



**EuroCluster
Rural
Tourism**



EuroCluster Rural Tourism

*Online info-day on the Call for SMEs
27 July 2023*

supported by SMP-COSME-2021-CLUSTER - "EUROCLUSTERS"



Co-funded by the COSME program of the European Union under the Single Market Program for Euroclusters (SMP-COSME-2021-CLUSTER - "EUROCLUSTERS")

Objective: complying with the trends of the tourism demand for services such as rural tourism, eco-tourism, farm-tourism and sustainable tourism.

Traditionally based on local or regional demand, this sector has now the opportunity to extend markets by working together on a transnational base in the ***EuroCluster Rural Tourism ERT.***

Project duration: 24 months

- Started on the 1st of September, 2022*
- End on the 31st of August, 2024*

Total value of the project: €1,299,644.47

European Union contribution: 1,263,235.52 € (of which 950,000 € to SMEs)

supported by



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Who are we?



Lead Partner: **Venetian Cluster srl (VHC)** - Italy

Partner 2: **Asociatia de Dezvoltare Intercomunitara Harghita (ADI Harghita)** - Romania

Partner 3: **Narodni Klastrova Asociace (NCA)** – Czech Republic

Partner 4: **Euracademy Association (EURACADEMY)** - Greece

Partner 5: **Federation Europeenne de Tourisme Rural (RURALTOUR)** - France

Partner 6: **Asociacion Cluster de Turismo Sostenible de Aragon (TSAC)** – Spain

Associated partner 1: **Longarone Fiere Dolomiti Srl** - Italy

Associated partner 2: **Ecoclub S.A.** – Greece



