

UPREST

**UP- & REskilling Sustainable
Tourism in a new digital era**

GUIDELINES FOR CONTINUING FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



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Introduction

In the evolving landscape of global tourism, sustainability has emerged as a critical imperative, demanding innovative approaches and robust strategies to ensure long-term viability and resilience.

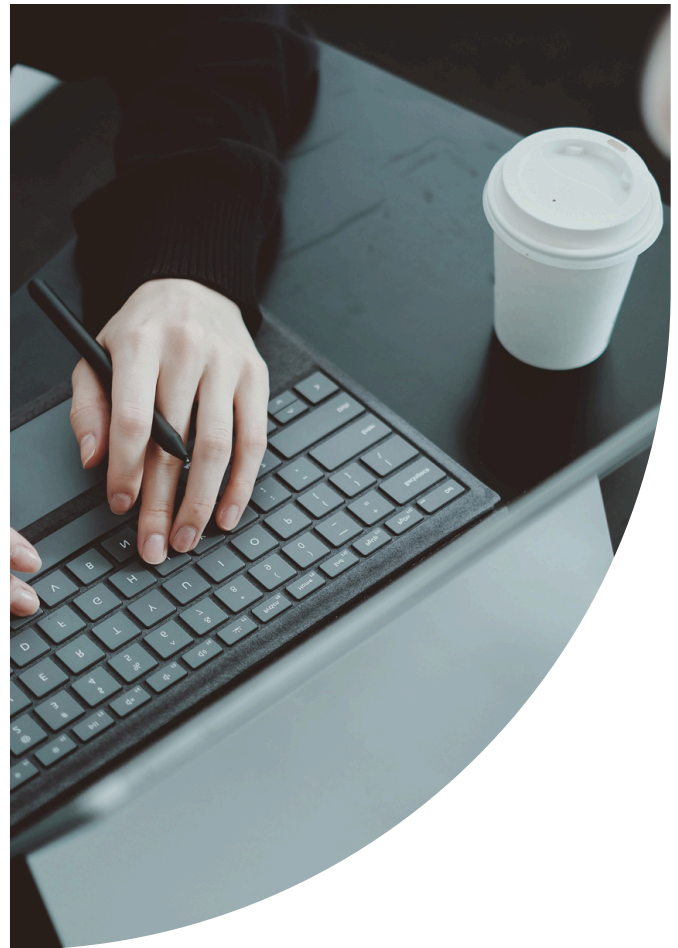
The UPREST project—UP- & REskilling Sustainable Tourism in a New Digital Era—recognises the profound impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector and has developed comprehensive "Guidelines for Continuing Follow-Up Activities on Sustainable Tourism." These guidelines are designed to support local authorities, coordinating organisations, and other key stakeholders in fostering sustainable tourism practices through digitalisation that are both innovative and practical.

The tourism industry has historically been a significant economic driver, contributing substantially to GDP and employment in many regions. However, the sector's rapid growth has often come at a cost, leading to environmental degradation, cultural displacement, and socio-economic imbalances. The pandemic has provided a unique opportunity to reassess and reimagine tourism, emphasising the need for sustainability, resilience, and digital transformation. The UPREST project aims to address these challenges by providing a structured approach to upskilling and reskilling, ensuring that tourism professionals are equipped to meet the demands of a post-pandemic world.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The UPREST project was conceived in response to the urgent need for sustainable practices in the tourism sector, especially in the wake of the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project is a collaborative effort involving multiple partners across Europe, each bringing unique insights and expertise to the table. The overarching goal is to enhance the digital and sustainable competencies of tourism actors, ensuring that they are well-equipped to meet the demands of a post-pandemic world.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating effects on the European tourism sector, it is vital that appropriate policies and measures are implemented at the local level across Europe. These measures aim to ensure that the new, post-pandemic tourism industry becomes competitive and relevant to the needs and expectations of future visitors. Both digital experiences and sustainability have become key issues for many tourists when deciding which cities and countries to visit. Recognising this shift, the UPREST project believes that these two areas hold great potential for development within local ecosystems. To take advantage of this potential, it is necessary for local officials, together with tourist organisations and professionals in the tourism sector, to engage in continuous education and training. Upskilling and reskilling through innovative and ongoing training programmes are essential for equipping stakeholders with the knowledge and tools needed to implement sustainable and digital tourism practices effectively.



