allowed us to identify certain patterns, occurrences, good practices, and replication potentials. What many such processes have in common is a well-established order of actions in order to reach best possible achievements and improvements.

These actions are not standalone actions as each of them is coupled with another one to accompany and complete them and give them a meaning. We could easily look at six key actions coupled with relevant follow ups.

4.1 Steps, objectives, stakeholders and replicability

UNDERSTAND NEEDS

Whether initiated by a public authority of whatever instance, a private funding, a trade union or association or a development agency, a process like this needs to establish the underlying objectives to be achieved and understood by all parties. These objectives can be based on a set of triggers or reasons: current (unsustainable) trends in tourism and tourism processes based on observations or figures, a new strategy or action plan published by a relevant authority, compliance and compatibility with other industries and trends. External stakeholders to be brought in at this point are certainly practitioners and academia, as they should have the best overview of current trends and occurrences in tourism and its impact on environment. It is also encouraged to bring tourists into the picture, too, through a general consultation (survey, interviews, focus groups) in order to collect their expectations and feelings about improving the environmental management in tourism. This collaboration would allow the initiator of the process to focus on relevant aspects of tourism and environmental management, which would have the biggest impact or those which are the subject of current strategies, targets and similar.



LESSONS LEARNT: The TOURISME project completed this phase through a survey targeting SMEs in the participating countries, translated into the four languages in order to facilitate the outreach and number of responses. The copy of the survey can be found in Annex I. This exercise gave valuable insight in the current trends and gathered valuable intelligence for building the following phases. The results were presented in a relevant [scientific paper](#) "Adoption of Circular Economy and Environmental Certifications: Perceptions of Tourism SMEs".

REACH OUT WITH OFFER

Once the objectives for the process are set it would be time to reach out to the SMEs and other smaller or larger tourism businesses with the offer and the call. This offer needs to be as clear as possible, highlighting the needs, the offer and the potential benefits the SMEs could enjoy. SMEs need to understand from the very beginning what their role in this process would be, how much time and/or money would it cost them, what the benefits would be and, what their contribution would be to local community. In order to do so, a set of different external stakeholders would need to be involved in this process – business incubators, industry associations, media, development agencies and other entities which work with SMEs or have direct contact with them. Such stakeholders would allow you to target relevant SMEs in large numbers at once. Media and public presence are important, too. Efforts and support are required already at this phase, for organising sessions, call centres, workshops and similar activities for facilitating the SMEs adherence to the initiative.



LESSONS LEARNT: The recruitment phase in TOURISME's case saw a call for SMEs which was disseminated not only through the project's own communication channels but also relevant national entities. While the relevant partners set up internal modalities regarding the scoring and final selection, an infographic was used to reach out to the target group, which is shown in Annex II.

SCAN BASELINE

Once the recruitment process is over and relevant SMEs are selected to participate in the initiative, their current performances and environmental practices need to be assessed, compared to each other and generally speaking, understood for the next phases. This is an important step because a lot of what is yet to come will depend on the selected SMEs capacities, potentials, current performances and expectations.

For this step, depending on the knowledge of the topic and available tools for analysis, involving academia, practitioners, previously completed initiatives of this kind to help analysing the application forms and collected data is optional.



LESSONS LEARNT: As a part of the Call for SMEs, the application form contained an important part, presented as Annex III, which served for collecting SME specific information. It gave a preliminary overview of SMEs practices, expectations, motivations and some industry-specific key performances indicators of choice which reflect the aspect of environmental management previously identified as a priority. The results were presented in a [publication](#) "Benchmarking Sustainability of Selected SMEs".

IDENTIFY POTENTIALS

As a crucial step that needs to happen after analysing the application forms (or other kind of adherence documents to the initiative), this step needs to set the expectation right – either by

confirming the ones you had at the beginning of the process or slightly modifying them and making them either more humble or even advanced. At this stage tailor-made material can be prepared in order to give the SMEs a preliminary idea and inspiration.

This particular step is a rather internal one, as it would require reviewing the initial objectives and complement them with specific objectives which reflect the SMEs capacities and potentials.



LESSONS LEARNT: At this stage the TOURISME project developed a comprehensive [Compendium of Good Practices](#) which was published even before some of the capacity building activities started. It encompassed various aspects of environmental management which were inspired by the previous surveys and benchmarking, as well as to answer some of the challenges SMEs would have during the certification phase.

DEVELOP ACTIVITIES

Once the potentials and capacities of SMEs are analysed and understood, it is time for developing support for the SMEs through training and teaching modules and coaching, matchmaking activities. The most important thing to consider, apart from matching the methodology with the goal is also matching the methodology with the topics to be explored. The timeframe also needs to be considered, in order to match the SMEs available time and their pace.

This phase will certainly require an extensive support from external stakeholders, such as experts, practitioners, academia, other SMEs, European platforms (associations, trade unions). There are cases where this entire step is externalised to a certain knowledge provider through a turnkey principle, where the modules development, teaching or coaching and evaluation is done by an external contractor or partner.



LESSONS LEARNT: As mentioned before, the TOURISME project developed a comprehensive and systematic plan and programme for the beneficiary SMEs, primarily as a combination of three key methodologies – training sessions, matchmaking events and certification support. The document titled “[Transnational and Cross-Sectoral Schemes](#)” is the one that describes in detail what the plan looked like, including the topics and phases it covered.

MOBILISE EXPERTS

As a connected step to the previous one and as something that complements and completes it, internal or external contributors should be identified to provide knowledge for training and capacity building activities. In case the internal knowledge is not sufficient or doesn't match the needs, depending on the availability of relevant knowledge providers, a certain desk research, networking, consultations are needed to identify relevant experts.

As previously said, depending on the quality of the internal knowledge, significant cooperation might be needed for this phase. Teaching, coaching and vocational training has significantly developed, and various techniques exist, practiced by different knowledge providers. The usual suspects in this field are certainly academia (universities and institutes), consultants, practitioners, other peers, and even public authorities or NGOs and similar associations.



LESSONS LEARNT: While the previously mentioned Schemes that were developed contained the outline of the training and capacity building programme, the “mobilisation” of knowledge providers were happening on the go, taking many different circumstances into account:

- The timing (exact dates) of different events was not precisely defined in the Schemes but left to respective partners to determine them.
- Different events required different profiles, based on the format, and the TOURISME project showed that a diverse set of knowledge providers contributes largely to a successful learning phase; for the project’s purpose not only academia and consultants were invited but also business owners, entrepreneurs, public authorities and other.
- The Schemes started during the time COVID-19 was limiting travels and physical activities.
- Some of the topics were being decided on the go and adjusted to the SMEs’ needs.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Timing plays an important aspect of planning both in terms of duration, frequency of individual capacity building actions and overall time needed for the process to end. Frequent teaching and learning activities with close timings might be difficult for the SMEs to keep up with. The process also needs to allow SMEs to digest information, perhaps follow up on certain new learnings and similar. In certain countries, there are certain circumstances which could dictate the timing such as when the tourist season takes place (more activities in low season and practical exercises or visits during the high season), geographical characteristics (tourists seasons happening at different times in different parts of a country).

