TOURAL

Multidimensional model of tourism verticals driving the sustainable balanced growth among rural & remote grids and urban clusters of rural regions, fostering macro-regional cooperation

101132489, HORIZON-CL2-2023-HERITAGE-01

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Executive Summary

The deliverable "Preliminary Identification of Funding Instruments" (D2.6), serves as a comprehensive guide to funding opportunities for projects and initiatives interested in developing and reinforcing tourism value chains. It aims to be a resource for a wide spectrum of tourism stakeholders, including businesses, organizations, and policymakers, who are seeking financial support to bring their tourism-related projects to fruition.

Developed as part of Task T2.5 work, this report meticulously examines a diverse array of funding instruments available at European, national, regional, and sea-basin levels. It delves into specific programs, calls, and initiatives designed to bolster various facets of tourism development, such as sustainable practices, cultural heritage preservation, digital innovation, and capacity building.

The deliverable highlights funding instruments like Horizon Europe, ESF+, ERDF, LIFE, and InvestEU, as well as national programs from Greece, Italy, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine. Additionally, it explores opportunities for cross-border collaboration in the Adriatic-Ionian (Mediterranean Sea) and Black Sea regions (sea-basin level). Each instrument is analyzed in detail, offering insights into objectives, eligibility criteria, funding mechanisms, and application procedures.

By consolidating this information, the deliverable empowers stakeholders to identify financial resources that align with the project needs. This first iteration establishes the groundwork for the digital one-stop-shop repository envisioned in Task T2.5, and will continue to evolve as part of the TOURAL project work in WP2.

List of Symbols and Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
CCT	Cultural & Creative Tourism
CH	Cultural Heritage
CST	Cultural Science Tourism
KAC	Knowledge Awareness Centre
MDM	Multidimensional Model
MRC	Macro-Regional Cooperation
RRG	Rural and Remote Grids
SBG	Sustainable Balanced Growth
SLT	Silver Tourism
TV	Tourism Verticals
UCCST	UCNHT-CCT-CST-SLT
UCH	Underwater Cultural Heritage
UCNH	Underwater Cultural & Nature Heritage
UCNHT	Underwater Cultural & Nature Heritage Tourism
UCRR	Urban Clusters of Rural Regions
UW	Underwater
VR	Virtual Reality
WP	Work Package

1. Introduction

1.1 Scope and objectives of the deliverable

Deliverable D2.6 entitled "Preliminary Identification of Funding Instruments" is a comprehensive guide to funding opportunities for projects and initiatives related to the development and enhancement of tourism value chains. It aims to provide a valuable resource for tourism stakeholders, including businesses, organizations, and policymakers, who are seeking funding to support their projects. Recognizing the intricate nature of tourism development and the diverse range of stakeholders involved, this guide serves as a first point of reference to navigate the complex landscape of funding instruments. It meticulously gathers and presents information on various funding programs, calls, and initiatives which could support different facets of tourism development, such as sustainable tourism practices, cultural heritage preservation, digital innovation, and capacity building.

The deliverable addresses funding opportunities at multiple levels:

- **European Level:** Programs such as Horizon Europe, LIFE, and the European Social Fund+.
- **Sea-basin Level:** Sea-basin funding instruments for the Adriatic-Ionian (Mediterranean Sea) and Black Sea.
- **National Level**: Specific instruments available in Greece, Italy, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine.
- **Regional Level:** Initiatives tailored to the unique needs of specific regions, ensuring localized support for tourism ventures (relevant mostly for Romania, Ukraine and for other regionally applied national programs).

The funding guide delves into each instrument, providing detailed information on its objectives, eligibility criteria, funding mechanisms, and application procedures. This comprehensive approach ensures that stakeholders can readily identify the most suitable funding opportunities for their specific project needs and aspirations.

By consolidating and clarifying information on funding instruments, this deliverable aims to empower tourism stakeholders to secure the necessary financial resources to implement their projects effectively. It strives to stimulate innovation, promote sustainable tourism development, and contribute to the overall growth and resilience of the tourism sector.

1.2 Structure of the deliverable

Chapter 2: European Funding Instruments presents the relevant available funding instruments at EU level with an analysis of each Funding Instrument, in relevance to the tourism value chains. The most relevant calls per instrument are also described in this chapter in respect to the 4 focus tourism sectors of the project. The following instruments are analyzed: Horizon Europe, Single Market Project, Creative Europe, LIFE, European Social Fund+, ERDF, InvestEu, Just Transition Fund, REACT-EU.

Chapter 3: Sea-basin Funding Instruments - Adriatic-Ionian and Black Sea presents the available funding instruments focusing on cross border-collaboration at sea-basin level. The following Interreg instruments are presented: Cross- border collaboration between neighboring countries, IPA Adrion, Euro-MED, NEXT Black Sea Basin Program, NEXT MED, IPA South Adriatic

Chapter 4: National Funding Instruments – Greece follows the same structure as chapter 2 but focuses specifically on the Greek national programs (“ΕΣΠΑ” and “Ελλάδα 2.0”).

Chapter 5: National Funding Instruments – Italy focuses on the Italian national programs (“Invitalia's Smart Start”, “ISMEA Agritourism Fund”, “National Villages Plan”).

Chapter 6: National Funding Instruments – Croatia focuses on the Croatian national funding instruments ("Competitiveness Development Program for the Tourism Sector") and regional programs available at regional level (Zadar County).

Chapter 7: National Funding Instruments – Bulgaria focuses on the Bulgarian national programs ("Support Program for the Competitiveness of Micro, Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises" and "Rural Development Programme"

Chapter 8: National Funding Instruments – Romania focuses on the Romanian national and regional programs ("State Aid Scheme for Investments in Tourism", 3 axes of "South-East Regional Programmes" and "Romanian National Plan for Recovery and Resilience - P4 Social and Territorial Cohesion").

Chapter 9: National Funding Instruments - Ukraine focuses on the Ukrainian programs ("DART" and "Baltic Sea Neighbor Program"). The national "Agritourism and Rural Tourism" Strategy is also explained. The existing funding programs for tourism are either regionally implemented or under the auspices of the European Union. However, for conformity reasons, these funding instruments are described under a "national" perspective so they can be also considered as national funding instruments for Ukraine.

2. European Funding Instruments

2.1 Horizon Europe

2.1.1 Overview

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding program for research and innovation with a budget of €93.5 billion for 2021-2027. It tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts the EU's competitiveness and growth. It is the successor to the Horizon program and is based on three pillars:

- **Excellent Science:** It supports frontier research projects through the European Research Council (ERC) and funds Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions for researchers' training and career development.
- **Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness:** It supports research on societal challenges and key technologies and strengthens industrial capacity and innovation ecosystems.
- **Innovative Europe:** It aims to make Europe a more attractive location for research and innovation by supporting the European Innovation Council (EIC) and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).

Horizon Europe has simpler rules for participation and dissemination, aiming to make it easier for researchers and innovators to access funding and share their results. It also emphasizes the importance of open science, promoting open access to publications and data.

2.1.2 Funding relevance

1. Integrated Cultural & Creative Tourism Value Chains:

- **Connecting local artisans, artists, and cultural heritage sites:** This aligns with Horizon Europe's focus on **strengthening European cultural and creative industries**. By creating new tourism experiences based on local culture and heritage, it can contribute to the **economic sustainability of these sectors** and promote **European cultural diversity**. This links to the **"Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society"** cluster, particularly in areas like promoting cultural heritage and supporting artists and cultural professionals.
- **Developing new cultural tourism routes and itineraries:** This can contribute to **innovation in tourism offerings** and support the development of **sustainable and responsible tourism destinations**. It also links to the **"Civil Security for Society"** cluster by promoting the protection and preservation of cultural heritage.
- **Creating collaborative platforms for artists and artisans:** This can facilitate the **digital transformation of the cultural and creative sectors** by providing new channels for showcasing and selling their products. This connects to the **"Digital, Industry and Space"** cluster, specifically in areas like supporting digital innovation and entrepreneurship in cultural and creative industries.

2. Multi-dimensional Tourism Offerings:

- **Combining different tourism niches:** This approach can contribute to **diversification of tourism offerings** and attract a wider range of visitors, promoting **sustainable tourism development** in rural areas. This aligns with Horizon Europe's focus on **boosting rural economies and social inclusion**.
- **Developing combined tour packages:** This can support the creation of **innovative and competitive tourism products** that cater to different target groups. This links to the **"Civil Security for Society"** cluster by promoting sustainable and responsible tourism practices.

3. Macro-Regional Cooperation and Value Chains:

- **Fostering cross-border tourism:** This contributes to **European territorial cooperation** and strengthens collaboration between regions, promoting **economic growth and social cohesion**. This aligns with Horizon Europe's focus on **strengthening the European Research Area** and supporting **interregional cooperation**.

- **Developing shared branding and marketing strategies:** This can enhance the **visibility and attractiveness of European tourism destinations** and contribute to the **competitiveness of the European tourism sector**.

4. Digital Technologies and Value Chain Integration:

- **Developing digital platforms for tourism promotion and booking:** This supports the **digital transformation of the tourism sector** and enhances the visitor experience, contributing to the **competitiveness and sustainability of European tourism**. This links to the **"Digital, Industry and Space"** cluster, specifically in areas like developing digital technologies for tourism and promoting data sharing and interoperability in the tourism sector.

5. Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Value Chains:

- **Promoting responsible tourism practices:** This aligns with Horizon Europe's focus on **sustainable development** and contributes to the **"Civil Security for Society"** cluster by promoting environmental protection, social inclusion, and economic benefits for local communities.

Available funding	93.5 billion €
Period of Validity	2021-2027
URL	https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

2.1.3 Relevant calls

2.1.3.1 *HORIZON-MISS-2024-CIT-01*

A. **Key Information**

Call title	Changing urban spaces and mindsets to accelerate the transition to climate neutrality
Call Reference	HORIZON-MISS-2024-CIT-01
Domain of interest.	Transforming urban spaces to achieve climate neutrality.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Open
Period of Validity	17/9/2024 – 11/2/2025
Application deadline	11 February 2025
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	€45 million
Indicative budget range per project	9 million €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	5
Max Funding rate	70%
Call URLs	https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/HORIZON-MISS-2024-CIT-01-01?isExactMatch=true&status=31094501,31094502&frameworkProgramme=43108390&callIdentifier=HORIZON-MISS-2024-CIT-01&order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=startDate
Keywords	Sustainable transport. Social inclusion. Governance. Innovation. Circular economy.

	Ecosystem services.

B. Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

Eligible entities:

- **Legal entities established in any of the following:**
  - EU Member States (including their overseas departments)
  - Associated Countries to Horizon Europe
  - Low- and middle-income countries

Geographical areas of intervention:

- Actions should focus on urban areas within the EU Member States and Associated Countries.

B.2 Eligible Entities

- Universities and research institutions
- Local authorities
- Businesses
- SMEs
- NGOs
- Civil society organizations

B.3 Other Conditions

1. Type of Action:

- This call specifically provides grants for **Innovation Actions (IA)**. These projects focus on developing and deploying innovative solutions, with a strong emphasis on real-world implementation and impact.

2. Duration:

- Projects are expected to have a **duration of 36 to 48 months**.

3. Consortium Composition:

- Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least three independent legal entities.
- These entities must be established in three different eligible countries (EU Member States, Associated Countries, or low- and middle-income countries).
- The call encourages the participation of cities as beneficiaries or associated partners.

4. Expected Outcomes:

- Projects should demonstrate tangible outcomes that contribute to climate neutrality in urban areas.
- This includes developing and implementing innovative solutions related to energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, sustainable mobility, circular economy, and nature-based solutions.
- Projects should also focus on citizen engagement and social innovation to ensure the solutions are accepted and adopted by the local community.

5. Alignment with Mission Objectives:

- Proposals must clearly demonstrate how they contribute to the objectives of the EU Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities.
- This includes achieving climate neutrality by 2030, improving the quality of life in cities, and fostering innovation and economic growth.

6. Open Science Practices:

- Projects are expected to adhere to open science principles, including open access to publications and data, where applicable.

7. Ethical Considerations:

- Proposals should address any potential ethical implications of their research and innovation activities.

C. Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

C.1 Reallocation of space and re-design of infrastructure:

- Promoting sustainable modes of transport: Developing and implementing solutions for walking, cycling, and public transport, including infrastructure improvements, integrated ticketing systems, and mobility-as-a-service solutions.
- Improving energy efficiency in buildings: Retrofitting existing buildings and designing new buildings with energy-efficient technologies, including smart building management systems and renewable energy integration.
- Decarbonizing industrial activities: Developing and implementing solutions for reducing emissions from industrial processes, including energy efficiency measures, circular economy approaches, and the use of renewable energy sources.
- Enhancing green infrastructure: Creating and improving green spaces, urban forests, and water bodies to mitigate the urban heat island effect, improve air quality, and enhance biodiversity.

C.2 Dynamic curb-side management:

- Developing and implementing smart parking solutions: Including real-time parking availability information, dynamic pricing, and integrated payment systems.
- Optimizing delivery and loading zones: Implementing efficient loading and unloading procedures, designated delivery zones, and off-peak delivery incentives.
- Promoting micro-mobility and shared mobility services: Providing dedicated space for e-scooters, bike-sharing stations, and other shared mobility options.
- Integrating curb-side management with other urban systems: Connecting curb-side management systems with traffic management systems, public transport systems, and other smart city platforms.

D. Scope Relevance

1. Relevance to the EU Mission:

- **Directly contributes to the EU Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities:** The call explicitly addresses the Mission's goal of achieving climate neutrality in 100 European cities by 2030.
- **Supports the Mission's three main objectives:** The call's focus on rethinking urban spaces and dynamic curb-side management directly contributes to:
    - **Climate neutrality:** By promoting sustainable transport, energy efficiency, and green infrastructure.
    - **Improved quality of life:** By creating more livable, healthy, and accessible urban spaces.
    - **Innovation and economic growth:** By fostering the development and deployment of innovative solutions in cities.

2. Relevance to Societal Challenges:

- **Addresses urgent climate change challenges:** The call tackles the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in urban areas, which are major contributors to climate change.
- **Contributes to sustainable urban development:** The call promotes a holistic approach to urban development that integrates environmental, social, and economic considerations.
- **Improves citizens' quality of life:** The call supports solutions that enhance urban living, including improved air quality, reduced noise pollution, and increased access to green spaces.

3. Relevance to Research and Innovation:

- **Fosters cutting-edge research and innovation:** The call encourages the development and implementation of innovative solutions that go beyond the state-of-the-art.
- **Promotes collaboration and knowledge sharing:** The call requires the participation of multidisciplinary consortia, fostering collaboration between research institutions, businesses, and cities.

- **Contributes to the advancement of knowledge in urban planning and sustainability:** The call supports the development and testing of new approaches to urban design and management.

4. Relevance to Policy and Implementation:

- **Supports the implementation of EU policies:** The call aligns with EU policies on climate change, energy, and transport, including the European Green Deal and the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy.
- **Provides valuable insights for policymakers:** The projects funded under this call can generate evidence and best practices able to raise the awareness of policymakers and influence the policymaking processes at local, national, and European levels.
- **Promotes the uptake of innovative solutions in cities:** The call encourages the development of solutions that are replicable and scalable, facilitating their wider adoption in other urban contexts.

2.1.3.2 *HORIZON-WIDERA-2025-ACCESS-01*

A.Key Information

Call title	Teaming for Excellence
Call Reference	HORIZON-WIDERA-2025-ACCESS-01
Domain of interest	Boost research and innovation excellence in widening countries by supporting the creation of new Centers of Excellence.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Forthcoming
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	10 April 2025/20 January 2026
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	270 million
Indicative budget range per project	2-5 million €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	Approx. 23 projects
Max Funding rate	100%
Call URLs	https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/HORIZON-WIDERA-2025-ACCESS-01-01-two-stage?isExactMatch=true&status=31094501,31094502&frameworkProgramme=43108390&callIdentifier=HORIZON-WIDERA-2025-ACCESS-01&order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=startDate
Keywords	Widening participation. Teaming for Excellence. Centre of Excellence. Research and innovation. Smart Specialization Strategy. International collaboration.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- EU Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

- Associated Countries to Horizon Europe: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine

B.2 Eligible Entities

Geographical areas of intervention

- The activities funded under this call should focus on strengthening research and innovation capacity in the Widening countries.
- This means that the Centre of Excellence must be located in a Widening country, and its activities should primarily benefit that country's research and innovation ecosystem.

C. Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

- **Developing a strategic research and innovation agenda:** Defining the Centre's research priorities, aligning them with national and/or European strategies, and identifying key areas of focus.
- **Building research and innovation capacity:** Recruiting and training researchers, acquiring state-of-the-art equipment, and developing strong research infrastructure.
- **Fostering collaboration and knowledge transfer:** Establishing partnerships with leading institutions in Europe and beyond, promoting researcher mobility, and engaging in knowledge transfer activities with industry and society.
- **Creating an attractive and sustainable research environment:** Implementing measures to attract and retain talented researchers, promoting open science practices, and ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the Centre.
- **Boosting innovation and impact:** Supporting the translation of research results into innovative products and services, fostering entrepreneurship, and contributing to regional economic development.

D.Scope Relevance

1. Relevance to the Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area (ERA):

- Directly addresses the widening gap: This call tackles the challenge of uneven research and innovation performance across Europe by specifically targeting Widening countries.
- Strengthens the ERA: By fostering collaboration between Widening countries and leading research institutions in other EU Member States or Associated Countries, it promotes knowledge transfer and integration within the ERA.
- Contributes to a more balanced ERA: It aims to reduce disparities in research and innovation capacity across Europe, creating a more inclusive and competitive research landscape.

2. Relevance to Societal Challenges:

- Promotes economic growth and social well-being: By strengthening research and innovation capacity in Widening countries, it contributes to their economic development and addresses societal challenges.
- Fosters knowledge-based economies: It supports the development of knowledge-based economies in Widening countries by investing in research and innovation, which are key drivers of economic growth and competitiveness.
- Addresses regional disparities: It helps to reduce regional disparities within Europe by supporting less developed regions to catch up with more advanced ones in terms of research and innovation performance.

3. Relevance to Research and Innovation:

- Fosters excellence in research: The call promotes the establishment of Centres of Excellence that strive for high-quality research and contribute to the advancement of knowledge.
- Encourages international collaboration: It supports the creation of strategic partnerships between research institutions in Widening countries and leading institutions across Europe, fostering international collaboration and knowledge sharing.

- Promotes innovation and technology transfer: It encourages Centres of Excellence to engage in innovation activities and knowledge transfer, translating research results into tangible benefits for society and the economy.

4. Relevance to Policy and Implementation:

- Aligns with EU policies: The call is fully aligned with EU policies on research and innovation, widening participation, and strengthening the ERA.
- Supports the implementation of national strategies: It encourages Centres of Excellence to align their research priorities with national and/or regional smart specialization strategies, contributing to their implementation.
- Promotes long-term sustainability: It encourages the development of sustainable business models for Centres of Excellence, ensuring their long-term operation and impact beyond the funding period.

2.1.3.3 *HORIZON-CL2-2024-HERITAGE-ECCCH-01-01*

A.Key Information

Call title	A European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage – Innovative tools for digitisation and analysis of dynamic processes, objects and complex combined data
Call Reference	HORIZON-CL2-2024-HERITAGE-ECCCH-01-01
Domain of interest	Development of innovative tools for the digitization and analysis of dynamic processes, objects, and complex combined data in the field of cultural heritage.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Open
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	22 January 2025
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	12 million €
Indicative budget range per project	5-6 million €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	2
Max Funding rate	70%
Call URLs	https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/HORIZON-CL2-2024-HERITAGE-ECCCH-01-01?order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=10&sortBy=startDate&isExactMatch=true&frameworkProgramme=43108390&callIdentifier=HORIZON-CL2-2024-HERITAGE-ECCCH-01
Keywords	Cultural Heritage. Digitization. 3D modeling. Data analysis. Cloud computing.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- EU Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

- Associated Countries to Horizon Europe: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine.

B.2 Eligible entities

- Any legal entity established in an EU Member State or Associated Country: This broadly includes universities, research institutions, companies, non-profit organizations, and public bodies.
- International European Research Organisations: These organizations can participate as beneficiaries or affiliated entities.
- Legal entities established in non-associated third countries: They may exceptionally participate as beneficiaries or affiliated entities if their participation is essential for carrying out the action. This might be the case if they have unique expertise or resources critical to the project's success.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

1. Strategic Development and Capacity Building:

- **Developing a shared strategic research and innovation agenda:** This involves defining the Centre's long-term vision, research priorities, and key performance indicators. This agenda should be aligned with national and/or European strategies and address societal challenges.
- **Recruiting and training research personnel:** Attracting talented researchers, providing training and development opportunities, and fostering a supportive and stimulating research environment.
- **Investing in research infrastructure and equipment:** Acquiring state-of-the-art equipment, upgrading existing facilities, and developing cutting-edge research infrastructure.
- **Strengthening institutional capacity:** Improving research management, promoting open science practices, and enhancing the Centre's overall organizational capacity.

2. Collaboration and Knowledge Transfer:

- **Establishing strong partnerships with leading institutions:** Creating sustainable collaborations with advanced research institutions in Europe and beyond through joint research projects, staff exchanges, and knowledge sharing activities.
- **Promoting researcher mobility:** Facilitating researcher mobility between the Centre of Excellence and partner institutions through fellowships, exchange programs, and short-term visits.
- **Engaging in knowledge transfer activities:** Transferring research results to industry and society through workshops, conferences, publications, and technology transfer initiatives.

3. Innovation and Impact:

- **Supporting the development of innovative products and services:** Facilitating the translation of research results into marketable products and services through incubation programs, technology transfer offices, and partnerships with industry.
- **Fostering entrepreneurship and spin-off creation:** Creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurship and encouraging the creation of spin-off companies based on research conducted at the Centre.
- **Contributing to regional economic development:** Leveraging the Centre's research and innovation capacity to address regional challenges and promote economic growth in the Widening country.

4. Sustainability and Long-term Impact:

- **Developing a sustainable business model:** Creating a long-term financial and operational plan for the Centre of Excellence that ensures its sustainability beyond the funding period.
- **Building strong links with stakeholders:** Engaging with local authorities, businesses, and civil society to ensure the Centre's relevance and impact on the wider community.
- **Monitoring and evaluating progress:** Implementing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track the Centre's progress, measure its impact, and ensure continuous improvement.

D.Scope relevance

1. Relevance to the Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area (ERA):

- **Directly addresses the widening gap:** This call tackles the challenge of uneven research and innovation performance across Europe by specifically targeting Widening countries.
- **Strengthens the ERA:** By fostering collaboration between Widening countries and leading research institutions in other EU Member States or Associated Countries, it promotes knowledge transfer and integration within the ERA.
- **Contributes to a more balanced ERA:** It aims to reduce disparities in research and innovation capacity across Europe, creating a more inclusive and competitive research landscape.

2. Relevance to Societal Challenges:

- **Promotes economic growth and social well-being:** By strengthening research and innovation capacity in Widening countries, it contributes to their economic development and addresses societal challenges.
- **Fosters knowledge-based economies:** It supports the development of knowledge-based economies in Widening countries by investing in research and innovation, which are key drivers of economic growth and competitiveness.
- **Addresses regional disparities:** It helps to reduce regional disparities within Europe by supporting less developed regions to catch up with more advanced ones in terms of research and innovation performance.

3. Relevance to Research and Innovation:

- **Fosters excellence in research:** The call promotes the establishment of Centres of Excellence that strive for high-quality research and contribute to the advancement of knowledge.
- **Encourages international collaboration:** It supports the creation of strategic partnerships between research institutions in Widening countries and leading institutions across Europe, fostering international collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- **Promotes innovation and technology transfer:** It encourages Centres of Excellence to engage in innovation activities and knowledge transfer, translating research results into tangible benefits for society and the economy.

4. Relevance to Policy and Implementation:

- **Aligns with EU policies:** The call is fully aligned with EU policies on research and innovation, widening participation, and strengthening the ERA.
- **Supports the implementation of national strategies:** It encourages Centres of Excellence to align their research priorities with national and/or regional smart specialization strategies, contributing to their implementation.
- **Promotes long-term sustainability:** It encourages the development of sustainable business models for Centres of Excellence, ensuring their long-term operation and impact beyond the funding period.

2.2 Single Market Programme

2.2.1 Overview

The Single Market is one of the European Union's most significant achievements. It aims to create a single market within which goods, services, capital, and people can move freely between Member States, just as they would within a single Country.

Key Features and Benefits:

- **Free movement of goods:** No customs duties or quotas between Member States. Free movement of services: Businesses can offer services in any Member State. Free movement of capital: Investments and money transfers without restrictions.
- **Free movement of people:** Right to work in any Member State. Increased competition: More competitive prices and a wider choice of products for consumers.

- **Economic growth:** Creation of new jobs and increased GDP. Strengthening European integration: Common rules and standards across the EU.
- **Challenges:** Barriers to free movement: Some bureaucratic obstacles or differing regulations between Member States still exist. Social and environmental concerns: Free movement can impact employment, labor standards, and the environment.
- **Digital Single Market:** Enhancing e-commerce and digital services. Green Deal: Promoting sustainable development and the circular economy. Strengthening the social dimension: Ensuring fair working conditions and social protection.

2.2.2 Funding relevance

1. Integrated Cultural & Creative Tourism Value Chains:

- **Facilitates cross-border collaboration:** The Single Market enables easier movement of people, goods, and services, making it simpler for artisans, artists, and cultural institutions from different countries to collaborate and create integrated tourism experiences. This can lead to:
    - Joint development of cultural tourism routes that span multiple countries, attracting a wider range of tourists.
    - Easier access to markets for artisans and artists to sell their products to tourists from across the EU.
    - Increased opportunities for cultural exchange and cooperation, promoting cultural diversity and understanding.