A crucial component of this strategy is the focus on Continuing Follow-Up Activities on Sustainable Tourism. This ongoing engagement ensures that the skills and practices learned are continuously reinforced, updated, and adapted to the evolving needs of the tourism sector.

RATIONALE FOR THE GUIDELINES

Tourism is a multifaceted industry that intersects with various sectors, including hospitality, transportation, cultural heritage, and environmental conservation. As such, the transition to sustainable tourism requires a holistic approach that integrates environmental, economic, and social dimensions. The UPREST guidelines aim to facilitate this transition by providing practical strategies and tools that can be adapted to different local contexts.

The rationale for these guidelines stems from the recognition that sustainable tourism is not merely a trend but a necessity. The increasing awareness of climate change, environmental degradation, and cultural preservation demands that tourism stakeholders adopt more sustainable practices. Moreover, the digital revolution presents both challenges and opportunities for the tourism sector. While digital technologies can enhance operational efficiency and customer engagement, they also require new skills and competencies. The UPREST guidelines address these dual challenges by focusing on upskilling, reskilling, and sustainable practices. The emphasis on continuing follow-up activities ensures that the initial training and upskilling efforts lead to sustained improvements and adaptability in the long run.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of these guidelines is to enhance the digital and sustainable competencies of actors within the tourism sector, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This focus is crucial for ensuring that the tourism industry remains competitive and relevant, meeting the needs and expectations of contemporary tourists who prioritise sustainability and digital engagement. Specifically, these guidelines aim to:

- Enhance collaboration dynamics among municipalities and tourism actors.
- Guide upskilling and reskilling strategies within the sustainable tourism sector.
- Showcase successful examples of sustainable tourism ecosystems resulting from effective upskilling processes.
- Ensure ongoing engagement and adaptation through continuing follow-up activities.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The guidelines are tailored for a diverse audience involved in the tourism sector, ensuring that the strategies and practices recommended are relevant and applicable to various stakeholders. The target groups of this project include:

1. **Civil Servants of Local Authorities:** These include professionals working in tourism, local development, and other relevant departments. They play a crucial role in implementing policies and coordinating efforts to promote sustainable tourism practices.
2. **Organizations within the Local Ecosystem:** This encompasses SMEs in the tourism industry, tourist boards, business associations, local groups, and other entities that are integral to the local tourism ecosystem. Their active participation and collaboration are vital for achieving sustainable tourism goals.
3. **C-VET Providers:** These are organizations offering continuing vocational education and training for professionals. They are essential for delivering the training and upskilling programmes needed to enhance the competencies of those involved in sustainable tourism.

MAPPING OF THE ECOSYSTEM

Understanding the local tourism ecosystem is crucial for implementing effective upskilling and reskilling strategies. This involves:

1 IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS

Mapping out key actors is the first step towards creating a cohesive and collaborative ecosystem. This involves identifying businesses, educational institutions, and government bodies involved in tourism. These stakeholders are instrumental in driving sustainable tourism initiatives. Local authorities, tourist boards, business associations, SMEs, and civil society organisations form the core of the local tourism ecosystem. Their roles and contributions are key in shaping the direction and success of sustainable tourism efforts at the local level.

3 ANALYSING INTERACTIONS

Understanding how different stakeholders interact and collaborate within the ecosystem is essential for promoting sustainable tourism. This includes examining existing collaboration dynamics and identifying areas for improvement. The UPREST project emphasises the importance of creating platforms for regular interaction and knowledge exchange among stakeholders. The way in which this interaction occurs can vary according to the type of actors involved but the evidence emerged from the UPREST project suggests that a blend of online and in presence interaction is the most effective solution to make best use of the time actors of the local ecosystem can dedicate to these C-VET activities. Effective collaboration can lead to the development of innovative solutions and the sharing of best practices in sustainable tourism.