Normally, by now, all the necessary external stakeholders should have been identified. However, late arrivals should be added to the training activities whenever possible. The stakeholders which could be beneficial for this phase would be venues and other locations for successful implementation of teachings. Depending on whether the process needs to be recorded and archived or made possible for replications, or if it requires additional visibility, marketing or communication agencies could be hired, if internal capacities do not exist.



LESSONS LEARNT:

- The TOURISME project showed a great extent of adaptability to many different circumstances, both enabling and hindering ones. Over the period of implementation, a lot of added values were achieved, such as successful study visits and even more important – merging and combining TOURISME activities with major tourism and environment events in Europe, such as Ecomondo in Rimini, FITUR in Madrid or Tourismatch 2020 in Gran Canaria. The feedback from the SMEs was rather encouraging and confirming that the pace chosen for the implementation phase met everyone's capacities. The report "[Implemented Schemes](#)" describes in details the different approaches and deployment methods the project used;
- The TOURISME implementation phase included a significant support mechanism, closely following the deployment of various activities and through the relevant partners staying in touch with the SMEs. The support was reflected in adding study visits and testimonials to the programme, adapting the Scheme once travelling and physical events could take place. Webinars were organised as extracurricular activities to support SMEs communicating their progress and successes, communication material was added to promote their efforts and other ad-hoc actions.

REQUEST ACTION

While we did not speak about this before, the participating SMEs should be aware of such a step potentially coming, as far back as the first time they heard about this process and opportunity. This step might be looking like a burden for the SMEs, but if explained properly and put into the context of the overall process, it could boost their motivation and commitment and surely help monitoring and evaluate the overall success of the process.

As this phase would solely be happening between your entity and the selected entities, there is not much need for external support. Teachers and the knowledge providers could help you revise these plans and help you assess their potentials and how realistic they are. It would also help them to slightly modify the future modules and topics in order to contribute to these plans.



LESSONS LEARNT: While this step was not explicitly requested from the SMEs, at least not in a formal way, the SMEs did show initiative and willingness to change certain practices, what would be reported on at a later stage. The fact that that many SMEs expressed their interest to pursue environmental certificates was indirectly an indicator of taking action and capitalising on the learnings.

MONITOR PROGRESS

The outcomes of the previous action and the extent of the action itself will define what this one would look like and what kind of monitoring system would need to be set up. When it comes to the monitoring itself, there is a multitude of different approaches – from simple and remote data collection (quantitative or qualitative), calls, reports to on-site visits, interviews, interaction with clients and customers and other on-site monitoring activities. The monitoring phase could lead to certain corrective actions, revisions of the plans and additional efforts.

The monitoring phase will greatly depend on whether you already externalised certain actions and services. At the same time, this monitoring phase also requires somewhat developed positive relationship between your entity and the selected SMEs, trust, privacy and other healthy arrangements – simply because in some cases, the monitoring phase could imply sharing confidential information, being honest and other qualities which would determine how successful the monitoring phase would be.



LESSONS LEARNT: During the TOURISME project, monitoring was continuous and culminated towards the end of the project with a relevant exercise (more about it in the coming phase). The fact that the SMEs were meeting not only each other but also their respective contact points in Spain, France, Cyprus and Italy on a regular basis, ensured that all their efforts and actions are followed up.

COLLECT SUCCESS

At the end of the process, many actions will have happened, several different phases completed and closed and the teaching and training as well as the implementation phase will have reached their end. If no previous intermediate and periodic quality checks, satisfaction surveys and similar took place before, this would be the last opportunity to organise one. There are many methods of collecting success indicators, both qualitative and quantitative.

For collecting quantitative and qualitative data, there should not be much need for an external expertise. In fact, as previously mentioned, the trust, private arrangement and relationship between your entity and the beneficiaries should give better and more honest results.



LESSONS LEARNT: The project ran a final collection of success indicators towards the end of the project which encompassed all the different phases of the project. The objective wasn't only to gather numbers but be able to compare them with the baseline scenario and benchmark analysis – in terms of achieved improvements in different fields, but also in terms of successful certifications. The results and conclusions are included in the [“Report on the Improvement in the Uptake of Sustainable Solutions”](#). Annex IV contains a copy of the data collection template.

EVALUATE PROJECT

The pinnacle of every process – evaluating the success, drawing conclusions, and communicating the success stories. The phase which validates and confirm the resources invested in the process and looks at all the added values along the process. Following the previous phases and actions, the best that could happen is certainly clear indications for conclusions. Based on the earlier collected quantitative and qualitative data, which is comparable with the baseline assessment, relevant conclusions can be drawn.

Evaluation is something that can certainly be done internally, as well as externally, using external evaluators. If hiring external evaluators for this purpose, they surely need to be acquainted with the baseline assessment and have access to the feedback forms, recordings or feedback focus groups (whatever the feedback collection looked like). An involvement of media would be advantageous for disseminating the outcomes and results.



LESSONS LEARNT: This particular document, the Guidelines, along with other reports and publications, perfectly summarises the evaluation process. The objective of this phase in TOURISME was not only to evaluate the project in terms of indicators and comparisons, but also to extract conclusions, lessons learnt, outlooks and suggestions for replication.

As the purpose of these guidelines is primarily to inspire tourism SMEs and their associations, the above-mentioned steps should be taken with a reserve and rather as inspiration, suggestion and after all, guidance. Processes like this are very complex and sometimes unpredictable, thus a certain amount of flexibility must be taken on board.

4.2 Process timeframe

While the previous chapter presented the different steps as they were to happen one after another, this can also be considered slightly more complex, too. Many of these actions and phases can be either repetitive or overlap each other. This complexity gives the whole process a meaning as the different actions can complement each other, control each other, or intervene for each other.

If we look at a three-year long period, the way this process could be presented on a timeline if displayed in Figure 4.

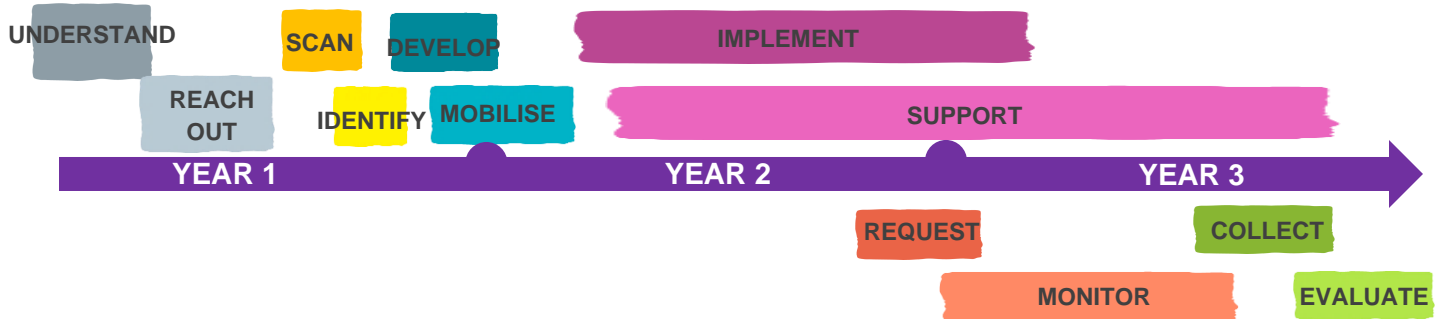


Figure 4. Timeline display of the different actions listed in the previous chapter

As mentioned before, one special attention needs to be given to the SMEs availability and human resources to complete such a process. There are certain phases which could provide sufficient knowledge and information on such limitations and the collected information can significantly help the organiser to build a reasonable timeframe for the process.

