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DETOUR

Development of resilient tourism ecosystems along Mediterranean walking routes

The 19th Conference for Cultural Tourism in Europe

23-26 September 2026

Skiathos, Greece

Luca Bruschi

The Municipality of Fidenza (IT), Project Coordinator

DETOUR

Co-funded by the European Union

Comune di Fidenza

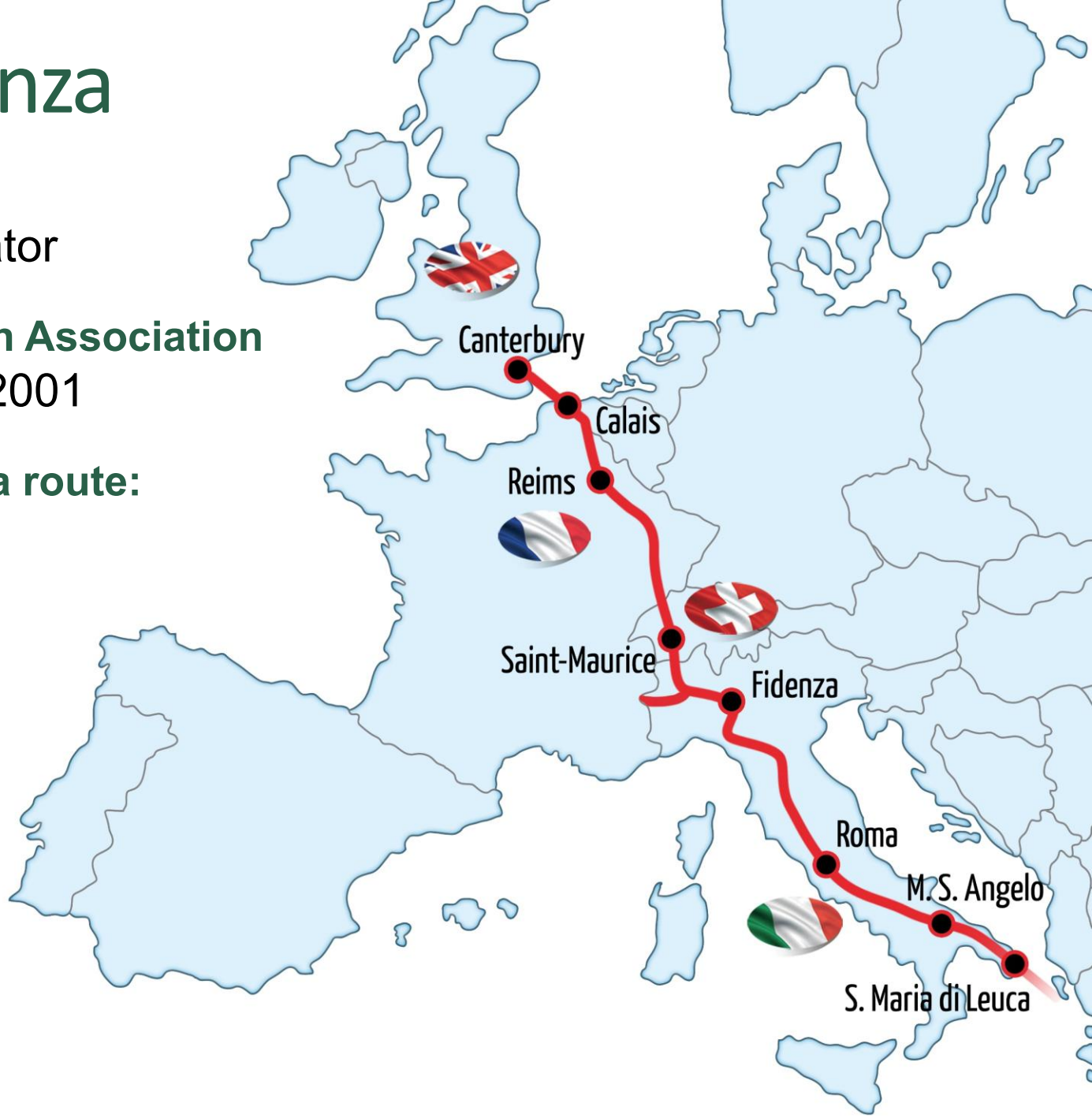
The Municipality of Fidenza

DETOUR SMP-COSME Project Coordinator

Home to **the headquarters of the European Association of the Via Francigena Ways (AEVF)** since 2001