MAPPING THE ECOSYSTEM

2 ASSESSING EXISTING SKILLS AND GAPS

A thorough assessment of the existing skills within the tourism sector is necessary to identify gaps and areas that require development. The UPREST project's initial findings revealed significant gaps in digital knowledge and skills among tourism professionals. This assessment helps in tailoring training programmes that address these specific gaps. For instance, in the framework of UPREST it has emerged that many SMEs and local tourism organisations lack expertise in digital marketing, data analytics, and sustainable practices, which are crucial elements for modern tourism operations.

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

In the field of sustainable tourism, the consortium is characterised by the common need to implement and develop new ways of promoting innovation in the local tourism sector through the use of new formats and technologies. At present, these new formats are not widely spread in the partner countries. This is due to the fact that locally, both the professionals at work in the local ecosystem (mainly private actors) and the civil servants operating in the tourism sector lack adequate skills and knowledge to meet the challenges of a post-pandemic context and relaunch the sector after two years of profound crisis.

»» LACK OF DETAILED UNDERSTANDING

The partners have realised that there is a lack of detailed understanding about the main knowledge and skills-related gaps that need to be addressed at the local level. Identifying these gaps is crucial for designing effective training programs that can enhance the competencies of tourism professionals and civil servants. Detailed surveys and consultations with stakeholders can help in gathering the necessary data to identify these gaps and develop targeted interventions.

»» NEED FOR INNOVATIVE FORMATS AND TECHNOLOGIES

There is a pressing need to introduce and implement innovative formats and technologies in the local tourism sector. This includes the use of digital tools for marketing, data analytics for decision-making, and sustainable practices for

operations. The adoption of these innovations requires training programmes that are tailored to the specific needs of the local ecosystem.

TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The training activities are designed to foster digital skills and sustainable tourism practices among the target groups. These activities are structured into three main modules:

Module 1 Fundamentals of sustainable tourism

This module introduces the key principles of sustainable tourism and their application in the real world. It is divided into three parts:

1. **Introduction to Sustainable Tourism:** This part covers the definition and principles of sustainable tourism, emphasising the triple bottom line of economic viability, social equity, and environmental protection.
2. **Global and Local Impact:** Participants will explore case studies of successful sustainable tourism initiatives and understand the negative impacts of tourism and how sustainability can mitigate these effects.
3. **Role of Policy and Regulation:** This section provides an overview of international and national policies promoting sustainable tourism and discusses the role of certifications and standards in sustainable tourism practices.

Module 2 Digital Innovations in Tourism

This module explores how digital technologies like VR, AR, and AI are transforming the tourism industry and enhancing sustainable practices. It includes:

1. **Introduction to Digital Technologies:** An overview of VR, AR, and AI and their applications in tourism, highlighting the benefits of digital technologies in creating immersive and sustainable tourism experiences.
2. **Virtual and Augmented Reality in Sustainable Tourism:** Case studies on VR and AR applications for virtual tours, conservation education, and heritage preservation, along with a practical session where participants experience a VR/AR application.
3. **Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Management:** Using AI for customer service, personalized experiences, and operational efficiency, as well as its role in data analysis for sustainable decision-making and reducing carbon footprint.
4. **Group Activity and Discussion:** Participants will brainstorm innovative applications of digital technologies in their organizations, fostering collaborative learning and practical application.

Module 3 Implementing Technology-Driven Sustainable Tourism

This module provides participants with the tools and strategies to implement sustainable and digital innovations in their tourism practices. It covers:

1. **Strategic Planning for Sustainable Digital Adoption:** Frameworks for integrating VR, AR, and AI into tourism business models, assessing organizational readiness for digital transformation.
2. **Sustainability and Technology Ethics:** Ensuring digital inclusivity and accessibility in tourism experiences.
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Setting measurable goals for sustainability and technological implementation, using SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) objectives.

4. **Workshop:** Developing an Action Plan: Participants work in groups to develop an action plan for integrating sustainable practices and digital technologies in their settings.