Phases which depend on each other such as teaching and optionally requesting action plans, for example, need to be completing each other in terms of potential modifications of the topics, new topics of interest arising etc.

4.3 The paradigm applied to individual SMEs

While the previous chapter describes the TOURISME paradigm by looking at its different phases, we must also reflect on what SMEs can do to enhance their environmental sustainability.

The mix of financial, technical and knowledge barriers make it more complex to identify a linear and unambiguous path of progression towards sustainability indicators for tourism SMEs. Let's take as an example environmental certification: while on the one hand they represent a conclusive (or intermediate) step to communicate and make visible the efforts and progress already undertaken by SMEs, during many TOURISME matchmaking events they were described by SMEs as "a learning journey" to discover their own potential and weaknesses with the support of external expertise.

While this overall document proposes a more systemic approach for different stakeholders to approach sustainability practices, this chapter of these guidelines moves from the previously mentioned "journey" metaphor, by identifying suggestions learnt through the implementation of the TOURISME support scheme. Interviews with SMEs, feedbacks on trainings and matchmaking events are the main source of those suggestions, clustered into three categories: Understand, reach out, implement.

1. UNDERSTAND NEEDS

As highlighted by TOURISME benchmarking study, the current state of adoption of certifications is very poor among tourism SMEs. This data is not surprising, considering how SMEs often struggles with resources and skills to assess their environmental performances. In an ideal scenario, it is recommended to include a target value along with sustainability indicators to establish desired conditions and threshold values. The primary step in determining the key factors for SMEs is to identify a set of essential conditions that must be met for sustainability. It is crucial to identify these values whenever feasible and provide a clear explanation of their significance in conjunction with the indicators. In cases where confident identification of targets is not possible, it is preferable to specify favourable trend directions instead of inaccurately specifying a target level. If practical challenges, such as data availability, arise, a surrogate indicator may be selected. However, it is important to disclose that this surrogate indicator is the most suitable practical option currently available, rather than the optimal indicator possible.

Matching your needs with evolving external contexts

It is crucial that the definition of trends (if not indicators) for improving sustainability performance is highly integrated with the context in which SMEs work. Local policies as waste management systems, destination management strategies and fiscal incentives have a strong impact on the success of good practices replication. It should be noted that even during the project lifecycle itself, regulatory frameworks have evolved (e.g., at EU level, the Proposal for a Directive on green claims as one of the most fitting examples). TOURISME SMEs showed a high awareness of the need to interpret policy and legislative framework that could directly or indirectly impact their operations, and suggested how chambers of commerce and sectoral associations and press are important tools to keep being informed.

Together with data, focus on your capacity to interpret them

Knowledge of environmental performance is crucial but cannot alone determine priority areas of intervention for SMEs, which must also be defined through an analysis of the potential for change (in terms of staff and skills, financial resources and forecasting impacts). As an example: three TOURISME companies measured the carbon footprint of their activity before and after the project experience. They have not found significant differences with respect to their initial situation but found improvements in areas that were not initially considered, such as reuse, training of employees, and raising awareness for the visitors.

Bring out the best from every learning opportunity

TOURISME matchmaking of SMEs was aimed at creating synergies business-to-business (b2b), to facilitate the exchange of good practices among SMEs and with technology and sustainable solutions providers. Participating SMEs emphasised not only the importance of becoming aware of the different actions that can be implemented, but especially the elements of replicability of good

practices. Peer-to-peer exchange allows for the deepening of processes and criteria for the feasibility of good practices through the comparison of concrete direct experiences. In this way, it is possible to minimise the impact of spill over effects and externalities potentially not taken into account (e.g. staff and skills needed to monitor and maintain an action, customer feedback).

2. REACH OUT

In comparison to other industries, the formation of networks and close collaborative relationships appears to be even more crucial in the tourism sector, where diverse partners are essential in order to supply integrated tourist products and provide sustainable services to customers. At the local level, destination management policies set or at least steered by public authorities have an impact on different levels of SMEs operations (from marketing to waste management, transports and mobility, energy grids, supply chains for food and other materials, etc.). We already explored the role and actions of development agencies, cities and regions and other facilitators like Chambers of commerce and employers' association. But even when such schemes are not present, SMEs can anyway look for potential partners like restaurants, shops and tourism related associations, as well as NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g., food banks) to set up agreements and joint actions that can improve environmental performances as well as brand reputation of the tourist destination. The dialogue among local stakeholders helps SMEs to better understand what the benefits of environmental actions could be and what their contribution would be to local communities, local policies and overall efforts of relevant public and private across when it comes to environment.

SMEs are the backbone of destination management

The success of a destination in the tourism industry is significantly influenced by the frequency of interactions among interconnected tourism firms, both in formal and informal contexts. More frequent contacts have the potential to facilitate efficient transfer of information, knowledge, and skills. Consequently, the establishment of networks among tourism SMEs can enhance their social capital, improve the competitive position of tourism firms, and ultimately enhance the overall experience of tourists. During the first Italian matchmaking event, Sardinia Region showed how the mutual knowledge and cohesion of local SMEs was the base of the development of community brand and the creation of sustainable travel packages at the base of the DESTIMED Interreg EU project.

Networking means not being alone

It cannot be underestimated the impact of networking activities on SMEs human and social capital. As highlighted in the TOURISME analysis scientific article, increased turnover and profits are not necessarily outcomes of green and circular economy practices adoption. Qualitative feedbacks of the TOURISME trainings by the SMEs showed how personal commitment of owners and personal orientations towards sustainability are a not negligible factor determining success of practices. In this sense, networking among peers also helped the build-up of a community of likeminded professionals that not only reinforces knowledge exchange mechanisms, but also supports commitment towards similar sustainability objectives.

The role of informal peer exchanges

The TOURISME report on the improvement in the uptake of sustainable solutions revealed that certain initiatives identified by companies were initially overlooked due to a lack of awareness regarding their potential as sustainable measures. Conversely, other initiatives were readily integrated as they posed minimal challenges to the companies yet were not recognized as sustainable measures. It is to be noted how TOURISME SMEs autonomously established bilateral and multilateral communication channels via social media and provided positive feedback on how those channels helped continuous exchanges on practices implementation.