Centrally located along **the Via Francigena route:**

- Physical route **on foot and by bicycle**
- Certified as **Council of Europe Cultural Route in 1994**
- from London via Rome to Brindisi / Santa Maria di Leuca along **3.200 km**
- **5 countries**: England, France, Switzerland, Italy and the Vatican State



European Association of the Via Francigena Ways

- **Offices:** Fidenza, Piacenza (IT) and Besançon (FR) + operational office in Bari
- **260** Members - regions, departments, provinces, municipalities
- **90+** local associations involved
- **+ 500** private tourism stakeholders
- Economic branch - Francigena Service was founded in 2007
- **UNESCO** candidacy – to protect and promote this route as a symbol of culture, dialogue, and sustainability.

About the DETOUR project

A EU-funded project under the Single Market Programme (SMP), with a total budget of €2 million.

Objective: Support small businesses along the cultural routes through green and digital transition, boost the resilience of local tourism ecosystems.

Duration: 1 November 2024 - 31 October 2027 (36 months)

Project itineraries:

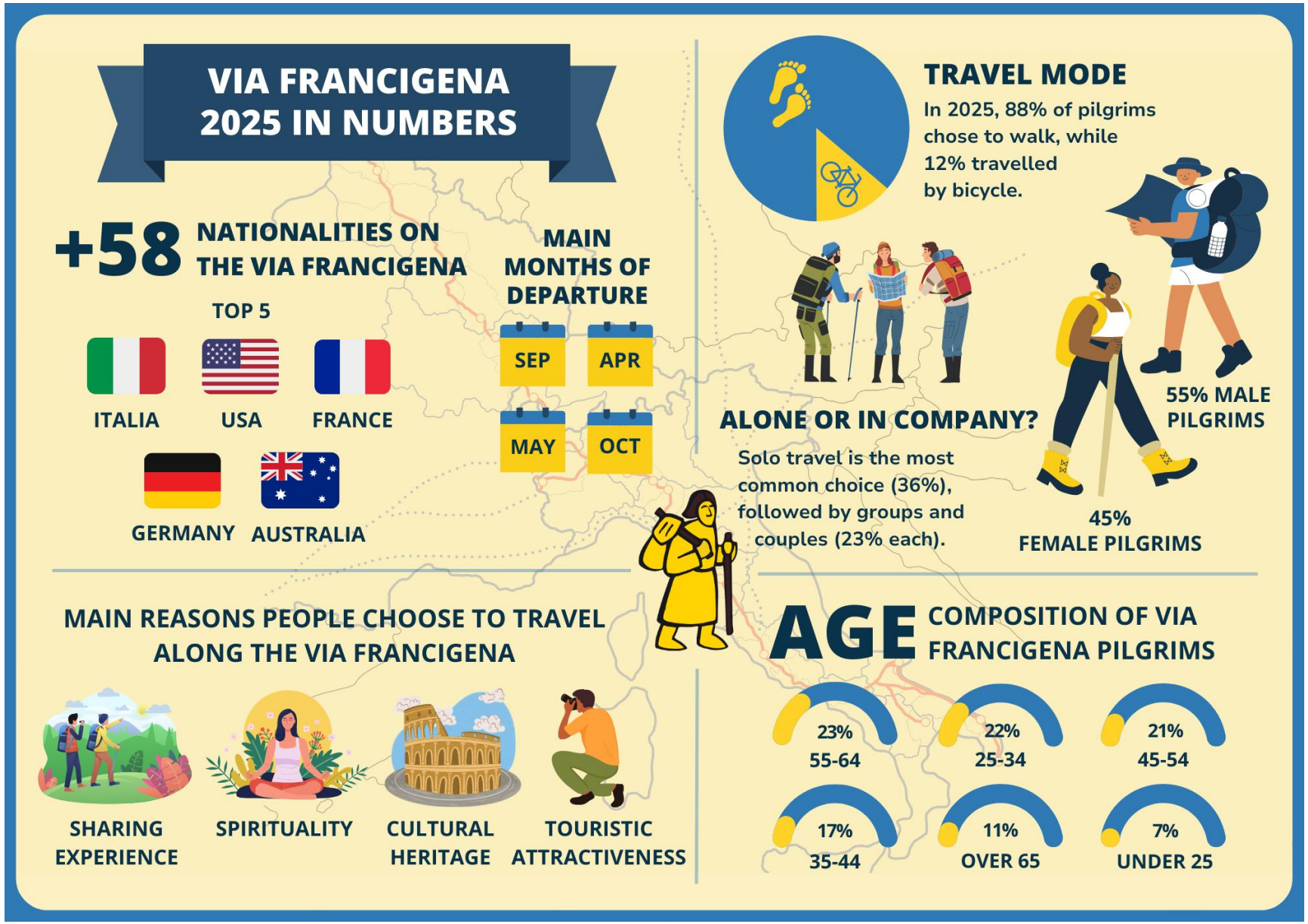
- Via Francigena (Italy)
- Lycian way (Türkiye)
- Sultan's Trail and Thrace Tourist Region (Bulgaria)
- The Network of Mountain Routes linking Mount Olympus, Mount Kissavos, and Mount Mavrovouni (Greece)