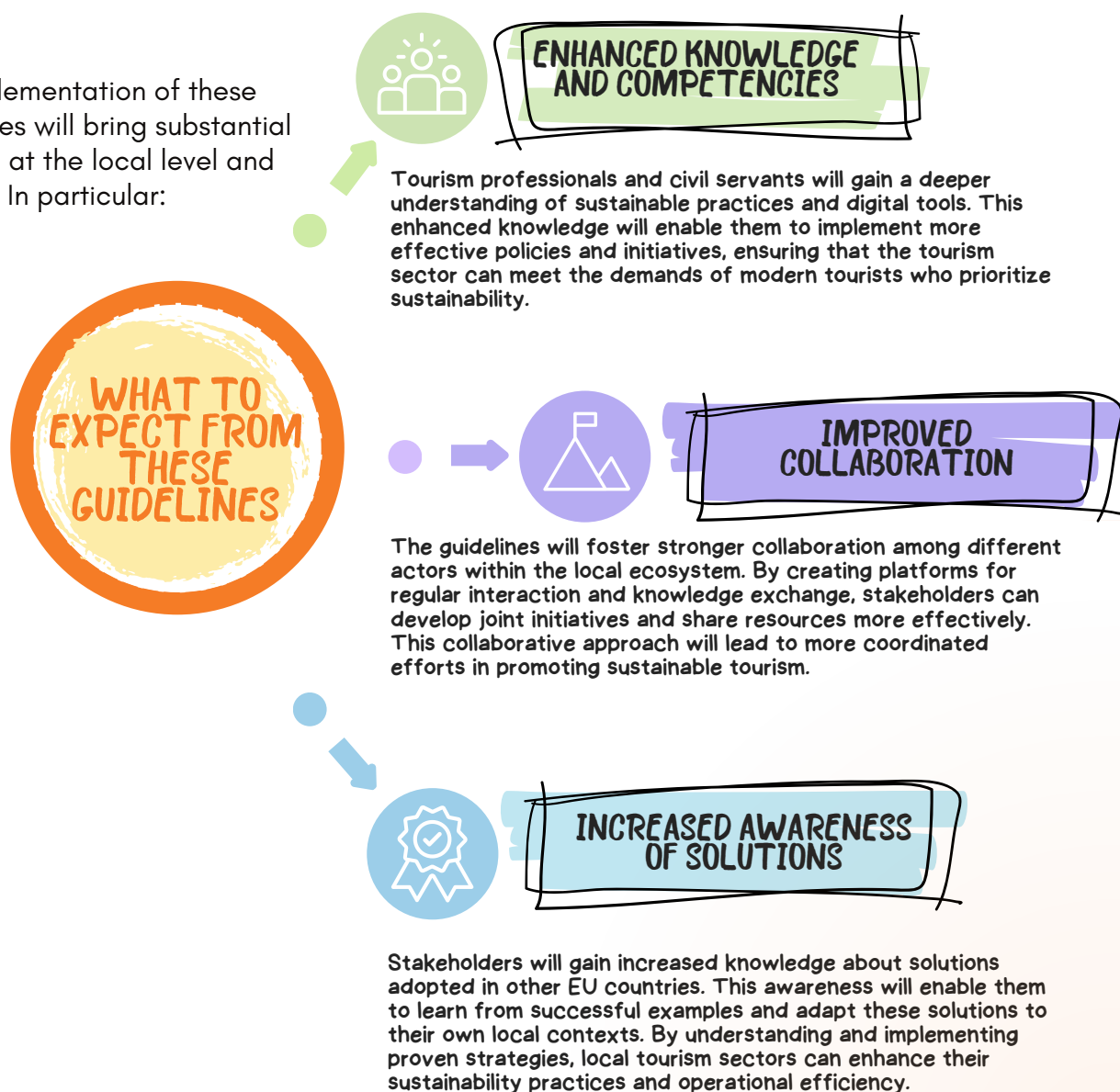
IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED IMPACT

The implementation of these guidelines constitutes the first step in a long-term process aimed at making a locally shared approach to sustainable tourism more resilient and oriented towards commonly defined objectives. By following these guidelines, local authorities, policy coordinators, and tourism actors can collaboratively build a more sustainable and competitive tourism sector.

LONG-TERM VISION

The long-term vision of these guidelines is to create a resilient and sustainable tourism sector that can adapt to changing circumstances and meet the evolving needs of tourists. This vision involves continuous upskilling of tourism professionals, fostering innovation, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders. The guidelines aim to create an ecosystem where sustainable tourism practices are the norm and where digital tools are effectively used to enhance operations and visitor experiences.