3. IMPLEMENT

Good practices identified by TOURISME SMEs are a well-balanced mix of formulation of sustainability strategies and monitoring systems, analysis of energy usage, water management optimisation, reduction of waste and improvement of waste management, awareness raising and communication, revision of organisational processes, and more rigorous criteria for identifying suppliers. In terms of strategy making, the key tools adopted by TOURISME SMEs are certification schemes, which were mostly perceived as processes to identify medium- and long-term objectives and prioritise implementation of specific actions.

Test and run do not require large investments

In some cases, SMEs have turned to good practices that do not require large investments. These include: the introduction of eco-tariffs (discounts for customers who forego room cleaning), the creation of environmentally friendly tourist circuits, more information for customers on the most sustainable options during their stays, the training of employees, and the development of information content on SMEs' websites. An approach aimed at testing small-scale actions, according to TOURISME SMEs, proved effective in building trusting relationships with customers and aligning on sustainability operations with SME staff.

Environmental certifications help build trust relationships, environmental performances consolidate them

It is widely recognised by all TOURISME SMEs undertaking an environmental certification how the process itself supported not only to identify performance improvement margins, but also prioritise interventions according to SMEs and local contexts characteristics and possibilities. Environmental certifications are also widely seen as an effective tool to improve brand reputation and get in touch with new likeminded customers, business partners & more experienced peers as well as other supply chain stakeholders. In this sense, TOURISME SMEs were able to build trusted relationships with certification experts and experienced colleagues known directly in the training and matchmaking activities. This helped them improve their knowledge on environmental certifications and improve their management strategies.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Looking back at the TOURISME experience and these Guidelines, one can draw several conclusions based on the lessons learnt, translate them into recommendations for replication and use the achievements as validation points for those. Sustainable Development and Circular Economy as principles exist for the last two decades and gave us so many solutions, examples of good practices and opportunities for replication. However, research, surveys, interviews show that tourism businesses do not yet have the sufficient capacity and knowledge to deal with the increasing pressure and demand for improving their environmental performances. This is where the cooperation with solution and knowledge providers comes in. What these guidelines have covered in its various chapters can be summarised in the following key actions, which require the participation of all the stakeholders along the tourism value chain that would contribute to tourism SMEs' transition towards more environmentally sustainable practices.

Encouragement

SMEs need to understand the increasing demand from their customers and the potential environmental improvements could bring to their businesses

Self-awareness

Being able to identify poor environmental performances and turn them into opportunities is key for tackling the issue of environmental footprint

Motivation

Knowing the benefits and added values of improved environmental performance is an essential prerequisite for what is yet to come

Peer education

Whatever the good or bad lessons learnt are, the achievements or failures made, peer to peer exchange is highly valued as a way of creating a critical mass among SMEs and a platform which would help all the SMEs to advance in the field

Determination

Whatever the objective is, SMEs need to determine what the objectives are in function of available time and resources and show their tenacity reflected in investments (financial, human power, etc)

Reasonableness

Linked to self-awareness, SMEs must take reasonable steps which are in line with their capacities and resources to avoid disappointments and backlogs

Pride

If all the efforts, milestones and final achievements are not communicated and displayed timely and properly, the added value of attracting interest from tourists, investors or other stakeholders could be missed out

Support

Without the intervention of public authorities and other stakeholders, SMEs would be left on their own in these ambitions which would discourage them from advancing

Looking back at these keywords, the TOURISME project’s specific conclusions reflect the previously listed key actions.

Having been supported by the COSME programme of the European Union, specifically targeting the tourism industry, the consortium that was built around the project’s objective managed to provoke an interest among a **considerable number of tourism SMEs**, assess their current environmental performances, help them **identify and understand their potentials, unlock opportunities for capacity building activities, peer to peer education and support them throughout this process**. Thanks to the framework that was built around the project, these **SMEs got additional visibility** nationally and internationally which paid its respect to the determination they all showed.

Throughout the TOURISME experience, SMEs had the opportunity to attend different training sessions and workshops to learn about applications of sustainable tourism and initiatives, as well as to learn how to set up a roadmap for environmental development actions in their companies. These trainings were complemented with matchmaking events in order to enhance cooperation, peer-to-peer learning and create partnerships. Finally, the certification scheme was the third part of the TOURISME programme and dealt with the increased knowledge and roadmap establishment for the access to environmental certifications by SMEs.

During the monitoring phase, SMEs participating in the TOURISME experience were tracked. Following the results of the Report on the improvement in the uptake of sustainable solutions, growth and scaling up of tourism SMEs, the project managed to fully monitor and receive feedback to a dedicated survey from 48 SMEs out of the 65 beneficiary ones. The monitoring and evaluation covered three different fields of improvements:



Figure 5 below displays a comparative analysis of the different indicators the project collected through its monitoring phase (in function of the 48 monitored SMEs). We can see a quite remarkable improvement in the three above mentioned indicators among the project’s beneficiaries. However, these results also need to be accompanied with some clarifications. Namely, the expected difference between the two major target industries - hotels and other accommodation and travel agencies, tour operators and similar. While both industries expressed similar achievements with nearly negligible differences, the hotels and other accommodations were more active in certain domains, such as

energy saving, improved waste management, green procurement and sustainable policies. One could understand that water, waste and energy are attracting attention and solutions for more sustainable and thus cheaper solutions among hotels because their consumption and waste production are much more significant among hotels than tour operators and agencies. However, it was interesting to see a slight discrepancy in the interest for green procurement practices and sustainable policies between hotels and tour operators and agencies where these measures could be equally implemented.