Pilot area 1: Via Francigena

Via Francigena: walking and cycling route (originally medieval pilgrimage route) along 3.200 km from Canterbury, UK, via France, Switzerland and Italy.

The itinerary was certified as a **Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 1994**, recognising its historical and cultural significance as a transnational pilgrimage and heritage route.

Pilot area 1: Via Francigena

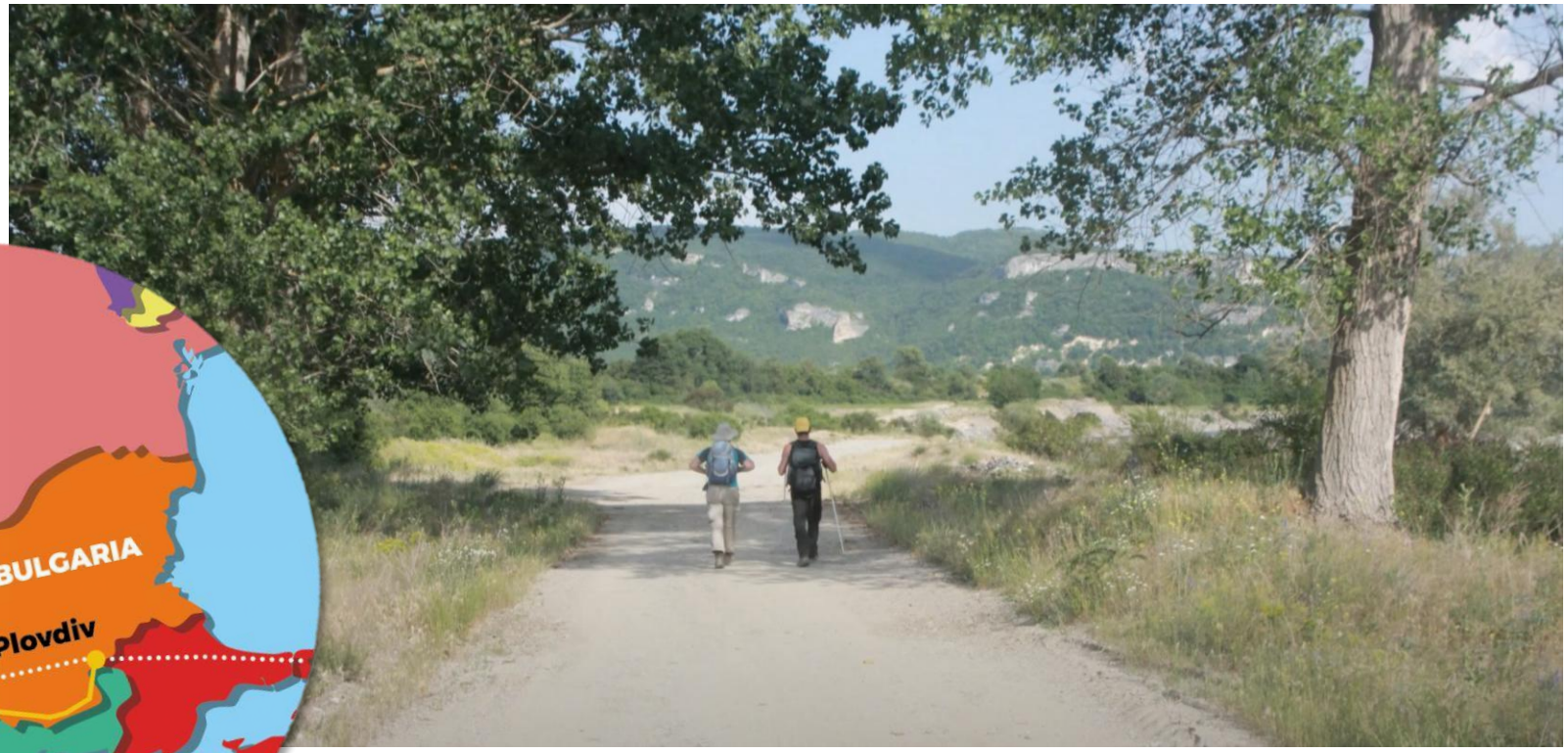


Pilot area 2: Lycian Way

Lycian Way: long-distance hiking trail along the coastal area next to Antalya. It takes it name from the Lycian people, who lived in the area from the prehistoric period until they were absorbed into Roman culture.