The implementation of these guidelines will bring substantial benefits at the local level and beyond. In particular:



The 5W1H Approach

For the users of the training modules, it is essential to follow up on the training performed, monitor its effect, and gain feedback from the target groups. Follow-up activities should be planned in advance before the training session starts to ensure a more substantial impact at local level.

A simple reminder for this is the 5W1H Approach, a questioning approach and a problem-solving method that answers all the basic elements within a problem which are what, who, when, where, why, and how. It aims to view ideas from various perspectives and gain an in-depth understanding of a specific situation.

Essentially, this type of tool allows you to define:

- » **WHAT** : What should be measured?
- » **WHO**: Who are your target group? To whom will you communicate? Which members of your team will participate in the training?
- » **WHERE**: Where will you obtain the information you need?
- » **WHEN**: What is your schedule for the follow-up?
- » **HOW**: What are the tools of the follow-up? (web, survey, Mentimeter, interview, questionnaire, etc)?
- » **WHY**: What are the benefits of the follow-up? What is the objective of this follow-up?

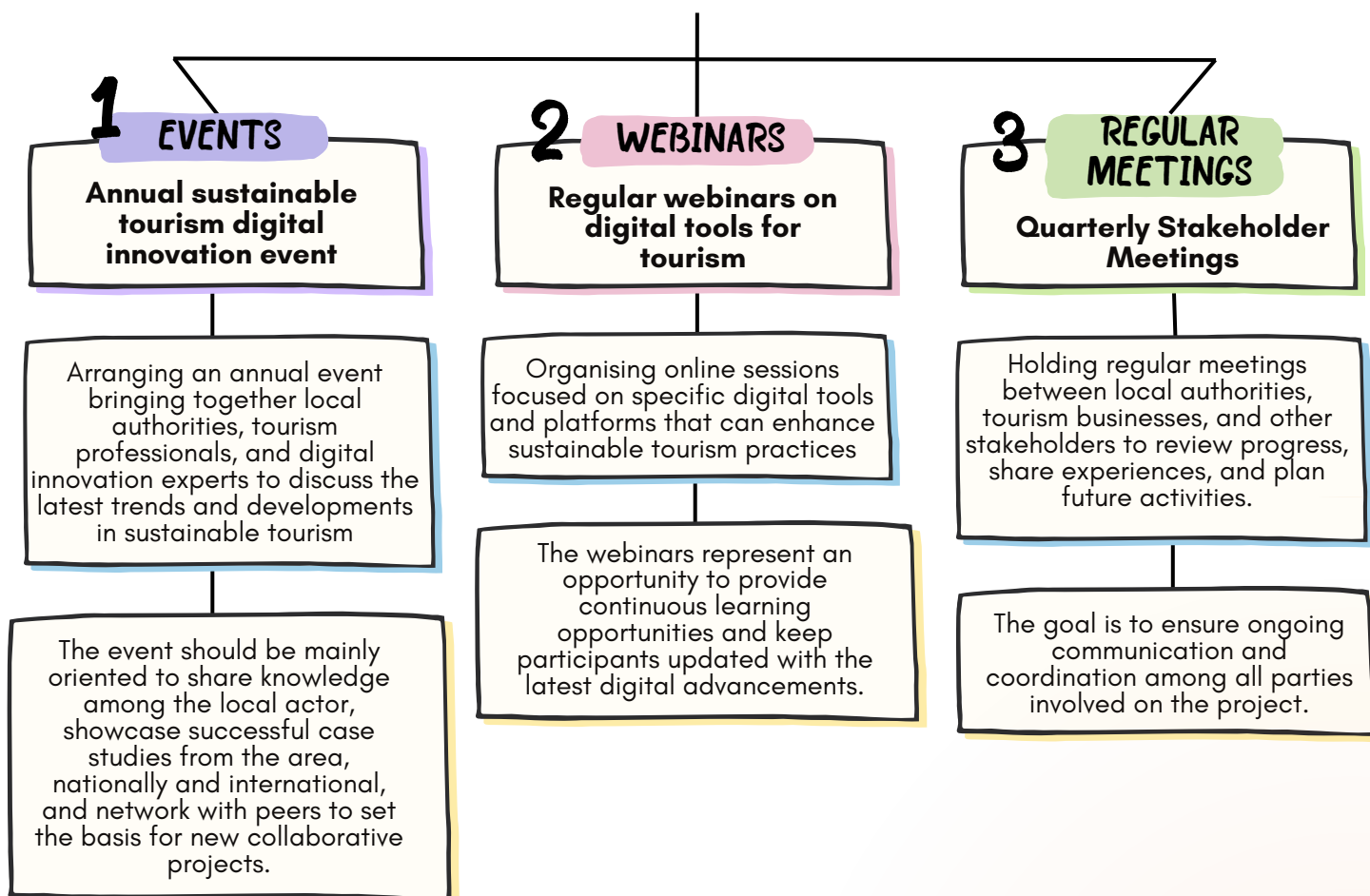


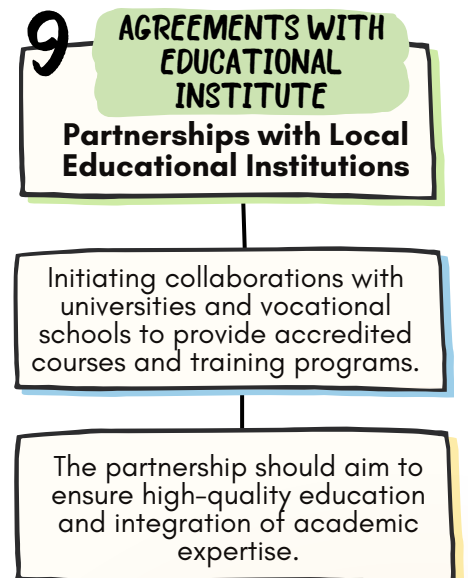
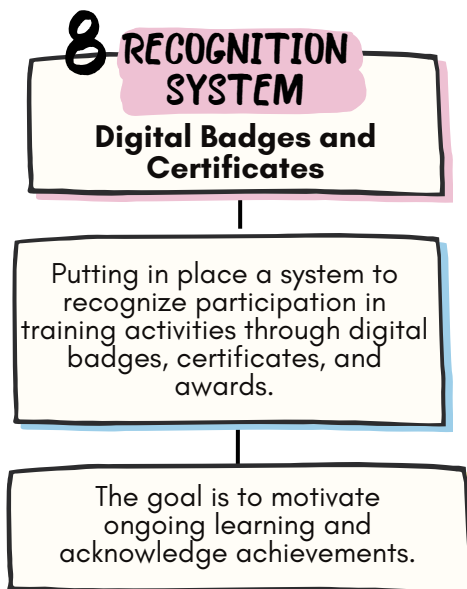
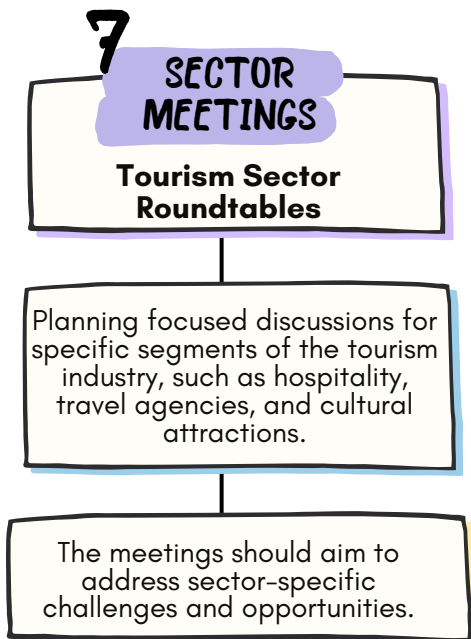
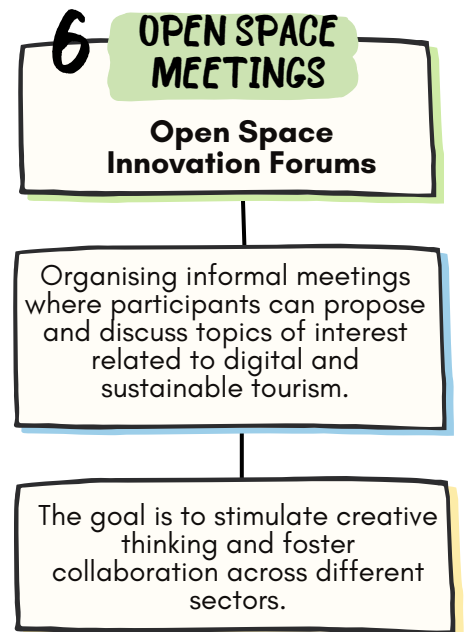
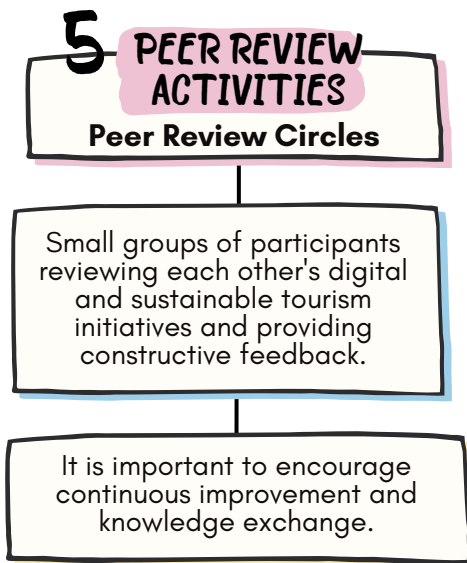
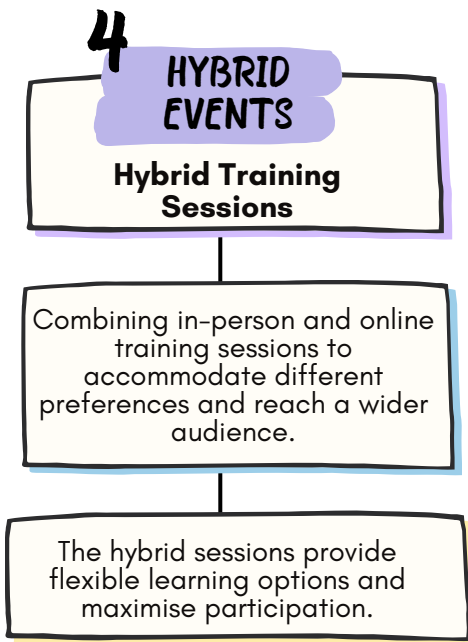
5W1H method allows you to structure your thoughts and to ask essential questions in order to decipher a situation. In terms of project management, this is an irreplaceable tool which may be used in multiple contexts.