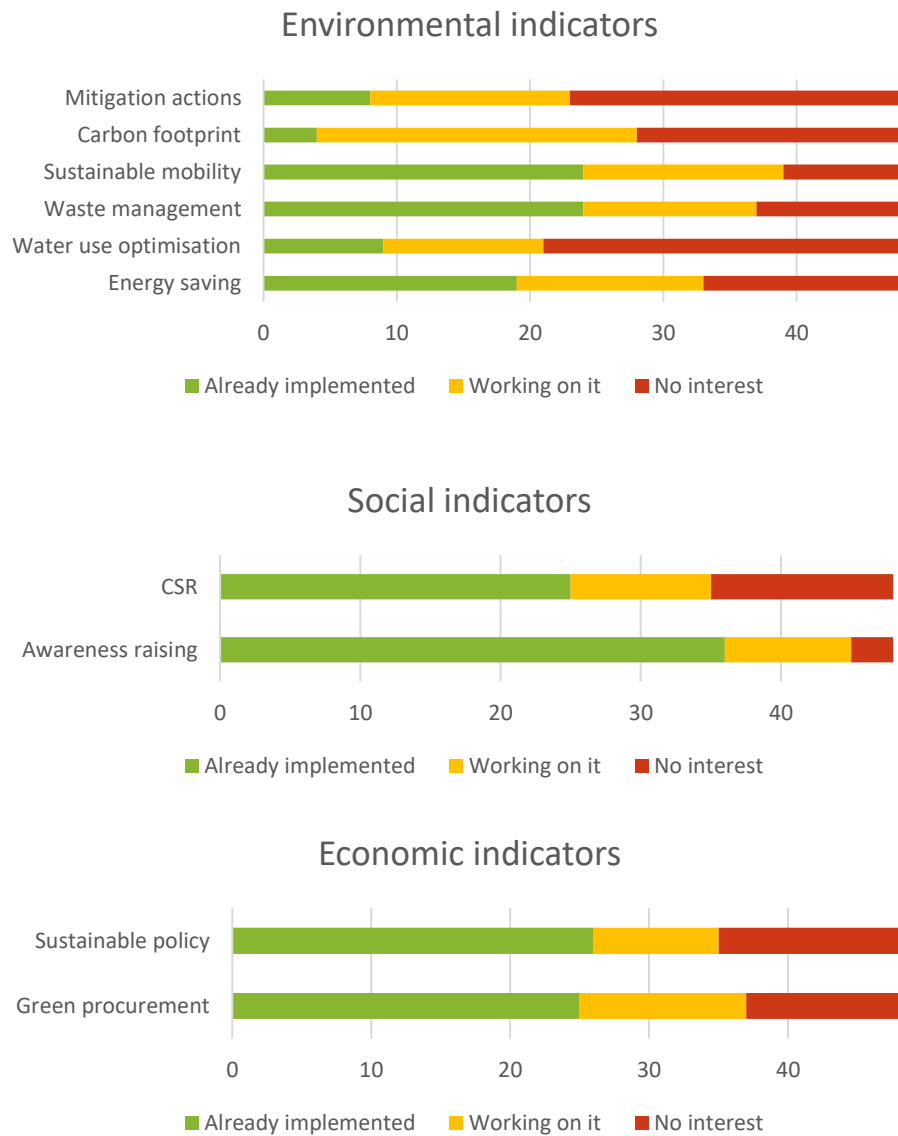


Figure 5. Comparative display of 48 beneficiary SMEs' achievements in three categories – environmental, social and economic improvements

Probably the most impressive achievements are reflected in what could be measured by acknowledgements and awards, as well as public display. While there were only 7 SMEs among the monitored ones who already had one of environmental certificates, the TOURISME project allowed this number to grow to 26!

The TOURISME project was there to help SMEs to understand the importance and benefits of environmental certification, convince them about their advantages for both sustainability and business purposes. The key conclusion and lesson learnt was that there is a strong interest among SMEs to become sustainable, and such a pathway is easier and faster to implement when supported by knowledge and when shared with others. Despite the high interest, the main challenge for tourism SMEs emerged from TOURISME is that they have limited resources to invest (time, staff); several of them have been busy to cater to pent-up demand after the COVID-19 period. Therefore, SMEs need and want to be accompanied step-by-step through coaching and training.

The certification phase and the activities performed as a part of the project, made the SMEs understand the importance of work with a method, to define, write and share protocols for action, to define goals and monitor process and impacts and the relevance of communication of sustainability both internally and externally.

Based on all the previous observations, final main achievements and conclusions on the use of support schemes for enhanced sustainability in SMEs are reported below.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

TOURISME succeeded in creating and combining **capacity building and networking actions**, which were **rich in content**, for a diverse group of SMEs.

The **group dynamics** were very remarkable, thanks to regular activities and ability to travel and attend events in person.

Significant **informal learning** occurred alongside the foreseen support schemes in form of peer-to-peer learning, synergies and partnerships.

The number of **good practices** collected, presented, discovered, and visited greatly contributed to the learning process.

The **mix of formats of project support schemes** (training, matchmaking, certification access) proved to be successful for improved sustainability awareness and practices among SMEs as it provided complementary insights and knowledge to SMEs.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS - SMEs

Sustainability has become a relevant aspect of the tourism sector, which should also be uptaken by the private sector including SMEs. SMEs shall seek to match their needs as private business-driven companies with the green transition we are currently going through.

Look for **external financing, training, and/or mentoring**, etc from local or national business support organisations or public authorities to guide the time- path for sustainability growth, which can be rather time-consuming and expensive for an SME alone.

Assess current practices and set up a progressive strategy for improvements in sustainable practices. Exploit the already existing knowledge e.g., the TOURISME compendium and interactive toolkit, as well as its training material.

Engage other colleagues and businesses going through the same path to share practices and knowledge.

Dedicate efforts to assess and implement **environmental certifications**, which can have a good impact on the business performance but also an effective tool to improve brand reputation.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS – BUSINESS SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Analyse local/regional/national context to create tailored support schemes adapted to real needs, interests, and expectations of tourism SMEs.

Adapt support schemes' content and complexity based on existing knowledge, type of business activity and level of experience of SMEs. Travel sector representatives (e.g., travel agencies and tour operators) have at times, different needs and requirements in terms of training compared to hotels and accommodations. Consider adapting a part of the planned support actions (or content) to their sector too.

Implement training coupled with practical case studies and peer learning & matchmaking opportunities. **Engage external SMEs and providers** to enrich the partnership and synergy making potential.

Implement specific actions to guide SMEs set up their **environmental certification** paths step-by-step, through joint training actions, ad hoc individual mentoring sessions with experts/certification provides, and analysis of successful good practices.

Allow beneficiary SMEs to continue their cooperation independently from the support scheme period and beyond its lifetime.



ANNEXES:

I: TOURISME survey

II: Call for SMEs infographic

III: Application form and benchmarking template

IV: Monitoring survey



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Dear Participant

Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in this survey that aims to understand your organizational perspective regarding sustainable tourism. The survey completion might take about 15 minutes.

This survey is being carried out under the framework of the European project [TOURISME](#) that aims to boost sustainable tourism development and capacity of tourism SMEs through transnational cooperation and knowledge transfer. This survey will help us in designing innovative solutions and schemes that could boost sustainable practices and circular business models among tourism SMEs.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this survey. Your responses will be strictly confidential and data from this survey will be reported only in the aggregate form. There is no good or bad response to any question in this survey. We request you to please respond to this survey to the best of your knowledge.

This survey will remain active until **15 February 2021**. For any information, please feel free to contact us at info@tourisme-project.eu

You can click 'NEXT' to begin this survey.