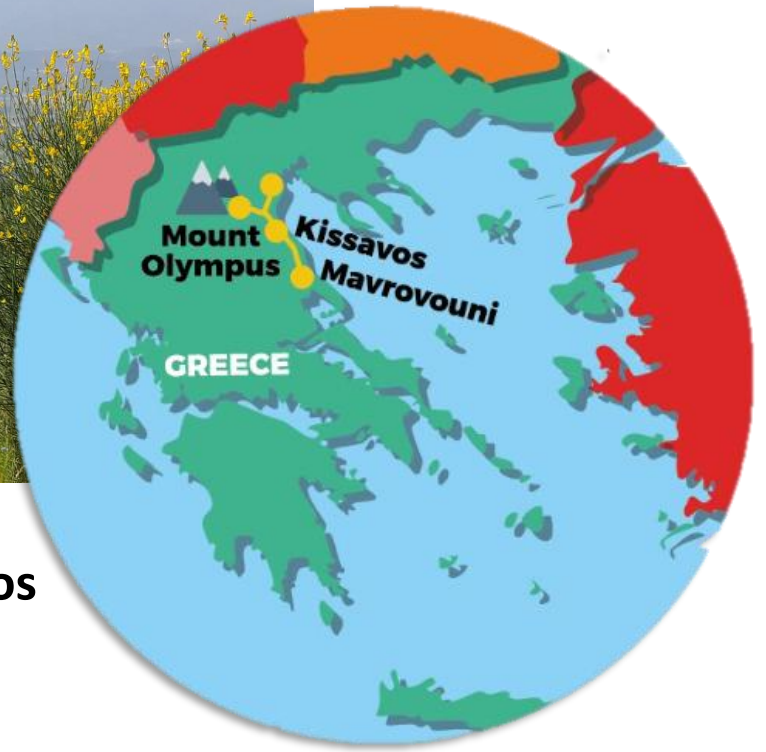
The route is 710 km from Ovacık in Fethiye sub-province, Muğla province to Aşağı Karaman in Konyaaltıı sub province, Antalya Province. Turkish Hisarönü (Ovacık) to Aşağı Karaman in Konyaaltı, in the vicinity of Antalya

Pilot area 3: Sultan's Trail & Thrace Tourist Region



Sultan' Trail: walking and cycling route along 2.500 km from Vienna to Istanbul. The route takes its name from the sultan Suleiman the Magnificent of the Ottoman Empire. The **selected stretch in Bulgaria is the entire Thrace Region**