Follow-up activities

The UPREST project aims to enhance the digital skills of actors in the field of sustainable tourism, fostering the recovery of the sector post-pandemic. Ensuring the long-term success of these initiatives requires continuous engagement, learning, and collaboration among all stakeholders. The following section provides examples of follow-up activities designed to maintain and upgrade the upskilling achievements at the local and regional levels.

EXAMPLES OF FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES





Reskilling and upskilling efforts aimed at empowering local workforces, promoting innovation, and supporting the transition to more sustainable and digitally proficient tourism practices are processes which require a strategic perspective. Most importantly, a comprehensive approach to reskilling and upskilling process at the local level requires a multifaceted strategy. The follow-up activities outlined above aim to create a varied and dynamic and supportive environment for the continuous development of digital and sustainable tourism skills.

By implementing these activities, local authorities and their stakeholders project can ensure the long-term success of the process as this approach can prove effective in terms of enhancing individual competencies but also builds community capacity, fostering a resilient and competitive tourism sector.

Capitalization of UPREST results

Improving the digital skills of tourism operators means allowing them to acquire new technological abilities, to improve the quality and efficiency of the services offered. It favours the innovation of tourist services and the development of new ones, providing more interactive and personalized tourist experiences.

The capitalization of UPREST results is therefore a crucial process to ensure that the benefits and innovations introduced by the project are sustainable and widely disseminated beyond its conclusion, thus continuing to implement and support an innovative entrepreneurial local ecosystem.