2. Multi-dimensional Tourism Offerings:

- **Enhances product diversification:** The Single Market encourages innovation and product differentiation, enabling the development of unique and diverse tourism packages that combine different niches sectors. This can lead to:
    - More attractive tourism offerings that cater to a wider range of interests and preferences.
    - Increased competitiveness of European tourism destinations by offering unique and specialized experiences.
    - Greater opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to develop niche tourism products and services.

3. Macro-Regional Cooperation and Value Chains:

- **Strengthens regional cooperation:** The Single Market provides a framework for macro-regional cooperation, facilitating the development of cross-border tourism initiatives and joint marketing strategies. This can lead to:
    - Increased visibility and attractiveness of lesser-known regions within the Single Market.
    - More balanced tourism development across different regions, reducing disparities and promoting economic growth in less developed areas.
    - Enhanced collaboration between tourism stakeholders across borders, fostering innovation and knowledge sharing.

4. Digital Technologies and Value Chain Integration:

- **Supports digital innovation:** The Single Market promotes the development and adoption of digital technologies, facilitating the creation of online platforms for tourism promotion and booking. This can lead to:
    - Increased accessibility and convenience for tourists, making it easier to plan and book travel experiences.
    - Improved efficiency and competitiveness of tourism businesses by leveraging digital tools and platforms.
    - Greater transparency and consumer protection in the tourism sector through online reviews and booking platforms.

5. Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Value Chains:

- **Promotes sustainable practices:** The Single Market encourages sustainable development and environmental protection, supporting the development of tourism value chains that prioritize responsible practices. This can lead to:
  - Increased awareness and demand for sustainable tourism options among consumers.
  - Greater incentives for businesses to adopt sustainable practices, leading to a more environmentally and socially responsible tourism sector.
  - Enhanced protection of cultural and natural heritage through sustainable tourism development.

Available funding	4.2 billion €
Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/single-market-programme/overview_en

2.2.3 Relevant calls

2.2.3.1 *Open Call for the FU-TOURISM Accelerator Programme*

A.Key Information

Call title	Open Call for the FU-TOURISM Accelerator Programme
Call Reference	Open Call for the FU-TOURISM Accelerator Programme
Domain of interest	Supporting innovative tourism SMEs in adopting digital and sustainable solutions.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Open
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	31 January 2025
Periodicity	On-off
Call Budget	1.2 million €
Indicative budget range per project	20.000 €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	60
Max Funding rate	100%
Call URLs	https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/competitive-calls-cs/9384?keywords=Tourism&isExactMatch=true&status=31094501,31094502,31094503&programmePeriod=2021%20-%202027&order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=relevance
Keywords	Tourism. SMEs. Innovation. Digitalization. Sustainability.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- Austria
- Belgium

- Croatia
- Greece
- Poland
- Spain

B.2 Eligible entities

- **Must be an SME:** This means meeting the European Commission's definition of a small or medium-sized enterprise (fewer than 250 employees, annual turnover not exceeding €50 million, and/or annual balance sheet total not exceeding €43 million).
- **Legally established:** Officially registered as a legal entity in one of the eligible countries (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Poland, or Spain).
- **Minimum 6 months operation:** Must have been operating for at least 6 months before the application deadline.
- **Tourism-related activities:** The SME's main activities should be related to tourism, as defined by the NACE code categories listed in the call documentation.
- **Single Tourism SMEs:** An individual SME that meets the criteria above.
- **Consortia of Tourism SMEs:** A group of 2-4 SMEs collaborating on a joint project, where each SME individually meets the eligibility criteria.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

1. Digital Transformation:

- Enhancing online presence: Creating or upgrading websites, developing mobile apps, and implementing digital marketing strategies to reach wider audiences.
- Improving customer relationship management: Implementing CRM systems to personalize communication, managing customer interactions, and building loyalty.
- Adopting data-driven decision making: Utilizing data analytics to understand customer preferences, optimize pricing strategies, and personalize the tourist experience.
- Integrating innovative technologies: Exploring and integrating technologies like artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and the Internet of Things to enhance the tourist experience and improve operational efficiency.

2. Sustainability:

- Adopting eco-friendly practices: Implementing measures to reduce energy consumption, water usage, and waste generation.
- Promoting sustainable transportation: Encouraging the use of public transport, cycling, and walking, and offering electric vehicle charging stations.
- Supporting local communities and economies: Sourcing products and services locally, collaborating with local businesses, and contributing to the preservation of cultural and natural heritage.
- Raising awareness about sustainable tourism: Educating tourists about responsible travel practices and promoting sustainable tourism initiatives.

3. Innovation and Growth:

- Developing new tourism products and services: Creating innovative and unique tourism experiences that cater to emerging trends and customer demands.
- Improving business processes: Streamlining operations, enhancing efficiency, and adopting new business models to improve competitiveness.
- Expanding into new markets: Developing strategies to reach new customer segments and expand into new markets.

D.Scope relevance

1. Alignment with European Tourism Policy:

- Supports the EU's tourism transition pathway: The program directly contributes to the EU's goals of making European tourism more sustainable, digital, and resilient.
- Promotes the twin transition: It strongly emphasizes both digitalization and sustainability, which are key pillars of the EU's tourism strategy.
- Contributes to the European Green Deal: By supporting sustainable practices in tourism, the program aligns with the broader goals of the European Green Deal for a climate-neutral and sustainable economy.

2. Addressing Challenges in the Tourism Sector:

- Enhancing competitiveness: The program aims to help tourism SMEs to become more competitive by adopting innovative solutions and embracing the twin transition.
- Improving resilience: It supports the development of resilient tourism businesses that can adapt to challenges like economic downturns, climate change, and changing consumer preferences.
- Fostering sustainability: It promotes environmentally and socially responsible tourism practices, contributing to the long-term sustainability of the sector.

3. Focus on Innovation and Digitalization:

- Driving digital transformation: The program encourages the adoption of digital technologies to enhance the tourist experience, improve efficiency, and create new business opportunities.
- Supporting innovative solutions: It funds the development and implementation of innovative products, services, and business models in the tourism sector.
- Promoting data-driven decision making: It encourages the use of data analytics to optimize tourism operations and personalize the tourist experience.

4. Empowering Tourism SMEs:

- Targeted support for SMEs: The program specifically focuses on supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, which are the backbone of the European tourism sector.
- Capacity building: It provides funding and opportunities for SMEs to develop and implement innovative solutions, enhancing their capacity and competitiveness.
- Promoting collaboration: It encourages partnerships and knowledge sharing among tourism SMEs and other stakeholders.

5. Contribution to Regional Development:

- Focus on specific regions: By targeting SMEs in six specific Countries and their pilot destinations, the program contributes to regional development and strengthens the tourism sector in those regions.
- Promoting local economies: It encourages the development of tourism offerings that benefit local communities and contribute to the preservation of cultural and natural heritage.

2.3 Creative Europe

2.3.1 Overview

Creative Europe is the European Union's main program for supporting the cultural and creative sectors. With a budget of €2.44 billion for 2021-2027, it aims to:

- **Safeguard and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity.**
- **Increase the competitiveness of the cultural and creative sectors.**

It's structured around three strands:

1. **CULTURE Strand:** Supports projects in various cultural sectors, including:
    - **Cooperation projects:** Transnational projects involving cultural organizations from different countries.
    - **Literary translation:** Funding for the translation of European literary works.
    - **European networks:** Supporting networks of cultural organizations.
    - **European platforms:** Developing platforms for cultural cooperation and exchange.

2. **MEDIA Strand:** Supports the European audiovisual industry, including:
    - **Development of audiovisual works:** Funding for the development of films, TV series, and video games.
    - **Distribution and promotion:** Support for the distribution and promotion of European audiovisual works.
    - **Training and film literacy:** Promoting skills development and audience engagement.
3. **Cross-sectoral Strand:** Addresses issues relevant to both Culture and MEDIA strands, including:
    - **Support for the creative sector:** Funding for initiatives that benefit the wider creative sector.
    - **Policy cooperation:** Promoting cooperation between EU countries on cultural policy.
    - **Analysis and monitoring:** Research and analysis on the cultural and creative sectors.

2.3.2 Funding relevance

1. Integrated Cultural & Creative Tourism Value Chains:

- **Heritage Preservation and Promotion:** Creative Europe strongly supports initiatives that safeguard and promote Europe's diverse cultural heritage. Connecting local artisans, artists, and heritage sites through tourism creates economic incentives for preservation and raises awareness among wider audiences.
- **Boosting Cultural and Creative Sectors:** By integrating cultural and creative experiences into tourism offerings, new markets and revenue streams are created for artists, artisans, and cultural organizations. This aligns with Creative Europe's goal of strengthening the competitiveness of these sectors.
- **Cross-border Cultural Collaboration:** Creative Europe encourages transnational cooperation and exchange. Developing cultural tourism routes that span multiple Countries allows for deeper cultural exchange and collaboration between artists, heritage sites, and tourism operators across borders.

2. Multi-dimensional Tourism Offerings:

- **Diversifying Cultural Experiences:** Creative Europe seeks to promote a rich and diverse European cultural landscape. Combining different tourism niches, like cultural heritage with contemporary art or gastronomy, creates more compelling and multifaceted cultural experiences for tourists.
- **Innovation in Cultural Tourism:** Creative Europe supports innovation in the cultural and creative sectors. Developing new, combined tour packages and specialized itineraries encourages creative approaches to cultural tourism, leading to more engaging and unique experiences.

3. Macro-Regional Cooperation and Value Chains:

- **Strengthening European Cultural Networks:** Creative Europe emphasizes the importance of European networks and platforms for cultural collaboration. Macro-regional cooperation in tourism can facilitate the creation of new networks and partnerships between cultural organizations and tourism operators across wider geographical areas. This fosters knowledge sharing, joint initiatives, and a stronger sense of European cultural identity.

4. Digital Technologies and Value Chain Integration:

- **Digital Transformation in Culture:** Creative Europe supports the digital transformation of the cultural and creative sectors. Utilizing digital platforms for promoting and booking cultural tourism experiences enhances accessibility and visibility for cultural organizations, while providing tourists with more engaging and informative tools.
- **Innovative Digital Experiences:** Creative Europe encourages the use of digital technologies to create new cultural experiences. Virtual tours, augmented reality applications, and interactive exhibits can enhance visitors' experience at cultural sites and make cultural heritage more accessible to wider audiences.

5. Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Value Chains:

- **Sustainable Cultural Tourism:** Creative Europe promotes sustainable practices in the cultural and creative sectors. Developing sustainable tourism value chains that prioritize environmental protection,

social inclusion, and economic benefits for local communities ensure the long-term viability and positive impact of cultural tourism.

Available funding	2.44 billion €
Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe

2.3.3 Relevant calls

2.3.3.1 *CREA-CULT-2025-COOP-UA-3*

A.Key Information

Call title	Preparing the post-war recovery of the Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors
Call Reference	CREA-CULT-2025-COOP-UA-3
Domain of interest	Preparing the Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors for post-war recovery.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Open
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	6 February 2025
Periodicity	On-off
Call Budget	1 million €
Indicative budget range per project	Not specified
Estimated number of projects to be funded	Not specified
Max Funding rate	90%
Call URLs	https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/crea/wp-call/2025/call-fiche_crea-cult-2025-coop-ua_en.pdf
Keywords	Resilience. Capacity building. Innovation. Digitalization.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- **EU Member States:** All 27 EU member states are eligible.
- **Associated Countries:** Countries associated with the Creative Europe program are also eligible. These include: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, and Georgia.
- **Ukraine:** Ukrainian organizations are specifically encouraged to apply and lead projects under this call.

B.2 Eligible entities

Legal entities:

- Public bodies (national, regional, and local authorities)
- Non-profit organizations (NGOs, associations)
- Private companies
- Educational and training institutions
- Research institutions (including universities)
- International organizations

Established in eligible countries: The applying organizations must be legally established in one of the eligible countries, which includes all EU Member States, associated countries to Creative Europe, and Ukraine.

Minimum partnership: Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least three applicants (beneficiaries) from three different eligible countries, with at least one applicant established in Ukraine**.**

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

1. Supporting Ukrainian artists and cultural organisations:

- Capacity building and skills development: Activities that enhance the skills and knowledge of Ukrainian artists and cultural professionals, including training programs, workshops, mentoring initiatives, and study visits.
- Mobility and residencies: Supporting the mobility of Ukrainian artists and cultural professionals within Ukraine and to other European countries through residencies, exchanges, and networking opportunities.
- Creation and dissemination of cultural content: Funding the creation, production, and dissemination of cultural and artistic works by Ukrainian artists and cultural organizations, including digital content and online platforms.
- Protection and promotion of Ukrainian cultural heritage: Activities that safeguard and promote Ukrainian cultural heritage, including digitization, restoration, and accessibility initiatives.

2. Fostering Ukrainians' access to culture and cultural heritage:

- Developing cultural programs and events: Supporting the organization of cultural events, festivals, exhibitions, performances, and other activities that provide access to culture for Ukrainian citizens, particularly those affected by the war.
- Promoting cultural participation and inclusion: Activities that encourage cultural participation and inclusion for all Ukrainians, including marginalized groups and those displaced by the conflict.
- Enhancing access to cultural heritage: Improving access to cultural heritage sites and collections for Ukrainian citizens, including digital access and online resources.

3. Preparing the post-war recovery of the Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors:

- Developing strategies and policies: Supporting the development of strategies and policies for the recovery and long-term sustainability of the Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors.
- Strengthening cultural infrastructure: Funding the renovation, reconstruction, and development of cultural infrastructure in Ukraine, including cultural centers, museums, libraries, and theatres.
- Fostering international cooperation: Supporting partnerships and collaborations between Ukrainian and European cultural organizations to facilitate knowledge transfer, capacity building, and access to international markets.

D.Scope relevance

1. Responding to the Ukrainian Crisis:

- **Direct support for Ukraine:** This call directly addresses the urgent need to support the Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors in the face of the ongoing war and its devastating impact.
- **Cultural resilience and recovery:** It recognizes the vital role of culture in fostering resilience, healing, and social cohesion during and after conflict, and aims to empower Ukrainian cultural actors in the recovery process.
- **International solidarity:** It demonstrates European solidarity with Ukraine and fosters collaboration between Ukrainian and European cultural organizations.

2. Aligning with European Cultural Policy:

- **Promoting European values:** The call promotes fundamental European values such as cultural diversity, freedom of expression, and intercultural dialogue, which are particularly important in times of conflict.

- **Strengthening European cultural cooperation:** It fosters cooperation and exchange between Ukrainian and European cultural organizations, contributing to a stronger and more inclusive European cultural space.
- **Supporting the cultural and creative sectors:** It aligns with the broader objectives of the Creative Europe program to support the cultural and creative sectors, which are essential for social and economic development.

3. Addressing Societal Challenges:

- **Promoting social cohesion and inclusion:** The call supports activities that promote social cohesion and inclusion through culture, particularly for vulnerable groups and those affected by the conflict.
- **Fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding:** It encourages intercultural dialogue and understanding between Ukrainian and European citizens, contributing to peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.
- **Protecting cultural heritage:** It supports the protection and promotion of Ukrainian cultural heritage, which is an essential part of Ukraine's national identity and cultural memory.

4. Focus on Capacity Building and Networking:

- **Empowering Ukrainian cultural actors:** The call emphasizes capacity building and networking activities to strengthen the skills, knowledge, and resilience of Ukrainian artists, cultural professionals, and organizations.
- **Fostering sustainable development:** It supports the development of sustainable strategies and infrastructure for the Ukrainian cultural and creative sectors, ensuring their long-term viability and contribution to the country's recovery.
- **Promoting international collaboration:** It encourages partnerships and knowledge sharing between Ukrainian and European cultural organizations, facilitating access to international expertise and resources.

5. Potential for Long-Term Impact:

- **Contributing to post-war recovery:** The call has the potential to make a significant contribution to the post-war recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine by supporting the cultural and creative sectors, which play a vital role in social and economic development.
- **Strengthening cultural ties:** It can strengthen cultural ties between Ukraine and Europe, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation.
- **Promoting peace and reconciliation:** By supporting cultural initiatives that promote social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and access to culture, the call can contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation.

2.3.3.2 *CREA-CULT-2025-COOP-UA-2*

A.Key Information

Call title	Fostering Ukrainians' access to culture and cultural heritage
Call Reference	CREA-CULT-2025-COOP-UA-2
Domain of interest	Supports projects that foster Ukrainians' access to culture and cultural heritage, particularly for displaced persons, in Ukraine or in Creative Europe participating countries.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Open
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	6 February 2025
Periodicity	On-off
Call Budget	2 million €
Indicative budget	Not specified

range per project	
Estimated number of projects to be funded	Not specified
Max Funding rate	90%
Call URLs	https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/crea/wp-call/2025/call-fiche_crea-cult-2025-coop-ua_en.pdf
Keywords	Culture. Cooperation. Heritage. Resilience.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- **EU Member States**: All 27 countries in the European Union are typically eligible.
- **Associated Countries:** These are non-EU countries that participate in Creative Europe. This often includes countries like Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein.
- **Ukraine:** Given the focus of this call, Ukraine is almost certainly an eligible country.

B.2 Eligible entities

- **Legal status:** Organizations must be legally established in a Creative Europe country (including Ukraine) or a country associated with the Creative Europe program.
- **Financial capacity:** Organizations must demonstrate sound financial management and the ability to co-finance the project.
- **Operational capacity:** Organizations need to have the necessary experience, expertise, and human resources to implement the proposed project.
- **Project relevance:** The proposed project must align with the objectives of the call, focusing on cultural cooperation with Ukraine and addressing the needs of the Ukrainian cultural sector.
- **Partnership:** Projects must involve a partnership between organizations from at least two eligible countries, with at least one partner from Ukraine."

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

- **Cultural and artistic activities:** These can encompass a wide range of initiatives, such as organizing workshops, performances, exhibitions, festivals, and cultural exchanges. The aim is to provide opportunities for Ukrainian artists and cultural professionals to engage with their peers in Creative Europe countries, showcase their work, and foster intercultural dialogue.
- **Access to cultural heritage:** Projects can focus on providing access to Ukrainian cultural heritage for displaced persons, helping them connect with their roots and maintain their cultural identity. This could involve initiatives such as digitalization and preservation of cultural heritage, organization of virtual tours and exhibitions, and development of educational programs.
- **Integration and social cohesion:** Activities can promote the integration of displaced Ukrainians into their host communities through cultural initiatives. This could involve language courses, cultural awareness programs, and community-building activities that foster mutual understanding and social cohesion.
- **Health and well-being:** Projects can explore the role of culture in promoting health and well-being, particularly for displaced persons who may be experiencing trauma or psychological distress. This could involve initiatives such as art therapy, music therapy, and other cultural activities that support mental and emotional well-being.

D.Scope relevance

- **Promotes cultural identity:** By supporting access to Ukrainian culture and heritage, the call helps preserve and promote Ukrainian identity in a time of great upheaval.
- **Fosters social cohesion:** Through cultural activities, the projects funded under this call can help bridge cultural divides and foster understanding between displaced Ukrainians and their host communities.
- **Contributes to well-being:** Culture plays a vital role in healing and recovery. This call recognizes the importance of cultural activities in promoting mental and emotional well-being for those affected by the conflict.
- **Supports European cultural collaboration:** It encourages collaboration between Ukrainian and European cultural organizations, strengthening cultural ties and promoting intercultural dialogue.

2.4 LIFE

2.4.1 Overview

The LIFE Program is the European Union's main funding instrument for the environment and climate action. The aim of the LIFE Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE) (2021/2027) is to contribute to the implementation, updating, and development of EU environmental and climate policy and legislation.
The Program pursues this aim by funding projects with high added value in three key areas:

- **Nature and Biodiversity:** Protection of Europe's species and habitats, conservation of biodiversity, and promotion of sustainable management of natural resources.
- **Circular Economy and Quality of Life:** Transition to a more circular economy, reduction of waste, and improvement of air and water quality.
- **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:** Implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and enhancement of resilience to climate change.

2.4.2 Funding relevance

Protection of Nature and Biodiversity:

- **Marine Research and Education Value Chain:** Research centers and educational programs contribute to the understanding and protection of marine ecosystems, while volunteer clean-up activities directly improve the marine environment.
- **Sustainable Tourism Value Chain:** Ecotourism activities and the development of eco-hotels promote a form of tourism that respects and protects the natural environment.

Climate Action:

- **Marine Research and Education Value Chain:** Research on climate change and the sustainable management of marine resources is crucial to addresse the impacts of climate change.
- **Sustainable Tourism Value Chain:** The use of renewable energy sources in eco-hotels and the promotion of local products help to reduce the environmental footprint of tourism.

Circular Economy and Quality of Life:

- **Local Products and Handicrafts Value Chain:** Promoting local products and creating handicraft workshops boost the local economy, promote material reuse, and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage.

Environmental Governance and Information:

- **Underwater Cultural Heritage Experiences Value Chain:** Conservation workshops and the use of VR/AR technologies contribute to the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, while educational programs raise public awareness about its importance.

Available funding	5.4 billion €

Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en

2.4.3 Relevant calls

2.4.3.1 *LIFE-2024-SAP-NAT*

A.Key Information

Call title	LIFE 2024 Standard Action Projects for Nature & Biodiversity
Call Reference	LIFE-2024-SAP-NAT
Domain of interest	Nature and Biodiversity
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	19 September 2024
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	155.500.000
Indicative budget range per project	1 to 5 million
Estimated number of projects to be funded	Approx. 30-35 projects
Max Funding rate	60% - 75%
Call URLs	https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life/life-calls-proposals-2024_en https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/Domain of interest.-details/life-2024-sap-nat-nature
Keywords	Environmental funding. Climate action funding. Nature conservation funding. Biodiversity funding. Large-scale project funding. Policy implementation funding.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- EU Member States: All 27 member states of the European Union are eligible.
- Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs): Linked to the following Member States:
- Denmark
- France
- Netherlands
- EFTA countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland can participate under certain conditions, as outlined in the as outlined in the LIFE Regulation.

B.2 Eligible Entities

- Legal entities: Public or private bodies, including but not limited to:
- Public administrations at national, regional, and local levels
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Universities and research institutions
- Businesses and industries

B.3 Other Conditions

- **Co-financing:** Projects must secure co-financing to cover the portion of the project costs not funded by the LIFE program. The maximum co-financing rate varies depending on the specific project type and priority area.
- **Duration:** Projects typically have a maximum duration, which can range from 18 to 36 months depending on the project type and specific priorities.
- **Alignment with EU environmental and climate policy:** Projects must contribute to the implementation of relevant EU environmental and climate policies and legislation.
- **No double funding:** Projects cannot receive funding from other EU funding sources for the same activities.
- **Additionality:** Projects must demonstrate that they go beyond what would be achieved without LIFE funding, showcasing their added value and impact.
- **Sustainability:** Projects should aim for long-term sustainability and have a plan for continuing their activities and benefits beyond the funding period.
- **Partnerships:** While not mandatory for all project types, partnerships with other organizations can strengthen proposals and demonstrate a collaborative approach.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

The LIFE-2024-SAP-NAT call primarily supports Strategic Nature Projects (SNAPs) aimed at achieving large-scale and lasting impacts on nature and biodiversity conservation. Intervention areas:

C.1 Space for Nature

Focuses on improving the condition of species and habitats through area-based conservation or restoration measures.

Activities may include:

- Habitat restoration and improvement
- Species reintroduction or reinforcement
- Management of invasive alien species
- Establishment of protected areas
- Implementation of conservation plans
- Monitoring and evaluation of conservation outcomes
- Focuses on improving the condition of species (or reducing the impact of invasive alien species) through activities beyond area-based conservation or restoration measures.
- Reducing human-induced mortality of protected species
- Preventing stakeholder conflicts and promoting coexistence with protected species
- Improving the acceptance of protected species
- Implementing species-specific action plans
- Raising public awareness and engagement in species conservation

Expected Outcomes:

- Improved conservation status of species and habitats: This includes increased population sizes, expanded habitat ranges, and reduced threats to biodiversity.
- Enhanced management and resilience of Natura 2000 network sites: This involves improved management plans, effective monitoring systems, and increased capacity for addressing threats to protected areas.
- Contribution to the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Projects should align with the broader objectives of the strategy and contribute to its successful implementation.

- Demonstration of innovative approaches and best practices: Projects should showcase innovative solutions and approaches to nature conservation that can be replicated and scaled up.
- Increased public awareness and engagement: Projects should actively involve stakeholders and raise public awareness about the importance of nature conservation.

D.Scope Relevance

The LIFE-2024-SAP-NAT call aligns closely with the objectives of Toural by supporting projects that promote sustainable tourism and biodiversity conservation in a manner that resonates with Toural's core principles. Specifically, the call prioritizes projects that:

- **Enhance the conservation status of species and habitats:** This aligns with Toural's focus on protecting and promoting natural assets and biodiversity in the outermost regions. Projects funded under this call could directly contribute to the preservation of marine ecosystems, coastal habitats, and the species that inhabit them, thereby strengthening the foundation for sustainable tourism development.
- **Improve the management and resilience of Natura 2000 network sites:** This resonates with Toural's emphasis on responsible tourism practices and environmental governance. By supporting projects that enhance the management of protected areas, the call indirectly contributes to the preservation of natural and cultural resources that are crucial for eco-tourism initiatives.
- **Support the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030:** This overarching goal aligns with Toural's vision of fostering a new ecological focus in tourism development. Projects funded under this call could contribute to the broader objectives of the Biodiversity Strategy, such as restoring degraded ecosystems, promoting sustainable use of natural resources, and combating invasive alien species.