Survey Questionnaire

1.1. Your organization is located in:

- Cyprus France Italy Spain Other (please specify)

1.2. Your organization belongs to:

- Hotels and similar accommodation Tour operator activities
 Holiday and other short-stay accommodation Other reservation service and related activities
 Travel agency activities Other, not listed here (please specify)

1.3. Number of employees in your organization are approximately:

- 1 – 5 6 – 9 10 – 25 26 – 49 50 – 99 100 – 249
 More than 250



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1.4. Annual turnover of your organization is approximately:

- less than 1,000,000 Euro
- 1,000,000 – 2,000,000 Euro
- More than 2,000,000 Euro

1.5. Your organization is certified with:

- ISO 9001
- ISO 14001
- ISO 22000
- ISO 50001
- ISO 45001 / OHSAS 18001

- EMAS
- EU Ecolabel
- No Certification
- Other, not listed here (please specify)

1.6. Your designation in the organization is:

- Owner
- Manager
- Other (please specify)

2. Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I know the benefits of environmental certifications and/or ecolabeling schemes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the names of some environmental certifications/ecolabeling schemes related to the tourism and hospitality industry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the concept of sustainable tourism and/or circular economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The concept of sustainability has become more important for the tourism and hospitality industry after the coronavirus pandemic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization knows how to recover financial loss, increase profit, and sustain our business after the coronavirus pandemic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. How much is the demand (expectations of partners/suppliers/trade association) to adopt an environmental certification/ecolabeling scheme in your sector?

- Very Low
- Low
- Medium
- High
- Very High



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4. How much is the demand (expectations of guests/customers) for green products and services in your sector?

- Very Low
 Low
 Medium
 High
 Very High

5. Has your organization been considering or adopting any of the following environmental certifications/ecolabeling schemes?

	We did not know this certification / scheme	We know this certification / scheme, but not considering it	We are considering the adoption of this certification / scheme	We are engaging the adoption of this certification / scheme	We have successfully adopted this certification / scheme
Green Globe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Green Key	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EU Ecolabel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Travelife	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Biosphere Tourism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EarthCheck	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nordic Swan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blue Angel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EMAS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ISO 14001	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NF Environnement ¹	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ECORISMO ²	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Legambiente Turismo ³	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
BIO HOTELS d'Italia ⁴	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

¹ For France, only given in <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TOURISME-FR>

² Idem

³ For Italy, only given in <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TOURISME-IT>

⁴ Idem



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AENOR Medio Ambiente / AENOR Residuo Cero ⁵	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HES - Hoteles Eficientes Sostenibles ⁶	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other environmental certification / ecolabeling scheme (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="text"/>					

6. Has your organization been considering or implementing the following practices?

	We are not doing, nor considering doing so	We are not doing, but considering doing so	We are planning resources to do so	We have been initiating implementation	We have successfully implemented it
Reducing energy consumption	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing water consumption	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing plastic use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing food waste	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reusing water and/or wastewater	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reusing furniture, small appliances, and amenities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recycling waste	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using materials made of recycled products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using renewable energy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promoting sustainable mobility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training to staff on sustainability issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="text"/>					

⁵ For Spain, only given in <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TOURISME-ES>

⁶ Idem



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7. Please rate why did your organization decide to adopt sustainable tourism (or circular economy) practices?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
To demonstrate to the public the legal compliance of our organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To improve relations with the local community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To improve relations with suppliers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To satisfy a request from trade associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To satisfy a request from guests or customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To improve the environmental performance of our organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To improve the public reputation of our organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To improve the quality of our services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To keep up with the main competitors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To increase our employee satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To have a uniform standard that is nationally or internationally recognized	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To have better management of environmental impacts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To gain financial benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To reduce operational costs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="text"/>					

8. Please rate the degree to which your organization agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Circular economy is beneficial for the whole society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Circular economy is financially rewarding for our business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



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Circular economy adoption would give our organization moral satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We will suffer serious natural disasters if the concept of sustainable tourism and/or circular economy is not adopted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is the responsibility of our organization to contribute to the objectives of sustainable tourism and/or circular economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most people inside our organization think that our organization should adopt some best practices of circular economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of our guests/customers/stakeholders think that our organization should adopt some best practices of circular economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Many organizations similar to our organization are adopting the concept of circular economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our neighboring organizations are adopting the concept of circular economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization knows some best practices of circular economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization knows how circular economy might be implemented in our business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Whether or not our organization adopt some best practices of circular economy is completely within our control	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization intends to reduce the environmental impacts associated with our business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization is willing to put efforts to implement some best practices of circular economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization is willing to support national and international efforts for sustainable tourism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Please rate whether you agree or disagree that the following factors cause hindrance for your organization in the adoption of sustainable tourism (or circular economy) practices?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Lack of funds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of skilled-personnel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of an environmental expert	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of space in the facility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of information about potential partners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



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Other (please specify)

10. Please evaluate the improvement level of the following in your organization due to the adoption of sustainable tourism (or circular economy) practices:

	Not at All	A Little Bit	To Some Degree	Relatively Significant	Significant	Don't Know
Reduced some environmental impacts associated with our business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increased annual turnover	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increased profit growth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved quality of our services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved our organization's reputation towards customers and suppliers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved our organization's reputation towards government authorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved our organization's relationship with stakeholders or trade associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increased level of satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty of our employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following general statements regarding your organization:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our organization quickly recognizes shifts in our market (e.g., competition, regulation, demography)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization can better understand customer needs compared to other organizations in our sector	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization can quickly introduce new offers or innovative services to keep up with our competitors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization is able to effectively deploy resources to experiment with new ideas or to develop new services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization effectively collaborate with partners, suppliers, and trade associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization observes the best practices in our sector	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization absorbs new knowledge to enhance the performance of our organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



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- | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Our organization adopts new technologies where possible | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Our organization adopts new management practices where possible | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Our organization has the capacity to assimilate innovations that are useful for our business | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Our employees regularly attend training courses | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Our employees are able to apply new knowledge in their practical work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

12. Please indicate whether or not your organization would like to adopt the following specific actions (or best practices)?

- | | No | Yes | We already
have adopted it |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Formulation of a sustainability policy | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Installation of centralized or automatic lighting control system | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Installation of energy-efficient lighting equipment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Installation of motion sensor light switches | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Installation of solar water heating system | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Installation of smart thermostats | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Installation of energy-efficient kitchen | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Improving building envelop | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Installation of double-glazed windows | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Installation of in-house filtered water bottling system and reuse of glass bottles | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Installation of water-efficient fittings (e.g. low-flow taps, showers, toilets, etc.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Collection and use of rainwater in irrigation/toilet/laundry | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Optimization of laundry operations | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Installation of electric car charging station near or within our facility | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Purchase of energy-efficient appliances (e.g. refrigerators, air conditioners, laundry machines, etc.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



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- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Purchase of food and/or other products considering green procurement criteria | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Providing breakfast (or other meals) comprised of locally produced organic ingredients | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Donating excess food to others and/or guests are welcome to take home their leftover food | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Renting bicycles or electric bikes to our guests/customers | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Encouraging our guests/customers to explore the attractions by public transport, bicycle or on foot | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Providing sustainable tour packages to our customers | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

13. **Would you like to receive the results of this survey? If yes, please write your email address here (optional):**

Thank you for completing this survey!!!

Are you interested in receiving updates and news, invitations to events, and other communications from the TOURISME project? Subscribe to our newsletter through our website www.tourisme-project.eu

TAKE BACK YOUR MARKET

WITH SUSTAINABLE

TOURISME

What do we offer?



