



## Press Release

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.

The keynote speaker Matthias 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.”

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.

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.