2.4.3.2 *LIFE-2024-STRAT-two-stage*

A. Key Information

Call title	Strategic Nature and Integrated Projects (SNAP/SIP)
Call Reference	LIFE-2024-STRAT-NAT-SNAP-two-stage
Domain of interest	Nature and Biodiversity
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Open
Period of Validity	16/05/2024 – 05/09/2024 - 06/03/2025
Application deadline	5 September 2024 (1st stage) 6 March 2025 (2nd stage)
Periodicity	2-stage (also, possibility to re-occur with different call reference in the future)
Call Budget	€155,500,000
Indicative budget range per project	5 million €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	30 projects
Max Funding rate	60%
Call URLs	https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/life/wp-call/2021-2024/call-fiche_life-2024-strat-two-stage_en.pdf

Keywords	Nature. Biodiversity. Conservation. Strategic Nature Projects. Natura 2000. EU Biodiversity Strategy

B. Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- EU Member States: All 27 member states of the European Union are eligible.
- Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs): Linked to the following Member States:
- Denmark
- France
- Netherlands
- EFTA countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland can participate under certain conditions, as outlined in the LIFE Regulation.

B.2 Eligible Entities

- Public administrations at national, regional, and local levels
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Universities and research institutions
- Businesses and industries

B.3 Other Conditions

- **Co-financing:** Projects must secure co-financing to cover the portion of the project costs not funded by the LIFE program. The maximum co-financing rate varies depending on the specific project type and priority area.
- **Duration:** Projects typically have a maximum duration, which can range from 18 to 36 months depending on the project type and specific priorities.
- **Alignment with EU environmental and climate policy:** Projects must contribute to the implementation of relevant EU environmental and climate policies and legislation.
- **No double funding:** Projects cannot receive funding from other EU funding sources for the same activities.
- **Additionality:** Projects must demonstrate that they go beyond what would be achieved without LIFE funding, showcasing their added value and impact.
- **Sustainability:** Projects should aim for long-term sustainability and have a plan for continuing their activities and benefits beyond the funding period.
- **Partnerships:** While not mandatory for all project types, partnerships with other organizations can strengthen proposals and demonstrate a collaborative approach.

C. Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

C.1 Space for Nature

Focus: Improving the condition of species and habitats through area-based conservation or restoration measures.

Activities may include:

- Habitat restoration and improvement
- Species reintroduction or reinforcement
- Management of invasive alien species
- Establishment of protected areas
- Implementation of conservation plans
- Monitoring and evaluation of conservation outcomes

C.2 Safeguarding Our Species

Focus: Improving the condition of species (or reducing the impact of invasive alien species) through activities beyond area-based conservation or restoration measures.

Activities may include:

- Reducing human-induced mortality of protected species
- Preventing stakeholder conflicts and promoting coexistence with protected species
- Improving the acceptance of protected species
- Implementing species-specific action plans
- Raising public awareness and engagement in species conservation

D. Scope Relevance

The LIFE-2024-SAP-NAT call aligns closely with the objectives of Toural by supporting projects that promote sustainable tourism and biodiversity conservation, resonating with Toural's core principles.

- **Enhance the conservation status of species and habitats:** This directly supports Toural's focus on protecting and promoting natural assets and biodiversity in the outermost regions. Projects funded under this call could contribute to the preservation of marine and coastal ecosystems, that is a crucial issue for sustainable tourism development.
- **Improve the management and resilience of Natura 2000 network sites:** This resonates with Toural's emphasis on responsible tourism and environmental governance. Supporting projects that enhance the management of protected areas indirectly contributes to preserving natural and cultural resources essential for eco-tourism.
- **Support the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030:** This overarching goal aligns with Toural's vision of fostering a new ecological focus in tourism development. Projects funded under this call could contribute to the broader objectives of the Biodiversity Strategy, such as restoring degraded ecosystems and promoting sustainable use of natural resources.

2.5 European Social Fund+

2.5.1 Overview

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) is the European Union's main instrument for investing in people. With a total budget of €99.3 billion for the 2021-2027 programming period, the ESF+ will continue to play a crucial role in supporting EU Member States in their efforts to achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, particularly in the areas of employment, education and social inclusion. The ESF+ is a continuation of the ESF, which has been running since 1958. The ESF+ has been strengthened and expanded to reflect the new challenges and opportunities facing the EU in the 21st century. The ESF+ will support a wide range of activities, including:

- **Training and education:** To help people acquire the skills they need to get a job and stay employable in the changing economy.
- **Apprenticeships and traineeships:** To provide young people with the opportunity to gain on-the-job experience and develop their skills. Support for entrepreneurship: To help people start and run their own businesses.
- **Social inclusion:** To help people who are marginalized or disadvantaged to participate fully in society.

The ESF+ will be implemented by Member States through Operational Programs (OPs). OPs are multi-annual plans that set out how the ESF+ will be used in each Member State. OPs must be approved by the European Commission. The ESF+ is a co-financing instrument, which means that Member States must also contribute to the funding of ESF+ projects. The co-financing rate varies from Member State to Member State, but it is typically between 50% and 80%. The ESF+ is expected to make a significant contribution to achieving the EU's objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The ESF+ will help to create more jobs, reduce poverty and social exclusion, and improve the skills and qualifications of the European workforce.

2.5.2 Funding relevance

1. **Underwater Cultural Heritage:**
   - **Job creation:** Development of diving centers, museums, and tourism services creates new employment opportunities in rural areas, contributing to ESF+ goals of increasing employment and labor mobility.
   - **Skills development:** Training local communities in diving, guiding, and hospitality services enhances skills and supports lifelong learning, aligning with ESF+ investment in education and skills.
2. **Cultural and Creative Tourism:**
   - **Social inclusion:** Engaging local artists, craftspeople, and communities promotes social inclusion and preserves cultural heritage, supporting ESF+ priorities of social inclusion and combating poverty.
   - **Job creation:** Developing cultural and creative tourism businesses creates new employment opportunities, particularly for vulnerable groups, contributing to ESF+ goals of increasing employment.
   - **Skills development:** Training local communities in cultural tourism management, marketing, and hospitality enhances skills and supports lifelong learning.
3. **Science Tourism:**
   - **Skills development:** Promoting science tourism encourages interest in STEM fields and supports skills development in science and technology, aligning with ESF+ investment in education and skills.
   - **Job creation:** Developing science tourism creates new jobs in research centers, museums, and tourism services, contributing to ESF+ goals of increasing employment.
   - **Supporting the digital transition:** Science tourism can promote digital skills and innovation, aligning with ESF+ support for the digital transition.

2.5.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

2.6 ERDF

2.6.1 Overview

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is a key instrument of the EU's regional policy, aiming to strengthen economic and social cohesion by correcting imbalances between regions. It invests in innovation and research to support businesses, provides financial assistance to SMEs, funds projects promoting energy efficiency and sustainable transport, and invests in broadband infrastructure for digital connectivity. The ERDF provides funding to EU regions based on their development level, with less developed regions receiving more. Funding is allocated to projects aligned with the ERDF's objectives and the EU's goals for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. These projects are selected and managed by national and regional authorities in partnership with the European Commission. Key features of the ERDF include the partnership principle, requiring close cooperation between stakeholders; concentration of resources on key priorities; additionality, where ERDF funding complements national funding; and sustainability, ensuring projects contribute to long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The ERDF has significantly supported economic development, job creation, infrastructure improvement, innovation, business competitiveness, environmental protection, and social inclusion. With a budget exceeding €200 billion for 2021-2027, it focuses on supporting green and digital transitions, promoting innovation and competitiveness, and strengthening social inclusion.

2.6.2 Funding relevance

1. Underwater Cultural Heritage:

- **Preservation and restoration of cultural heritage:** The ERDF prioritizes investments in protecting and preserving cultural heritage. Projects focused on underwater archaeological sites (e.g., surveying, conservation, and creating underwater museums) could be eligible for funding.

- **Developing tourism infrastructure:** The ERDF supports investments in tourism infrastructure. Funding could be used to develop diving centers, improve access to coastal areas with underwater heritage, or create visitor centers and museums showcasing underwater finds.
- **Promoting sustainable tourism:** The ERDF emphasizes sustainable tourism development. Projects that promote responsible diving practices, minimize environmental impact, and involve local communities in managing underwater cultural heritage would align with this priority.

2. Cultural and Creative Tourism:

- **Supporting cultural and creative industries:** The ERDF recognizes the importance of cultural and creative industries for regional development. Funding could support the creation of workshops, studios, and cultural spaces, as well as training programs for artists and craftspeople.
- **Developing cultural tourism infrastructure:** The ERDF can support investments in cultural tourism infrastructure, such as museums, galleries, and performance venues. It could also fund the development of digital platforms and apps to promote cultural and creative tourism experiences.
- **Revitalizing urban and rural areas:** The ERDF aims to revitalize regions by leveraging their cultural and creative assets. Projects that use cultural and creative tourism to regenerate historic towns, develop rural tourism, and create new economic opportunities would be relevant.

3. Science Tourism:

- **Investing in research and innovation:** The ERDF prioritizes investments in research and innovation infrastructure. Funding could support the development of science centers, museums, and interactive exhibits that showcase scientific achievements and promote STEM education.
- **Promoting digital technologies:** The ERDF supports the development of digital technologies and infrastructure. Projects that use digital tools to enhance science tourism experiences, such as virtual reality tours of research facilities or interactive science apps, could be eligible for funding.
- **Developing skills and competencies:** The ERDF aims to develop skills and competencies for the future workforce. Science tourism projects that offer educational programs, workshops, and training opportunities in STEM fields would align with this priority.

4. Silver Tourism:

- **Promoting social inclusion:** The ERDF aims to promote social inclusion and combat discrimination. Projects that develop accessible tourism infrastructure and services for seniors, ensuring they can fully participate in tourism activities, would be relevant.
- **Developing health and wellness tourism:** The ERDF supports the development of health and wellness tourism. Funding could be used to create specialized wellness programs for seniors, improve accessibility to health and wellness facilities, and promote healthy aging through tourism activities.
- **Extending the tourism season:** The ERDF encourages initiatives that extend the tourism season and create year-round economic activity. Silver tourism projects that offer activities and experiences tailored to seniors during the off-season could be eligible for funding.

2.6.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

2.7 InvestEu

2.7.1 Overview

InvestEU is the EU's flagship investment program, designed to boost sustainable investment, innovation, and job creation across Europe. It builds on the success of the previous Investment Plan for Europe (the Juncker Plan) and aims to mobilize over €372 billion in public and private investment by 2027.

Objectives:

- **Support sustainable investments:** InvestEU focuses on financing projects that contribute to the EU's key priorities, including the European Green Deal, the digital transition, and social resilience.
- **Mobilize private investment:** It uses an EU budget guarantee to crowd in private investment, encouraging banks and other investors to participate in financing projects.
- **Simplify access to finance:** InvestEU provides a single point of entry for accessing EU funding, making it easier for businesses and project promoters to find the support they need.
- **Address market gaps:** It focuses on areas where the market is failing to provide sufficient financing, such as innovative projects, SMEs, and social infrastructure.

Key features:

- **Focus on sustainability:** InvestEU prioritizes investments that contribute to environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and good governance.
- **Additionality:** InvestEU funding must mobilize additional private investment and should not crowd out private financing.
- **Risk-sharing:** The EU budget guarantee allows financial partners to take on more risk, increasing the availability of financing for innovative and high-impact projects.
- **Advisory support:** InvestEU provides advisory support to project promoters to help them develop and implement their projects.

2.7.2 Funding relevance

1. Underwater Cultural Heritage:

- **Sustainable Infrastructure:** InvestEU's Sustainable Infrastructure window could support projects related to:
  - **Preserving underwater archaeological sites:** Funding could be secured for projects focused on the conservation, restoration, and protection of these sites, including the development of sustainable tourism infrastructure like underwater trails and museums.
  - **Developing coastal and maritime tourism:** InvestEU could support investments in sustainable and accessible tourism infrastructure in coastal areas, such as eco-friendly diving centers, visitor centers, and improved access points to underwater heritage sites.
- **SMEs:** The SME window could provide financing and guarantees to:
  - **Small diving businesses:** Support could be given to diving centers, equipment rental companies, and tour operators specializing in underwater cultural heritage tourism.
  - **Local businesses involved in the value chain:** This includes restaurants, accommodation providers, and businesses offering related services like boat tours and underwater photography.

2. Cultural and Creative Tourism:

- **Research, Innovation, and Digitization:** This InvestEU window could support:
  - **Digital platforms for cultural tourism:** Funding could be secured to develop online platforms and mobile applications that promote cultural and creative experiences, provide virtual tours, and connect tourists with local artists and artisans.
  - **Innovative cultural and creative projects:** InvestEU could support the development of new and innovative cultural products and experiences, such as interactive museum exhibits, immersive art installations, and cultural festivals.
- **SMEs:** The SME window could provide financing to:
  - **Cultural and creative enterprises:** Support could be given to artists, craftspeople, and small businesses operating in the cultural and creative sectors, such as galleries, workshops, and design studios.
  - **Tourism businesses offering cultural experiences:** This includes tour operators, accommodation providers, and businesses offering cultural tours, workshops, and events.

3. Science Tourism:

- **Research, Innovation, and Digitization:** This InvestEU window could support:
  - **Developing interactive science museums and centers:** Funding could be secured to create engaging and interactive exhibits that promote science education and attract tourists interested in science and technology.
  - **Promoting digital tools for science tourism:** InvestEU could support the development of virtual reality experiences, augmented reality applications, and online platforms that enhance science tourism experiences and provide access to scientific information.
- **SMEs:** The SME window could provide financing to:
  - **Science-related tourism businesses:** Support could be given to businesses offering science tours, workshops, and educational programs, as well as those developing innovative science tourism products and services.

4. Silver Tourism:

- **Social Investment and Skills:** This InvestEU window could support:
  - **Developing accessible tourism infrastructure for seniors:** Funding could be secured to improve accessibility in hotels, transportation, and tourist attractions, making it easier for seniors to travel and participate in tourism activities.
  - **Promoting health and wellness tourism for seniors:** InvestEU could support the development of specialized health and wellness programs and facilities tailored to the needs of older adults.
- **SMEs:** The SME window could provide financing to:
  - **Businesses catering to senior tourists:** Support could be given to hotels, travel agencies, and tour operators offering specialized services for seniors, such as accessible transportation, customized tours, and healthcare assistance.

2.7.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

2.8 Just Transition Fund

2.8.1 Overview

The Just Transition Fund (JTF) is a key funding instrument of the European Union aimed at supporting regions and communities most affected by the transition towards a climate-neutral economy. It is specifically designed to help those areas heavily reliant on fossil fuels (like coal, peat, and oil shale) or carbon-intensive industries to diversify their economies and create new jobs while mitigating the social and economic impacts of this transition.

2.8.2 Funding relevance

1. Underwater Cultural Heritage:

- **Limited direct relevance:** Unless the region with underwater cultural heritage is also significantly reliant on fossil fuels or carbon-intensive industries, the JTF might not be the primary funding source.
- **Potential indirect relevance:** If the development of underwater cultural heritage tourism is part of a broader strategy to diversify the local economy away from fossil fuels, then there could be a case for JTF funding. For example:
  - **Creating new jobs:** Developing diving centers, museums, and tourism services related to underwater cultural heritage can create new employment opportunities in a region transitioning away from fossil fuel industries.
  - **Reskilling workers:** Former employees of fossil fuel industries could be trained for new roles in tourism, such as diving instructors, guides, or museum staff.
  - **Environmental rehabilitation:** If the underwater cultural heritage site is located in an area affected by industrial pollution or degradation, JTF funding could support environmental rehabilitation efforts.

2. Cultural and Creative Tourism:

- **Potential for social inclusion:** In regions experiencing economic hardship due to the decline of fossil fuel industries, cultural and creative tourism can contribute to social inclusion and community revitalization. JTF funding could support:
  - **Cultural and creative initiatives:** This could include workshops, festivals, and community-based projects that promote social cohesion and provide opportunities for vulnerable groups.
  - **Reskilling and upskilling:** JTF funding could support training programs for local artists, craftspeople, and tourism operators to develop skills relevant to cultural and creative tourism.

3. Science Tourism:

- **Potential link to green technologies:** If the science tourism activities focus on renewable energy, environmental sustainability, or climate change mitigation, there could be a connection to the JTF's objective of supporting the transition to a green economy. For example:
  - **Promoting research and innovation:** JTF funding could support science centers and museums that showcase green technologies and promote STEM education in fields relevant to the green transition.
  - **Developing skills in green technologies:** JTF funding could support educational programs and training opportunities in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and other green sectors.

4. Silver Tourism:

- **Limited direct relevance:** Silver tourism generally has less direct relevance to the JTF's focus on fossil fuel-dependent regions.
- **Potential indirect relevance:** If the region is experiencing economic decline due to the transition away from fossil fuels, silver tourism could contribute to economic diversification and job creation. JTF ***funding might be possible if the project:***
  - **Creates jobs for local residents:** Developing silver tourism services can create new employment opportunities in healthcare, hospitality, and tourism for residents of affected communities.
  - **Supports social inclusion:** Silver tourism can promote social inclusion and combat ageism, which could be particularly relevant in regions facing social and economic challenges due to industrial decline.

2.8.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

2.9 REACT-EU

2.9.1 Overview

REACT-EU (Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe) is a European Union initiative that provides financial support to EU member states to help them recover from the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is part of the broader NextGenerationEU recovery plan and aims to promote a green, digital, and resilient recovery.

Objectives:

- **Support crisis repair:** REACT-EU provides funding for immediate measures to address the consequences of the pandemic, such as supporting healthcare systems, preserving jobs, and helping businesses stay afloat.
- **Boost economic and social recovery:** It finances investments that promote sustainable and inclusive growth, focusing on green and digital transitions.
- **Strengthen regional resilience:** REACT-EU helps regions to become more resilient to future shocks by investing in areas such as healthcare, social infrastructure, and climate change adaptation.

  Key features:

- **Focus on recovery:** REACT-EU is specifically designed to address the immediate and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Flexibility:** It provides Member States with flexibility in how they use the funding to address their specific needs and priorities.
- **Complementarity:** REACT-EU complements other EU funding instruments, such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), to maximize the impact of the recovery effort.

2.9.2 Funding relevance

1. Underwater Cultural Heritage:

- **Job creation and skills development:** REACT-EU aims to support job creation and skills development, particularly in sectors impacted by the pandemic. Developing underwater cultural heritage tourism can contribute to this by:
    - **Creating jobs:** Establishing diving centers, museums, and tourism services related to underwater cultural heritage can generate employment opportunities in coastal communities.
    - **Providing training:** REACT-EU funding could support training programs for local residents in diving, guiding, and hospitality services, equipping them with skills relevant to the tourism sector.
- **Sustainable tourism development:** REACT-EU encourages sustainable tourism practices. Projects that promote responsible diving, minimize environmental impact, and involve local communities in managing underwater cultural heritage would align with this priority.

2. Cultural and Creative Tourism:

- **Supporting cultural and creative industries:** REACT-EU recognizes the importance of cultural and creative industries for economic recovery. Funding could support:
    - **Digitalization of cultural experiences:** Developing online platforms, virtual tours, and digital tools to promote cultural and creative tourism can help these industries adapt to the changing tourism landscape.
    - **Resilience of cultural businesses:** REACT-EU could provide financial support to cultural and creative businesses, such as artists, craftspeople, and cultural venues, to help them to recover from the pandemic and build resilience.
- **Promoting sustainable and authentic tourism:** REACT-EU encourages tourism that respects local traditions and promotes cultural heritage. Developing authentic cultural and creative tourism experiences aligns is fully coherent with this priority.

3. Science Tourism:

- **Investing in research and innovation:** REACT-EU supports research and innovation in areas relevant to recovery. Science tourism projects that promote scientific knowledge and innovation could be eligible for funding, particularly if they focus on:
    - **Health and wellbeing:** Projects that showcase scientific advancements in healthcare, disease prevention, and healthy living could be relevant to REACT-EU's focus on strengthening healthcare systems.
    - **Digital technologies:** Science tourism initiatives that promote digital skills and innovation in areas such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and data science could align with REACT-EU's focus on the digital transition.
- **Developing skills and competencies:** REACT-EU aims to support skills development for the future workforce. Science tourism projects that offer educational programs and training opportunities in STEM fields could be relevant.

4. Silver Tourism:

- **Supporting the tourism sector:** REACT-EU aims to support the recovery of the tourism sector, which was heavily impacted by the pandemic. Silver tourism can contribute to this by:

- **Extending the tourism season:** Developing activities and experiences that attract senior tourists during the off-season can help businesses generate revenue throughout the year.
- **Promoting health and wellness tourism:** Silver tourism can be linked to health and wellness activities, which align with REACT-EU's focus on promoting healthy living and strengthening healthcare systems.

- **Social inclusion:** REACT-EU aims to address social exclusion and support vulnerable groups. Silver tourism can contribute to this by providing opportunities for seniors to participate in social and recreational activities.

2.9.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

3. Sea-basin Funding Instruments - Adriatic-Ionian and Black Sea

3.1 INTERREG Cross- border collaboration between neighbouring Countries

3.1.1 Overview

INTERREG is a key instrument of the European Union's cohesion policy that encourages economic, social, and territorial development across its Member States and neighboring Countries. Focusing on cross-border cooperation, Interreg funds projects that address common challenges and opportunities faced by regions along borders. This cooperation fosters joint solutions in areas such as:

- Economic development: Supporting innovation, entrepreneurship, and the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- Social inclusion: Addressing issues like unemployment, poverty, and access to healthcare and education.
- Environmental protection: Promoting sustainable resource management, climate change adaptation, and biodiversity conservation.
- Improving governance: Strengthening cross-border institutional capacity and cooperation among local and regional authorities.

INTERREG operates through different programs, each tailored to specific geographic areas and priorities. These programs involve partnerships between regional and local authorities, as well as various organizations from different sectors in the participating Countries.

3.1.2 Funding relevance

INTERREG Cross-border collaboration programs present invaluable opportunities to cultivate and enhance the tourism value chains outlined. These programs, inherently designed to nurture cooperation and integrated development between neighboring regions, are exceptionally well-suited to support the collaborative and transnational nature of these tourism initiatives.

INTERREG serves as a vital source of funding and support for projects seeking to develop these value chains. This encompasses financial backing for infrastructure enhancements, such as developing accessible trails to cater to the Silver Tourism market or supporting the digitalization of cultural heritage sites to enrich the Cultural & Creative Tourism experience. Moreover, it facilitates skills development and training programs, empowering local communities engaged in these tourism sectors.

Beyond funding, INTERREG fosters cross-border partnerships intrinsically linked to the success of these value chains. In the realm of Underwater Cultural & Nature Heritage Tourism, INTERREG can facilitate collaborations between diving centers, archaeologists, and marine biologists across borders. This fosters the creation of joint tourism offerings and ensures sustainable management of shared underwater heritage. Similarly, within Cultural Science Tourism, INTERREG can catalyze partnerships between museums, research institutions, and educational organizations across national boundaries, enabling the development of joint programs that attract a wider and more diverse audience.

Furthermore, INTERREG supports innovation within the tourism sector. This commitment is manifested in the measures supporting the development of cutting-edge technologies, such as augmented reality applications that enhance the experience of cultural heritage sites or virtual reality experiences that allow immersive underwater exploration. It also extends to fostering innovative approaches to tourism management, including the development of cohesive cross-border marketing campaigns and the creation of unified ticketing systems for cultural attractions, streamlining the visitor experience.

Moreover, INTERREG is deeply invested in ensuring the sustainability of these tourism value chains. By encouraging responsible tourism practices, supporting environmental protection initiatives, and promoting social

inclusion, INTERREG guarantees that these tourism initiatives generate tangible benefits for local communities and contribute to the long-term preservation of invaluable natural and cultural resources.

Available funding	6.7 billion €
Period of Validity	2021-2027
URL	https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border_en

3.1.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

3.2 Interreg IPA Adrion Programme

3.2.1 Overview

IPA ADRION is a **European transnational cooperation programme** that invests in regional innovation systems, cultural and natural heritage protection, environmental resilience, sustainable transport, capacity building and skills development.

3.2.2 Funding relevance

The Interreg IPA Adrion Programme presents a unique opportunity for the Adriatic-Ionian region's tourism sector by strategically aligning with and supporting the development of diverse tourism value chains. By enhancing transnational cooperation and promoting sustainable development, the program can fully harness the region's rich potential in cultural, natural, and scientific tourism. Through innovative actions and collaborative initiatives, the program can highlight the region's unique identity, attract a wide range of visitors, and promote responsible and sustainable forms of tourism.

Specifically, the program fosters the growth of Cultural & Creative Tourism by encouraging projects that showcase and preserve the region's unique cultural heritage. This includes supporting the development of cross-border cultural routes that link historical sites, museums, and artisan workshops, promoting traditional crafts and performing arts, and organizing joint cultural festivals and events. Furthermore, the program encourages the use of digital technologies to enhance the visitor experience, such as creating virtual tours of cultural heritage sites and developing interactive museum exhibits.

Recognizing the importance of sustainable tourism, the Interreg IPA Adrion Programme actively promotes the responsible development of Underwater Cultural & Nature Heritage Tourism. This commitment is demonstrated through the support for projects that prioritize the protection and sustainable management of marine and coastal environments, including the development of eco-friendly diving practices and monitoring tourism's impact on marine ecosystems. Additionally, the program encourages cross-border collaboration to protect shared underwater cultural heritage, such as shipwrecks and submerged archaeological sites, by facilitating joint research, capacity building for marine archaeologists, and the development of transnational conservation strategies.