At local level this process requires a great effort of information, communication, as well as of dialogue with local stakeholders to gather feedback to properly tailor actions to respond to local needs which constantly evolve over time, due to domestic and global social-economic-climate-political dynamics.

More specifically capitalisation of project results is aimed at:

- » Making sure that the knowledge acquired is accessible to a wider audience, facilitating the replication of training activities in other contexts, sharing and disseminating good practices and successful experiences, and last but not least, keeping the interest of the stakeholders on the topic. These goals can be achieved by implementing activities such as:
 - the organisation of thematic seminars, events, meetings, webinars, inspirational talks, etc.;
 - the implementation of targeted communication actions towards stakeholders to keep their interest on the topic such as thematic newsletters, social media, to disseminate project results, success histories, best practices, results of evaluation reports and studies, spread concrete examples of application to demonstrate the efficacy of the adopted solutions to encourage the spread at a large scale;
- » Ensuring training remains relevant and effective and adapt training contents to the emerging needs of the tourism sector by evaluating the digital skills acquired by tourism operators, therefore, to examine the results and impact of the activities through the implementation of monitoring systems such as:
 - feedback Systems: implement feedback systems to collect opinions and suggestions from course participants;
 - impact analysis: conduct studies to evaluate the impact of the skills acquired on the performance of tourism operators;
 - content update: use the data collected to continuously update and improve training content
- » Promoting a continuous exchange of knowledge and update of skills by creating collaboration networks with training institutions and digital technology developers, through the development of agreements allowing the definition and implementation of new training programs according with the results of the evaluation actions implemented.

Besides the above-mentioned goals and activities, the identification and access to funding resources is a key element a Public Administration should take into due account to feed the innovation process. Access to funding allows scaling up UPREST results and building on the outcomes of the capitalisation actions implemented. To this purpose, a great possibility is represented by European funding programmes that institutions as well as organizations and companies can use according with their needs and perspectives. The most relevant are listed below:

ERASMUS+

The Erasmus+ programme itself offers funding opportunities for the dissemination and capitalization of project results through several key actions, in particular:

- Key Action 2 (KA2) - Strategic Partnerships: Support projects that promote innovation and the exchange of good practices.
- Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support for Policy Reform: Includes dissemination activities and exploitation of results.

[CLICK HERE](#) ✨

HORIZON EUROPE

The Horizon Europe programme funds research and innovation projects which may include dissemination and capitalization activities:

- Cluster 2 - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society: Projects that promote sustainable tourism and the digitalisation of cultural heritage.
- EIC Accelerator: Supports SMEs and start-ups in developing and scaling breakthrough innovations, including digital technologies in tourism.

[CLICK HERE](#) ✨

ERDF (EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND)

The ERDF supports projects that promote innovation, digitalisation and competitiveness of SMEs through Regional Operational Programmes which may include funds for projects that promote the digitalisation of the tourism sector.

[CLICK HERE](#) ✨

INTERREG PROGRAMMES

The Interreg programmes promote cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. They support the exchange of experiences and good practices between European regions, including projects in the field of tourism, innovation and digitalisation.

[CLICK HERE](#) ✨

COSME (PROGRAM FOR THE COMPETITIVENESS OF ENTERPRISES AND SMES)

COSME supports SMEs, including projects that improve the competitiveness of the tourism sector through digitalisation and training:

- European Networks: Funds networks and consortia of businesses and organizations working together on topics of common interest.

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CREATIVE EUROPE

The Creative Europe program supports the cultural and creative sector, which also includes cultural tourism:

- Culture sub-programme: Supports projects that promote cultural cooperation and the diffusion of innovations in the tourism sector.

[CLICK HERE](#) 

DIGITAL EUROPE PROGRAMME

This program aims to strengthen Europe's digital capabilities and accelerate the spread of digital technologies:

- Digital Innovation Projects: Supports the adoption of advanced technologies such as AI and AR in various sectors, including tourism.

[CLICK HERE](#) 

The UPREST project results can ensure a long lasting impact at local level, and inspiration for other initiatives which can be framed and implemented at European level thanks to a wide range of European funding programmes. These programmes offer support for dissemination, innovation, continuous training and digital skills development, thus contributing to the sustainability and sharing of the project's benefits in the long term.



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