Pilot area 4: Trails around Mounts Olympus, Kissavos and Mavrovouni



Greek walking trails around Mount Olympus, Mount Kissavos and Mount Mavrovouni - a network of 1370 km^2 of trails

Project Phases & Timeline

📌 **Research (February - April 2025)**

over *700* *SMEs interviewed in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Türkiye: …high seasonality;* ***15%*** *do not use digital maps or apps; >****20%*** *don't have a website; advertising, bureaucracy, and lack of staff as main challenges…*

📌 **Development of training modules**

6 *training modules in* ***5*** *languages,* ***30*** *hours of materials, webinars in English and national languages*

📌 **Training of key stakeholders (Train the Trainers, September - November 2025)**

41 *certified trainers in* ***4*** *countries*

📌 **Online/offline training for SMEs along the Via Francigena (January - April 2026)**

120 *SMEs selected for training. Training platform and materials available in English, Bulgarian, Greek, Italian and Turkish languages*

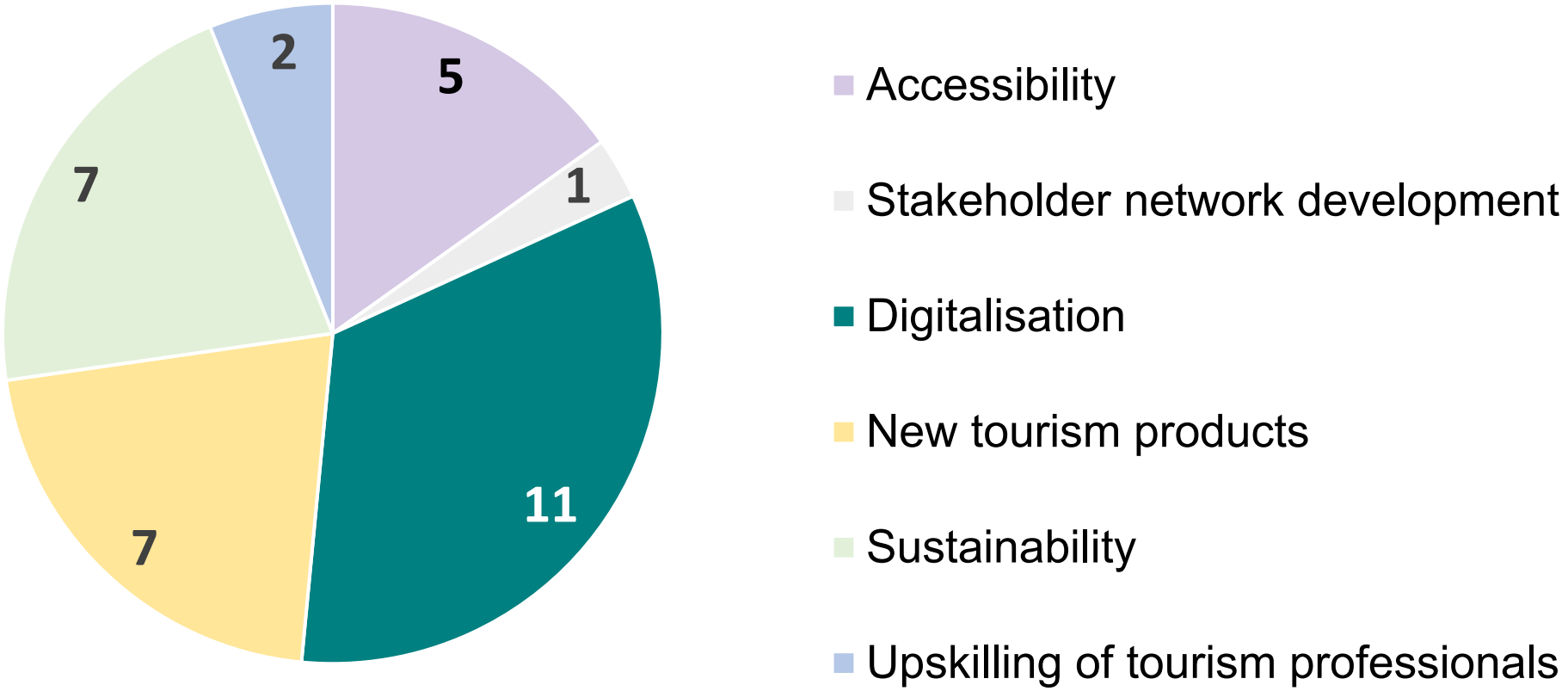
📌 **Funding and implementation of SMEs' collaborative projects (September 2026 – May 2027)**