Furthermore, the program actively promotes Cultural Science Tourism by supporting initiatives that connect science and tourism. This includes developing engaging science museums and visitor centers, organizing interactive science festivals and workshops, and creating educational tourism programs that showcase the region's scientific achievements and expertise. By facilitating partnerships between research institutions and universities across borders, the program fosters scientific exchange and strengthens the region's reputation as a hub for scientific innovation.

Finally, the Interreg IPA Adrion Programme recognizes the growing importance of Silver Tourism and actively supports its development by promoting accessible tourism infrastructure, such as adapted accommodation, transportation, and tourist attractions. It encourages the development of health and wellness tourism offerings, including thermal spas and specialized healthcare services, catering to the specific needs and interests of senior travelers. Moreover, the program facilitates cross-border healthcare cooperation to ensure that senior tourists have access to quality care while traveling across the region.

Available funding	160 million €
Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	https://www.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu/

3.2.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

3.3 Interreg Euro-MED

3.3.1 Overview

The Interreg Euro-MED Programme supports cooperation across Mediterranean borders. The Programme provides funds for projects developed and managed by public administrations, universities, private and civil society organizations.

3.3.2 Funding relevance

The Interreg Euro-MED Programme offers a powerful framework for enriching the Mediterranean's tourism offerings by fostering innovative and sustainable approaches to the development of key tourism value chains. Its emphasis on transnational cooperation and integrated development creates fertile ground for cultivating unique and enriching experiences that celebrate the region's rich cultural heritage, stunning natural landscapes, and scientific achievements.

By promoting a shared Mediterranean identity, the program empowers projects that weave together cross-border cultural routes, showcasing the diverse tapestry of traditions, crafts, and artistic expressions that define the region. It breathes life into the Cultural & Creative Tourism sector by supporting the digitalization of cultural heritage sites, fostering cultural entrepreneurship, and encouraging dynamic collaborations between artists and creative businesses across the Mediterranean.

Being aware of the delicate balance between tourism and environmental conservation, the Interreg Euro-MED Programme advocates for the sustainable development of Underwater Cultural and Natural Heritage Tourism. It prioritizes the protection of marine and coastal ecosystems by supporting eco-friendly diving practices, responsible tourism initiatives, and comprehensive monitoring of tourism's impact on marine biodiversity. At the same time, it encourages integrated coastal management strategies, bringing together stakeholders from various sectors and countries to ensure the long-term health of these invaluable underwater treasures.

Recognizing the power of knowledge and innovation, the program actively promotes Cultural Science Tourism by supporting the development of engaging science museums and visitor centers, organizing captivating science festivals and workshops, and creating immersive educational tourism programs that highlight the region's scientific contributions. By facilitating dynamic networks and collaborations between research institutions, universities, and businesses, the program fosters a vibrant ecosystem for knowledge transfer and innovation, attracting curious minds eager to explore the Mediterranean's scientific landscape.

Furthermore, the Interreg Euro-MED Programme champions accessible and inclusive tourism for all, with a particular focus on the needs of senior travelers. It supports the development of accessible tourism infrastructure,

provides specialized training for tourism professionals to enhance their understanding of age-friendly practices, and promotes destinations that cater to the specific needs and desires of senior citizens. By encouraging the development of health and wellness tourism offerings, including rejuvenating thermal spas and specialized healthcare services, the program ensures that the Mediterranean remains an attractive and welcoming destination for travelers of all ages.

In summary, the Interreg Euro-MED Programme acts as a catalyst for the sustainable and integrated development of tourism in the Mediterranean region. By fostering cross-border partnerships, promoting innovation, and prioritizing environmental and social responsibility, the program unlocks the full potential of these tourism value chains, contributing to the economic prosperity and overall well-being of the region.

Available funding	294 million €
Period of Validity	2021-2027
URL	https://interreg-euro-med.eu/en/

3.3.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

3.4 Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme

3.4.1 Overview

The Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme 2021-2027 strengthens the existing links between the participating countries and builds new ones in the field of research and innovation and environmental protection. The Programme builds upon and deepens cross-border cooperation in the Black Sea Basin area in a transnational configuration.

3.4.2 Funding relevance

The Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme, with its focus on transnational cooperation and sustainable development, provides a robust framework for enhancing the tourism value chains of the Black Sea region. By fostering innovation, knowledge transfer, and environmental protection, the program creates fertile ground for cultivating unique and enriching tourism experiences that leverage the region's diverse cultural heritage, stunning natural landscapes, and scientific potential.

A key initiative focuses on developing tourism within the Black Sea region, encompassing three distinct areas. In Cultural & Creative Tourism, the Programme encourages the creation of cross-border routes that connect the diverse traditions, crafts, and artistic heritage of the region. This is facilitated by digitizing cultural sites, supporting cultural businesses, and building networks between artists and creative professionals across borders, ultimately helping local communities showcase their unique cultural identities to a broader audience.

Understanding the ecological significance of the Black Sea, the program prioritizes the sustainable development of Underwater Cultural and Natural Heritage Tourism. This includes funding research and innovation in marine conservation, promoting eco-friendly diving practices, and implementing responsible tourism initiatives. The program also emphasizes the importance of closely monitoring tourism’s impact on marine ecosystems to preserve underwater heritage sites such as shipwrecks and submerged archaeological remains.

The program also fosters Cultural Science Tourism by supporting the development of engaging science museums and visitor centers. It facilitates the organization of interactive science festivals, workshops, and educational tourism programs that highlight the region’s scientific achievements and expertise. Through strategic partnerships between research institutions, universities, and businesses, the program creates a dynamic environment for

knowledge sharing and innovation, enhancing the Black Sea region's reputation as a center for scientific discovery and exploration.

In summary, the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme seeks to improve the tourism sector by integrating cultural, environmental, and scientific elements. Through collaboration, innovation, and sustainability, the program positions the Black Sea region as a vibrant, responsible, and forward-thinking destination, appealing to a wide range of visitors.

Available funding	94.46 million €
Period of Validity	2021-2027
URL	https://www.blacksea-cbc.net/

3.4.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

3.5 Interreg NEXT MED

3.5.1 Overview

NEXT MED is implemented under strand B 'Transnational cooperation' of the external dimension of Interreg, allowing for cooperation over larger transnational territories or around sea basins between EU Member States and Southern Neighborhood partner countries. The Programme aims to contribute to smart, sustainable, fair development for all across the Mediterranean basin by supporting balanced, long-lasting, far-reaching cooperation and multilevel governance.

The main mission of the program is to fund collaborative projects that address common socio-economic, environmental, and governance challenges at the Mediterranean level. These challenges include:

- Adoption of advanced technologies
- Enhancement of competitiveness for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and creation of new jobs
- Improvement of energy efficiency
- Sustainable water resource management
- Adaptation to the impacts of climate change
- Transition to a circular economy with efficient resource use
- Strengthening education and training
- Upgrading healthcare services

3.5.2 Funding relevance

The Interreg NEXT MED Programme, with its focus on transnational cooperation and sustainable development across the Mediterranean, offers a powerful framework for enhancing the tourism value chains you've described. By fostering innovation, knowledge transfer, and integrated approaches, the program cultivates unique and enriching tourism experiences that leverage the region's rich cultural heritage, stunning natural landscapes, and scientific potential.

For Cultural & Creative Tourism, the program encourages the development of cross-border cultural routes that weave together the diverse tapestry of traditions, crafts, and artistic expressions found throughout the Mediterranean. By supporting the digitalization of cultural heritage sites, promoting cultural entrepreneurship, and fostering collaborations between artists and creative businesses across borders, the program empowers local communities to showcase their unique cultural identities and attract a wider audience.

Recognizing the ecological significance of the Mediterranean Sea, the program actively promotes the sustainable development of Underwater Cultural & Nature Heritage Tourism. By supporting research and innovation in marine conservation, the program encourages the development of eco-friendly diving practices, responsible tourism initiatives, and comprehensive monitoring of tourism's impact on marine biodiversity. This commitment to environmental protection ensures that the region's underwater treasures can be enjoyed by generations to come.

In addition, the program fosters the growth of Cultural Science Tourism by supporting the development of engaging science museums and visitor centers, organizing interactive science festivals and workshops, and creating immersive educational tourism programs that showcase the region's scientific achievements and expertise. By facilitating partnerships between research institutions, universities, and businesses across the Mediterranean, the program fosters a vibrant ecosystem for knowledge transfer and innovation, attracting curious minds eager to explore the region's scientific landscape.

Available funding	253 million €
Period of Validity	2021-2027
URL	https://www.interregnextmed.eu/

3.5.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

3.6 Interreg IPA South Adriatic

3.6.1 Overview

The Interreg IPA South Adriatic 2021-2027 is a cross-border cooperation Programme co-funded by the European Union through the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA III) with a total budget of 81.258.768,19 euro (including 17,51% co-financing). It widely builds on the results of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro programme 2014-2020.

3.6.2 Funding relevance

The Interreg IPA South Adriatic Programme, with its focus on cross-border cooperation and sustainable development in the Adriatic-Ionian region, presents a unique opportunity to enhance and diversify the tourism offerings of participating countries. By fostering partnerships, promoting innovation, and prioritizing environmental protection, the program can effectively contribute to the growth and sustainability of various tourism value chains.

In the field of Cultural and Creative Tourism, the programme supports the creation of cross-border cultural routes that connect the region's diverse traditions, artistic expressions, and historical landmarks. By facilitating the digitalization of cultural heritage, promoting cultural entrepreneurship, and encouraging collaboration between artists and creative industries across borders, the programme empowers local communities to celebrate their unique cultural identities and attract a wider audience of visitors.

Due to the significant ecological importance of the Adriatic Sea, the programme actively supports the sustainable development of Underwater Cultural and Natural Heritage Tourism. By investing in research and innovation in marine conservation, the programme promotes eco-friendly diving practices, responsible tourism initiatives, and strict monitoring of tourism's impact on marine biodiversity. This commitment to environmental protection ensures that underwater treasures, such as shipwrecks and submerged archaeological sites, remain accessible for future generations to explore and enjoy.

The development of Cultural Science Tourism is considered essential. Therefore, the programme supports the creation of engaging science museums and visitor centers, the organization of interactive science festivals and workshops, and the development of educational tourism programs that highlight the region's scientific achievements and expertise. By facilitating partnerships between research institutions, universities, and businesses in the Adriatic-Ionian region, the programme creates a dynamic ecosystem for knowledge transfer and innovation, attracting individuals eager to discover the region's scientific heritage.

Available funding	81.25 million €
Period of Validity	2021-2027
URL	https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/

3.6.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

4. NATIONAL FUNDING INSTRUMENTS-GREECE

4.1 ESPA

4.1.1 Overview

ESPA 2021-2027 in Greece is a crucial funding instrument for promoting employment, social inclusion, and education. It's part of the EU's Cohesion Policy and has a significant budget allocated to address Greece's specific needs and priorities.

4.1.2 Funding relevance

1. Integrated Cultural & Creative Tourism Value Chains:

- **Skills Development:** ESPA invests in training and skills upgrading. Connecting local artisans, artists, and cultural heritage sites through tourism can create opportunities for training programs in areas such as cultural heritage management, digital promotion, and sustainable tourism development.
- **Social Inclusion:** ESPA aims to promote the social inclusion of vulnerable groups. Integrating artists and artisans into tourism activities can create employment and social inclusion opportunities for these groups.

2. Multi-dimensional Tourism Offerings:

- **Innovation in Tourism:** ESPA supports innovation and entrepreneurship. Combining different forms of tourism and developing innovative tourism packages contributes to strengthening the competitiveness of the tourism sector.

3. Macro-Regional Cooperation and Value Chains:

- **Regional Development:** ESPA aims for balanced regional development. Macro-regional cooperation in tourism can contribute to the development of less developed areas and reduce regional disparities.

4. Digital Technologies and Value Chain Integration:

- **Digital Transformation:** ESPA promotes digital transformation in all sectors, including tourism. The development of digital platforms and the use of new technologies in tourism are directly linked to this priority.

5. Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Value Chains:

- **Sustainable Tourism Development:** ESPA supports sustainable development, including sustainable tourism. Promoting sustainable tourism practices and supporting businesses that adopt such practices are aligned with the objectives of ESPA.

Available funding	26.1 billion €
Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	https://www.espa.gr/

4.1.3 Relevant calls

4.1.3.1 *Promotion of sales and mainly of SME exports of the North Aegean Region*

A.Key Information

Call title	Promotion of sales and mainly of SME exports of the North Aegean Region
Call Reference	Προώθηση των πωλήσεων και κυρίως των εξαγωγών
Domain of interest	Enhancing the competitiveness and export capacity of businesses in the North Aegean region of Greece.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	19 December 2024
Periodicity	Periodic

Call Budget	4 million €
Indicative budget range per project	60.0000-300.000 €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	15
Max Funding rate	50%
Call URLs	https://www.espa.gr/Lists/Proclamations/Attachments/6575/9%CE%990%CE%977%CE%9B%CE%A9-1%CE%95%CE%A3.pdf
Keywords	SMEs. Exports. Competitiveness. Innovation. Internationalization.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

North Aegean Region: This includes the following islands:

- Lesvos
- Chios
- Samos
- Ikaria
- Limnos
- Psara
- Oinousses
- Fournoi Korseon

B.2 Eligible entities

SMEs: The call is specifically targeted towards existing very small, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as defined in Annex IV of the call documentation.

Located in the North Aegean Region: The business must be located and operate within the eligible geographical areas of the North Aegean region (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Ikaria, Limnos, and the smaller islands).

Active businesses: The businesses must have been active for at least two full fiscal years (2022 and 2023) before the application submission date. This means they should have filed the necessary tax documents for those years.

Legal forms: Eligible businesses can be sole proprietorships, partnerships, limited liability companies, or other legal forms allowed for businesses in Greece.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

. **1. Enhancing Digital Presence and E-commerce:**

- **Developing or upgrading e-shops:** Creating or improving online stores with features like secure payment gateways, product catalogs, and customer management systems.
- **Digital marketing and promotion:** Implementing digital marketing strategies, including search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and online advertising campaigns.
- **Developing digital content:** Creating high-quality photos, videos, and other digital content to showcase products and services online.
- **Participating in online marketplaces and platforms:** Joining relevant online marketplaces and B2B platforms to reach wider audiences and potential buyers.

2. Improving Product and Service Innovation:

- **Developing new or improved products and services:** Investing in research and development to create innovative products and services that meet market demands.
- **Upgrading production processes:** Modernizing production processes and adopting new technologies to improve efficiency and product quality.
- **Obtaining certifications and quality labels:** Acquiring certifications and quality labels (e.g., organic, fair trade) to enhance product value and appeal to specific markets.

3. Expanding into New Markets:

- **Market research and analysis:** Conducting market research to identify potential export markets and understand consumer preferences.
- **Developing export strategies:** Creating comprehensive export strategies that include market entry plans, distribution channels, and marketing approaches.
- **Participating in trade fairs and exhibitions:** Attending international trade fairs and exhibitions to showcase products and services to potential buyers and partners.
- **Building international networks:** Developing relationships with potential distributors, agents, and partners in target export markets.

4. Strengthening Business Skills and Capacity:

- **Training and skills development:** Providing training programs for employees in areas such as digital marketing, export management, and foreign languages.
- **Consulting and mentoring:** Offering consulting services and mentoring support to help businesses develop and implement their export strategies.
- **Improving business management practices:** Implementing modern management practices and tools to enhance efficiency and competitiveness.

D.Scope relevance

1. Alignment with Regional Development Priorities:

- **Supporting RIS3:** The call directly supports the Regional Smart Specialization Strategy (RIS3) of the North Aegean region by prioritizing investments in sectors identified as having high growth potential, such as tourism, agri-food, and the blue economy.
- **Addressing regional challenges:** The call tackles key challenges faced by businesses in the North Aegean, such as limited access to markets, low competitiveness, and a need for digital transformation.

2. Focus on Enhancing Competitiveness:

- **Export promotion:** The call explicitly focuses on enhancing export capacity, helping businesses in the North Aegean to reach new markets and increasing their international competitiveness.
- **Innovation and digitalization:** It supports investments in innovation, digital technologies, and e-commerce, which are crucial for businesses in order to adapt to the changing global market.
- **Skills development:** The call promotes training and capacity building for businesses, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in international markets.

3. Supporting Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs):

- **Targeted support:** The call specifically targets SMEs, which are the backbone of the North Aegean economy.
- **Addressing specific needs:** It recognizes the specific challenges faced by SMEs, such as limited resources and access to finance, and provides tailored support to overcome these obstacles.
- **Promoting entrepreneurship:** By supporting SMEs, the call contributes to a more dynamic and entrepreneurial business environment in the region.

4. Contribution to Economic Development:

- **Boosting exports:** The call aims to increase exports from the North Aegean region, contributing to economic growth and job creation.

- **Attracting investment:** By enhancing the competitiveness of businesses, the call can attract foreign investment and stimulate economic activity in the region.
- **Promoting diversification:** The call supports the diversification of the regional economy by encouraging businesses to explore new markets and sectors.

5. Potential for Long-Term Impact:

- **Sustainable growth:** By promoting innovation, digitalization, and export orientation, the call contributes to the long-term sustainable growth of the North Aegean economy.
- **Resilience:** It strengthens the resilience of businesses in the region, making them better equipped to face future challenges and economic shocks.
- **Social impact:** By supporting businesses and creating employment opportunities, the call can have a positive social impact, improving living standards and reducing inequalities in the region.

4.1.3.2 *Comprehensive tourism promotion program of the Region of Epirus*

A.Key Information

Call title	Comprehensive tourism promotion program of the Region of Epirus
Call Reference	Ολοκληρωμένο πρόγραμμα τουριστικής προβολής της Περιφέρειας Ηπείρου
Domain of interest	**Showcasing Epirus' diverse offerings:** Highlighting its natural beauty, cultural heritage, history, and gastronomy. **Developing innovative promotional materials:** Creating compelling digital and print materials to attract visitors. **Utilizing digital platforms:** Leveraging online channels and technologies for wider reach and engagement. **Organizing promotional events:** Participating in tourism fairs and hosting events to raise awareness. **Supporting sustainable tourism:** Promoting responsible practices that benefit both the environment and local communities.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Open
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	28 February 2025
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	1 million €
Indicative budget range per project	Not specified
Estimated number of projects to be funded	Not specified
Max Funding rate	Not specified
Call URLs	https://www.espa.gr/Lists/Proclamations/Attachments/6587/6%CE%93787%CE%9B9-%CE%A474.pdf
Keywords	Tourism promotion. Destination marketing. Cultural Heritage. Natural beauty. Gastronomy. Digital marketing. Sustainable tourism.

4.2 Greece 2.0

4.2.1 Overview

Greece 2.0 is the Country's National Recovery and Resilience Plan, funded by the European Union's Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). It's a comprehensive plan with a budget of €30.5 billion to help Greece recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and build a more resilient, sustainable, and digital economy.

4.2.2 Funding relevance

1. Integrated Cultural & Creative Tourism Value Chains:

- **Digital Transformation:** Greece 2.0 emphasizes digitalization. Creating digital platforms for promoting and showcasing cultural tourism aligns directly with this goal.
- **Sustainable Development:** Greece 2.0 promotes sustainable development practices. Incorporating sustainable practices in cultural tourism (e.g., promoting local products, reducing environmental footprint) contributes to achieving this goal.

2. Multi-dimensional Tourism Offerings:

- **Innovation in Tourism:** Greece 2.0 supports innovation. Combining different forms of tourism and creating new, enriched tourist experiences, it contributes to innovation and competitiveness in the tourism sector.

3. Macro-Regional Cooperation and Value Chains:

- **Regional Development:** Greece 2.0 aims for balanced regional development. Macro-regional cooperation in tourism can contribute to developing areas with tourism potential across the country.

4. Digital Technologies and Value Chain Integration:

- **Digital Skills:** Greece 2.0 invests in developing digital skills. Using digital tools and platforms in tourism (e.g., for bookings, promotion, management) demands the development of such skills by those working in the sector.

5. Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Value Chains:

- **Green Transition:** Greece 2.0 focuses on the green transition. Adopting sustainable tourism practices contributes to environmental protection and developing a more sustainable tourism model.
- **Social Cohesion:** Greece 2.0 aims to strengthen social cohesion. Inclusive tourism, which considers the needs of all social groups, is directly linked to this goal.

Available funding	35.95 billion €
Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	https://greece20.gov.gr/

4.2.3 Relevant calls

4.2.3.1 *Support for Diving and Underwater Tourism*

A.Key Information

Call title	Support for Diving and Underwater Tourism
Call Reference	Ενισχύσεις Καταδυτικού και Υποβρύχιου Τουρισμού
Domain of interest	Improving and expanding diving tourism infrastructure and services in Greece
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	20 December 2024
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	50 million €
Indicative budget range per project	50.000-300.000 €

Estimated number of projects to be funded	Approx. 160
Max Funding rate	100%
Call URLs	https://greece20.gov.gr/?calls=ypovoli-aitiseon-enischysis-odigos-efarmogis-gia-to-programma-kratikis-enischysis-me-titlo-enischyseis-katadytikoy-toyrismoy
Keywords	Underwater attractions. Artificial reefs. Sustainability. Marine environment. Diving parks. Museums

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

All of Greece: The call for proposals explicitly states that the geographical scope covers the entire country. This means that eligible entities from any region in Greece can apply.

B.2 Eligible entities

- **Diving centers and schools:** Businesses that offer diving courses, equipment rental, and guided dives.
- **Liveaboard diving operators:** Companies that offer multi-day diving trips on specialized vessels.
- **Underwater tourism service providers:** Businesses that provide services related to underwater tourism, such as underwater photography, videography, and guided tours of underwater archaeological sites or marine parks.
- **Accommodation providers with a focus on diving tourism:** Hotels, resorts, and guesthouses that cater specifically to divers.
- **Businesses:** operators involved in the manufacturing or supply of diving equipment.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

1. Improving Diving Infrastructure and Services:

- **Establishing or upgrading diving centers:** Creating new diving centers or modernizing existing ones with improved facilities, equipment, and services.
- **Developing diving parks and trails:** Creating organized diving parks with marked trails, underwater signage, and interpretation panels to enhance the diving experience and protect marine ecosystems.
- **Investing in safety and accessibility:** Improving safety measures, such as providing emergency equipment and training, and enhancing accessibility for divers with disabilities.
- **Developing innovative diving experiences:** Offering unique and specialized diving experiences, such as night diving, wreck diving, cave diving, and underwater photography tours.

2. Promoting Sustainable Diving Tourism:

- **Adopting eco-friendly practices:** Implementing environmentally friendly practices in diving operations, such as reducing waste, conserving water, and using renewable energy sources.
- **Protecting marine biodiversity:** Supporting initiatives that protect marine biodiversity and ecosystems, such as coral reef conservation and responsible fishing practices.
- **Raising awareness about marine conservation:** Educating divers about marine conservation and responsible diving practices.

3. Enhancing the Visitor Experience:

- **Developing digital tools and platforms:** Creating websites, mobile apps, and virtual tours to provide information about diving sites, services, and marine life.
- **Improving accessibility and information:** Providing clear and accessible information about diving sites, regulations, and safety procedures in multiple languages.
- **Developing complementary tourism offerings:** Creating packages that combine diving with other activities, such as cultural tours, gastronomy experiences, and nature exploration.

4. Strengthening the Diving Tourism Sector:

- **Promoting diving tourism:** Implementing marketing and promotion campaigns to attract divers from Greece and abroad.
- **Developing professional skills:** Providing training programs for diving instructors, guides, and other professionals in the diving tourism sector.
- **Supporting innovation and entrepreneurship:** Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship in the diving tourism sector, such as developing new technologies and services.

D.Scope relevance

1. Alignment with Greece 2.0 and Tourism Strategy:

- **Supporting Greece 2.0:** This call directly contributes to the goals of Greece 2.0, the national recovery and resilience plan, by promoting sustainable tourism development and economic growth.
- **Enhancing tourism competitiveness:** It aligns with Greece's tourism strategy by focusing on diversification and developing niche tourism products, such as diving and underwater tourism.
- **Promoting the blue economy:** It supports the development of the blue economy by investing in sustainable marine tourism and promoting the protection of marine ecosystems.

2. Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in Diving Tourism:

- **Untapped potential:** The call recognizes the significant potential of diving tourism in Greece, with its rich marine biodiversity, underwater archaeological sites, and diverse coastline**.**
- **Improving infrastructure and services:** It addresses the need for improved infrastructure, services, and safety standards in the diving tourism sector.
- **Promoting sustainability:** It emphasizes the importance of sustainable practices in diving tourism to protect the marine environment and ensure the long-term viability of the sector.

3. Focus on Innovation and Quality:

- **Developing innovative experiences:** The call encourages the development of innovative and unique diving experiences, such as underwater archaeological tours and diving parks.
- **Enhancing quality and safety:** It promotes investments in safety equipment, training, and accessibility to ensure high-quality and safe diving experiences.
- **Digitalization:** It encourages the use of digital technologies to enhance the visitor experience and promote diving tourism.

4. Supporting Businesses and Creating Jobs:

- **Targeted support:** The call specifically is targeted to businesses operating in the diving and underwater tourism sector, providing them with financial support to invest and grow.
- **Job creation:** By promoting the development of diving tourism, the call contributes to job creation in coastal communities and supports local economies.
- **Entrepreneurship:** It encourages entrepreneurship and innovation in the diving tourism sector, fostering the creation of new businesses and services.

5. Potential for Long-Term Impact:

- **Sustainable tourism development:** The call promotes sustainable and responsible diving tourism practices, contributing to the long-term protection of the marine environment.
- **Economic growth:** It supports the growth of a niche tourism sector with high potential, contributing to the diversification and resilience of the Greek economy.
- **Regional development:** By encouraging investments in diving tourism infrastructure and services across Greece, the call can contribute to regional development and reduce disparities between regions.

