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Transitioning to a more sustainable and resilient ecosystem –  
empowering tourism SMEs



## Deliverable 3.2 Trainer's Guides on How to Train SMEs

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## List of Abbreviations

Coronavirus Disease 2019	<b>COVID 19</b>
European Commission	<b>EC</b>
European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency	<b>EISMEA</b>
Grant Agreement	<b>GA</b>
Partnership Agreement	<b>PA</b>
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Non-governmental Organisation	<b>NGO</b>
Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental factors	<b>PESTLE</b>
Steering Group	<b>SG</b>
SME and Medium-sized Enterprise	<b>SME</b>
Train-the-Trainer Programme	<b>TTP</b>
Lead Partner Team	<b>LPT</b>
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## Project Partners



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## INSPIRES Train the Trainer Programme

The Tourism Transition Pathway<sup>1</sup> is an EU-level strategic framework developed through an extensive co-creation process involving hundreds of tourism stakeholders—businesses, public authorities, destinations, NGOs, researchers, and Member States. It outlines the actions, reforms, investments, and collaborations needed to modernize the tourism ecosystem in the aftermath of COVID-19 and in alignment with the EU's green and digital ambitions. The Transition Pathway is not meant to be a one-size-fits-all blueprint. It is a shared EU framework that each country and region adapt to its own tourism realities. While the framework provides direction, the practical implementation occurs locally through coordinated efforts by governments, destinations, and businesses.

The content of INSPIRES Train the Trainer Programme<sup>2</sup> (TTP) has been designed so that the information and examples can be adapted to different EU-level and regional contexts. The material is editable and trainers can later implement region-specific best practices and case examples. The TTP has been designed to align with this EU-level strategic framework. The pathway emphasizes that SMEs need local multipliers and that training ecosystems must be aligned with the green, digital and resilience goals. TTP has been designed and co-created to align with this EU-level strategic framework.

TTP has been aligned with three main pillars of the pathway: green transition, digital transition, and resilience. Methodology reflects the principles of the pathway, for example using country-specific case studies, emphasizing peer-learning and community building, and providing theoretical knowledge bases but prioritizing practical tools for SMEs.<sup>3</sup>

TTP supports the tourism industry in training and upskilling different stakeholders such as DMO representatives, educators, project managers, officials, and decision makers in sustainability, resilience and digitalization. Through this training programme, multipliers can then transfer the knowledge to SMEs in their country and region in SME-friendly frameworks that reduce administrative burdens and encourage innovation.

The practical implementation has been designed to be as transparent and easy to use as possible. There are five training modules in the programme:

- 1) Risk Management and Resilience,
- 2) Circular Tourism,
- 3) Regenerative Tourism,
- 4) Inclusion and Diversity, and

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<sup>1</sup> [European Commission, 2022](#)

<sup>2</sup> [INSPIRES Train the Trainer Programme, 2025](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Tourism Transition Pathway, 2022](#)

#### 5) Emerging Technologies and Smart Tourism.

All modules align with the Transition Tourism Pathway framework. During 2025–2026, Lapland University of Applied Sciences organized five online training sessions for multipliers. In total, 46 multipliers participated. These multipliers will now transfer the knowledge to local level by organizing both onsite and online training sessions on the key topics.

This guide introduces the five topics and training methods that help trainers to:

1. internalise new information in each module, and
2. transfer knowledge to SMEs in their own region utilising the selected training methods.

## Trainer's Guides for Five Training Modules

### Module 1: Risk Management and Resilience

Risk management refers to the process of identifying, assessing, prioritizing, and mitigating risks to minimize the likelihood and impact of adverse events while maximizing opportunities for achieving organizational objectives. It involves a systematic approach to understanding and managing risks across all levels of an organization, from strategic decision-making to everyday operations.

Safety is a central part of quality and competitiveness in tourism businesses. Cooperation, information exchange, and joint development interests solidify the network operations and create added value to all parties.

