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Press Release

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ACR+ engages in a European-wide support scheme to boost sustainability of SMEs in the field of tourism

More than 60 European SMEs active in the field of tourism will be targeted to improve their sustainability practices thanks a new EU-funded project, TOURISME, launched last month. While many businesses offering tourism services are already transiting towards more sustainable practices, SMEs involved in TOURISME will benefit from a financial support accompanied by a dedicated coaching and capacity building activities enabling SMEs to exchange their knowledge and good practices and discover the underlying principles of circular economy and how they can make tourism more circular.

Brussels, Belgium – Tourism is one of the economic sectors hardest hit by the pandemic. According to the World Tourism Organisation, it might face a decline of 58% and 78% in international tourist arrivals during 2020 and has 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk.¹ The same organisation lists as a priority action pushing for “innovation and sustainability as the new normal”² in their Guidelines to restart the sector.

This priority is reflected in the strategy of ACR+ and a consortium of 7 who joined forces to launch the [TOURISME](#) project in September 2020, funded by the EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME). This new project is expected to result in a multitude of gains: from empowering SMEs' in the transition to circular economy principles to increasing local and regional authorities' capacities to support those businesses in their transition, all the way to revitalisation of the tourism.

For two and a half years, project partners will work closely with 62 different SMEs of the tourism sector, located in Spain, Italy, Cyprus and France to boost their sustainability. In order to do so, TOURISME will provide the selected SMEs not only with a financial support but also with a series of trainings and coaching fostering the uptake of the know-how and other valuable knowledge. The project will also see guidelines which will summarise this learning process to be used beyond its lifetime.

¹ <https://www.unwto.org/news/covid-19-international-tourist-numbers-could-fall-60-80-in-2020>

² <https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-05/UNWTO-Global-Guidelines-to-Restart-Tourism.pdf>



Under the lead of Consulta Europa, the project consortium gathers a wide-range of expertise and backgrounds – including a regional authority, an academic institute, a national network for coaching and training businesses or a regional development agency. While in charge of some technical aspects as well as communication and dissemination activities, ACR+ is bringing the experience gained through several previous projects, namely Horizon2020 URBAN-WASTE, Interreg Europe INTHERWASTE, and Interreg MED BLUEISLANDS. The latter already highlighted sustainability and international collaboration as the way forward for tourism, especially for Mediterranean islands, during an international conference last May. This consortium also reflects the ACR+'s commitment to enable its members to cooperate and learn from each other in the fields of their interest as five ACR+ members will be a part of this project – the [Autonomous Region of Sardinia](#), [Institut Paris Region \(ORDIF\)](#), [Sistemi Formativi Confindustria](#), [Nicosia Development Agency \(ANEL\)](#), and [Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna – Institute of Management](#).

Commenting on the launch of TOURISME, ACR+ Managing Director Francesco Lembo added: *“TOURISME is happening with a perfect timing, in order to show how deeply sustainability is interlinked with key drivers of tourism sector recovery. Furthermore, we have several public authorities in our network whose economy is strongly linked with tourism. For them developing circular economy on their territories means taking into consideration, supporting, and involving all stakeholders – including SMEs in the tourism sector. We are thus looking forward to involving our members in TOURISME and put the acquired knowledge and know-how at their disposal.”*

Make sure you do not miss any update on TOURISME by [subscribing to its mailing list](#).

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The Association of Cities and Regions for sustainable Resource management (ACR+) is an international network of cities and regions sharing the aim of promoting sustainable resource management and accelerating the transition towards a circular economy on their territories and beyond. The network, gathering around 90 members, is open to other key players in the field of material resource management such as NGOs, academic institutions, consultancies or private organisations. Members' needs and priorities define the network's activities, which include facilitating the exchange of experiences between members, sharing technical and policy information and livening up the network. To strengthen the knowledge and capacities of the network and push for innovation in the field of material resource management, ACR+ is also involved in several projects at European level and in the Mediterranean region, in cooperation with its members.

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