5. NATIONAL FUNDING INSTRUMENTS-ITALY

5.1 Invitalia's Smart Start

5.1.1 Overview

Invitalia's Smart&Start Italia is a program designed to boost innovation and entrepreneurship in Italy. It offers financial incentives and support to innovative startups, helping them to launch and grow their businesses.

5.1.2 Funding relevance

1. Integrated Cultural & Creative Tourism Value Chains:

- **Innovative platforms:** Creating digital platforms for showcasing and promoting cultural tourism can be considered an innovative idea with commercial potential. Startups developing such platforms could be funded by Smart&Start.
- **Cutting-edge technologies:** Incorporating cutting-edge technologies (e.g., augmented reality, virtual reality) into cultural experiences can enhance the attractiveness of tourism products. Startups developing such technologies in the tourism sector could also be eligible for funding.

2. Multi-dimensional Tourism Offerings:

- **Innovative tourism packages:** Creating combined tourism packages that combine different forms of tourism (e.g., cultural tourism with agri-food or nature activities) can be a subject of funding for a tourism startup.

3. Macro-Regional Cooperation and Value Chains:

- **Cross-border platforms:** Developing digital platforms that promote tourism at macro-regional level can strengthen cooperation between regions and be a subject of funding for a startup operating in the tourism sector.

4. Digital Technologies and Value Chain Integration:

- **Digital tools for tourism:** Startups that develop innovative digital tools for tourism (e.g., mobile applications, booking systems, promotional tools) can benefit from the Smart&Start program.

5. Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Value Chains:

- **Sustainable tourism businesses:** Startups that promote sustainable tourism practices (e.g., eco-friendly accommodation, activities with a low environmental footprint, slow and low carbon activies) can be eligible for funding from Smart&Start.

Available funding	800 million €
Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	https://www.invitalia.it/cosa-facciamo/creiamo-nuove-aziende/smartstart-italia

5.1.3 Relevant calls

5.1.3.1 *Incentives for innovative startups*

A.Key Information

Call title	Incentives for innovative startups
Call Reference	Incentivi per le startup innovative
Domain of interest	Providing financial and technical support to innovative startups in Italy
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Open
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	N/A
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	N/A

Indicative budget range per project	0.1-1.5 million €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	N/A
Max Funding rate	80-90%
Call URLs	https://www.invitalia.it/eng/what-we-do/services/startups
Keywords	Start-ups

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- Italy

B.2 Eligible entities

Innovative Startups: This call is exclusively for innovative startups as defined by Italian law (Law Decree No. 179/2012). This includes:

- **Registered in Italy:** The startup must be registered in the special section of the Register of Companies dedicated to innovative startups.
- **Age:** The startup must have been established for no more than 60 months at the time of application.
- **Shareholder requirements:** The majority of the startup's shares cannot be held by large companies.
- **Investment in R&D:** The startup must invest a certain percentage of its expenses in research and development activities.
- **Technological focus:** The startup's activities must have a strong technological focus, often involving new technologies or innovative solutions.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

1. Research and Development (R&D):

- **Developing new products and services:** Funding for research and development activities aimed at creating innovative products, services, or processes.
- **Prototyping and testing:** Support for building prototypes, conducting pilot projects, and testing new technologies.
- **Acquiring R&D equipment and infrastructure:** Funding for purchasing equipment, software, and other resources needed for R&D activities.

2. Business Development and Growth:

- **Marketing and commercialization:** Support for marketing and commercialization activities, including market research, branding, and sales promotion.
- **Hiring skilled personnel:** Funding for recruiting and training highly skilled personnel, such as engineers, developers, and researchers.
- **Expanding operations:** Support for expanding the startup's operations, including opening new offices, hiring more staff, and increasing production capacity.
- **Internationalization:** Support for entering new markets and expanding internationally, including participation in trade fairs and missions.

3. Digital Transformation:

- **Developing digital technologies:** Funding for developing and implementing digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and cloud computing.
- **Improving digital infrastructure:** Support for upgrading IT infrastructure and adopting new digital tools and platforms.
- **Enhancing cybersecurity:** Funding for implementing cybersecurity measures to protect the startup's data and intellectual property.

4. Sustainability and Green Innovation:

- **Developing sustainable products and processes:** Funding for developing and implementing environmentally friendly products, services, and production processes.
- **Adopting circular economy principles:** Support for implementing circular economy principles, such as reducing waste, reusing materials, and recycling.
- **Investing in green technologies:** Funding for adopting green technologies, such as renewable energy sources and energy-efficient equipment.

D.Scope relevance

1. Alignment with Italian Innovation Policy:

- **Supporting the National Innovation Strategy:** The call directly supports Italy's National Innovation Strategy, which aims to foster a more innovative and competitive economy by promoting the creation and growth of innovative startups as well as their role in the implementation of the Strategy itself.
- **Enhancing the startup ecosystem:** It contributes to strengthen the Italian startup ecosystem by providing financial and technical support to startups at various stages of development.
- **Attracting investment:** By providing incentives to innovative startups, the call can attract both domestic and foreign investments in strategic sectors.

2. Addressing Challenges Faced by Startups:

- **Access to finance:** The call addresses the challenge of access to finance for startups by providing grants, equity investments, and other financial incentives.
- **Technical expertise:** It recognizes the need for technical expertise and support by offering mentoring, training, and networking opportunities.
- **Regulatory environment:** It helps startups navigate the regulatory environment and access relevant resources and information.

3. Focus on Innovation and Technology:

- **Promoting high-growth potential:** The call prioritizes startups with high-growth potential and a strong focus on innovation and access to cutting-edge technologies.
- **Supporting key sectors:** It encourages the development of startups in strategic sectors, such as ICT, biotech, green tech, and creative industries.
- **Driving digital transformation:** It supports the adoption of digital technologies and the development of innovative solutions that can contribute to Italy's digital transformation.

4. Contribution to Economic Growth:

- **Job creation:** By supporting the growth of innovative startups, the call contributes to job creation and economic development in Italy.
- **Boosting competitiveness:** It helps to enhance the competitiveness of the Italian economy by fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Attracting talent:** The call can attract talented entrepreneurs and skilled professionals to Italy, contributing to the improvement of the Country's human capital.

5. Potential for Long-Term Impact:

- **Building a sustainable innovation ecosystem:** The call contributes to building a sustainable and dynamic innovation ecosystem in Italy, which can drive long-term economic growth and social progress.
- **Fostering a culture of entrepreneurship:** It encourages a culture of entrepreneurship and risk-taking, which is essential for innovation and economic development.
- **Addressing societal challenges:** By supporting innovative startups, the call can contribute to addressing societal challenges in areas such as healthcare, environment, and education.

5.1.3.2 *Development Contracts*

A.Key Information

Call title	Development Contracts
Call Reference	Contratti di Sviluppo
Domain of interest	Supporting large-scale investments that promote industrial development and economic growth in Italy.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Open
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	N/A
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	N/A
Indicative budget range per project	1.5 million €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	N/A
Max Funding rate	80%
Call URLs	https://www.invitalia.it/cosa-facciamo/sosteniamo-grandi-investimenti/contratto-di-sviluppo/accordo-di-sviluppo
Keywords	Investment. Economic development. Job creation. Innovation. Sustainability. Regional development.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- Italy

B.2 Eligible entities

Large Enterprises: This program is primarily aimed at supporting large enterprises, unlike some other Italian programs that focus on SMEs.

Specific Conditions: To be eligible, companies must meet at least *one* of the following conditions**:**

- **Number of Employees:** Have more than 250 employees (including temporary workers and part-time employees) across all their locations in Italy.
- **Owners of Historical Brands:** Own "historical brands of national interest," which are brands with significant historical and cultural value to Italy.
- **Strategic Importance:** Hold assets and relationships that are considered strategically important for the national interest, regardless of the number of employees. This could include companies involved in critical sectors or those with significant contributions to the Italian economy.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

1. Production Projects:

- **Industrial investments:** These projects involve investments in new or existing production facilities, including:
  - **Construction or modernization of plants:** Building new factories or modernizing existing ones to increase production capacity, improve efficiency, or adopt new technologies.

- **Acquisition of machinery and equipment:** Purchasing new machinery, equipment, and technologies to enhance production processes and product quality.
- **Diversification of production:** Expanding into new product lines or markets to increase competitiveness and resilience.

2. Environmental Projects:

- **Sustainable development:** These projects focus on investments that contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development, including:
  - **Renewable energy:** Investing in renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, and hydro power.
  - **Energy efficiency:** Implementing energy efficiency measures in industrial processes and buildings.
  - **Circular economy:** Adopting circular economy principles, such as reducing waste, reusing materials, and recycling.
  - **Pollution reduction:** Investing in technologies and processes to reduce pollution and environmental impact.

3. Research and Development (R&D) Projects:

- **Innovation and technology:** These projects support investments in research and development activities that lead to innovation and technological advancement, including:
  - **Developing new technologies and products:** Conducting research and development to create new or improved products, processes, and services.
  - **Creating R&D centers and laboratories:** Establishing new research and development centers or upgrading existing facilities.
  - **Collaborating with research institutions:** Partnering with universities and research institutions to conduct joint research projects.

D.Scope relevance

1. Alignment with Italian Industrial Policy:

- **Supporting national strategic objectives:** The program aligns with Italy's industrial policy objectives by promoting investments in key sectors, such as manufacturing, green technology, and innovation.
- **Enhancing competitiveness:** It aims to enhance the competitiveness of Italian businesses by supporting large-scale investments that improve productivity, efficiency, and technological advancement.
- **Attracting foreign investment:** The program can attract foreign direct investment by offering incentives to international companies that wish to invest in Italy.

2. Addressing Challenges Faced by Large Enterprises:

- **Supporting major investments:** The program recognizes that large-scale investments often require significant financial resources and provides support to overcome this barrier.
- **Promoting collaboration:** It encourages collaboration between companies and research institutions, fostering innovation and knowledge transfer.
- **Facilitating complex projects:** It provides a streamlined process for approving and managing complex investment projects, reducing bureaucratic hurdles.

3. Focus on Industrial Development and Growth:

- **Stimulating economic growth:** By supporting large-scale investments, the program contributes to economic growth and job creation in Italy.
- **Modernizing industrial sectors:** It encourages the modernization of traditional industries and the development of emerging sectors, such as green technology and digital technologies.
- **Promoting regional development:** It incentivizes investments in less developed areas of Italy, contributing to balanced regional development and reducing economic disparities.

4. Contribution to Sustainability:

- **Promoting green investments:** The program explicitly supports investments in environmental protection, renewable energy, and sustainable development, contributing to Italy's green transition.
- **Encouraging circular economy:** It promotes the adoption of circular economy principles in industrial processes, reducing waste and resource consumption.
- **Supporting environmental remediation:** It can fund projects aimed at remediating environmental damage and promoting sustainable land management.

5. Potential for Long-Term Impact:

- **Strengthening industrial base:** The program contributes to strengthening Italy's industrial base and enhancing its long-term competitiveness in the global market.
- **Creating high-quality jobs:** By supporting investments in advanced technologies and innovation, the program promotes the creation of high-quality jobs and skills development.
- **Promoting sustainable development:** The program's focus on environmental sustainability contributes to Italy's efforts to achieve its climate goals and transition to a more sustainable economy.

5.2 ISMEA Agritourism Fund

5.2.1 Overview

The ISMEA Agritourism Fund is a financial instrument in Italy aimed at supporting the development and modernization of agritourism businesses. It is managed by ISMEA (Istituto di Servizi per il Mercato Agricolo Alimentare), a public entity that provides services for the agricultural and food market.

5.2.2 Funding relevance

1. Integrated Cultural & Creative Tourism Value Chains:

- **Enriching the agritourism experience:** Integrating cultural and creative activities (e.g., craft workshops, visits to cultural heritage sites) can enrich the agritourism experience and attract new visitors. This aligns with the fund's objective of improving the quality of agritourism services.
- **Collaboration with local actors:** Collaboration with local artists, artisans, and cultural organizations can boost the local economy and create new employment opportunities, contributing to the fund's goal of supporting rural economies.

2. Multi-dimensional Tourism Offerings:

- **Product diversification:** Combining different forms of tourism (e.g., agritourism with cultural tourism or ecotourism) can create new, attractive tourism packages and attract a wider audience. This can enhance the competitiveness of agritourism businesses, which is supported by the fund.

3. Macro-Regional Cooperation and Value Chains:

- **Networking and collaboration:** Macro-regional cooperation in agritourism can strengthen networks between businesses and organizations in different areas, promoting the exchange of knowledge and best practices. This can lead to more innovative and sustainable agritourism offerings.

4. Digital Technologies and Value Chain Integration:

- **Digital promotion and booking:** Using digital tools and platforms (e.g., websites, mobile apps) can facilitate the promotion and booking of agritourism services, increasing the reach of businesses and improving the visitor experience.

5. Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Value Chains:

- **Sustainable practices:** Adopting sustainable practices in agritourism (e.g., using renewable energy sources, protecting biodiversity) aligns with the fund's objectives and can enhance the attractiveness of agritourism businesses.
- **Accessibility:** Ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities and promoting inclusive tourism practices can contribute to the social and economic sustainability of rural areas.

Available funding	Not specified
Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	https://www.ismea.it/

5.2.3 Relevant calls

5.2.3.1 *Earth Generation*

A.Key Information

Call title	Earth Generation
Call Reference	Generazione Terra
Domain of interest.	Helping young people become farmers and develop sustainable agricultural businesses in Italy.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	29/11/2024
Periodicity	Open
Call Budget	35 million €
Indicative budget range per project	0.5-1.5 million €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	35
Max Funding rate	60%
Call URLs	https://www.ismea.it/Startup/GenerazioneTerra
Keywords	Young farmers. Land purchase. Agricultural entrepreneurship. Sustainable agriculture. Rural development Italy.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- Italy

B.2 Eligible entities

- **Young Individuals:** This program is specifically for individuals, not companies or organizations.
- **Age:** Applicants must be between 18 and 41 years old at the time of application**.**
- **EU Citizenship:** Applicants must be citizens of a European Union member state.
- **Residency:** They must either be residents of Italy or commit to establishing residency in Italy within 60 days of the land purchase.
- **No Prior Land Ownership:** Applicants cannot already own agricultural land exceeding 50% of the average size of farms in the region where they intend to purchase.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

1. Land Purchase:

- **Acquisition of agricultural land:** This is the core focus of the program. It provides loans to help young people purchase agricultural land in Italy. The land can be used for various agricultural activities, including:
    - Crop production (arable farming)

- Livestock farming
- Horticulture
- Forestry
- Agritourism

2. Business Start-up and Development:

- **Business plan development:** The program provides funding to help young farmers to develop a comprehensive business plan for their new agricultural activity. This includes:
  - Market analysis
  - Financial projections
  - Production plans
  - Marketing strategies
- **Start-up costs:** The program can help cover initial start-up costs, such as:
  - Purchase of machinery and equipment
  - Construction or renovation of farm buildings
  - Purchase of seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs
  - Marketing and promotion expenses

3. Promoting Sustainable Agriculture:

- **Investments in sustainable practices:** The program encourages the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, such as:
  - Organic farming
  - Precision agriculture
  - Integrated pest management
  - Water conservation
  - Renewable energy use
- **Environmental protection:** Funding can be used for activities that contribute to environmental protection, such as:
  - Biodiversity conservation
  - Soil conservation
  - Water management

D.Scope relevance

1. Addressing Agricultural Challenges in Italy:

- **Aging workforce:** The program tackles the challenge of an aging farming population in Italy by encouraging young people to enter the agricultural sector.
- **Land abandonment:** It helps to prevent land abandonment and revitalize rural areas by supporting new agricultural businesses.
- **Promoting generational renewal:** It contributes to the generational renewal of the agricultural sector, ensuring its long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

2. Focus on Youth and Entrepreneurship:

- **Empowering young people:** The program is specifically targeted to young people, providing them with opportunities to become agricultural entrepreneurs and contribute to rural development.
- **Supporting start-ups:** It offers financial and technical support to young farmers in the crucial start-up phase of their businesses.
- **Fostering innovation:** It encourages young farmers to adopt innovative approaches and technologies in agriculture, contributing to the modernization of the sector.

3. Contribution to Rural Development:

- **Revitalizing rural areas:** By supporting the establishment of new agricultural businesses, the program contributes to the economic and social revitalization of rural areas.

- **Creating jobs:** It promotes job creation in rural areas, helping to address unemployment and outmigration.
- **Preserving cultural heritage:** It supports the preservation of agricultural land and rural landscapes, which are an important part of Italy's cultural heritage.

4. Promoting Sustainable Agriculture:

- **Environmental sustainability:** The program encourages the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, contributing to environmental protection and the fight against climate change.
- **Food security:** It supports the production of high-quality food in a sustainable way, contributing to food security in Italy.
- **Biodiversity:** It promotes biodiversity conservation by encouraging practices that protect ecosystems and natural resources.

5. Potential for Long-Term Impact:

- **Ensuring the future of agriculture:** By supporting young farmers, the program contributes to ensuring the long-term viability and sustainability of the agricultural sector in Italy.
- **Strengthening rural communities:** It helps to strengthen rural communities by creating economic opportunities and promoting social inclusion.
- **Promoting a more sustainable food system:** It contributes to the development of a more sustainable and resilient food system in Italy.

5.2.3.2 *Innovation Fund - Intervention to support productivity*

A.Key Information

Call title	Innovation Fund - Intervention to support productivity
Call Reference	Fondo Innovazione - Intervento a sostegno della produttività
Domain of interest	Boost productivity in the Italian agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture sectors through technological innovation.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	13 December 2024
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	30 million €
Indicative budget range per project	0.5-1.5 million €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	30
Max Funding rate	60%
Call URLs	https://www.ismea.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/13219
Keywords	Innovation. Productivity. Sustainability. Italian agriculture.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- Italy

B.2 Eligible entities

- **Individual Enterprises:** This includes businesses of all sizes – from individual farmers and small producers to larger companies – operating in the eligible sectors**.**
- **Forms of Enterprise:** This can include sole proprietorships, partnerships, limited liability companies, cooperatives, and other legal forms of businesses recognized in Italy.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** The call also allows for public-private partnerships, where public entities (like research institutions or local authorities) collaborate with private businesses on projects.
- **Research Institutions:** Research institutions and universities can participate as partners in projects or as standalone applicants if their project focuses on research and innovation that directly benefits the agriculture, fisheries, or aquaculture sectors.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

1. Technological Innovation in Production Processes:

- **Precision agriculture:** Adopting technologies like sensors, drones, and data analytics to optimize farming practices, improve resource efficiency, and increase yields.
- **Robotics and automation:** Investing in robots and automated systems for tasks like planting, harvesting, and processing, to improve efficiency and reduce labor costs.
- **Innovative aquaculture systems:** Implementing new aquaculture technologies, such as recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) and integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA), to increase production and reduce environmental impact.
- **Modernization of fishing vessels and equipment:** Upgrading fishing vessels with advanced technologies, such as sonar systems, fish finders, and energy-efficient engines, to improve catch efficiency and sustainability.

2. Digitalization and Data Management:

- **Farm management software:** Implementing software and digital tools for farm management, including data collection, analysis, and decision-making.
- **Traceability systems:** Developing and implementing traceability systems to track products throughout the supply chain, ensuring food safety and transparency.
- **E-commerce platforms:** Creating online platforms for selling agricultural products and connecting with consumers.

3. Sustainability and Environmental Protection:

- **Renewable energy:** Investing in renewable energy sources, such as solar panels and wind turbines, to power agricultural and aquaculture operations.
- **Water management:** Implementing efficient irrigation systems and water management practices to conserve water resources.
- **Sustainable fishing practices:** Adopting sustainable fishing practices, such as selective fishing gear and responsible fishing quotas, to protect fish stocks and marine ecosystems.
- **Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions:** Implementing measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural activities, such as using low-emission fertilizers and improving livestock management.

4. Product Quality and Safety:

- **Improving product quality:** Investing in technologies and processes to improve the quality and safety of agricultural, fishery, and aquaculture products.
- **Developing new products:** Creating new and innovative products with added value, such as functional foods and organic products.
- **Implementing quality control systems:** Adopting quality control systems and certifications to ensure product safety and meet market standards.

D.Scope relevance

1. Alignment with National and EU Priorities:

- **Supporting Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP):** The call aligns with the NRRP's objectives of promoting innovation, digitalization, and sustainability in key sectors like agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture.
- **Contributing to the European Green Deal:** It supports the EU's Green Deal by encouraging investments in sustainable practices, resource efficiency, and climate change mitigation in these sectors.
- **Strengthening the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):** It complements the CAP by promoting innovation and competitiveness in the agricultural sector.

2. Addressing Challenges in the Agri-food Sectors:

- **Boosting productivity:** The call addresses the need to increase productivity and efficiency in the agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture sectors to ensure their long-term competitiveness.
- **Promoting sustainability:** It encourages the adoption of environmentally friendly practices and technologies to reduce the environmental impact of these sectors.
- **Enhancing resilience:** It supports the development of more resilient and adaptable agri-food systems that can cope with challenges like climate change and market volatility.

3. Focus on Innovation and Technology:

- **Driving technological adoption:** The call promotes the adoption of innovative technologies and digital solutions to modernize the agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture sectors.
- **Supporting research and development:** It encourages collaboration between businesses and research institutions to develop and implement new technologies and practices.
- **Fostering a culture of innovation:** It contributes to creating a culture of innovation in these sectors, encouraging businesses to embrace new ideas and approaches.

4. Contribution to Economic Growth:

- **Enhancing competitiveness:** By supporting innovation and productivity, the call helps to enhance the competitiveness of Italian agri-food businesses in national and international markets.
- **Creating jobs:** It contributes to job creation in rural areas by supporting the growth and modernization of agricultural, fishery, and aquaculture businesses.
- **Adding value:** It encourages the development of high-quality products with added value, contributing to the growth of the Italian agri-food sector.

5. Potential for Long-Term Impact:

- **Sustainable food systems:** The call contributes to the development of more sustainable and resilient food systems in Italy, ensuring food security and environmental protection.
- **Technological advancement:** It promotes technological advancement in the agri-food sectors, ensuring their long-term competitiveness and adaptability.
- **Rural development:** It supports the economic and social development of rural areas by promoting innovation and job creation in agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture.

5.3 National Villages Plan

5.3.1 Overview

The "Piano nazionale dei villaggi" (National Plan for Villages) is an Italian initiative aimed at revitalizing rural villages and promoting sustainable development in rural areas. It is a comprehensive plan with a focus on innovation, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

5.3.2 Funding relevance

1. Addressing Rural Challenges in Italy:

- **Combating depopulation:** The plan directly addresses the issue of depopulation and decline in rural villages by making them more attractive places to live, work, and visit.
- **Promoting social inclusion:** It aims to improve social inclusion and access to services in rural areas, ensuring equal opportunities for all residents.

- **Supporting rural economies:** It seeks to revitalize rural economies by promoting sustainable tourism, agriculture, and local businesses.

2. Focus on Sustainability and Innovation:

- **Environmental sustainability:** The plan emphasizes environmental sustainability by promoting green practices in agriculture, tourism, and infrastructure development.
- **Digital innovation:** It encourages the adoption of digital technologies to improve services, connect communities, and promote economic development in rural areas.
- **Social innovation:** It supports social innovation initiatives that address local challenges and promote community well-being.

3. Preserving Cultural Heritage:

- **Protecting rural landscapes:** The plan recognizes the importance of preserving rural landscapes and cultural heritage as valuable assets for tourism and community identity.
- **Promoting local traditions:** It supports the preservation and promotion of local traditions, crafts, and cultural events.
- **Enhancing cultural tourism:** It aims to enhance cultural tourism by improving access to cultural heritage sites and promoting authentic cultural experiences.

4. Empowering Local Communities:

- **Bottom-up approach:** The plan emphasizes a bottom-up approach, encouraging local communities to participate in the planning and implementation of revitalization projects.
- **Community-led development:** It supports community-led development initiatives that address local needs and priorities.
- **Strengthening social cohesion:** It aims to strengthen social cohesion and community engagement in rural areas.

5. Potential for Long-Term Impact:

- **Sustainable rural development:** The plan contributes to the long-term sustainable development of rural areas by promoting economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection.
- **Balanced territorial development:** It aims to achieve more balanced territorial development in Italy by revitalizing rural areas and reducing disparities between urban and rural regions.
- **Enhancing quality of life:** The plan aims to improve the quality of life for residents of rural villages by providing better services, creating opportunities, and promoting social inclusion.

Available funding	Not specified
Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	https://cultura.gov.it/pnrr-borghi

5.3.3 Relevant calls

5.3.3.1 *M1C3 – Investment 2.1 "Attractiveness of villages"*

A.Key Information

Call title	Attractiveness of villages
Call Reference	M1C3 – Investimento 2.1 "Attrattività dei borghi
Domain of interest	Revitalizing small historic villages in Italy to enhance their cultural attractiveness and promote sustainable tourism.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Open
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	N/A
Periodicity	On-off
Call Budget	1 billion €

Indicative budget range per project	1.2 million €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	Approx. 100
Max Funding rate	80%
Call URLs	https://pnrr.cultura.gov.it/misura-2-rigenerazione-di-piccoli-siti-culturali-patrimonio-culturale-religioso-e-rurale/2-1-attrattivita-dei-borghi/
Keywords	Villages. Cultural Heritage. Sustainable tourism. Infrastructure. Livability.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- **Eligible Country:** Italy
- **Geographical Areas of Intervention:** The program focuses on "borghi", which are defined as small historic villages with populations under 5,000 residents. These villages are located throughout Italy, and the program aims to revitalize them by enhancing their cultural attractiveness and promoting sustainable tourism.