In tourism businesses, risk management should be integrated into strategic management across all levels –including purpose, governance, leadership and commitment, strategy, objectives, and operations. While a variety of tools exist for risk management, each country and region has its own unique operating environment and stakeholder networks. It is therefore important to select an approach that best suits the business's operations, size, and location.

Learn the basics of risk management and resilience in tourism.

[Module 1 Risk Management and Resilience in Tourism](#) highlights the role of the tourism ecosystem to strengthen SMEs' ability to withstand shocks such as pandemics, climate change, labour shortages, geopolitical disruptions, and digital vulnerabilities. The module directly supports this by giving SMEs tools to anticipate and respond to such disruptions.

#### Key concepts:

Risk management, foresight, resilience, tourism safety, crisis, crisis management

### Learning outcomes

	Participant
1	Understands the concept of risk management and resilience in tourism
2	Analyses the principles and processes of risk management from SME perspective
3	Understands risk management as a holistic approach in both strategic and operational levels
4	Applies the risk management process and tools in tourism business

### Introduction

This module consists of two sessions as follows:

1. Holistic Approach to Risk Management. This session explores the concept of risk management and resilience and how it is applied to tourism context from SME perspective.
2. Risk Management Process and Tools. This session increases understanding of the risk management process phases and available tools for SMEs.

### Content

This module consists of the following contents:

1. Two sets of lecture slides, one per session
2. Examples and best practices
3. A list of videos and online reading materials
4. Activities

## Module 2: Circular Tourism

The operations of the tourism industry are based on the use of large amounts of materials. The industry consumes a lot of energy and water and produces waste. These negative impacts highlight the need to shift towards circular economy in tourism.

In general, circular economy is an economic model that aims at an in-depth transformation of the way resources are used; resources are reused and kept in a loop of production and usage. Therefore, circularity is an important tool for tourism companies to achieve sustainable development. It brings positive environmental impacts by increasing resource-efficiency of their operations.

[Module 2 Circular tourism](#) integrates circular economy principles throughout the broader green transition. Circularity appears repeatedly in strategic objectives, operational measures, SME support actions, research and innovation priorities, and environmental monitoring tools. For SMEs circularity is often operationalised through environmental management systems and

sustainable procurement.

**Key concepts**

circular tourism, resource use, resource efficiency, circular tourism principles, circular business model, circular practices, circular transformation

**Learning outcomes**

	<b>Participant</b>
<b>1</b>	Understands the concept of circular economy and its main characteristics in tourism
<b>2</b>	Analyses the features of circular business models and practices in tourism
<b>3</b>	Understands how a tourism company can start its circular transformation journey

**Introduction**

This module consists of two sessions as follows:

1. Introduction to Circular Economy in Tourism. This session explores the concept of circular economy and its main characteristics in tourism from a tourism company perspective.
2. Circular Business Models and Practices. This session increases understanding on circular business models and practices as well as how to start a circular transformation journey.

**Content**

This module consists of the following contents:

1. Two sets of lecture slides, one per session
2. A case study related to how circular economy is applied in a tourism company
3. A list of videos and online reading materials
4. Activities

**Module 3: Regenerative Tourism**

Regenerative tourism is highlighted as the new wave of sustainability in the tourism industry. The current approaches to sustainable development are insufficient to meet growing ecological and social challenges, which require tourism companies to adopt a completely new way of thinking and doing business.

Therefore, regenerative tourism is not a type of tourism rather adopting a different mindset about the relationship between economy, nature, and society. It is about fulfilling the potential of tourism places to flourish by increasing the regenerative capacity of natural and human living systems the company is embedded in.

[Module 3 Regenerative Tourism](#) emphasizes that tourism should actively enhance ecosystems, not just minimise harm, but improve the wellbeing of local people and strengthen local economies as well as the unique character and cultural assets of a place. Circular systems are foundational to regeneration. The Pathway’s actions enable destinations to shift toward regenerative operational models.