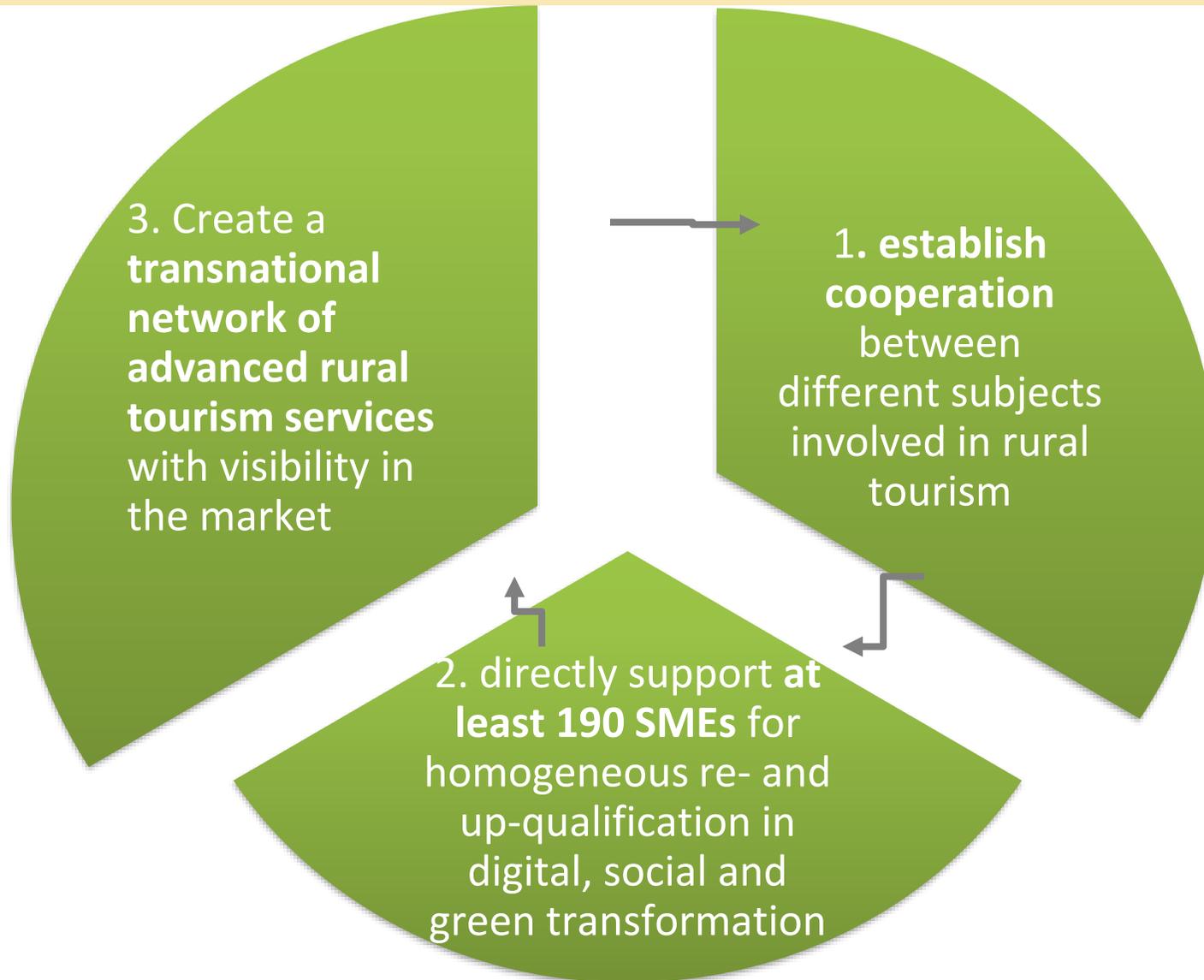
Our Mission



- ✓ Involved in consolidating the first *Eurocluster* of Rural Tourism (ERT)* at the European level, combining public and private players to **promote the rural tourism sector**.
- ✓ Committed to foster businesses in the sector with activities to: promote **knowledge**, expand the **market**, lengthen tourist **seasons** and offer better **services**.
- ✓ Involved to foster the development of tourism offer compatible with **digital, social and environmental issues**, by offering innovative and attractive tourism products, and promoting digitalisation, environmental protection and social inclusion.



Our Vision





...But how do we reach all that??





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Thank you!

Maurizio Malè - EU Project Manager Venetian Cluster

Project Coordinator of EuroCluster Rural Tourism

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Eurocluster Rural Tourism

<i>Open:</i>	07/07/2023
<i>Closure:</i>	10/09/2023
<i>Total EU funding available :</i>	950.000 Euros
<i>Max duration of the financed projects:</i>	9 months
<i>Call identifier:</i>	SMP-COSME-2021-CLUSTER

Lump sum grant of EUROS 5000 per SME.



SME Technical Support Details

*Each SME will choose and improve at least **4 out of the 12** action areas, that preferably **address at least 1 from each field** (digital, green and sustainable, and soft/social). Services will need to be provided by ASPs*