B.2 Eligible entities

Municipalities (Comuni): The primary eligible entities are the municipalities (Comuni) where these historic villages are located. They are responsible for submitting proposals and managing the projects.

Partnerships: Municipalities can also form partnerships with other entities to implement projects, including:

- Local businesses: Such as those in the tourism, hospitality, and cultural sectors.
- Non-profit organizations: Including cultural associations and community groups.
- Universities and research institutions: For projects involving research, innovation, or cultural heritage preservation.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

. **1. Restoration and Enhancement of Cultural Heritage:**

- **Restoration of historic buildings and public spaces:** This includes restoring and preserving historic buildings, monuments, and public spaces within the borghi, such as squares, streets, and parks.
- **Creation of cultural and tourist itineraries:** Developing thematic itineraries that highlight the cultural and historical significance of the borghi, including guided tours, museums, and cultural events.
- **Promotion of traditional crafts and local products:** Supporting the preservation and promotion of traditional crafts, local products, and cultural events that showcase the unique identity of the borghi.

2. Improvement of Services and Infrastructure:

- **Upgrading public services:** Improving access to essential services, such as healthcare, education, and transportation, to enhance the quality of life in the borghi.
- **Enhancing digital connectivity:** Expanding broadband internet access and promoting the use of digital technologies in the borghi to improve connectivity and support local businesses.
- **Developing sustainable tourism infrastructure:** Investing in sustainable tourism infrastructure, such as eco-friendly accommodation, cycle paths, and walking trails.

3. Promotion of Sustainable Tourism:

- **Developing sustainable tourism initiatives:** Creating and promoting sustainable tourism experiences that respect the environment, preserve cultural heritage, and benefit local communities.
- **Marketing and promotion:** Implementing marketing,communication and sensitization campaigns to raise awareness about the borghi and attract tourists.
- **Developing tourism packages and itineraries:** Creating attractive tourism packages and itineraries that combine cultural experiences with outdoor activities, gastronomy, and other attractions.

4. Social Inclusion and Community Development:

- **Supporting social inclusion programs:** Implementing programs that promote social inclusion and address the needs of vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, youth, and people with disabilities.
- **Enhancing community spaces:** Creating and improving community spaces, such as libraries, community centers, and recreational areas.
- **Promoting cultural events and activities:** Organizing cultural events and activities that foster community engagement and social interaction.

Important Considerations:

- **Focus on small historic villages:** The projects must focus on borghi with populations under 5,000 residents.
- **Integrated approach:** The projects should adopt an integrated approach that considers the cultural, social, economic, and environmental aspects of the borghi.
- **Sustainability:** The projects should promote sustainable development and environmental protection.
- **Community involvement:** The projects should involve the local community in the planning and implementation process.

D.Scope relevance

1. Alignment with National and EU Priorities:

- **Supporting Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR):** The initiative is a key component of the PNRR, contributing to its goals of promoting sustainable tourism, cultural heritage preservation, and balanced territorial development.
- **Addressing EU Rural Development Policy:** It aligns with EU rural development policy by focusing on the revitalization of rural areas and promoting social inclusion and economic diversification.
- **Contributing to the European Green Deal:** It supports the EU's Green Deal by encouraging sustainable tourism practices and investments in green infrastructure.

2. Addressing Challenges Faced by Historic Villages:

- **Combating depopulation:** The initiative tackles the challenge of depopulation and decline in small historic villages (borghi) by making them more attractive and vibrant places to live and visit.
- **Promoting economic diversification:** It supports the diversification of rural economies by promoting tourism and creating new opportunities for local businesses.
- **Preserving cultural heritage:** It recognizes the importance of cultural heritage in attracting tourists and strengthening community identity and provides funding for its preservation and enhancement.

3. Focus on Sustainable Tourism Development:

- **Enhancing tourism offerings:** The initiative promotes the development of sustainable tourism offerings that respect the environment, preserve cultural heritage, and benefit local communities.
- **Improving infrastructure and services:** It supports investments in tourism infrastructure and services, enhancing the visitor experience and making borghi more accessible and attractive to tourists.
- **Promoting responsible tourism:** It encourages responsible tourism practices that minimize negative impacts and maximize benefits for local communities.

4. Empowering Local Communities:

- **Bottom-up approach:** The initiative encourages a bottom-up approach, empowering local authorities and communities to lead the revitalization of their borghi.

- **Community engagement:** It promotes community involvement in the planning and implementation of projects, ensuring that they reflect local needs and priorities.
- **Social inclusion:** It supports social inclusion programs that address the needs of vulnerable groups and promote social cohesion in rural communities.

5. Potential for Long-Term Impact:

- **Sustainable rural development:** The initiative contributes to the long-term sustainable development of rural areas by promoting economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection.
- **Cultural heritage preservation:** It ensures the preservation and enhancement of Italy's rich cultural heritage for future generations.
- **Enhanced quality of life:** It aims to improve the quality of life for residents of borghi by providing better services, creating opportunities, and promoting social inclusion.

6. NATIONAL FUNDING INSTRUMENTS-CROATIA

6.1 Competitiveness Development Program for the Tourism Sector

6.1.1 Overview

The "Program razvoja konkurentnosti sektora turizma" (Program for the Development of Competitiveness of the Tourism Sector) in Croatia is a government initiative aimed at strengthening the tourism sector and improving its competitiveness. It provides financial support and incentives to tourism businesses for investments that enhance the quality, sustainability, and innovation of tourism offerings in Croatia.

6.1.2 Funding relevance

1. Integrated Cultural & Creative Tourism Value Chains:

- **Enriching tourism offerings:** Connecting local artisans, artists, and cultural heritage sites can create new, attractive tourism products and enhance the competitiveness of Croatian tourism. This aligns with the program's goal of improving the quality and diversity of tourism offerings.
- **Skills development:** The program supports training for tourism professionals. Developing cultural and creative tourism may create a need for new skills (e.g., cultural heritage management, event organization).

2. Multi-dimensional Tourism Offerings:

- **Product diversification:** Combining different forms of tourism (e.g., cultural tourism, adventure tourism, gastronomic tourism) can create unique tourist experiences and attract a wider audience, contributing to the program's aim of diversifying tourism products.

3. Macro-Regional Cooperation and Value Chains:

- **Cooperation for development:** Macro-regional cooperation can enhance tourism development across Croatia, including in less developed areas, aligning with the program's focus on regional development.

4. Digital Technologies and Value Chain Integration:

- **Digital transformation:** The program promotes adopting digital technologies in tourism. Developing digital platforms, mobile applications, and other digital tools can improve visitor experience and business efficiency.

5. Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Value Chains:

- **Sustainable tourism:** The program emphasizes sustainability. Promoting sustainable tourism practices (e.g., eco-friendly accommodation, reducing environmental footprint) is directly linked to the program's goals.
- **Inclusion:** Developing tourism services accessible to all, including people with disabilities, contributes to the social dimension of tourism, which the program supports.

Available funding	91.2 billion €
Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	https://mint.gov.hr/

6.1.3 Relevant calls

6.1.3.1 *Competitiveness Development Program for the Tourism Sector*

A.Key Information

Call title	Competitiveness Development Program for the Tourism Sector
Call Reference	ROMOCIJU I JAČANJE KOMPETENCIJA STRUKOVNIH I UMJETNIČKIH ZANIMANJA ZA TURIZAM
Domain of interest.	Enhancing the quality and competitiveness of Croatian tourism through investments in innovation, sustainability, and human capital.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed

Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	14 November 2024
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	N/A
Indicative budget range per project	290.000€
Estimated number of projects to be funded	N/A
Max Funding rate	100%
Call URLs	https://mint.gov.hr/javni-pozivi-i-natjecaji-11414/t-u-r-i-z-a-m/22181
Keywords	Tourism. Skills development. Vocational training. Artistic occupations. Competency enhancement.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- Croatia

B.2 Eligible entities

Businesses: This includes a wide range of tourism-related businesses, such as**:**

- Hotels and other accommodation providers
- Restaurants and catering establishments
- Travel agencies and tour operators
- Tourist attractions and theme parks
- Businesses offering recreational activities (e.g., water sports, adventure tourism)

Forms of Business: This can include sole proprietorships, partnerships, limited liability companies, cooperatives, and other legal forms of businesses recognized in Croatia.

Public Entities: In some cases, public entities involved in tourism development, such as tourism boards or local authorities, may be eligible to apply, especially in partnership with private businesses.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

1. Improving Accommodation Quality:

- **Modernization and renovation:** Upgrading hotels, campsites, and other accommodation facilities to improve their quality, comfort, and accessibility. This can include:
  - Renovating rooms and common areas
  - Upgrading energy efficiency and adopting renewable energy sources
  - Improving accessibility for people with disabilities
  - Implementing smart technologies to enhance the guest experience

2. Developing New Tourism Products and Experiences:

- **Diversification:** Creating new and innovative tourism products and experiences that cater to different market segments and interests. This can include:
  - Adventure tourism (e.g., hiking, cycling, kayaking)
  - Cultural tourism (e.g., heritage tours, festivals, gastronomy)
  - Health and wellness tourism (e.g., spa treatments, yoga retreats)

- Ecotourism and nature-based tourism (e.g., birdwatching, wildlife tours)

3. Enhancing Sustainability:

- **Environmental protection:** Implementing environmentally friendly practices in tourism operations, such as:
  - Reducing energy and water consumption
  - Minimizing waste generation and promoting recycling
  - Protecting biodiversity and natural habitats
  - Adopting sustainable transportation options
- **Social responsibility:** Promoting social responsibility in tourism, such as:
  - Supporting local communities and businesses
  - Protecting cultural heritage
  - Ensuring fair labor practices

4. Investing in Digital Technologies:

- **Digital marketing and promotion:** Utilizing digital channels and technologies to promote Croatian tourism and reach new markets.
- **Online booking and reservation systems:** Implementing online booking systems to improve efficiency and customer experience.
- **Developing digital content and experiences:** Creating virtual tours, augmented reality applications, and other digital content to enhance the visitor experience.

5. Developing Human Capital:

- **Training and education:** Providing training programs for tourism professionals to enhance their skills and knowledge in areas such as customer service, foreign languages, and sustainable tourism practices.
- **Skills development:** Supporting initiatives that develop skills relevant to the tourism sector, such as hospitality management, digital marketing, and cultural heritage interpretation.

D.Scope relevance

1. Alignment with National Tourism Strategy:

- **Supporting national tourism goals:** The program directly supports Croatia's National Tourism Strategy by aiming to enhance the competitiveness, sustainability, and quality of the tourism sector.
- **Promoting Croatia as a destination:** It contributes to promoting Croatia as a desirable tourist destination by supporting investments in diverse tourism products and experiences.
- **Enhancing the visitor experience:** It aims to improve the overall visitor experience by supporting investments in quality accommodation, innovative tourism products, and digital technologies.

2. Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in Croatian Tourism:

- **Increasing competitiveness:** The program addresses the need to increase the competitiveness of Croatian tourism in the face of growing global competition.
- **Promoting sustainability:** It recognizes the importance of environmental and social sustainability in tourism development and encourages businesses to adopt responsible practices.
- **Diversifying tourism offerings:** It supports the diversification of tourism products and experiences to attract a wider range of visitors and reduce reliance on traditional "sun and sea" tourism.

3. Focus on Innovation and Digitalization:

- **Encouraging innovation:** The program promotes innovation in tourism by supporting the development of new products and services, as well as the adoption of new technologies.
- **Digital transformation:** It encourages the use of digital technologies to enhance the visitor experience, improve marketing and promotion, and increase the efficiency of tourism businesses.
- **Data-driven decision making:** It supports the collection and analysis of tourism data to inform decision-making and improve the effectiveness of tourism policies and strategies.

4. Developing Human Capital:

- **Investing in skills and training:** The program recognizes the importance of human capital in the tourism sector and supports investments in training and skills development for tourism professionals.
- **Improving service quality:** By enhancing the skills and knowledge of tourism professionals, the program contributes to improving the quality of service and the overall visitor experience.
- **Promoting employment:** It supports the creation of new jobs and career opportunities in the tourism sector.

5. Contribution to Economic Growth:

- **Boosting tourism revenue:** By enhancing the competitiveness and attractiveness of Croatian tourism, the program contributes to increasing tourism revenue and economic growth.
- **Supporting regional development:** It promotes investments in tourism infrastructure and services across different regions of Croatia, contributing to regional development and reducing economic disparities.
- **Strengthening the tourism value chain:** It supports the development of a strong and sustainable tourism value chain, involving various stakeholders and contributing to the overall economy.

6.1.3.2 *Public Call for the Allocation of Grants for the Development of Public Tourism Infrastructure in 2024*

A.Key Information

Call title	Public Call for the Allocation of Grants for the Development of Public Tourism Infrastructure in 2024
Call Reference	Javni poziv za dodjelu bespovratnih sredstava za razvoj javne turističke infrastrukture u 2024. godini
Domain of interest	Development of public tourism infrastructure in Croatia.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	15 April 2024
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	N/A
Indicative budget range per project	69.000€
Estimated number of projects to be funded	N/A
Max Funding rate	100%
Call URLs	https://mint.gov.hr/javni-pozivi-i-natjecaji-11414/t-u-r-i-z-a-m/22181
Keywords	Tourism. Infrastructure. Development. Sustainability.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- Croatia

B.2 Eligible entities

- Municipalities (općine) within the county.
- Public institutions relevant to tourism development (e.g., tourism boards, nature parks, museums).

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

- **Construction of new public tourism infrastructure:** This could include building new facilities or amenities that enhance tourism experience, such as visitor centers, trails, or recreational areas.
- **Reconstruction of existing public tourism infrastructure:** This could involve renovating or upgrading existing tourism facilities to improve their quality and attractiveness.
- **Equipping public tourism infrastructure:** This could include providing necessary equipment and furnishings for public tourism facilities, such as museums, visitor centers, or recreational areas.

D.Scope relevance

- **Focus on public tourism infrastructure:** The call specifically targets the development of public tourism infrastructure, indicating that projects must benefit the general public and enhance the overall tourism experience in the region.
- **Emphasis on sustainable development:** While not explicitly stated in this excerpt, the inclusion of sustainable development principles suggests that projects should consider environmental sustainability, economic viability, and social responsibility.
- **Limited scope:** The excerpt highlights a limited scope of intervention, focusing solely on construction, reconstruction, and equipping of public tourism infrastructure. It does not mention other potential areas of support, such as marketing, promotion, or tourism training programs.

6.1.3.3 *Competitiveness of the Tourism Industry*

A.Key Information

Call title	Competitiveness of the Tourism Industry
Call Reference	KONKURENTNOST TURISTIČKOG GOSPODARSTVA
Domain of interest	Enhancing the competitiveness of the Croatian tourism sector through green and digital transition.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	15 March 2024
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	N/A
Indicative budget range per project	1.4 million €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	N/A
Max Funding rate	100%
Call URLs	https://mint.gov.hr/javni-pozivi-i-natjecaji-11414/t-u-r-i-z-a-m/22181
Keywords	Competitiveness. Investment. Sustainability. Digitalization. Innovation. Green transition

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- Croatia

B.2 Eligible entities
Small business entities.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded
Mjera A - Hoteli (Measure A - Hotels)
Projects can be implemented in two categories:
Category 1:

- Construction of a new hotel or annex to an existing hotel.
- Reconstruction or extension of existing hotels.
- Raising the categorization of the hotel by at least one star.
- Equipping hotels.

Category 2:

- Digitalization of business.
- Improving energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources.
- Introduction of a sustainability management system.
- Accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Other measures (according to Article 21 of the Ordinance on the criteria for determining the categorization of hotels, apartments, rooms, and holiday homes and on the minimum conditions that must be met for the provision of catering services in the provision of accommodation services in households - "Narodne novine" no. 130/17, 51/19, 138/20, 52/22 and 146/22).

Mjera B - Kampovi (Measure B - Camps)

- Construction of a new camp.
- Reconstruction or extension of existing camps.
- Raising the categorization of the camp.
- Equipping camps.

Mjera C - Restorani (Measure C - Restaurants)
Projects can be implemented in two categories:
Category 1:

- Construction of a new restaurant or annex to an existing restaurant.
- Reconstruction or extension of existing restaurants.
- Raising the categorization of the restaurant.
- Equipping restaurants.

Category 2:

- Digitalization of business.
- Improving energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources.
- Introduction of a sustainability management system.
- Accessibility for people with disabilities.

Mjera D - OPG/Poljoprivrednik (Measure D - Family Agricultural Enterprises/Farmers)
Projects can be implemented in two categories:
Category 1:

- Construction of a new building or annex to an existing building intended for the provision of catering services on a family agricultural holding.

- Reconstruction or extension of existing buildings intended for the provision of catering services on a family agricultural holding.
- Equipping buildings intended for the provision of catering services on a family agricultural holding.

Category 2:

- Digitalization of business.
- Improving energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources.
- Introduction of a sustainability management system.
- Accessibility for people with disabilities.

Mjera E - Plovni objekti nautičkog turizma (Measure E - Vessels for nautical tourism)
Projects can be implemented in two categories:

Category 1:

- Construction of new vessels for nautical tourism (yachts, mini-cruisers, etc.).
- Reconstruction or refurbishment of existing vessels for nautical tourism.
- Equipping vessels for nautical tourism.

Category 2:

- Digitalization of business.
- Improving energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources.
- Introduction of a sustainability management system.
- Accessibility for people with disabilities.

D.Scope relevance

- **Targeted support:** The call specifically targets investments in accommodation facilities (hotels, camps), catering establishments (restaurants), and nautical tourism (vessels). This indicates a strategic approach to improving key aspects of the tourism sector.
- **Emphasis on modernization and sustainability:** The inclusion of activities like digitalization, energy efficiency, and accessibility for people with disabilities suggests a focus on modernizing tourism infrastructure and promoting sustainable practices.
- **Support for diversification:** By including Family Agricultural Enterprises/Farmers, the call promotes diversification of tourism offerings and encourages agritourism development.
- **Categorization and standards:** The emphasis on raising the categorization of hotels, camps, and restaurants highlights a focus on improving quality and meeting established standards.
- **Limited scope:** The call primarily focuses on physical investments and modernization. It doesn't appear to include support for marketing, promotion, or broader tourism development strategies.
- **Specific eligibility criteria:** The eligibility criteria for applicants (small business entities and Family Agricultural Enterprises/Farmers) define a clear target group for the funding.

6.1.3.5 Public tender for co-financing of climbing infrastructure development projects in 2024

A.Key information

Call title	Public tender for co-financing of climbing infrastructure development projects in 2024
Call Reference	Javni natječaj za sufinanciranje projekata uređenja penjačke infrastrukture u 2024.

Domain of interest	Raising the competitiveness of Croatian tourism by improving the public tourist infrastructure for the development of special forms that contribute to the quality of the tourist offer in the territory of the Republic of Croatia.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	15 May 2024
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	N/A
Indicative budget range per project	5.300 €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	N/A
Max Funding rate	100%
Call URLs	https://mint.gov.hr/javni-pozivi-i-natjecaji-11414/t-u-r-i-z-a-m/22181
Keywords	Tourists. Athletes. Investment. Sustainability.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

Croatia.

B.2 Eligible entities

Sports climbing associations and climbing clubs.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

- Renovation, arrangement and equipping of existing natural climbing areas
- Conducting training for licensed outfitters of nature courses and outfitter instructors' directions in nature
- Arrangement of access roads leading to the climbing area (the activity cannot be registered as the only one project activity).

D.Scope relevance

Focus on tourism infrastructure: The call specifically targets and encourages the renovation, arrangement and equipping of existing natural climbing areas.

The development of less developed touristic areas and rural areas: By encouraging the development of mountaineering infrastructure, it will contribute to the diversification of tourism products, increasing the safety of visitors in mountainous areas and creating sustainable year-round tourist offers.

Limited scope: Insufficient grant amount.

6.1.3.6 Public tender for co-financing projects of associations in tourism in 2024.

A. Key information

Call title	*Public tender for co-financing projects of associations in tourism in 2024.*
Call Reference	Javni natječaj za sufinanciranje projekata udruga u turizmu u 2024.
Domain of interest	Ensuring sufficient, qualified and competent staff with the aim of sustainable development, affordable tourism.

Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	15 July 2024
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	N/A
Indicative budget range per project	27.000 €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	N/A
Max Funding rate	70%
Call URLs	https://mint.gov.hr/javni-pozivi-i-natjecaji-11414/t-u-r-i-z-a-m/22181
Keywords	Young people. Unemployed. People with disabilities. Employers in tourism. Employed in tourism.

B. Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

Croatia

B.2 Eligible entities

Professional associations in tourism and/or hospitality industry
Association whose activities are related to equalizing the opportunities of people with disabilities
Professional associations in tourism and/or hospitality industry

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

- Seminars, workshops, congresses, conferences, job fairs, open days and others forms of promotional activities to motivate for education and/or career development in tourism
- Organization of the competition workshops for the general public on topics in accordance with the objectives of the Competition activities that contribute to the intensification of cooperation and interaction between professional schools/faculties, students and employers
- Training programs for employees in tourism, primarily those who come in direct contact with disabled people on the topic of caring for a disabled guest (seminars, workshops and other forms of acquiring new competences, knowledge and skills on the subject equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities)
- Training programs for people with disabilities to work in tourism and hospitality industry
- Workshops for the general public on topics in accordance with the objectives of the Call

D.Scope relevance

Targeted support: The call specifically encourages the provision of sufficient, qualified and competent personnel with the aim of sustainable development and affordable tourism.

Emphasis on people with disabilities: The funds are intended to co-finance projects that contribute to the inclusion of people with disability on the labor market in tourism, encouraging employers and tourist boards in tourism on the development of affordable tourism.

Green and digital transformation: Eligible activities are activities that contribute to green (eco certificates, adaptation to climate change, etc.) and/or digital transition (adaptation and upgrade of digital tools, innovative digital solutions and other forms) that contribute to the specific to the goal of the program area.

6.2 Available funding instruments at regional level

6.2.1 Overview

Zadar County as a unit of regional self-government approves loans to private renters in order to increase the quality of the tourist offer of family accommodation, strengthen the visibility of that segment, encourage specialization according to different target groups, create a significant strategic advantage and create preconditions for extending the season. Through this program Zadar County subsidizes the interest rate for private renters. Also, the Zadar County approves grants for the organization of events in tourism, which represents a strong motive for the arrival of tourists to destination and creates an additional offer in tourism, especially in the pre- and post-season.

6.2.2 Relevant calls

6.2.2.1 *Loans for private renters in Zadar County*

A. Key Information

Call title	Loans for private renters in Zadar County
Call Reference	Program kreditiranja privatnih iznajmljivača na području Zadarske županije
Domain of interest	To improve the quality of family accommodation, help service providers to increase the quality of service and create prerequisites for extending the tourist season.
Type of Funding	Loan
Status	Open
Period of Validity	Until funds are exhausted
Application deadline	N/A
Periodicity	N/A
Call Budget	N/A
Indicative budget range per project	The amount of the loan can be from 10.000 to 30.000 €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	N/A
Max Funding rate	The amount of the loan can be from 10.000 to 30.000 €
Call URLs	https://zadarska-zupanija.hr/stara/o-nama-gospodarstvo-turizam-eu/turizam/program-kreditiranja-privatnih-iznajmljiva%C4%8Da-na-podru%C4%8Dju-zadarske-%C5%BEupanije
Keywords	Accommodation facilities. Private renters.

B. Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

Croatia/Zadar County.

B.2 Eligible entities

Private renters

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

- Arrangement and furnishing of accommodation facilities (rooms, apartments, holiday homes...),
- Swimming pool (construction/purchase of an indoor or outdoor pool),
- Facilities for guests such as sunbeds,
- Playground for children,
- Garden with Mediterranean herbs, fruit trees, vegetable gardens...;
- Table tennis, table football, a corner with board games, bicycles for use, kayaks-canoes, pedal boats, sandolins for use and similar facilities, the use of which is included in the price,
- Room for storing bicycles (bike room), bike racks and bicycle tools, area for washing bicycles,
- Tasting room of domestic products.

D.Scope relevance

Focus on private tourism infrastructure: Private accommodation is the most numerous in the overall structure of accommodation capacities and it is precisely for this reason that it is important to invest in quality and continuously develop the offer.

Emphasis on sustainable development: With this program, Zadar County shows that it is aware of the importance of private accommodation in the economic development of the local community, that the growth of tourism and private accommodation encourages the development of other activities, from local production to various services, without which the tourist offer would be unimaginable.

Limited scope: Funds are approved exclusively for decoration, modernization (improvement of the quality of the facility), procurement of equipment for the purpose of improving or expanding the range of services, more specifically:

meet the requirements to achieve the requirements for four (4) or five (5) stars;

to expand the offer of services, improve the quality of the tourist offer and other standards of the special offer.

6.2.2.2 *Public call for granting support to events in tourism in the area of Zadar County for the year 2024*

A. Key information

Call title	Public call for granting support to events in tourism in the area of Zadar County for the year 2024
Call Reference	Javni poziv za dodjelu potpora događanjima u turizmu na području Zadarske županije za 2024. godinu
Domain of interest	Grants can be approved exclusively for tourism events held on area of the County in 2024, and which represent a strong motive for coming to the destination and enrichment of the tourist content of the destination.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed
Periodicity	N/A
Application deadline	1 March 2024
Call Budget	N/A
Indicative budget range per project	Zadar County allows users to grant support of up to 50% of justified/acceptable of the total costs of realization of an individual event.

