



INSPIRES
RESILIENT TOURISM

SMP EUROPE

Ideation Jam#3 Session

Topic “*Digitalisation*”

Online – 10th October, 2025

Summary key note plenary session & summary 7 Break out rooms

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1 General Information

The third Ideation Jam of the INSPIRES project focused on digitalisation and smart tourism. Following earlier editions on Resilience (Antwerp, February 2025) and Sustainability (Rovaniemi, June 2025), this online session explored how small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMEs) can strengthen their digital visibility, competitiveness and innovation capacity in a rapidly evolving technological environment.

A total of 93 participants registered from the partner regions, and 53 actively joined the Zoom session. The programme consisted of one plenary session featuring keynote speaker Matthias Burzinski (DestinetCHANGE), followed by seven national break-out rooms representing Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Poland, Spain and an International Room coordinated by ECTN. Together they provided a broad European perspective on how digital tools and smart practices can help SMEs adapt to new market realities.

A minor logistical issue occurred with room allocation; for future events, direct Zoom links per break-out room were recommended

2 Plenary Session

Keynote – Matthias Burzinski (DestinetCHANGE)
“Visibility is Everything – Being Found Online Without a Big Budget.”

Burzinski opened with a striking observation: the way travellers search for information has changed forever. Where travellers once browsed through dozens of search-engine results, AI-driven platforms—such as Google AI Overviews, Perplexity, Copilot and ChatGPT—now present only two to three trusted sources. If an SME is not among these first answers, it is simply invisible.

His key message was clear: digital visibility no longer depends on large marketing budgets but on precision, reliability and consistency.

He identified five pillars of “AI-ready visibility” that every tourism business can implement:

1. Foundation – Claim and complete every online listing (Google Business Profile, Tripadvisor, Apple Maps ...).
2. Structure – Use schema markup so AI can read and understand business information.
3. Content – Provide rich, authentic, locally grounded answers to travellers’ questions.
4. Authority – Build trust through reviews, third-party mentions and quality backlinks.
5. Consistency – Keep identical contact information across all channels.

Burzinski concluded with a 30-day action plan, encouraging SMEs to tackle one pillar each week—from optimising profiles to actively managing online reviews.

“You don’t need a big budget—only precision, trust and discipline.”

Q & A Highlights

Participants asked how small firms could start immediately. Burzinski advised: complete your

Google Business Profile, create a detailed FAQ page, and reply to every review—positive or negative. He also noted that AI search and voice-activated queries will soon dominate, making structured data essential.

3 Break-Out Rooms – Outcomes per Region

Bulgaria – Vratsa Region

Moderator: Svetlana Borisova Reporter: Galina Gavrilova

Two innovative examples framed the discussion: “Destination Vratsa – Beauty in 360°”, an immersive AR/VR heritage experience by the Knigini Association, and “Robcho Restaurant Onà”, where a service robot complements human hospitality.

Participants praised these creative approaches linking technology with storytelling. Financial limitations and skill gaps remained key obstacles.

Several participants proposed creating a regional digital platform, inspired by Bulgaria’s Go Troyan app, to integrate local tourism offers.

The session concluded that digitalisation should strengthen rather than replace authenticity, fostering community engagement throughout the year.

Poland – Podkarpackie Region

Moderator: Joanna Wdowik-Mika Reporter: Antoni Jeż

Best practices included “See Podkarpackie”—a network of accessible routes with audio and tactile guidance—and the Łańcut Castle Museum app combining beacons and 360° virtual tours.

Discussions centred on the practical use of AI for marketing, automation and customer service. Participants valued the keynote but cautioned that today’s free AI tools may become paid services, urging SMEs to plan for integration within their overall business strategy and data-security framework.

They agreed that digital innovation is achievable even on small budgets when guided by clear objectives and training.

Finland – Lapland UAS

Moderator: Jenny Kilpeläinen Reporter: Mirva Tapaninen

The Finnish session showcased Arctic Mint’s Digital Guidebook and Lapin AMK’s Arctic Guide Course as examples of cost-efficient digitalisation in remote regions.

