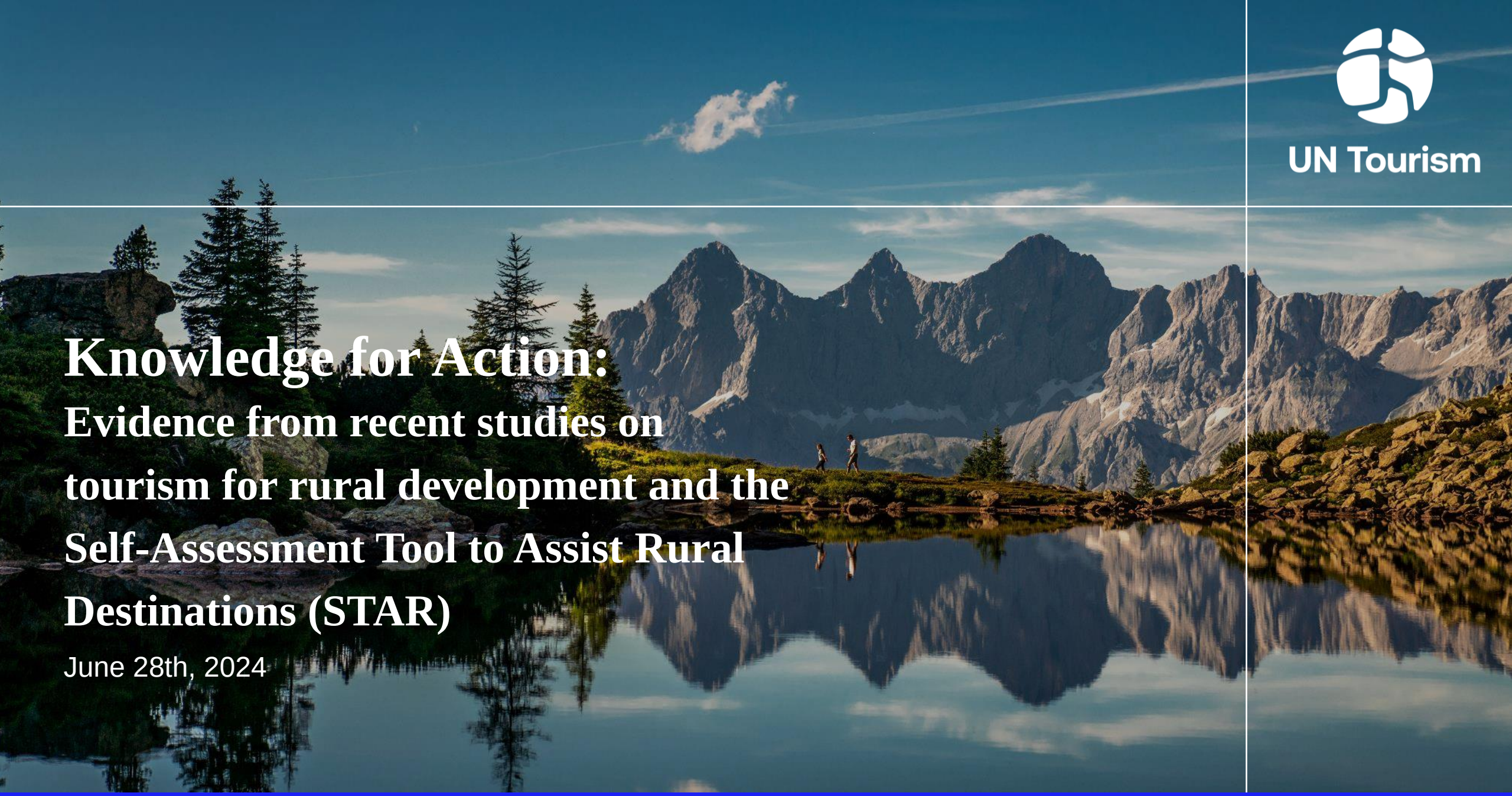

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Knowledge for Action:

Evidence from recent studies on tourism for rural development and the Self-Assessment Tool to Assist Rural Destinations (STAR)

June 28th, 2024

Tourism for Rural Development Programme

Why rural areas?

