

Digitourism Project

Cooperation programme: Interreg Europe

Leader: Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme

Interreg Priority Axis: 1 -Strengthening research, technological development and innovation

Objective: Promote innovation in virtual reality and augmented reality applied to the tourism sector.

Context:

Since early 2016, the first mainstream virtual reality tools have appeared and are becoming more and more popular.

Conscious of the considerable potential of these tools in the tourism sector, certain territories or economic stakeholders have already begun trials:

- Saint-Gervais Mont-Blanc offers a virtual ascent of Mont-Blanc with Google
- Thomas Cook uses virtual reality headsets in certain branches
- Marriott Hotels offer immersive tours
- Numerous airline companies have adopted the tool for various uses, in particular for in-flight entertainment (XL Airways)

These initiatives are only the beginning of a major revolution in the sector, as predicted by Sabre GDS in its 2017 annual prospective report.

Issues:

Getting ahead of the curve of this technological revolution can provide destinations and tourism businesses with a real head start in a very competitive economic sector.

There is an extremely wide range of possibilities and it is important to conduct multiple tests to explore all the advantages that this technology can offer:

- New promotional tool (use at trade fairs, posting content to view at home, etc.)
- Pre-purchase reassurance tool (before-sale immersion to reassure and generate a sale)
- Meditation tool, making virtual reality tours possible of areas of sites that are not easily accessible to the elderly or to disabled individuals, or of places that cannot be visited for safety reasons.
- Medium for extending the customer experience: holiday memories filmed in 3D allow clients to relive their trip and let family and friends relive and immerse themselves in their experiences.

Actions to carry out:

In order to assist the tourism sector in capitalising on the potential stemming from the arrival of mainstream virtual reality tools, considerations could be made for a public financing program for innovation dedicated to the uses of this technology in the tourism sector.

This program could integrate the ERDF OPs of the partners of the project to stimulate innovation by targeting the most pertinent stakeholders in the territory (start-ups, etc.).

Furthermore, creating favourable conditions for innovation is not limited to financing. Potential beneficiaries of this program would need access to tourist data to work on these new digital uses. Conditions for providing public data could be a second component of this project.

Partnership:

The partnership to be created should bring together:

- Public sector and equivalent organisations with a significant experience in the implementation of financing programs for stimulating innovation
- Public sector and equivalent organisations with significant knowledge of the uses of virtual and augmented reality and/or related technology
- Public sector and equivalent organisations acting in the sector of tourism economic development.

These structures should share the project's objective that should deal with a known territorial issue.

Ideally, the partnership will include a majority of managing authorities of Structural Funds.

Partners from all EU countries + Norway + Switzerland are welcome.

Deadline:

Expressions of interest should be sent by email by the 27th of March 2017.

Then the partnership will contribute to the preparation of the project to be submitted to Interreg Europe by the 30th of June.

Project timeframe: Phase 1 (main activities) from January 2018 to December 2020; phase 2 (monitoring of policy improvement) from January 2021 to December 2022.

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