



Virtual and Smart Cultural Tourism – Successful Interregional Partnership Leading to Innovations

Following the European Commission's call for expressions of interest for **Covid-19 Response and Recovery Partnerships – Pilot Action for Interregional Innovation**, launched within the framework of the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027¹, the Time Machine Organisation came in first in the category 'Sustainable and Digital Tourism'.

Between January and December 2021, a consortium with players from seven different European regions (Thuringia, Saxony, Lower Austria, Cyprus, France, Greater Amsterdam, Galicia), whose key smart specialisation priorities and activities are linked to tourism industry, took up the challenge to find responsive strategies to better align innovation activities and value chains in the area of virtual tourism.

Matching Funding Schemes With Project Concepts

Surveys and workshops with regional stakeholders and cultural heritage players enabled the identification of needs and bottlenecks in dealing with innovative investment projects and digital tourism. A virtual matchmaking event launched in June 2021, offering high-class contributions by speakers from different funding schemes of the European Commission, plus 1-on-1 meeting opportunities for project uptakes between stakeholders.

Lessons Learned

The networking and monitoring activities of the Partnership "Virtual and Smart Cultural Tourism" clearly showed the need for a pan-regional entity capable to support the transition of research results into commercial applications and involving stakeholders from the regions. Via projects initiated by the partnership already ~1 Mio. EUR of funds have been collected to realise business and investment ideas bourgeoned within this Pilot Action.

Pilot Action Results – Five Business Cases

The main outcome of the Pilot Action are five tangible and applicable business cases to be supported through concrete actions:

1. **Digital Heritage Marketplace:** A European B2B marketplace specialized in digital applications and content for cultural heritage destination management.
2. **Digital Heritage European Academy:** A centre for digital competency and entrepreneurial skills in the field of cultural heritage; providing training, access to training materials, best practice exchange and certification.
3. **Digital Heritage Development Platform:** A servicing environment for digital software applications and content development.

¹ Financial support for the Partnership came from the European Regional Development Fund ([ERDF](#)).



4. **European Heritage Funding Hub:** A consulting and servicing structure to obtain funding from European programmes; provide support to develop project proposals, build consortia, and support the management of EU grants.
5. **European Heritage Funding Accelerator:** A support mechanism with access to investments, co-financing and crowdsourcing for innovations and commercialisation.

“This Pilot Action gave us the chance to explore the enormous potential of digital heritage innovation in Europe. Since there are already plenty of great ideas, initiatives, and actors on a regional or national level, the partnership provides us the unique opportunity to leverage these activities to a European scale.”, Sander Münster rounds up the Partnership project.

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Interregional Partnership
Virtual and Smart
Cultural Tourism

More information on the Pilot Action “Virtual and Smart Tourism can be found here:

<https://www.timemachine.eu/project-participations/interregional-partnership-virtual-and-smart-cultural-tourism/>