Trainings, matchmaking events and capacity building activities to put in place new practices in your business



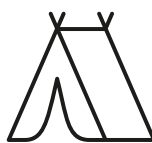
Up to €7,000 (€4,000 in Cyprus) depending on your objectives

Who can participate?

Small and Medium Enterprise from one the following categories:



Hotels



Short-stay accommodation



Travel agencies
Tour operators

located in:



How to participate?



Follow the link [https://TourisME.eu/...](https://TourisME.eu/) and fill out the application form by **15/08/2021** at **17:00 CET**



An Evaluation Committee will select a minimum of 62 SMEs by **mid-September 2021**



If selected, you will participate in the programme's activities during one year from **November 2021**

Application form template

Note: This annex contains only the structure of the application form but not the form itself, which is to be filled out electronically by following the indications detailed in paragraph 2.4.

SECTION 1. General Information

Field Name	Field Value	Field Type
Name of your organization		Text
VAT identification number of your organisation		Text
Location of your organisation	Cyprus France Italy Spain	Single choice list
Address		Text
Post code		Text
City		Text
Contact person Gender	Madam Mr.	Single choice list
Contact person First Name		Text
Contact person Family Name		Text
Contact person Email address		Text
Contact person Telephone number		Text
Contact person Position	Owner Manager Other	Single choice list

Please specify if your company will participate in Activity 3 in addition to Activities 1 and 2 (both are mandatory)

Field Name	Field Value	Field Type
Participation in activity 3: Access to environmental certifications	Yes No	Single choice list

SECTION 2. SME's eligibility and economic data

Field Name	Field Value	Field Type
Type of activity	Hotels and similar accommodation (NACE 55.10) Holiday and other short-stay accommodation (NACE 55.20) Travel agency and tour operator activities (NACE 79.1) Other reservation service and related activities (NACE 79.9)	Single choice list
Number of employees in your organization	<10 from 10 to 50 from 51 to 250 >250	Single choice list
Annual turnover of your organisation 2019 (prior to COVID-19 pandemic)	<2 M€ from 2 to 10 M€ from 10 to 50 M€ >50 M€	Single choice list
Evolution of turnover from 2018 to 2019	turnover has increased more than 5% turnover was stable (+/- 5%) turnover has decreased (between - 6% and - 30%) turnover has decreased (below -30%)	Single choice list

SECTION 3. Environmental commitment

Certification or ecolabeling of your organization		
<i>All eligible SMEs</i>		
Field Name	Field Value	Field Type
ISO 9001	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
ISO 14001	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
ISO 22000	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
ISO 50001	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
ISO 45001/OHSAS 18001	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
EMAS	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
EU Ecolabel	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
Green Globe	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
Green Key	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
Nordic Swan	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
Blue Angel	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
NF Environment	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
ECORISMO	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
Legambiente Turismo	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
BIO HOTELS d'Italia	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
AENOR Medio Ambiente / AENOR Residuo Cero	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
HES - Hoteles Eficientes Sostenibles	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list
Other (please specify)	Not adopted Successfully adopted	Single choice list

Sustainable practices implemented		
<i>Hotels and similar accommodation (NACE I5510) & Holiday and other short-stay accommodation (NACE I5520)</i>		
Field Name	Field Value	Field Type
Formulation of a sustainable policy or management plan	Yes No	Single choice list
Assessment of your organisation's carbon footprint	Yes No	Single choice list

Reducing energy consumption	Yes No	Single choice list
Using renewable energy	Yes No	Single choice list
Monitoring energy consumption	Yes No	Single choice list
Reducing water consumption	Yes No	Single choice list
Monitoring water consumption	Yes No	Single choice list
Reusing water and/or wastewater	Yes No	Single choice list
Reducing plastic use	Yes No	Single choice list
Reducing food waste	Yes No	Single choice list
Recycling waste	Yes No	Single choice list
Reusing furniture, small appliances, and amenities	Yes No	Single choice list
Using materials made of recycled products	Yes No	Single choice list
Monitoring waste production	Yes No	Single choice list
Promoting sustainable mobility	Yes No	Single choice list
Training to staff on sustainability issues	Yes No	Single choice list

Sustainable practices implemented		
<i>Travel agencies, tour operator reservation service and related activities (NACE N79)</i>		
Field Name	Field Value	Field Type
Formulation of a sustainable policy or management plan	Yes No	Single choice list
Have you ever assessed the carbon footprint of your activities?	Yes No	Single choice list
Implementing a carbon offset system	Yes No	Single choice list
Contract with or choose only green accommodations	Yes No	Single choice list
Promoting sustainable mobility	Yes No	Single choice list
Training to staff on sustainability issues	Yes No	Single choice list

SECTION 4. Environmental relevance

The objectives that you agree to set in your company in the framework of TouriSME and the implementation of their related practices.

Ambitions <i>All eligible SMEs</i>		
Field Name	Field Value	Field Type
Could you describe briefly how do you envisage sustainable tourism in your organisation? What is your vision?	(200 words max)	Text
Could you describe the means you will plan to engage or deepen sustainable tourism policy in your organisation (human resources, equipment, financial grant)?	(200 words max)	Text

Objectives <i>Hotels and similar accommodation (NACE I55.10) & Holiday and other short-stay accommodation (NACE I55.20)</i>		
Field Name	Field Value	Field Type
Awareness and behavioural change		
Raising awareness to visitors	yes no	Single choice list
Raising awareness to employees	yes no	Single choice list
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)		
Knowing its carbon footprint	yes no	Single choice list
Implementing a carbon offset system	yes no	Single choice list
Promoting social engagement	yes no	Single choice list
Promoting eco-friendly activities	yes no	Single choice list
Energy conservation		
Knowing its energy consumption	yes no	Single choice list
Modifying lighting equipment	yes no	Single choice list
Upgrading of household equipment's and optimizing their uses	yes no	Single choice list
Optimizing heating and ventilation management system	yes no	Single choice list

Diversifying its energy sources	yes no	Single choice list
Saving energy in building construction	yes no	Single choice list
Green procurement		
Changing cleaning products, using ecological labels	yes no	Single choice list
Developing short circuits and responsible consumption	yes no	Single choice list
Promoting reuse and products made of recycled materials	yes no	Single choice list
Purchasing efficient household equipment	yes no	Single choice list
Sustainable mobility		
Promote eco-mobility	yes no	Single choice list
Waste management		
Knowing its waste volume	yes no	Single choice list
Preventing waste production	yes no	Single choice list
Improving waste sorting	yes no	Single choice list
Fighting against food waste	yes no	Single choice list
Promote recycling and reuse	yes no	Single choice list
Water conservation		
Knowing its water consumption	yes no	Single choice list
Reducing its consumption	yes no	Single choice list
Recycling and using greywater	yes no	Single choice list
Diversifying its water supply	yes no	Single choice list
Optimizing pool maintenance	yes no	Single choice list
Certification		
Sensitize my company to EU Ecolabel, GREEN KEY certification, etc.	yes no	Single choice list

Objectives

Travel agencies, tour operator reservation service and related activities (NACE N79)

Field Name	Field Value	Field Type
Awareness and behavioural change		
Raising awareness to visitors	yes no	Single choice list
Raising awareness to employees	yes no	Single choice list
Developing sustainable tours		
Promote eco-mobility	yes no	Single choice list
Promoting eco-friendly activities	yes no	Single choice list

SECTION 5. Variety aspects

Information entered in this section should be as accurate as possible, but not necessarily exact.