Debate followed on multilingual websites and the need for SEO optimisation; separate language pages can be beneficial for ranking. AI tools such as ChatGPT, Canva and Adobe Firefly are already used daily for marketing and translation tasks, and AI chatbots increasingly handle first-contact customer queries.

Participants concluded that AI offers concrete, affordable advantages but that continuous training and peer learning are vital to build confidence and creativity.

Germany – North Sea Region

Moderator: Helmut Berends Reporter: Franziska Stenzel

Under the titles “Visible. Connected. Successful.” and “AI Made Easy”, speakers from Tourismus-Agentur Nordsee GmbH demonstrated how low-budget tools (≈ €100–€200 per month) can

improve digital guest services.

Practical examples included chatbots, podcasts and video formats to reach younger audiences. Training needs and data-protection standards were emphasised repeatedly.

The lively exchange confirmed that hands-on, affordable solutions are key for SMEs and that AI should be embedded structurally into business operations rather than treated as an add-on.

Spain – Andalusia

Moderator: Pablo Morales Reporter: Marta Gómez

Spanish start-ups Ticando Technologies and My Street Book presented their AI-based platforms for intelligent routing and digital visitor management. They openly shared challenges linked to payment systems, legal frameworks and market competition.

Participants agreed that agility matters: launching a minimum viable product early and improving it later often works better than lengthy development. Collaboration among local businesses was seen as the best route to visibility and resilience.

The take-away: entrepreneurial mindset and flexibility are just as essential as technical innovation.

Belgium – Flanders

Moderator: Sjantal Sillius Reporter: Tom van Wassenbergh

Flanders presented two distinctive best practices. The Smart B&B Scrabble combines bio-ecological design with domotics: keyless access, smart lighting and energy monitoring integrated with solar panels and EV chargers. Guests particularly value the mix of sustainability and comfort. The Rubens Experience (Antwerp) illustrates how museums can use technology to deepen visitor engagement through immersive AV installations and data analytics. Both examples show that smartness is not about gadgets but about thoughtful design.

International Room – ECTN

Moderator: Manos Vougioukas

The international discussion linked the event to the EU Transition Pathway for Tourism (2030) and showcased Pafos (Cyprus) and Dublin (Ireland)—European Capitals of Smart Tourism 2023 and 2024—as examples of how smart tourism integrates digitalisation, sustainability, accessibility and culture.

Participants highlighted the central role of SMEs as innovation drivers and data contributors within smart-destination ecosystems. The group underlined that capacity building, digital literacy and strong public-private partnerships are prerequisites for success across Europe.

4 Conclusions

From all sessions, five overarching insights emerged:

1. Digital visibility has become the currency of competitiveness. In the age of AI search, authentic and structured online presence determines whether a business is found or forgotten.

2. Affordable tools enable real progress. Many effective digital solutions—AI assistants, Canva, low-cost automation—require more time and consistency than money.
3. The human factor remains central. Technology must enhance hospitality, creativity and culture rather than replace them.
4. Collaboration multiplies impact. Regional and cross-border cooperation platforms give small players a collective voice and greater market reach.
5. Data transforms learning and policy. From the Rubens Experience to Lapland UAS, user analytics now guide both business improvements and destination management.

5 Outlook and Recommendations for INSPIRES

The insights from Ideation Jam #3 provide a strong foundation for upcoming project phases and for future support to tourism SMEs.

- Enhance SME Capacity Building. Develop targeted Digital Readiness Workshops and peer-learning sessions on SEO, AI content creation and data management.
- Strengthen Event Logistics. Simplify participation through direct break-out room links and automatic calendar invitations.
- Promote Best Practice Exchange. Publish concise case stories from each region on the INSPIRES website to inspire replication.
- Encourage Cross-Sector Partnerships. Connect tourism SMEs with tech start-ups and academic institutions for pilot projects.
- Maintain Momentum towards 2026. Use the outcomes to inform the next INSPIRES voucher call and broader EU discussions on digital tourism transformation.

Together, these actions will help translate the enthusiasm of this Ideation Jam into tangible, scalable innovation for Europe's tourism SMEs.