33 *financed projects in 4 countries.*

Mini-grants from ***€15.000*** *to* ***€25.000*** *for a total amount of* ***€800 000***

DETOUR Funded projects overview

Collaborative projects main topics distribution (n)



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9 settembre 2026
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Co-funded by the European Union
Opportunità per le PMI lungo i cammini
Formazione e finanziamenti per far crescere la tua attività turistica in modo sostenibile
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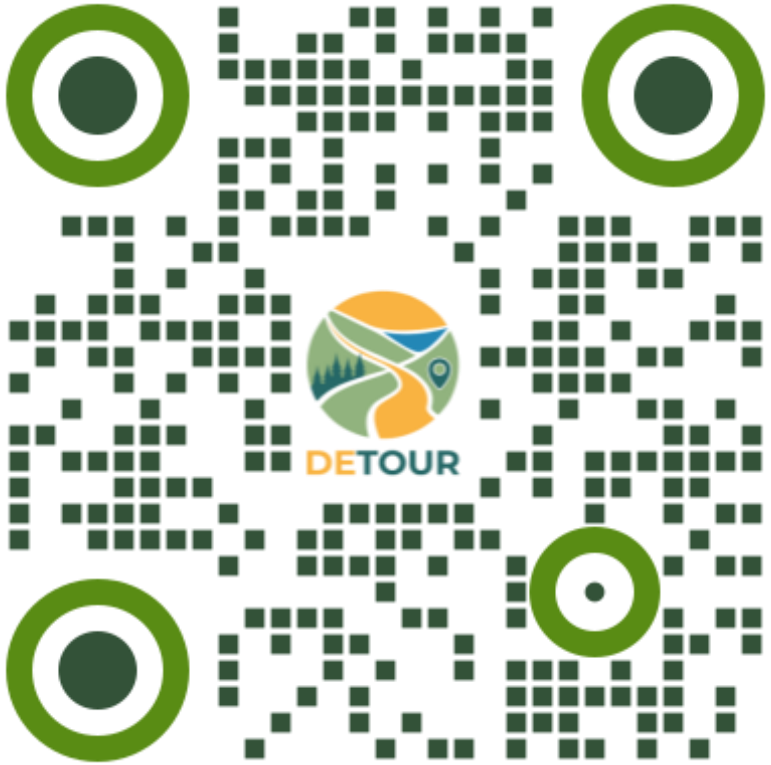
Useful resources: digital mapping & booking apps

- How digital tools can support SMEs and improve the visitor experience along hiking and Cultural Routes.
- Key traveller profiles, customer needs and digital touchpoints before, during and after the journey.
- Practical tools for navigation, booking, communication and online visibility, including Outdooractive, Google Maps and booking platforms.
- Recommendations for route and tourism managers on SME support, sustainable tourism, digital promotion, accessibility and trail infrastructure.