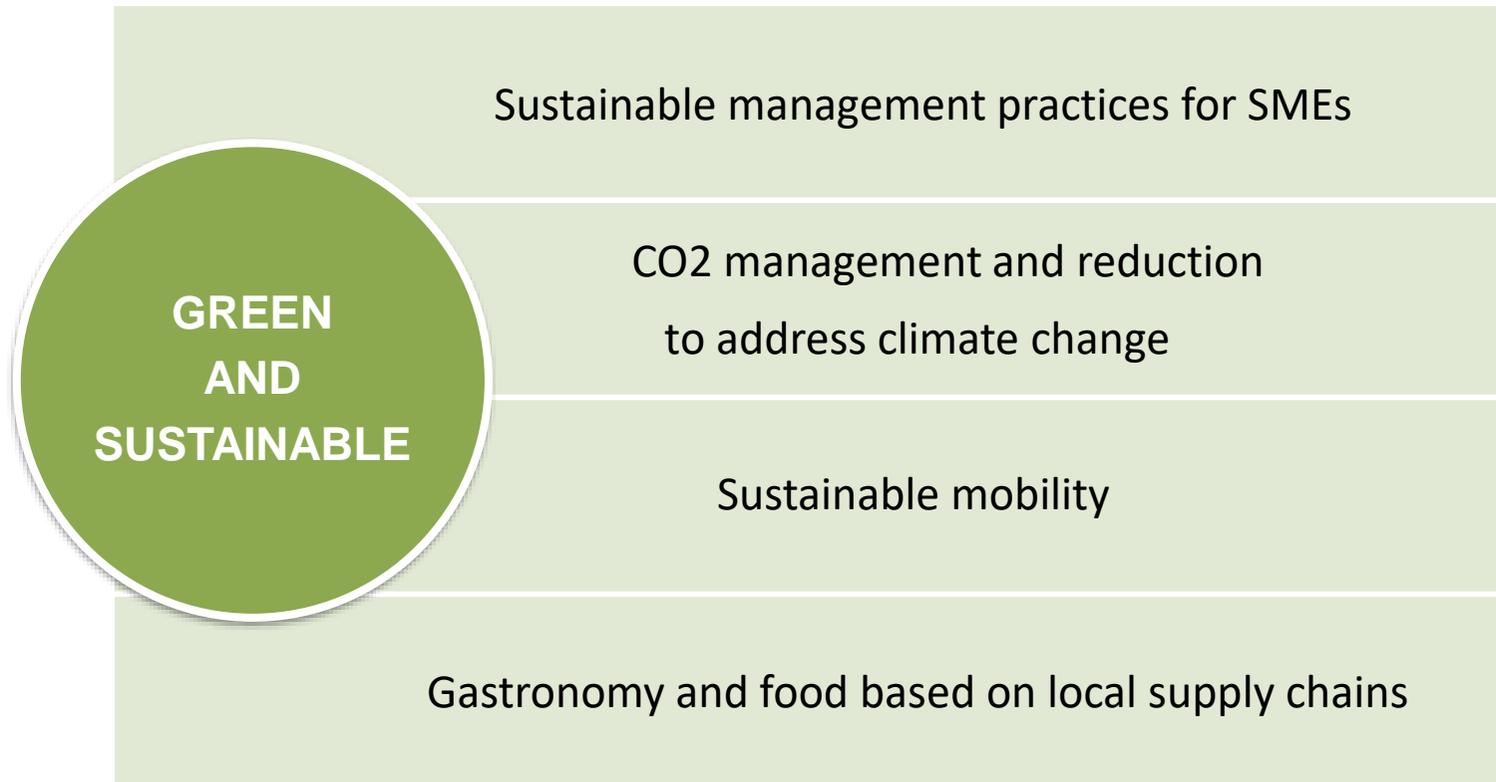




Digitalization of the processes in SMEs

Digital marketing and promotion

Marketing intelligence, data analysis,
marketing strategy based on data





**SOFT/
SOCIAL**

Social-cultural skills (attend visitors from different cultural background)

Experience generation for visitors (includes development of corresponding products)

Inclusive Tourism / Visitors with special needs

Integration with the local community

Interpretation techniques for cultural, historic, natural etc. resources



What the technical support should include?



Mentoring and advisory assistance during the full period from start of self-evaluation to final evaluation report



Specific services that are required as result of the improvement plan (*i.e. website design, social media campaign, sustainability training, certification cost, creation of new menu for special interest group, publication/ graphic design costs for code of conducts.*)



Participation in events (*local and transnationals*)



Technical support should consist of:

Phase 1

- Initial and final capacity building event for all supported SMEs in a region
- Self-assessment of the current situation in order to address needs for improvement
- On-site audit, revision of the product idea and improvement plan

Phase 2

- Mentoring, technical advice and support during the implementation process.
- Budget for additional external services that may be needed for implementation
- Final evaluation and follow-up visit by advisor
- Final meeting and discussion of results of the support action amongst all assisted SMEs



Only SMEs from the following countries or regions can apply*:

Belgium-Wallonie	Lithuania
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Montenegro
Croatia	Netherlands
Czech Republic	North Macedonia
Estonia	Romania-Harghita
Greece	Serbia, Slovakia
Hungary	Slovenia
Ireland	
Italy	
Latvia	Spain-Aragón, Cataluña, La Rioja, Navarra

*Preference to receive lump sum grants of EUROS 5000 per SME will be given to up to **10 SMEs** per country.



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Micro-Nano businesses (max 10 employees), with a history of operation covering at least 3 years;
- Located in the countryside, or in villages or towns in rural areas;
- SMEs have to fall under **the following NACE classification**:
 - Hotels and similar accommodation **(I5510)**;
 - Holiday and other short-stay accommodation **(I5520)**;
 - Camping grounds, recreational vehicle parks, and trailer parks **(I5530)**;
 - Travel agency, tour operator reservation service, and related activities **(N79)**.
- SMEs such agritourism, farm tourism, small hotel, guest house, holiday cottage, etc). Priority will be given to providers offering extra services such as food service (breakfast, half/full board), nature or farm activities, classes (culinary, crafts), guided tours, etc.



Content of the online Application Form, to be submitted by SME in ENGLISH

- ✓ **3** Eligibility Questions;
- ✓ **16** Company Data Questions;
- ✓ **2** Self Assessment rating Questions for current digital, green and soft/social competences;
- ✓ **3** Open ended questions;
- ✓ Option to select your preferred Assistance Service Provider from the pre-approved list of experts
NOT MANDATORY.