UN Tourism

Economic gaps

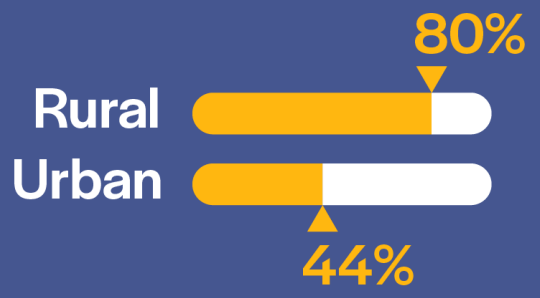
Around 83% of people living in poverty are found in rural areas

Source: United Nations Development Programme, OxfordPoverty and Human Development Initiative (2022)

Why rural areas?

UN Tourism

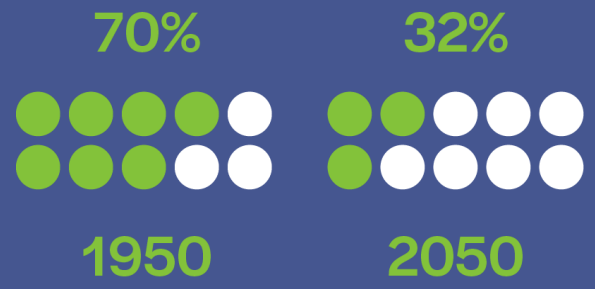
Gaps in employment



People in rural areas are twice as likely to be in informal employment as people in urban areas.

Source: International Labour Organization – ILOSTAT (2019)

Rural areas depopulation



By 2025, the percentage of the population in rural areas is expected to be 32%.

Source: United Nations Population Division (2022)

Gaps in education and skills

Gaps in the number of young people accessing employment or education are greater in rural areas and low-income economies.

Source: International Labour Organization (2021)

Why rural areas?

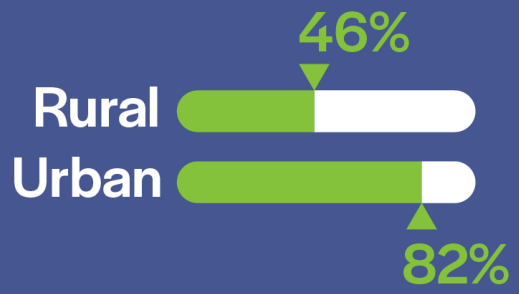
UN Tourism

Gaps in infrastructure and basic services

The number of people without access to electricity is at least 5 times higher in rural areas.

Source: United Nations, 2021

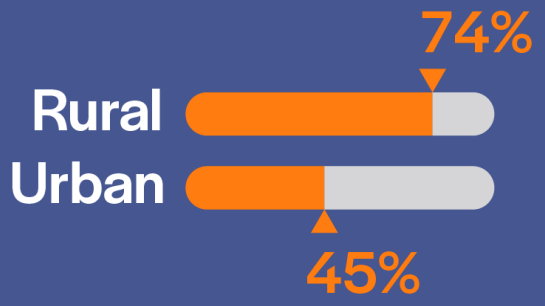
Gaps in connectivity and digitalization



The number of people accessing the digital world in rural areas is almost half that of urban areas.

Source: United Nations International Telecommunication Union, 2020

Gaps in gender and other vulnerable groups



Labor force participation is higher for men than women in rural areas.

Source: International Labour Organization, 2021

Tourism for Rural Development Programme

Mission

Advance the role of tourism in valuing and safeguarding rural villages along with their associated landscapes, knowledge systems, biological and cultural diversity, local values and activities.

Promote innovative and transformative approaches to the development of tourism in rural destinations that contribute to the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental – in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Vision

Make tourism a driver of rural development and wellbeing.

First Tourism for Rural Development Survey

79 countries responded to the first global survey of the status of rural tourism

UN Tourism

79

Countries responding

Africa	Americas	Asia and the Pacific	Europe	Middle East
17	18	16	19	9
22%	23%	20%	24%	11%

The survey was conducted in English, French, Arabic and Spanish.