Useful resources: tourism Transition Pathways & Best practices

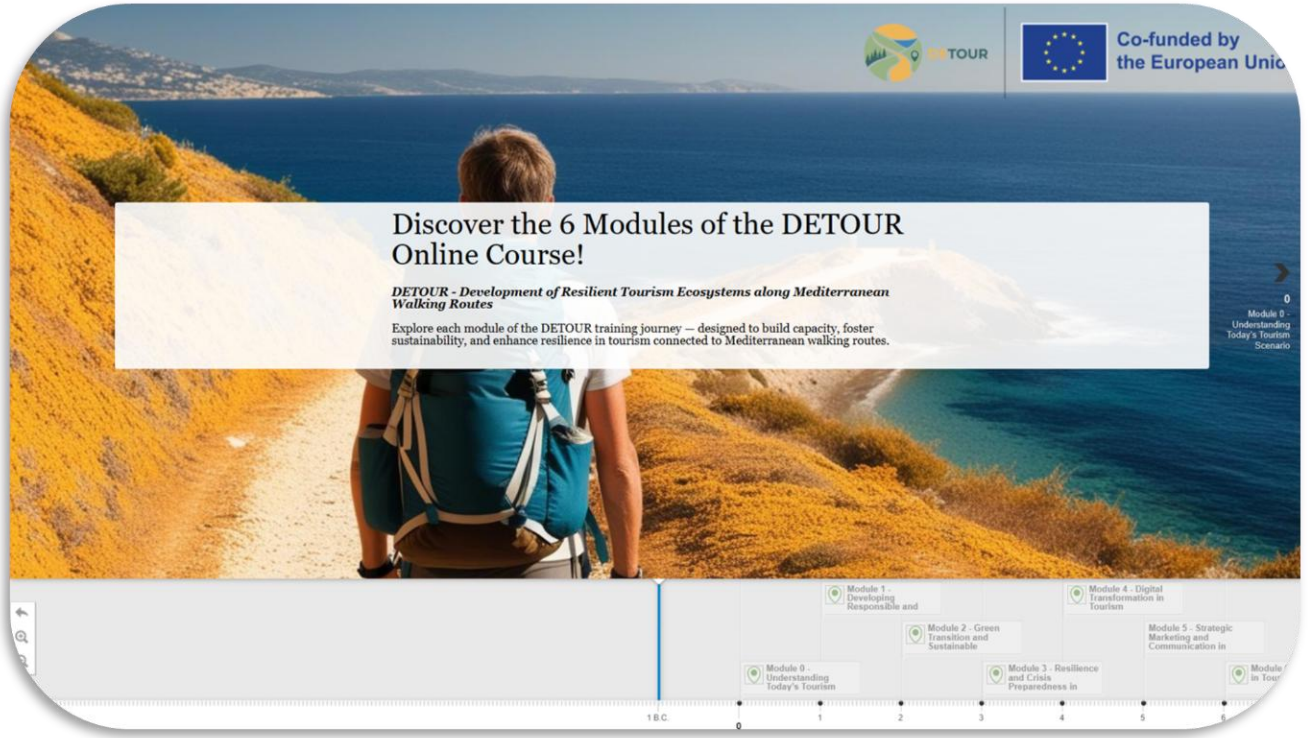
- Collection of best practices for tourism SMEs operating along long-distance walking routes, designed as a practical training resource within DETOUR
- Focuses on three key themes: green transition, digital transition and resilience, in line with **the EU Transition Pathway for Tourism**
- Includes case studies from 4 European routes - Santa Barbara Mining Route, Rota Vicentina, Cammino degli Dei and Via Dinarica - plus examples from rural destinations in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Spain and Türkiye
- Presents 12 practical SME best practices and training examples, offering simple, transferable solutions for businesses serving walkers, cyclists and ecotourists

DETOUR Training Platform

- **Open-access course** tailored for key tourism stakeholders, including Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), business associations, public authorities and SMEs.

- **6 training modules in 5 languages (EN, BG, GR, IT, TK)**, totalling **30 hours** of learning:

M1 - Responsible and Diversified Tourism Offerings
M2 - Green Transition and Sustainable Practices
M3 - Resilience and Crisis Preparedness in Tourism
M4 - Digital Transformation in Tourism
M5 - Strategic Marketing and Communication in Tourism
M6 - Inclusion in Tourism



https://www.detour-project.it/training/

DETOUR Next steps

- **SMEs projects implementation (September 2026 – May 2027)**
- **Participation in an international tourism fair (F.RE.E Munich, February 2027)**
  Visibility for the project routes, B2B and B2C meetings, attend conferences and networking events, promotion of SMEs products in the **international market**
- **Enhanced visibility for selected projects**
  The best projects will benefit from promotion through **influencer/blogger visits** and dedicated social media content
- **Closing Conference in Fidenza (September-October 2027)** for all project teams, key stakeholders, representatives of best collaborative projects

DETOUR Closing conference (Fidenza, 2027)

FRANCIGENA FIDENZA FESTIVAL dei Cammini d'Italia e d'Europa

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Thank you!

Luca Bruschi
detour.eu.project@gmail.com

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