### Key concepts

regenerative development; regenerative tourism; regenerative tourism products and services; regenerative tourism product development

### Learning outcomes

	Participant
1	Understands the concept of regenerative development and regenerative tourism
2	Analyses the principles of regenerative development in tourism from SME perspective
3	Understands the regenerative mindset in tourism product development
4	Applies the principles of regenerative development into tourism products and services and their development process

### Introduction

This module consists of two sessions as follows:

1. Introduction to Regenerative Tourism. This session explores the concept of regenerative development and how it is applied in the tourism context from SME perspective.
2. Regenerative Tourism Offerings. This session increases understanding on different types of regenerative tourism products and services and their development

### Content

This module consists of the following contents:

1. Two sets of lecture slides, one per session, on the key points with best practice examples
2. A case study related to how regenerative tourism is applied in tourism SMEs
3. A list of videos and online reading materials
4. Activities

### Module 4: Diversity and Inclusion

Inclusive tourism means creating travel experiences that are accessible and welcoming for everyone, regardless of age, ability, cultural background, or financial situation. It removes

barriers— physical, informational, and social— so that all people can enjoy tourism experience comfortably and safely.

Accessible tourism means designing and providing travel experiences that can be used and enjoyed by people of all abilities, including those with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities. Here, we look at accessibility from four different perspectives: mobility, hearing, vision and neuro-accessibility. Accessible tourism focuses on removing barriers in transportation, accommodation, attractions, and information so that everyone can travel independently, safely, and with dignity.

Accessibility is a human right issue. Tourism companies and destinations should develop inclusive and accessible tourism. It ensures equal opportunities and reflects social responsibility. It opens a growing market of travellers with diverse needs, and it strengthens reputation by showing commitment to fairness and sustainability. Inclusivity is not only ethical but also economically smart, as it attracts more visitors and aligns with global goals for responsible tourism.

[The module 4 Diversity and Inclusion](#) includes strong and explicit sections on both diversity and inclusion. The Pathway acknowledges the need for tourism services that are inclusive of different types of customers. Accessibility is positioned as both a rights issue and a competitive advantage for destinations.

### Key concepts

Inclusive tourism, accessible tourism, equality, diversity

### Learning outcomes

	Participant
1	Understands the concept of inclusive and accessible tourism
2	Analyses the principles and processes of inclusive tourism from SME perspective
3	Understands inclusive tourism and accessible tourism target groups
4	Applies the accessible tourism approaches and tools in tourism business

### Introduction

This module consists of two sessions as follows:

1. Inclusive tourism
2. Accessibility in tourism services

### Content

This module consists of the following contents:

1. Two sets of lecture slides, one per session, on the key points with best practice examples
2. Examples and best practices

3. A list of videos and online reading materials
4. Activities

## Module 5: Emerging Technologies and Smart Tourism

Emerging technologies in tourism refer to advanced digital innovations such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, large language models, big data, platforms, and immersive technologies such as the metaverse. These technologies are transforming tourism from simple online transactions into intelligent, interactive, and experience-based systems. AI enables tourism services to recognise, analyse, learn, and act, supporting marketing, sales, mobility, and personalised travel planning. Multimodal AI can function as a continuous digital travel companion that understands text, images, and video, while ultra-realistic digital humans and avatars enable immersive simulations and virtual encounters. Together, these developments support “Never-Ending Tourism,” where travel experiences extend beyond a single trip and become integrated into everyday digital life.

Smart Tourism builds these emerging technologies to enhance the entire tourism ecosystem across all stages of the journey—before, during, and after travel. It represents the evolution of traditional eTourism toward smartphone-based, data-driven, and AI-enabled experiences that are co-created by travellers, destinations, and technology. Smart tourism focuses not only on efficiency and personalisation, but also on broader societal goals. According to European and UN frameworks, smart tourism prioritises accessibility, sustainability, digitalisation, and cultural heritage and creativity. A smart destination strategically uses technology and innovation to make tourism inclusive, environmentally responsible, and beneficial for both visitors and residents, while supporting local culture, creative industries, and long-term regional development.

[The module 5 Emerging technologies and Smart tourism](#) refers to the twin green and digital transition, positioning them essential for building a more competitive, resilient, and sustainable European tourism ecosystem.