Mandatory files to be uploaded before submission

- registration of the business with tourism authorities
- Valid document of the SME legal representative (*copy of ID or passport*)
- **CV/list of projects and experiences from core SME staff**



FOCUS of 3 Open Questions

- **Describe in detail the new product and/or service improvement that you want to implement through COSME support.** *(i.e. a new service of gastronomy catering for special needs or preferences, improving accessibility of persons with reduced mobility, creating/publishing code of conduct for visitors, introducing quality certification, networking/clustering with complementary businesses in the area, etc)*
- **How you plan to improve your digital, green and soft/social competences in this context and use them in the new product or service** *(i.e. understand the convenience of counting with a set of recommendations, decalogue of measures on sustainability for clients, and/ or network and align with other companies in your destination around the same issue, design and incorporate measures to be a family friendly and/ or age friendly establishment or activity)*
- **Proposal's expected impacts, expected outcomes, outputs, and potential of the results as future Best Practice** *(i.e. reach new segments of clients thanks to the improvement and/ or diversification of your offer: more sustainable, suitable for different segments around food needs preferences, suitable for different age segments, suitable for people with functional physical diversities and disabilities, suitable for different segments where compatible (family friendly, adult friendly, bike friendly, pet friendly))*



Proposal Evaluation Criteria	Max. score
<p>Quality of the proposal General description of the company, achievements, actual needs with respect to the transition to a digital and green economy and to a more eco-sustainable tourism offer.</p>	30
<p>Innovation potential of the proposal The consistency of the problems selected and the selection of innovative solutions to address it.</p>	20
<p>Impact of the proposal How the improvements will drive the green and digital transition of the SME.</p>	20
<p>Implementation potential The consistency of the problem described and the fit with the selected plan for improvement; capacity issues, challenges.</p>	15
<p>Management expertise of project The background expertise and vitality of the SME, the profiles of the core person or team</p>	15
<p>All 3 fields of support are covered in the proposal At least 1 action from each field (digital, green and sustainable, and soft/social) is selected.</p>	15
TOTAL AT LEAST 60	



Business Evaluation Criteria

Enterprise viability: Does the company demonstrate a competitive advantage? Is it financially and commercially viable, and does it possess the management and financial resources to absorb project intervention?

Score: **(Minimum threshold is 3 out 5)**

Business benefit : Does the intervention reflect the management strategy and vision and will the expected outputs bring further expansion of the business? **(Minimum threshold is 3 out 5)**

Capacity / Skills: Which is the level of current technical skills to implement new projects and ideas proposed by the experts: In case the SME does not have them, what actions/ideas are proposed to offset this lack of skills internally? Level of business networking skills, especially the affiliation to local, regional or national professional bodies **(Minimum threshold is 3 out 5)**

Scoring options:

0: No information is available to address the criterion ; **1 Poor:** The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses; **2 Fair:** While information regarding the criterion is provided, there are significant weaknesses; **3 Good:** The business addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary; **4 Very good:** The business addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible; **5 Excellent:** The business successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question.



EVALUATION PROCESS

Administrative revision: *all relevant applications and request additional documentation, if needed, all eligibility criteria will be applied. Proposals being marked as non-eligible will get a rejection letter for being classified as non-eligible.*

Two steps evaluation: *Each partner will set up a two-member Evaluator Committee that will agree on Consensus on all eligible applications. The partner will then submit the results to a second level Consortium Evaluation Committee. All partners will be represented by one member in this committee.*

Communication of result: *list of financed SMEs will be published on the F&T and ECRT website. Selected succesful applicants shall be informed by email with confirmation of reception.*



After the Successful Selection of SME

- SME will receive a letter of acceptance.

The letter of acceptance shall be signed by the selected applicant within 7 days after receiving the notification

- The selected SMEs are expected to provide evidence of financial standing either an official copy of the profit and loss account, balance sheet, or income tax statements demonstrating good financial capability, for the last two years for which accounts have been closed.

Each beneficiary and each ECRT partner (funding entity) will sign a Grant Agreement (Annex IV-Call for SME)

- We strongly recommend for the selected team of supporting experts and the SME to sign bilateral specific agreements.



Payment of financial support

The ECRT grant is paid in lump sums: payments against deliverables, no financial report is required from the beneficiary since the principle is payment against expected results directly to the selected SMEs. Distribution of funds is based on 2 types of instalments:

First instalment: *the Grantee will receive 100% of Financial Support at the end of the support period and upon receipt of the Final Report.*

Second instalment: *40% upon the submission of the interim report (not later than month 3) and within 15 days after its approval; 60% (upon the successful completion of the service pack and the submission of the final report -month 6- and within 30 days after its approval).*

The ECRT grant will not be paid in the unfortunate event of SME not attaining

~~its objectives at a promised standard, set up case by case in the initial~~



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Web address for further information (full call text/proposal guidelines):

<https://www.euroclusterruraltourism.eu/en/calls/>

On-line application form :

https://clustersubmissionplatform.eu/eurocluster_post/eururaltourism-smes-open-call/

List of Selected SMEs will be published on

https://www.euroclusterruraltourism.eu/en/services/#Financial_support

Questions to info@euroclusterruraltourism.eu

Application Deadline 10th September 2021