

EU-funded Cross-Re-Tour project funds the green and digital transition for 87 tourism SMEs across Europe

Cross-Re-Tour is a three-year project funded under the European Union's Single Market Programme. Its main goal is to support European tourism SMEs in achieving the twin transition — digital and green — with a focus on circular economy principles. It aims to enable tourism businesses to embrace regenerative and sustainable tourism by connecting them to innovative tools and solutions. Coordinated by the **Breda University of Applied Sciences** (The Netherlands), the project's consortium spreads all across Europe: Slovenia (**ARCTUR**), Spain (**Barcelona Chamber of Commerce**), Germany (**Institute for Tourism Research in Northern Europe**), Montenegro (**Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije**), Latvia (**Latvian Country Tourism Association**), Malta (**Malta Tourism Authority**), and Portugal (**INOVA+**).

Following its Call for Challenges—designed to analyse sustainability issues faced by tourism enterprises across Europe—and the mapping of the most innovative green and digital solutions currently implemented in the EU, Cross-Re-Tour officially launched its Call for Proposals in February 2025. Under this Call, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from the Cross-Re-Tour consortium countries were invited to present innovative tourism project proposals to enhance their green and digital innovation in the project's exploration areas: food, energy, water, plastic, mobility, equipment and furniture, staff nudging and client nudging. A minimum of 80 of the best rated innovative projects would receive funding of EUR 20.000 or EUR 30.000 to implement their innovation during 14 months in the framework of the project's cross-domain Open Innovation Programme.

This initiative proved successful, with more than 200 applications. In this highly competitive environment, 87 Lighthouse projects were selected for funding, with 2,400,000 EUR awarded across the consortium countries. The distribution of approved projects is as follows: The Netherlands (10), Slovenia (12), Spain (11), Germany (10), Montenegro (11), Latvia (12), Malta (10) and Portugal (11). The scope of the awarded projects is quite vast, with projects focused on gamification, augmented-reality, Blockchain, IoT and many more.

The Open Innovation Programme officially launched on April 1, 2025. Over the course of 14 months, the 87 beneficiaries will implement their innovative projects, supported and guided by their respective Cross-Re-Tour Consortium partners from each participating country.

The beneficiaries gathered for the first time in Riga from May 6 to 8, 2025, for the Cross-Re-Tour Workshop on Client and Staff Nudging. This event provided a valuable platform for exchanging knowledge and ideas, fostering numerous networking opportunities throughout the sessions.

The Programme will conclude with a Show and Share event in Malta in 2026, where participants will showcase their project outcomes and explore opportunities for replication and scalability in the presence of key tourism stakeholders and investors.



Open Innovation Programme Beneficiaries in Riga