### Key concepts:

Digital tourism transformation, framing eTourism, Smart tourism & Smart Tourism 2.0 (Metaverse), human nexus nonhuman agencies in tourism, empathic phygital tourism experiences, emerging AI technologies, smart tourism, smart destinations

### Learning outcomes

	Participant
1	Identifies the digital transformation foundations: eTourism, Smart Tourism and Smart Tourism 2.0 (Metaverse tourism)
2	Understands human nexus nonhuman approaches of digital tourism

	Participant
<b>3</b>	Gains insights into emerging technologies and their implications to organisation’s strategy and operations
<b>4</b>	Understands the concepts of smart tourism and smart destinations
<b>5</b>	Analyses the principles and processes of smart tourism from SME perspective
<b>6</b>	Understands smart tourism as a holistic approach in both strategic and operational levels

### Introduction

This module consists of one session as follows:

1. Emerging technologies
2. Smart Tourism and Smart Destinations

### Content

This module consists of the following contents:

1. Two sets of lecture slides, one per session
2. Examples and best practices
3. A list of videos and online reading materials
4. Activities

## Training Methods

All the training modules in the INSPIRES Train the Trainer Programme had different training methods. The methods and approaches are introduced in this chapter. The multipliers can then later utilize these methods and tools when building the SME capacity in their own regions. The five methods are foresight, case studies, systems thinking, co-creation, and testing. Here we introduce the method and explain the benefits for both trainers and SMEs.

### Foresight

Foresight refers to anticipating possible futures from a specific perspective. It supports decision-making at organizational and individual levels. The foresight process consists of different phases—setting the time perspective, collecting data, analysing data, use of the results, and follow up—to systematically anticipate alternative futures. Foresight is co-creation.

The foresight approach and tools help companies plan their decision-making and operations so that they can achieve the desired future vision. Foresight helps companies prepare for uncertainties and utilize future opportunities more effectively. It can also improve a company's ability to respond quickly to changing circumstances and competitive situations. For these reasons, it is a useful approach when training risk management and resilience with SMEs.

For small businesses, the foresight process can be light, as they often do not have the resources or necessarily the need to organize foresight activities in the same way as larger operators. Even a small business can utilize the basic elements of the foresight process, such as searching for the necessary information, considering its significance in planning work, and focusing on imagining and doing the future. Future foresight tools that can be utilized are for example Futures Wheel, scenarios, PESTLE, megatrend analysis, trends and weak signals.

### Case Studies

A case study is a real or realistic example of a business situation that helps participants explore how certain challenges were approached and what solutions were used. It provides concrete context instead of abstract theory. This allows participants to see how concepts appear in everyday work.

Using case studies in an SME workshop helps participants engage actively, compare experiences, and identify practical ideas they can adapt to their own businesses. This method also encourages discussion, reflection, and problem-solving, making the learning experience more relevant and memorable.

For a small tourism company, understanding case studies offers inspiration, shows what works in similar contexts, and highlights how others have successfully implemented business practices.

Case studies allow businesses to benchmark themselves, spot opportunities for improvement, and reduce risks by learning from someone else's journey.

### Systems Thinking

Systems thinking is an approach to understanding how different elements of a situation, organization, or environment are interconnected. Instead of looking at problems or tasks in isolation, systems thinking helps participants to see the bigger picture: How causes and effects ripple across people, processes, nature, and communities.

In an SME workshop, using systems thinking helps participants uncover hidden connections between tourism businesses, local communities, nature, visitors, making it easier to identify root causes instead of only treating symptoms. It also supports collaborative problem-solving because each SME brings a piece of the system, and mapping these together builds shared understanding and sparks new insights.

For a small tourism company, systems thinking improves decision-making by showing how choices in pricing, marketing, partnerships, or environmental actions affect the broader ecosystem they depend on. It strengthens resilience by highlighting vulnerabilities. Most importantly, it helps small businesses understand how their actions contribute to community and environmental wellbeing — key principles of regenerative tourism.