Location <i>All eligible SMEs</i>		
Field Name	Field Value	Field Type
Main landscape surrounding your location	Urban Countryside Mountainous Seaside	Single choice list

Services, premises and equipment <i>Hotels and similar accommodation (NACE I55.10) & Holiday and other short-stay accommodation (NACE I55.20)</i>		
Field Name	Field Value	Field Type
Accommodation capacity (people)		Number
Number of rooms		Number
Number of accommodation buildings		Number
Number of floors (in average, if more than one accommodation building)		Number
Number of elevators	0 1 2 3 >3	Single choice list
Number of parking spaces for customers	no parking 1-10 spaces 11-50 spaces >50 spaces	Single choice list
Presence of a garden and its area	no garden 1-50 sq meters 51-250 sq meters >250 sq meters	Single choice list
Presence of a swimming pool	Yes No	Single choice list
Bathroom equipped with a bathtub	Yes No Partially (not all rooms are equipped)	Single choice list
Bedrooms equipped with a fridge	Yes No Partially (not all rooms are equipped)	Single choice list
Bedrooms are air conditioned	Yes No Partially (not all rooms are air conditioned)	Single choice list

Destination & type of transport offered <i>Travel agencies, tour operator reservation service and related activities (NACE N79)</i>		
Field Name	Field Value	Field Type
Number of clients in 2019		Number
Total number of travel packages sold in 2019		Number
Part of travels using short-haul flight	0-100	%
Part of travels using medium-haul flight	0-100	%
Part of travels using long-haul flight	0-100	%
Part of travels using train/bus travel	0-100	%
Part of travels using other motorised means (car, motorbike...)	0-100	%
Part of travels using other non-motorised means (bicycle, on foot...)	0-100	%
Part of destinations limited to your region	0-100	%
Part of destinations limited to your country excluding your region	0-100	%
Part of destinations in Europe excluding your country	0-100	%
Part of destinations out of Europe	0-100	%



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ANNEX IV: Monitoring system questionnaire

Impact category	N°	KPI - Question	Metric
Environment	1	Have you implemented a monitoring system of your organisation's energy consumption in the last two years?	1 -Strongly implemented 2- Implemented 3- Stable 4- Poorly implemented 5-Not implemented
Environment	2	Have you implemented practices directly related to energy conservation in your organisation in the last two year?	1 -Strongly implemented 2- Implemented 3- Stable 4- Poorly implemented 5-Not implemented
Environment	3	Energy conservation practices	1- Number of energy conservation practices implemented/year 2- Total solar panels installed 3- Number of smart thermostats/Total thermostats 4-Number of energy efficient lights (e.g.CFL, LED)/Total lights
Environment	4	Have you implemented a monitoring system of your organisation's water consumption in the last two years?	1 -Strongly implemented 2- Implemented 3- Stable 4- Poorly implemented 5-Not implemented
Environment	5	Have you implemented practices directly related to water conservation in your organisation in the last two year?	1 -Strongly implemented 2- Implemented 3- Stable 4- Poorly implemented 5-Not implemented

Environment	6	Water recycling practices	Number of water recycling practices implemented/ year
Environment	7	Water conservation practices	1- Number of water conservation practices implemented/year 2- Number of native plants selected for gardens/ Total plants 3- Number of water consumption monitoring sensors installed /year
Environment	8	Have you implemented waste monitoring system in your organisation in the last two years?	1 -Strongly implemented 2- Implemented 3- Stable 4- Poorly implemented 5-Not implemented
Environment	9	Have you implemented waste recycling practices in your organisation in the last two years?	1 -Strongly implemented 2- Implemented 3- Stable 4- Poorly implemented 5-Not implemented
Environment	10	Waste recycling practices	1- Number of waste recycling practices implemented/year 2- Total number of waste fractions collected separately
Environment	11	Reducing food waste	Number of food donations/year
Social	12	Have you implemented staff training on sustainability issues in your organisation in the last two years?	1 -Strongly implemented 2- Implemented 3- Stable 4- Poorly implemented 5-Not implemented

Social	13	Training staff on sustainability topics	Number of training hours per employee related to sustainability topics / Total of training hours
Social	14	Have you implemented awareness-raising practices on sustainability issues in your organisation in the last two years?	1 -Strongly implemented 2- Implemented 3- Stable 4- Poorly implemented 5-Not implemented
Social	15	Raising awareness on sustainability issues	Number of sustainability-related information and education campaigns for visitors or employees/ Year
Economic	16	Have you implemented green procurement practices in your organisation in the last two years?	1 -Strongly implemented 2- Implemented 3- Stable 4- Poorly implemented 5-Not implemented
Social	17	Community engagement	Number of local suppliers /Total suppliers
Environment	18	Green procurement - Suppliers	Number of suppliers selected according to environmental criteria/Total suppliers
Economic	19	Green procurement	Number of purchases made according to environmental criteria/Year

Economic	20	Green procurement - technological solutions to improve consumption efficiency	Investment in technological solutions to improve consumption efficiency € /year
Environment, Social, Economic	21	Have you implemented a sustainable policy or management in your organisation in the last two years?	1 -Strongly implemented 2- Implemented 3- Stable 4- Poorly implemented 5-Not implemented
Environment	22	Have you implemented eco-mobility initiatives in the last two years?	1 -Strongly implemented 2- Implemented 3- Stable 4- Poorly implemented 5-Not implemented
Environment	23	Have you implemented a carbon footprint assessment of your organisation in the last two years?	1 -Strongly implemented 2- Implemented 3- Stable 4- Poorly implemented 5-Not implemented
Environment	24	Have you adopted any certifications or ecolabels in your organization in the last two years? (please specify)	1- Yes 2- No

	25	If yes, please specify the type of certification or ecolab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-ISO 9001 2-ISO 14001 3-ISO 22000 4-ISO 50001 5-ISO 45001/OHSAS 18001 6-EMAS 7-EU Ecolabel 8-Green Globe 9-Green Key 10-Nordic Swan 11-Blue Angel 12-NF Environment 13-ECORISMO 14-Legambiente Turismo 15-BIO HOTELS d'Italia 16-AENOR Medio Ambiente/AENOR Residuo Cero 17-HES - Hoteles Eficientes Sostenibles
<p>Environment, Social, Economic</p>	26	<p>Could you briefly describe how you envisage sustainable tourism in your organisation? How has your vision changed in the last two years?</p>	