Estimated number of projects to be funded	N/A
Max Funding rate	Grant support up to 50% of justified/acceptable of the total costs of realization of an individual event.
Call URLs	https://www.zadarska-zupanija.hr/javni-pozivi-i-potpore/javni-pozivi-i-potpore-u-tijeku/item/2182-javni-poziv-za-dodjelu-potpora-dogadanjima-u-turizmu-na-podrucju-zadarske-zupanije-za-2024-godinu
Keywords	Cultural events. Fun events. Sports events. Eno-gastronomic. Historical.

B. Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

Croatia/Zadar County.

B.2 Eligible entities

Tourist boards, Trading companies, Trades, Cooperatives/associations, Sports associations, Public institutions (except those founded by Zadar County), Cultural institutions (except those founded by Zadar County), Artistic organizations in the area of Zadar County.

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

- Equipment rental (audio and visual equipment, stage, etc.),
- Procurement of working/consumable materials related to the organization of events,
- Rental of space for holding events,
- Rental of means of transport for the purpose of transporting organizers and contractors related to
- organization of events,
- Costs of contractors and external collaborators,
- Security services,
- Other justified costs of the immediate organization of events, except for promotional ones.

D.Scope relevance

Focus on the organization of events in tourism: This program allocates funds for the implementation of events in tourism, which represents a strong motive for the arrival of tourists to the destination and create an additional offer in tourism especially in the pre-offseason.

Limited scope: The call primarily focuses on organization of events it doesn't appear to include support for promotion of the event.

7. NATIONAL FUNDING INSTRUMENTS-BULGARIA

7.1 Support Program for the Competitiveness and Innovations of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

7.1.1 Overview

Support Program for the Competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Tourism Enterprises in Bulgaria is a key initiative for boosting innovation and growth in Bulgarian tourism businesses. It is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and managed by the Ministry of Innovation and Growth.

7.1.2 Funding relevance

1. Integrated Cultural & Creative Tourism Value Chains:

- **Innovation:** Creating new cultural tourism routes, developing collaborative platforms for artists and artisans, and incorporating cutting-edge technologies (e.g., augmented reality) into cultural experiences can be considered innovative actions in tourism. The CIE (is this the acronym of what?) program supports such innovative efforts.
- **Digital Transformation:** Developing digital platforms for showcasing and promoting cultural tourism is directly linked to the digital transformation that the CIE promotes.

2. Multi-dimensional Tourism Offerings:

- **Product Diversification:** Combining different forms of tourism (e.g., cultural tourism, adventure tourism, culinary tourism) can create new and competitive tourism products, which is encouraged by the CIE.

3. Macro-Regional Cooperation and Value Chains:

- **Cooperation for Development:** Macro-regional cooperation in tourism can enhance the development of the sector across Bulgaria, which aligns with the CIE's goals for regional development.

4. Digital Technologies and Value Chain Integration:

- **Digital Tools:** Developing and using digital tools in tourism (e.g., mobile applications, booking systems, marketing tools) is directly linked to the digital transformation promoted by the CIE.

5. Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Value Chains:

- **Sustainable Practices:** Adopting sustainable tourism practices (e.g., eco-friendly accommodation, reducing environmental footprint) contributes to the sustainable development of tourism, which is encouraged by the CIE.
- **Social Inclusion:** Developing tourism services that are accessible to all, including people with disabilities, is linked to the CIE's goals for social inclusion.

Available funding	325.8 million € in total; ~~64.9~~ 45.7 million € open for applications till 2028
Period of Validity	2023-2028
URL	https://www.tourism.government.bg/bg/kategorii/aktualno/prieta-e-indikativna-godishna-rabotna-programa-igrp-po-programa

7.1.3 Relevant calls

7.1.3.1 *Development of innovations in enterprises*

A.Key Information

Call title	Development of innovations in enterprises
Call Reference	BG16RFPR001-1.001
Domain of interest	Supporting Bulgarian micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in developing innovative products, services, and processes.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed

Period of Validity	2021-2027
Application deadline	15 May 2024
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	64.9 million €
Indicative budget range per project	25.000-255.100 €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	484
Max Funding rate	25-60 %
Call URLs	https://www.mig.government.bg/programa-konkurentosposobnost-i-inovaczii-v-predpriyatiyata/proczeduri-po-pkip/razrabotvane-na-inovaczii-v-predpriyatiyata/
Keywords	Innovation. Enterprises. Development. Competitiveness. Investment. Digital transformation.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- Bulgaria

B.2 Eligible entities

Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs): Only businesses that met the EU definition of an MSME at the time of applying were eligible. This includes having:

- Fewer than 250 employees
- An annual turnover not exceeding €50 million, or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding €43 million

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

The call is focused on supporting the development of innovations in Bulgarian MSMEs. Here's a breakdown of the areas of intervention and the types of activities that could be funded:

1. Research and Development (R&D):

- **Developing new products or services:** This could include funding for activities like:
  - Conducting market research to identify needs and opportunities
  - Designing and developing new products or services with a technological focus
  - Prototyping and testing new products or services
- **Improving existing products or services:** This could involve:
  - Enhancing existing products or services with new features or functionalities
  - Improving the efficiency or sustainability of existing production processes
  - Adapting existing products or services to new markets or customer needs
- **Acquiring new technologies:** This could include funding for:
  - Purchasing new machinery, equipment, or software
  - Licensing or acquiring intellectual property rights
  - Investing in research and development infrastructure

2. Innovation Management:

- **Developing an innovation strategy:** This could involve:
  - Assessing the company's innovation capacity

- Identifying opportunities for innovation
- Developing a roadmap for implementing innovation projects

- **Implementing innovation management systems:** This could include:
  - Adopting best practices in innovation management
  - Implementing tools and processes for managing innovation projects
  - Training employees in innovation management

3. Commercialization of Innovation:

- **Marketing and promotion:** This could involve:
  - Developing marketing strategies for new products or services
  - Creating promotional materials and campaigns
  - Participating in trade fairs and exhibitions
- **Protecting intellectual property:** This could include:
  - Filing patents and trademarks
  - Registering designs and copyrights
  - Developing strategies to protect intellectual property

D.Scope relevance

1. Alignment with National Innovation Strategy:

- **Supporting IS3:** The call directly supported Bulgaria's Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization (IS3) by prioritizing investments in key sectors like mechatronics, ICT, biotechnology, and creative industries.
- **Enhancing innovation capacity:** It aimed to strengthen the innovation capacity of Bulgarian MSMEs, contributing to the country's overall goal of becoming a more innovative and knowledge-based economy.
- **Promoting economic growth:** By supporting the development of new products, services, and processes, the call aimed to stimulate economic growth and create jobs in Bulgaria.

2. Addressing Challenges Faced by MSMEs:

- **Access to finance for innovation:** The call addressed the challenge of accessing finance for innovation projects by providing grants to MSMEs.
- **Encouraging R&D:** It encouraged investment in research and development, which is crucial for innovation and competitiveness but can be challenging for MSMEs with limited resources.
- **Promoting commercialization:** It supported the commercialization of innovations, helping MSMEs to bring their new products and services to market.

3. Focus on Key Sectors and Technologies:

- **Prioritizing strategic sectors:** The call focused on sectors identified as having high growth potential in Bulgaria, aligning with the IS3 strategy.
- **Promoting technological advancement:** It encouraged the adoption of new technologies and the development of innovative solutions in these sectors.
- **Supporting digital transformation:** It supported the digitalization of businesses and the adoption of digital technologies, which are essential for competitiveness in the modern economy.

4. Contribution to Economic Development:

- **Enhancing competitiveness:** By supporting innovation, the call aimed to enhance the competitiveness of Bulgarian MSMEs in both domestic and international markets.
- **Boosting productivity:** It encouraged the development of new and improved products, services, and processes, which can lead to increased productivity and efficiency.
- **Creating high-skilled jobs:** It supported the creation of high-skilled jobs in innovative sectors, contributing to the development of human capital in Bulgaria.

5. Potential for Long-Term Impact:

- **Building a sustainable innovation ecosystem:** The call contributed to building a sustainable innovation ecosystem in Bulgaria by supporting MSMEs, encouraging R&D, and promoting collaboration between businesses and research institutions.
- **Fostering a culture of innovation:** It encouraged a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among Bulgarian businesses, which is essential for long-term economic growth and development.
- **Addressing societal challenges:** By supporting innovation in key sectors, the call could contribute to addressing societal challenges in areas such as healthcare, environment, and education.

8. NATIONAL FUNDING INSTRUMENTS-ROMANIA

8.1 State Aid Scheme for Investments in Tourism

8.1.1 Overview

State Aid Scheme is a key instrument of the European Union's Cohesion Policy in Romania, aimed at promoting balanced and sustainable development across all regions. It is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Romanian Government.

8.1.2 Funding relevance

1. Integrated Cultural & Creative Tourism Value Chains:

- **Cultural heritage and tourism:** The scheme supports tourism development and cultural heritage preservation. Connecting local artisans, artists, and cultural heritage sites through tourism helps showcase cultural heritage and enhance tourism offerings.
- **Innovation:** Creating new cultural tourism routes and developing collaborative platforms for artists and artisans can be considered innovative actions in tourism, which the scheme supports.

2. Multi-dimensional Tourism Offerings:

- **Diversifying tourism products:** Combining different forms of tourism (e.g., cultural tourism, adventure tourism, culinary tourism) can create more attractive and competitive tourism packages, aligning with the aid scheme's goal of diversifying the tourism sector.

3. Macro-Regional Cooperation and Value Chains:

- **Regional development:** Macro-regional cooperation in tourism can contribute to developing tourism in less developed regions of Romania, a goal that aligns with the Regional Operational Programmes, too.

4. Digital Technologies and Value Chain Integration:

- **Digital transformation in tourism:** Developing digital platforms, mobile applications, and other digital tools for promoting and booking tourism services is directly linked to the aid scheme's priority for digital transformation.

5. Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Value Chains:

- **Sustainable tourism:** The scheme promotes sustainable development and tourism. Adopting sustainable tourism practices (e.g., eco-friendly accommodation, reducing environmental footprint) is directly linked to this priority.
- **Social inclusion:** Developing tourism services that are accessible to all, including people with disabilities, contributes to social cohesion, which the scheme also promotes.

Available funding	775 million €
Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	https://economie.gov.ro/ajutor-de-stat-pentru-industrie/

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

Eligible Country: Romania

Geographical Areas of Intervention: While the scheme applies to the whole Country, it prioritizes investments in areas with significant tourism potential, which may include:

- Mountain resorts
- Coastal areas
- Rural areas with cultural or natural attractions
- Spa towns

B.2 Eligible entities

Tourism Enterprises: This likely includes a range of businesses operating in the tourism sector, such as:

- Hotels and accommodation providers
- Restaurants and catering establishments
- Travel agencies and tour operators
- Tourist attractions and entertainment venues

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

1. **Developing Tourist Accommodation:**
   - **Construction of new accommodation:** Building new hotels, guesthouses, resorts, or other types of tourist accommodation.
   - **Modernization of existing facilities:** Renovating and upgrading existing hotels and accommodation to improve quality and standards.
   - **Increasing accessibility:** Making accommodation accessible to people with disabilities.
   - **Implementing sustainable practices:** Incorporating energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, and waste reduction measures.
2. **Enhancing Tourist Attractions and Activities:**
   - **Developing new attractions:** Creating new tourist attractions, such as theme parks, adventure parks, museums, and cultural centers.
   - **Improving existing attractions:** Upgrading and modernizing existing tourist attractions to enhance the visitor experience.
   - **Developing outdoor recreational activities:** Creating or improving facilities for activities like hiking, cycling, water sports, and skiing.
   - **Promoting cultural and heritage tourism:** Restoring and promoting cultural heritage sites, organizing cultural events, and developing cultural tourism itineraries.
3. **Improving Tourism Infrastructure and Services:**
   - **Upgrading transportation infrastructure:** Improving roads, access points, and transportation links to tourist destinations.
   - **Developing tourist information centers:** Creating or upgrading tourist information centers to provide visitors with information and assistance.
   - **Enhancing public spaces:** Improving public spaces in tourist areas, such as parks, gardens, and pedestrian zones.
   - **Investing in digital infrastructure:** Expanding broadband internet access and developing digital platforms to promote tourism and enhance the visitor experience.

D.Scope relevance

1. Alignment with National Tourism Strategy:

- **Supporting tourism development goals:** The scheme likely aligns with Romania's national tourism strategy by promoting investments in infrastructure and services that enhance the quality and competitiveness of the tourism sector.
- **Focus on priority areas:** By prioritizing investments in areas with significant tourism potential, the scheme supports the strategic development of tourism in those regions.
- **Enhancing the visitor experience:** Investments in tourism infrastructure contribute to improving the overall visitor experience, making Romania a more attractive tourist destination.

2. Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in Romanian Tourism:

- **Improving infrastructure:** The scheme addresses the need for improved tourism infrastructure in Romania, which is crucial for attracting more visitors and enhancing their experience.

- **Promoting sustainable tourism:** It likely encourages sustainable practices in tourism development, contributing to environmental protection and responsible tourism.
- **Diversifying tourism offerings:** By supporting investments in various types of tourism infrastructure and activities, the scheme contributes to diversifying Romania's tourism offerings beyond traditional attractions.

3. Stimulating Economic Growth and Development:

- **Boosting tourism revenue:** Investments in tourism infrastructure can lead to increased tourism revenue, contributing to economic growth and job creation.
- **Supporting local businesses:** The scheme can support the development of local businesses in the tourism sector, such as hotels, restaurants, and tour operators.
- **Regional development:** By focusing on areas with tourism potential, the scheme can contribute to regional development and reduce economic disparities between regions.

4. Enhancing Romania's Tourism Competitiveness:

- **Attracting international visitors:** Improved tourism infrastructure and services can make Romania more attractive to international visitors, increasing tourism revenue and promoting the country's image.
- **Developing niche tourism markets:** The scheme may support the development of niche tourism markets, such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, and adventure tourism, further diversifying Romania's tourism offerings.
- **Enhancing sustainability:** Promoting sustainable tourism practices can enhance Romania's reputation as a responsible and eco-friendly destination.

5. Potential for Long-Term Impact:

- **Sustainable tourism development:** The scheme contributes to the long-term sustainable development of tourism in Romania by encouraging responsible practices and investments in quality infrastructure.
- **Economic growth and job creation:** Investments in tourism infrastructure can have a long-term positive impact on economic growth and job creation in Romania.
- **Regional development:** By supporting investments in specific regions, the scheme can contribute to more balanced regional development and reduce disparities.

8.1.3 Relevant calls

8.1.3.1 *Improvement of tourism infrastructure, especially in areas with valuable tourism potential, including improving access to resources and tourist attractions*

A.Key Information

Call title	Improvement of tourism infrastructure, especially in areas with valuable tourism potential, including improving access to resources and tourist attractions
Call Reference	Decision no. 9 / 2023 of Monitoring Committee of South-Eastern Development Region of Romania regarding Action 1.6 / Operation A1 “Supporting the micro-enterprises development”
Domain of interest	Improving tourism infrastructure in Romania, specifically in areas with significant tourism potential.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	30 December 2024
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	N/A
Indicative budget range per project	500.000 €

Estimated number of projects to be funded	N/A
Max Funding rate	60%
Call URLs	https://regiosudest.ro/
Keywords	Tourism. Infrastructure. Accessibility. Resources. Attractions. Development. Investment.

8.2 South-East Regional Programme - Integrated development in urban areas through urban regeneration, heritage conservation and tourism development

8.2.1 Overview

For the implementation of urban regeneration projects, the area subject to regeneration will be treated as a functional whole, with the objective of approaching in a coherent way the urban development at local authorities level s? , with an emphasis on the valorization of the socio-economic dimension alongside accessibility, mobility, innovation and environment.

8.2.2 Funding relevance

- Improving urban tourism infrastructure, especially in areas with valuable tourist potential, innovative projects can be financed to diversify the services and activities offered to tourists with the aim of increasing the accessibility of tourist attractions.
- The development and promotion of urban, spa and climate efficient tourist resorts through the development of specific tourist infrastructure, as well as the development and modernization of related public utility infrastructure.
- Urban regeneration and security of public spaces - integrated rehabilitation activities of urban public spaces (including related technical and building infrastructure) in areas such as: spaces inside housing complexes, waterfront areas, banks, historical centers, areas and residential neighborhoods located including in outside central areas, children's playgrounds, squares, squares, pedestrian walkways, pedestrian and semi-pedestrian areas (including outside central areas), bike lanes, urban furniture, smart digitization, etc.

Urban regeneration projects will be identified and defined at the level of the Integrated Urban Development Strategy (SIDU)/SDU/related ZUF Strategy through detailed analysis of needs, mapping of the area (including detailing of public services and existing infrastructure) and description of the public consultation stage and involvement of local communities during the project identification/ elaboration/ implementation procedure. In an integrated manner, urban regeneration projects will also finance the infrastructure of green spaces.

Available funding	89.8 million € (ERDF) 30.3 million € (National contribution)
Period of Validity	2024-2027

URL	https://oportunitati-ue.gov.ro/en/program/programe-regionale/programul-regional-sud-est/

8.2.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

8.3 South-East Regional Programme - Capitalizing on the tourist potential in non-urban areas

8.3.1 Overview

The tourism development projects of the non-urban areas will be identified and defined at the level of the County Development Strategies through the detailed analysis of the needs, the mapping of the area (including the detailing of the existing public services and infrastructure) and the description of the public consultation and the involvement of the local communities during the procedure of identification/development/implementation of projects.

8.3.2 Funding relevance

- Improving tourism infrastructure, especially in non-urban areas with valuable tourist potential, including innovative projects to diversify the services and activities offered to tourists, in order to increase the accessibility of tourist attractions.
- The development and promotion of tourism, spa and climate efficient resorts in non-urban areas, through the development of specific tourist infrastructure, the development and modernization of related public utility infrastructure.
- Conservation, protection, restoration and sustainable exploitation of cultural, natural and historical heritage and the development of related services.

Available funding	30.04 million € (ERDF) 5.3 million € (National contribution)
Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	Not specified

8.3.3 Relevant calls

There are no active calls related to the TOURAL value chains.

8.4 South-East Regional Programme – Funds dedicated for Integrated Territorial Investments for Danube Delta – ITI DD (in which LAG Danube Delta is included)

8.4.1 Overview

The Vision for the Danube Delta Region (2030) was defined as: an attractive area - with precious biodiversity and vibrant business environment, with small/medium scale economic activities both in traditional and modern fields - where people live in harmony with nature; integrating economies of tourism, farming and fishery; and supported by urban service centers. This was derived from the following visions defined for the two sub-areas of the region - the biosphere reserve and the neighboring area - due to their different characteristics. Vision for the Danube Delta (the Biosphere Reserve area): a "living delta" (an area where people live and work), with balanced support for the environment and the community; a healthy, sustainable local economy - mainly based on nature and cultural tourism; and with an inclusive planning process (residents, governments, businesses). Vision for the Neighboring Area: a vibrant agricultural and business area, with a network of urban service centers and a tourism sector that is integrated with the attractions of the area and the Delta.

Two strategic objectives were derived from this agreed vision:

(1) conserve unique environmental assets through scientifically guided environmental management, and by empowering local communities to be proactive guardians of this unique global heritage; and

(2) develop a green and inclusive local economy, based on sustainable consumption and protection, resource efficiency, capitalizing on the area's comparative advantages, supported by improved public services.

8.4.2 Funding relevance

The Integrated Strategy for Sustainable Development of Danube Delta has **five pillars, derived from strategic objectives**. They correspond to the five pillars under which the sector analyses in the earlier needs assessment were grouped. Examples of recommended priority interventions from the study are indicated under each pillar below.

Pillar 1: Protecting the environmental and natural resource assets. The region's main comparative advantage is its environmental wealth. While posing a constraint to some economic activities, it also provides opportunities for bringing greater prosperity to the region, through income generation based mainly on non-consumptive use of the living natural resources and preservation of local cultural traditions. Restoring the natural environment and improving the management of the environmental and natural resource assets represent a critical first step. Over the longer term, sustainability will depend on local residents playing an active role as guardians and managers of Delta's environmental and cultural assets in partnership with the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration (DDBRA).

Pillar II: Improving the economy. The environmental and cultural richness and diversity of the region bring economic opportunities to the tourism industry, with co-benefits to local fisheries and aquaculture, agriculture and small business such as handicrafts. With more diversified attractions and nature programs, not only the number of tourists, but also the duration of their stay, will increase and provide revenue to local residents, both within the Biosphere Reserve (particularly in the core Delta) and its neighboring cities/towns and communes. Preservation of the region's tangible and intangible cultural heritage assets - traditions, arts, cuisine and cultural sites and events - can add to the distinctive positioning of the region as a travel destination and product branding. Special efforts are needed to further integrate minority groups into society and preserve their related cultural heritage. To address affordability constraints, economic opportunities and jobs need to be generated, with support ranging from skill development and in-job training to small grant schemes for microenterprises, including small agricultural and fish processing supporting tourism. Advisory services will guide farm consolidation and modernization and prepare small pension/hotel owners to cater to higher-end tourism. Incentives to small pilot businesses can be provided, including an appropriate evaluation framework to enable learning and replication.

Example suggested interventions: visitor infrastructure; beautification efforts; small grant facilities; tourism training; destination management organization; support for rural infrastructure modernization; support for aquaculture, recreational fishing, and small scale fish processing (canning, smoking); support for the development of business in non-agricultural areas (e.g. tourism, handicraft/craft products, renewable energies).

Pillar III: Improving connectivity. Improved connectivity to enhance movement of people, goods and information will bridge the divide between cities and remote locations and lagging and leading regions (e.g. Constanța, one of the country's growth poles) as well as within the region (e.g. between the Core Delta and the surrounding areas). An improved ICT infrastructure and a more rapid movement will support tourism development. It will also improve business opportunities by connecting sellers to markets and create opportunities for more innovative service delivery in health and education.

Example suggested interventions: upgrading of roads (various county and communal roads); modernization of Tulcea port and airport; improved transport on waterways; increased access to broad-band internet.

Pillar IV: Providing public services. Access to basic urban services (water, sanitation and waste disposal), health facilities and schooling in the region is uneven as is their respective quality. Addressing these and other service gaps will support tourism development, and improving the services will, partly by the use of ICT, be essential to improve health and social mobility. Basic services need to be provided at the lowest cost, which will require innovative approaches.

Pillar V: Promoting efficiency, affordability and sustainability. Further empowering local authorities to develop and oversee public service delivery is an essential factor that would help the development of the Study Area. The alternatives to local authorities (concessions, outside institutions etc.) are less accountable to the beneficiaries from these investments. If neither households, nor local governments can sustain the level of local services in the area, the supplemental finance through targeted subsidies needs to be provided by the central government, or services need to be tailored to affordable levels. Not only local authorities, but the capacity of all institutions to administrate the type and scale of projects envisaged needs to be strengthened. Limited budgetary resources and challenges in retaining staff in remote areas (e.g. in the health and education sectors) have put stress on the administrative systems. The need for effective coordination of interventions will present additional administrative demands on beneficiary institutions, and some new organizations are proposed to be established (for example, a destination management organization for the tourism sector). A comprehensive program on capacity building and technical assistance will need to be administered, that is supportive of future functions, incentives and accountability.

8.4.3 Relevant calls

8.4.3.1 *Capitalizing the tourism potential and preserving the heritage in non-urban areas*

A.Key Information

Call title	Capitalizing the tourism potential and preserving the heritage in non-urban areas
Call Reference	Capitalizing the tourism potential and preserving the heritage in non-urban areas
Domain of interest.	Integrated development in the non-urban areas of Danube Delta ITI
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Closed (to be opened) – information expected in February 2025
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	Not specified
Periodicity	A single call
Call Budget	12.85 million €
Indicative budget range per project	Not specified
Estimated number of projects to be funded	Not specified
Max Funding rate	85%
Call URLs	https://regiosudest.ro/ https://regiosudest.ro/ghiduri https://regiosudest.ro/ghiduri/prioritatea-6 https://regiosudest.ro/ghiduri/prioritatea-6/apeluri-in-consultare/consultare-finalizata-6-2-valorificarea-potentialului-turistic-in-zone-non---urbane
Keywords	Tourism. Infrastructure. Accessibility.

	Resources. Attractions. Development. Investment.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

Eligible Country: Romania

Geographical Areas of Intervention:

South-Eastern Development Region - Non-urban areas on Danube Delta ITI territory (ITI DD)

B.2 Eligible entities: Public entities on ITI Danube Delta area:

- Administrative-territorial unit defined according to GEO no. 57/2019 regarding the Administrative Code, with subsequent amendments and additions and the Local Public Administration Law no. 215/2001, with subsequent amendments and additions (county territorial administrative units and/or common territorial administrative units),
- Partnerships between the Administrative-Territorial Units,
- Intercommunity Development Associations (ADI), as defined in art. 5 lit. i) from the Government's emergency Ordinance no. 57/2019 regarding the Administrative Code, with subsequent amendments and additions, which have at least one non-urban administrative-territorial unit/municipality, county seat/municipality/city,
- Worship units or their partnerships with county Administrative-Territorial Units and/or joint Administrative-Territorial Units for the action aimed at the Conservation, protection, restoration and sustainable valorization of cultural and historical heritage in non-urban areas,
- Partnerships between the eligible ATUs and associations/religious units, for the exclusive performance of two categories of actions, categories D) and E), which are actions aimed at economic development, social integration and innovation and animation and awareness activities in territory and cross-border and transnational cooperation.