### Co-creation

Co-creation is a collaborative method where participants work together to generate ideas, develop solutions, or create something new. Instead of the trainer or organization designing everything in advance, the process actively involves learners, stakeholders, or users in shaping the outcome. It is commonly used in learning environments, service design, innovation projects, and team development. Co-creation methods are easily adapted to both onsite and online learning environments utilizing, for example, co-creation canvas, prototyping or co-writing templates.

Co-creation methods often increase participants' engagement because people are more motivated when they can actively contribute to shaping ideas or solutions, rather than just receiving information passively. It also leads to better-quality outcomes, as combining diverse experiences and viewpoints usually results in richer insights. Another key benefit is stronger commitment: when participants help create something themselves, they feel ownership over the result and are much more likely to support it and use it in practice. Co-creation also builds a shared understanding within the group, because working closely together helps align expectations and reduces misunderstandings. Finally, it empowers participants by valuing their expertise and building confidence, while also strengthening trust and community within the group through collaborative work.

In tourism SMEs, there are many benefits to co-creation. Co-creation helps SMEs generate new ideas and test them quickly with employees, customers, or partners. By involving customers or end users directly in the creation process, SMEs gain deeper insights into real needs, motivations, and pain points. When employees participate in developing new processes, solutions, or services, they feel valued and included in strategic development. Co-creation strengthens trust and loyalty because customers feel heard and involved.

### Testing

Testing is a structured way to try out a new technology, application, or system in a controlled environment to see how well it works before fully adopting it. It helps identify problems early, understand how the solution fits real work situations, and gather feedback from users. During training sessions, participants can test for example AI tools, mobile applications, sustainability and resource monitoring tools, and marketing automation tools.

Using testing in an SME workshop helps participants learn by doing rather than only by listening. They can experiment with real technologies, see how they behave in their own context, and discuss insights with peers. This practical hands-on experience makes learning stick better and builds confidence to make technology decisions. Hands-on experimentation can help SMEs make smarter digital choices.

For a small tourism company, understanding testing brings the benefit of reducing risks when adopting new digital tools, such as booking systems, customer apps, or AI-based services. By testing before investing, the company can avoid costly mistakes, improve efficiency, and choose solutions that genuinely support customer experience.

## Conclusion

The INSPIRES Train the Trainer Programme has been designed to strengthen the capacity of Europe's tourism ecosystem by equipping multipliers with the knowledge, tools, and pedagogical approaches needed to support SMEs in their green, digital, and resilience transitions. The five training modules—Risk Management and Resilience, Circular Tourism, Regenerative Tourism, Diversity and Inclusion, and Emerging Technologies & Smart Tourism—reflect the key priorities of the EU Transition Pathway for Tourism and respond directly to the evolving needs of tourism businesses across regions.

Each module provides a combination of theoretical foundations, practical examples, and hands-on activities, ensuring that trainers can adapt the material to diverse local contexts. The programme highlights the importance of long-term sustainability, strategic foresight, inclusivity, and digital transformation as essential components of successful and future-oriented tourism SMEs. Through real case studies, co-creation exercises, systems-thinking tools, and testing activities, trainers are supported in facilitating learning environments that are interactive, relevant, and grounded in the everyday realities of small businesses.

The methodological approaches introduced—foresight, case studies, systems thinking, co-creation, and testing) form a versatile toolkit that trainers can use to empower SMEs to anticipate change, innovate, and collaborate within their local ecosystems. These methods help SMEs translate abstract concepts into concrete actions, strengthen their resilience to disruptions, enhance resource efficiency, and develop tourism products and services that regenerate local environments and communities. Trainer's guide is a practical tool for multipliers for transferring the knowledge to local level.

Ultimately, the INSPIRES Train the Trainer Programme aims to build a multiplier network that accelerates the transition toward a more sustainable, inclusive, and technologically capable tourism sector in Europe. By fostering shared learning, practical experimentation, and cross-regional collaboration, the programme contributes to a stronger tourism ecosystem—one that is better prepared to navigate uncertainty, embrace innovation, and lead the transformation toward a thriving future.

## References

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