C.Areas of Intervention / Activities that can be funded

1. Improving tourism infrastructure, especially in non-urban areas with valuable tourist potential, including innovative projects to diversify the services and activities offered to tourists, in order to increase the accessibility of tourist attractions:
   - The arrangement of natural touristic objectives of public utility, as well as the creation/modernization of related infrastructures of public utility.
   - Creation of facilities to support biodiversity in the urban environment building tracks for cycle tourism
   - Construction/modernization of recreation and rest areas, points (birdwatching points) for observation, filming, and photography; tourist information points
   - The revitalization of public space through the implementation of urban and technical solutions, integrated and appropriate, through maintenance works, equipment or, rehabilitation of degraded urban furniture (benches, trash cans, ecological toilets, bicycle parking supports, fencing, etc.)
   - The realization of intelligent irrigation systems on the green spaces arranged by the project (activity that accompanies the basic activity of the investment proposed by the project, this cannot represent the main activity of the project)
   - Creation of facilities for recreation/leisure on the landscaped grounds (e.g. special areas for sports, playgrounds for children, open-air amphitheaters, stages, etc.)

- Marketing activities and tourism promotion of the area, including digitization services. Interventions aimed at tourist infrastructure will pursue environmental sustainability through design, integrating these considerations from the beginning.

Innovative projects can be financed to diversify the services and activities offered to tourists with the aim of increasing the accessibility of the objectives.

2. Activities related to the objectives of cultural heritage / historical heritage

- Restoration/consolidation/protection/conservation/endowment works, in order to enhance the value of historical monuments and cultural heritage, as well as works to ensure and improve energy efficiency depending on the potential to reduce consumption, respectively the reduction of carbon emissions, including their structural consolidation works depending on the level of exposure and vulnerability to the identified risks.
- Interior equipment (installations, equipment and equipment to ensure air-conditioning conditions, fire safety, anti-burglary).
- Modernization and rehabilitation and expansion and endowment of cultural institutions, libraries, museums and theaters.
- Works of restoration, consolidation, protection and preservation of buildings with cultural functions, for example cultural centers, as well as works to ensure and improve energy efficiency in terms of the potential to reduce consumption, respectively the reduction of carbon emissions, including consolidation works their structural structure depending on the level of exposure and vulnerability to the identified risks.
- Restoration works and plastic remodeling of the facades in the sense of valuing the cultural and historical heritage.
- Facilities for the operation, display and protection of movable and immovable cultural heritage
- Marketing activities and tourism promotion of the restored objective, including public information about the intention to implement the project.
- External arrangements on the site (green spaces, fencing, pedestrian walkways, landscaping), architectural lighting.
- Digitization of the heritage objective within the project (ex: virtual tours, scanning of mobile and immovable heritage objectives, creation and use of applications for mobile devices for visiting the objective, etc.).

Regarding the activity of digitizing the objective object of the project proposed for financing, this must be done through the project, at the end of the project implementation.

Within this call for projects, RP South-East will finance the objectives aimed at historical monuments that are included in the national and local cultural heritage in the rural environment (category A and B).
Also, according to EU Recommendation 1970/2021, cultural heritage conservation institutions are encouraged to make their digitized assets available through the European Data Space for Cultural Heritage and Tourism and thus contribute to the data space, in accordance with the standards and the frameworks mentioned and with the indicative objectives provided in annexes I and II to the Recommendation (art. 16 of Rec UE 2021/1970).

D.Scope relevance

1. **Alignment with Integrated Strategy of Sustainable Development in Danube Delta** (Romanian: **SIDDDD 2030**):

- **Supporting tourism development goals:** The scheme likely aligns with SIDD DD 2030 by promoting integrated investments in infrastructure and services that enhance the quality and competitiveness of the tourism sector.
- **Focus on integrated projects:** By prioritizing investments in non-urban areas with significant tourism potential, the scheme supports the strategic development of tourism in this region.
- **Enhancing the visitor experience:** Investments in tourism infrastructure contribute to improving the overall visitor experience, making the non-urban areas more attractive tourist destinations.

2. Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in Romanian Tourism:

- **Improving infrastructure:** The grant addresses the need for improved tourism infrastructure which is crucial for attracting more visitors and enhancing their experience.
- **Promoting sustainable tourism:** It likely encourages sustainable practices in tourism development, contributing to environmental protection and responsible tourism.

3. Stimulating Economic Growth and Development:

- **Boosting tourism revenue:** Investments in tourism infrastructure can lead to increased tourism revenue, contributing to economic growth and job creation.
- **Supporting local businesses:** The grant can support the development of local businesses in the tourism sector, such as hotels, restaurants, and tour operators.

4. Potential for Long-Term Impact:

- **Sustainable tourism development:** The grant contributes to the long-term sustainable development of tourism in non-urban areas from DD ITI by encouraging responsible practices and investments in quality infrastructure.
- **Economic growth and job creation:** Investments in tourism infrastructure can have a long-term positive impact on economic growth and job creation in the town.
- **Regional development:** By supporting investments in specific regions, the scheme can contribute to more balanced regional development and reduce disparities.

8.5 Romanian National Plan for Recovery and Resilience (NRPP) - P4 Social and Territorial Cohesion – C11 / TOURISM and CULTURE

8.5.1 Overview

Social and territorial cohesion' seeks to introduce green and digital policies in the field of urban mobility, as well as in the tourism and cultural and creative sectors. The measures also focus on boosting territorial cohesion.

8.5.2 Funding relevance

The loan part of the request, worth €0.9billion (net of pre-financing), is linked to a specific target, i.e. defining sites to be included in the cultural routes as part of the investment on promoting 12 touristic and cultural routes (NRRP component on tourism and culture). One example of a loan-related milestone included in the request concerns the enactment of a legislative act on the implementation of the national housing strategy and an action plan to decrease severe housing deprivation. This milestone is linked to the reform designed to improve housing quality under the NRRP pillar on social and territorial cohesion.

Available funding	0.9 billion €
Period of Validity	2024-2027
URL	https://mfe.gov.ro/pnrr

8.5.3 Relevant calls

A.Key Information

Call title	C11 – Tourism and Culture
Call Reference	C11 – Tourism and Culture
Domain of interest.	Romanian National Programme for Recovery and Resilience
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	3 calls (during 2022 – 2023)
Period of Validity	2022-2027
Application deadline	Not specified
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	5.22 million € (1.86 million €+ 3.36 million €
Indicative budget range per project	60.000 €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	31 (traditional objectives) 56 (traditional private houses in Danube Delta area)
Max Funding rate	Not specified
Call URLs	https://mfe.gov.ro/pnrr; https://mfe.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/b5bac2a382414751d06ba1c58424b6ef.pdf https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733641/EPRS_BRI(2022)733641_EN.pdf https://www.itideltadunarii.com/anunturi/nout%C4%83%C8%9Bi-finan%C8%9B%C4%83ri/pnrr-fonduri-europene-rute-culturale-artistice-alocari-financiare
Keywords	Cultural heritage. Tourism development. Sustainable tourism. Innovation in tourism.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- Romania

B.2 Eligible entities

- Public Sector:
- Ministries of Culture and Tourism
- National and regional tourism agencies
- Local governments and municipalities
- Museums and cultural institutions
- National parks and protected areas
- Private Sector:
- Tour operators and travel agencies
- Hotels and accommodation providers
- Restaurants and catering companies

- Cultural and creative industries (e.g., artists, performers, artisans)
- Transportation companies (e.g., airlines, railways)
- Non-profit Sector:
- NGOs active in the field of cultural heritage preservation
- Arts and culture organizations
- Community-based tourism initiatives
- Foundations supporting tourism and cultural development

C. Areas of Intervention / Activities that can be funded

Not specified

D.Scope relevance

Not specified

9. NATIONAL FUNDING INSTRUMENTS-UKRAINE

It should be noted that in Ukraine, there are no national funding instruments for tourism. The existing funding programs for tourism are either regionally implemented or under the auspices of the European Union (Ukraine is not an EU Member State, but an EU candidate Country). Additionally, Ukraine has a unique funding status due to the ongoing war, which has understandably transformed all existing conditions across various sectors dramatically.

However, for conformity reasons, these funding instruments are analyzed with a “national” perspective so they can be also considered as national funding instruments for Ukraine.

9.1 Strategy for the Development of Agritourism and Rural Tourism

9.1.1 Overview

The national "Agritourism and Rural Tourism" Strategy is not considered an official national funding instrument. However, it is included in this deliverable, as an introductory sub-chapter for Ukraine, since the Development of Agritourism and Rural Tourism are considered emerging sectors for the country. While still developing, Ukraine holds significant potential for economic growth and sustainable development in rural areas.

Characteristics:

- **Authentic experiences:** Visitors can experience authentic rural life, participate in agricultural activities, and connect with local communities.
- **Natural beauty:** Ukraine boasts diverse landscapes, from the Carpathian Mountains to the Black Sea coast, offering opportunities for outdoor activities like hiking, fishing, and horseback riding.
- **Cultural heritage:** Many rural areas have preserved traditional architecture, crafts, and folklore, providing cultural experiences for visitors.
- **Gastronomy:** Ukrainian cuisine is rich and diverse, and agritourism often features home-cooked meals with locally sourced ingredients.
- **Sustainability:** Many agritourism businesses are committed to sustainable practices, such as organic farming, renewable energy use, and environmental protection.

Types of Agritourism and Rural Tourism Activities:

- **Staying on farms:** Visitors can stay in guesthouses or farm stays, experiencing daily life on a working farm.
- **Participating in agricultural activities:** Guests can participate in activities like harvesting crops, milking cows, and making traditional crafts.
- **Enjoying nature:** Opportunities for hiking, cycling, fishing, birdwatching, and other outdoor activities in rural landscapes.
- **Exploring cultural heritage:** Visiting historical sites, museums, and traditional villages to learn about Ukrainian culture and history.
- **Tasting local cuisine:** Enjoying traditional Ukrainian dishes made with fresh, local ingredients.

Benefits:

- **Economic development:** Agritourism and rural tourism create income and employment opportunities in rural areas, contributing to economic diversification and reducing poverty.
- **Sustainable development:** They can promote sustainable practices, preserve natural resources, and support environmental protection.
- **Cultural preservation:** They help to preserve traditional culture, crafts, and heritage in rural communities.
- **Social benefits:** They foster social interaction and cultural exchange between urban and rural populations.

Challenges:

- **Infrastructure:** Some rural areas suffer from a lack of adequate infrastructure, such as roads, transportation, and internet access, which can hinder tourism development.
- **Marketing and promotion:** Many agritourism businesses need support in marketing and promoting their services to wider audiences.
- **Quality standards:** Ensuring consistent quality standards and service levels across agritourism businesses is important for visitor satisfaction.
- **Seasonality:** Agritourism can be seasonal, with peak activity during the summer months, posing challenges for year-round profitability.

Support and Development:

- **Government initiatives:** The Ukrainian government has implemented programs to support the development of agritourism and rural tourism, including providing training, financial assistance, and promoting agritourism destinations.
- **NGOs and associations:** Various non-governmental organizations and associations support the development of agritourism and rural tourism through training, networking, and advocacy.
- **EU support:** Ukraine benefits from EU programs that support rural development and tourism, which can be leveraged to enhance agritourism initiatives.

This strategy serves as a crucial bridge, connecting various stakeholders and facilitating a coordinated approach to the development of agritourism and rural tourism at the national level.

9.1.2 Funding relevance

1. Integrated Cultural & Creative Tourism Value Chains:

- **Enriching the rural experience:** Connecting local artisans, artists, and cultural heritage sites with agritourism creates a richer and more diverse experience for visitors. This can attract a wider range of tourists interested in authentic cultural experiences.
- **Supporting local communities:** Agritourism can provide a platform for local artisans and artists to showcase their work, sell their products, and engage with tourists, contributing to the economic and social well-being of rural communities.

2. Multi-dimensional Tourism Offerings:

- **Diversifying rural tourism:** Combining agritourism with other forms of tourism, such as cultural, historical, or nature-based tourism, creates more appealing and multi-faceted experiences for visitors. This can increase the attractiveness of rural destinations and encourage longer stays.

3. Macro-Regional Cooperation and Value Chains:

- **Promoting regional tourism:** Collaboration between different regions in Ukraine can create interconnected tourism routes and itineraries that showcase the diversity of rural landscapes, cultural heritage, and agritourism offerings. This can enhance the overall tourism experience and promote regional development.

4. Digital Technologies and Value Chain Integration:

- **Enhancing visibility and accessibility:** Utilizing digital platforms to promote agritourism and rural tourism experiences can increase their visibility and accessibility to potential tourists. Online booking systems, interactive maps, and virtual tours can enhance the visitor experience and facilitate travel planning.

5. Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Value Chains:

- **Promoting sustainable agritourism:** Agritourism businesses can adopt sustainable practices, such as organic farming, renewable energy use, and waste reduction, to minimize their environmental impact and contribute to the preservation of natural resources.
- **Ensuring accessibility:** Agritourism and rural tourism experiences should be accessible to all, including people with disabilities and less opportunities, to promote social inclusion and create a welcoming environment for everyone.

9.1.3 Relevant calls

The situation resulting from the war has put all calls on hold, and therefore, it is currently inactive.

9.2 DART

9.2.1 Overview

DART, which stands for **Digitalization, Analytics, Regionalization, and Tourism**, is a comprehensive strategy aimed at revitalizing Ukraine's tourism sector in the wake of the 2022 Russian invasion. It focuses on four key pillars:

1. **Digitalization:** Leveraging technology to improve the tourist experience, promote destinations, and streamline tourism operations. This includes initiatives such as:
    - Developing a unified digital platform for tourism services.
    - Creating interactive online maps and virtual tours.
    - Implementing digital marketing campaigns to reach global audiences.
2. **Analytics:** Utilizing data analysis to understand tourist behavior, identify market trends, and inform strategic decision-making. This involves:
    - Collecting and analyzing data on tourist preferences and spending patterns.
    - Conducting market research to identify new tourism opportunities.
    - Using data to measure the effectiveness of tourism initiatives.
3. **Regionalization:** Promoting diverse tourism offerings across different regions of Ukraine, highlighting unique cultural heritage and natural landscapes. This includes:
    - Developing regional tourism brands and marketing campaigns.
    - Investing in infrastructure and tourism facilities in various regions.
    - Supporting community-based tourism initiatives.
4. **Tourism:** Diversifying tourism products and experiences to attract a wider range of visitors. This includes:
    - Developing niche tourism products like ecotourism, gastronomy tourism, and cultural heritage tourism.
    - Promoting adventure tourism and outdoor activities.
    - Creating accessible tourism options for people with disabilities.

9.2.2 Funding relevance

- **Digitalization:** The emphasis on digital platforms for promotion, booking, and cultural heritage interpretation directly supports DART's goal of leveraging technology to enhance the tourist experience. This includes utilizing online platforms for marketing and booking and developing digital tools like virtual tours to enhance the understanding of cultural heritage.
- **Analytics:** By collecting data on tourist preferences and behaviors through digital platforms and engaging in participatory planning with local communities, valuable insights can be gathered to inform tourism strategies and decision-making, aligning with DART's focus on data-driven approaches.
- **Regionalization:** Promoting diverse tourism offerings and connecting urban centers with rural areas directly contributes to DART's regionalization objective. This involves creating cross-border tourism packages and promoting thematic routes that connect different attractions within and across regions, fostering a diverse and regionally focused tourism sector.
- **Tourism:** The focus on multi-dimensional tourism experiences, integrating various niches like cultural, creative, and eco-tourism, directly supports DART's aim of diversifying tourism products. This includes combining complementary tourism sectors like cultural and eco-tourism and developing cross-border tourism packages that cater to a wider range of tourist interests.

9.2.3 Relevant calls

The war has radically changed the priorities of Ukraine's strategy. As the country's priorities have now shifted, funding calls have been frozen. Before the war, funding was focused on areas with rich cultural heritage and natural beauty. Notable examples include the Black Sea regions and the Morshyn area.

9.3 Baltic Sea Neighbor Programme

9.3.1 Overview

The Baltic Sea Region Programme is a funding program by the European Union that supports cross-border cooperation among the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea. It aims to foster sustainable development, economic growth, and regional integration in the area. The program focuses on four key priorities:

- **Innovation:** Promoting research and development, supporting entrepreneurship and SMEs, and fostering the adoption of new technologies.
- **Sustainable Transport:** Improving connectivity and accessibility within the region, promoting environmentally friendly transport solutions.
- **Environment:** Protecting the Baltic Sea environment, addressing climate change, and promoting sustainable natural resource management.
- **Capacity Building and Governance:** Strengthening institutional capacity, promoting good governance, and enhancing cooperation among regional actors.

9.3.2 Funding relevance

1. Innovation in Tourism:

- The program's emphasis on innovation aligns with the development of technology-enabled tourism. This includes using digital platforms for promotion, booking, and cultural heritage interpretation, such as virtual tours and augmented reality experiences. Funding can support the creation of innovative tools and solutions for the tourism sector.

2. Sustainable Transport and Accessibility:

- Improved transport links and accessibility are crucial for connecting urban centers with rural areas and promoting multi-destination tourism. The program's focus on sustainable transport can support the development of eco-friendly transportation options and infrastructure for tourists, facilitating access to remote regions and cultural heritage sites.

3. Environmental Protection and Sustainability:

- The program's commitment to environmental protection aligns with the sustainable tourism value chain. Funding can support initiatives that promote responsible tourism practices, preserve cultural and natural heritage, and develop eco-tourism products. This includes protecting natural landscapes, managing waste and resources, and promoting sustainable practices within the tourism industry.

4. Capacity Building and Governance:

- Strengthening institutional capacity and promoting good governance are crucial for supporting tourism development. The program can facilitate capacity-building initiatives for tourism stakeholders, including training programs, knowledge sharing, and the development of sustainable tourism strategies. This can empower local communities to participate in tourism development and ensure its long-term sustainability.

5. Cross-border Cooperation and Regional Integration:

- The program's focus on cross-border cooperation aligns with the development of multi-dimensional tourism value chains that connect different regions and countries. By fostering collaboration and partnerships among tourism stakeholders in the Baltic Sea region, the program can support the creation of joint tourism products, marketing initiatives, and cross-border tourism routes.
-

Available funding	64.9 million €
Period of Validity	2024-2027

URL	https://si.se/en/apply/funding-grants/si-baltic-sea-neighbourhood/

9.3.3 Relevant calls

9.3.3.1 *Seed funding*

A.Key Information

Call title	Seed funding
Call Reference	Seed funding
Domain of interest	Sustainable development and transnational cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Open
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	4 March 2025
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	N/A
Indicative budget range per project	35.000€
Estimated number of projects to be funded	N/A
Max Funding rate	100%
Call URLs	https://si.se/en/apply/funding-grants/si-baltic-sea-neighbourhood/
Keywords	Innovation. Environment. Accessibility. Capacity building. Blue economy.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- Georgia
- Germany
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Moldova
- Poland
- Sweden
- Ukraine

B.2 Eligible entities

- **Public authorities:** This includes entities at the local, regional, and national levels (e.g., municipalities, regional development agencies, ministries).

- **Businesses:** Both small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and larger companies can apply. Business support organizations are also eligible.
- **Research and education institutions:** Universities, research centers, and other educational bodies.
- **Non-governmental organizations (NGOs):** Various types of NGOs working on relevant themes within the program's priorities.
- **Other:** This can include entities like hospitals, and interest groups

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

1. Innovative Societies:

- Boosting innovation: Supporting research and development projects, promoting entrepreneurship and SMEs, fostering technology transfer and digitalization.
- Developing skills and competences: Funding education and training programs, promoting lifelong learning, and supporting initiatives that address skills gaps in the labor market.
- Strengthening public services: Improving the efficiency and accessibility of public services, promoting digital public administration, and supporting cross-border cooperation in public service delivery.

2. Water-Smart Societies:

- Protecting the Baltic Sea: Funding projects that address pollution, eutrophication, and other environmental threats to the Baltic Sea.
- Promoting sustainable water management: Supporting initiatives that improve water quality, promote efficient water use, and enhance climate change adaptation in the water sector.
- Developing the blue economy: Funding projects that promote sustainable economic activities related to the sea, such as marine biotechnology, renewable energy, and sustainable fisheries.

3. Climate-Neutral Societies:

- Promoting the circular economy: Supporting projects that reduce waste, promote resource efficiency, and foster the transition to a circular economy.
- Accelerating the energy transition: Funding initiatives that promote renewable energy, energy efficiency, and the development of smart energy systems.
- Developing sustainable transport: Supporting projects that promote clean transport solutions, improve transport infrastructure, and enhance connectivity in the Baltic Sea Region.

4. Cooperation Governance:

- Strengthening macro-regional cooperation: Supporting initiatives that enhance cooperation among countries in the Baltic Sea Region, promote good governance, and foster regional integration.
- Developing project platforms: Funding platforms that facilitate knowledge sharing, networking, and collaboration among project partners and stakeholders.

D.Scope relevance

1. Geographic Relevance:

- While the Baltic Sea Region Programme doesn't directly cover the Adriatic-Ionian or Black Sea Basin macro-regions, there is potential for knowledge transfer and inspiration. The program's focus on transnational cooperation and sustainable tourism development can offer valuable insights for initiatives in other European regions.

2. Thematic Relevance:

- **Sustainable Tourism:** The program's emphasis on environmental protection, climate neutrality, and sustainable development aligns perfectly with the sustainable tourism value chain. Projects promoting eco-tourism, responsible tourism practices, and cultural heritage preservation can find potential support within the program's framework.
- **Innovation and Digitalization:** The program's focus on innovation and digitalization is directly relevant to the development of technology-enabled tourism. This includes using digital platforms for promotion,

booking, and cultural heritage interpretation, which can enhance the tourist experience and promote accessibility.

- **Capacity Building:** The program's support for capacity-building activities aligns with the participatory tourism value chain. This can involve training programs, knowledge sharing, and institutional strengthening to empower local communities and tourism stakeholders in developing and managing sustainable tourism initiatives.

3. Cross-cutting Themes:

- **Accessibility:** The program's focus on sustainable transport and improving connectivity can support the development of accessible tourism, ensuring that tourists with disabilities can reach and enjoy various destinations and attractions.
- **Regional Development:** The program's emphasis on balanced territorial development and strengthening rural areas aligns with the regionalization objective of tourism strategies. This can involve supporting tourism initiatives in rural and peripheral areas, promoting diverse tourism offerings, and connecting urban centers with rural communities.

9.3.3.2 *Cooperation projects*

A.Key Information

Call title	Cooperation projects
Call Reference	Cooperation projects
Domain of interest	Sustainable development and transnational cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region.
Type of Funding	Grant
Status	Open
Period of Validity	2024-2027
Application deadline	N/A
Periodicity	Periodic
Call Budget	N/A
Indicative budget range per project	0.8 million €
Estimated number of projects to be funded	N/A
Max Funding rate	100%
Call URLs	https://si.se/en/apply/funding-grants/si-baltic-sea-neighbourhood/
Keywords	Cooperation. Regional development. Cross-border. Collaboration. Capacity building. Innovation. Sustainability.

B.Eligibility Criteria

B.1 Eligible Countries/Geographical Areas of Intervention

- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland

- Georgia
- Germany
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Moldova
- Poland
- Sweden
- Ukraine

B.2 Eligible entities

- **Public authorities:** This includes entities at the local, regional, and national levels (e.g., municipalities, regional development agencies, ministries).
- **Businesses:** Both small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and larger companies can apply. Business support organizations are also eligible.
- **Research and education institutions:** Universities, research centers, and other educational bodies.
- **Non-governmental organizations (NGOs):** Various types of NGOs working on relevant themes within the program's priorities.
- **Other:** This can include entities like hospitals, and interest groups

C.Areas of Intervention /Activities that can be funded

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- Developing skills and competences: Funding education and training programs, promoting lifelong learning, and supporting initiatives that address skills gaps in the labor market.
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10.Conclusions

This deliverable, developed as part of Task T2.5, has identified and analyzed a wide range of funding instruments that are critical for the development of sustainable tourism in rural and remote regions. It lays the groundwork for TOURAL's digital funding repository by focusing on **European, National, Regional, and Sea-Basin level funding opportunities.**

These funding opportunities, which span a variety of areas such as cultural heritage preservation, sustainable tourism practices, innovation, and capacity building, offer a solid foundation for promoting economic growth and social inclusion in the tourism sector. The comprehensive analysis included in this report enhances stakeholders' ability to adopt informed decisions when applying for funding, ultimately supporting the sustainable and balanced growth of tourism sectors in these regions.

The funding instruments analyzed in this report demonstrate a clear commitment to addressing the challenges faced by rural and remote regions, especially in the context of tourism development.

At the European level, programs like Horizon Europe, LIFE, and Creative Europe provide substantial support for innovation, cultural heritage preservation, and sustainability, with a strong emphasis on the EU's Green Deal and digital transition. These instruments provide significant funding opportunities for projects that align with broader EU policy goals, including environmental sustainability and social innovation. The ESF+ and ERDF also present valuable resources for initiatives aimed at fostering social inclusion, employment, and regional development.

Furthermore, regional and sea-basin level funding opportunities, particularly through INTERREG, offer significant potential for fostering collaboration between neighboring countries, particularly in the Adriatic-Ionian and Black Sea areas. These initiatives ensure that projects are not only aligned with broader EU goals, but also consider the unique needs of specific regions, offering sometimes regional support for tourism, or tackling shared challenges and enhancing the appeal of each region's unique cultural and natural assets.

National funding programs from Greece, Italy, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine play a pivotal role in addressing national needs and priorities, with tailored financial instruments aimed at enhancing the tourism sector and fostering regional development through the integration of digital tools, sustainable practices, and inclusive tourism models. Moreover, several funding instruments at regional level were identified and analyzed (especially for Croatia, Romania, Ukraine).

Overall, these funding instruments could collectively be a contributing factor to a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable tourism sector, helping to create a future where rural and remote regions can thrive economically and socially through the power of tourism.