Source:
UNWTO Tourism for Rural Development Survey (2023)
Scan to access the report

Rural tourism as a priority

Is rural tourism part of the priorities established in tourism planning in your country?

Number of countries and percentage from total responses

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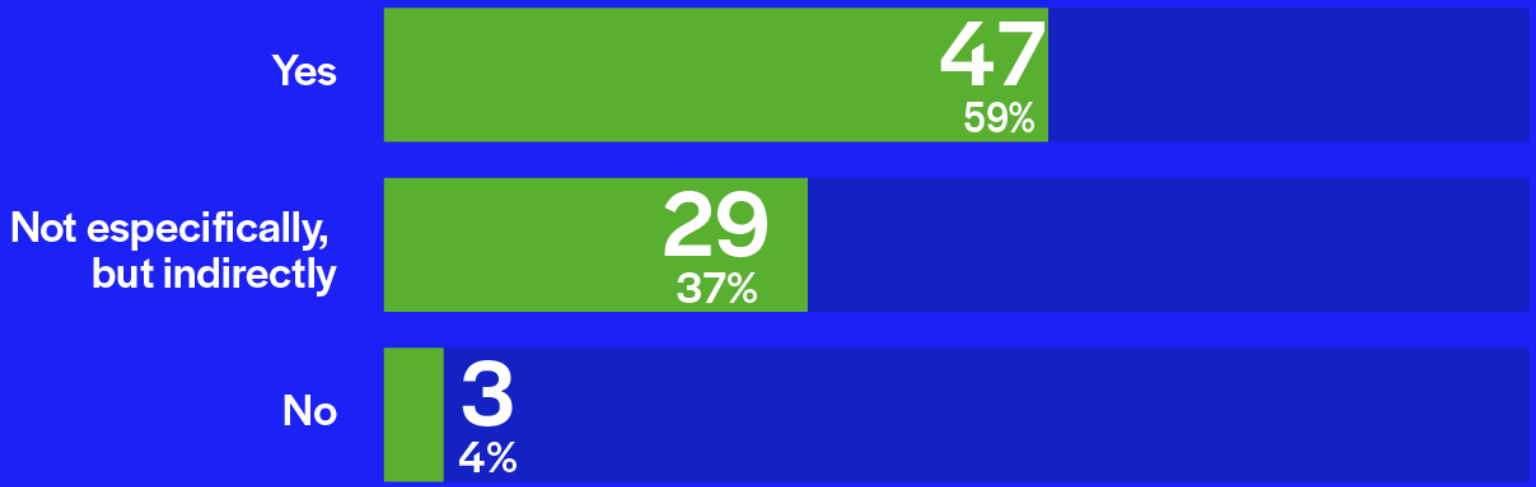

Results for Europe

Considering the direct and indirect efforts, 95% of responses in Europe define rural tourism as a priority.

Percentage from total responses:
Yes: **42%**
Not specifically, but indirectly: **53%**
No: **5%**

Source:
UNWTO Tourism for Rural Development Survey (2023)
Scan to access the report

How is rural tourism prioritized?

What did countries say:

- Focus on **improving the competitiveness** of destinations and visitors' experience.
- **Diversifying set of existing products** and routes. Important mentions include 'new' markets opportunities after the COVID pandemic.
- **Creating and improving regulatory frameworks** to better plan and manage.
- **Improving governance** through the creation or strengthen of decentralized forms of administration, highlighting the importance of enhancing collective and local forms of management and decision-making processes.
- **Improving infrastructure, basic services and accessibility**, seeking the reduction of physical barriers to improve tourism experience but also upgrading living conditions.
- **Supporting financing institutions**, create, optimize or increase investment policies and funding and encourage investment partnerships.

Source:
UNWTO Tourism for Rural Development Survey (2023)
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Which are the priority challenges to overcome?

Ranking delivered by countries to each topic (group of challenges per type), being 1 the top priority.

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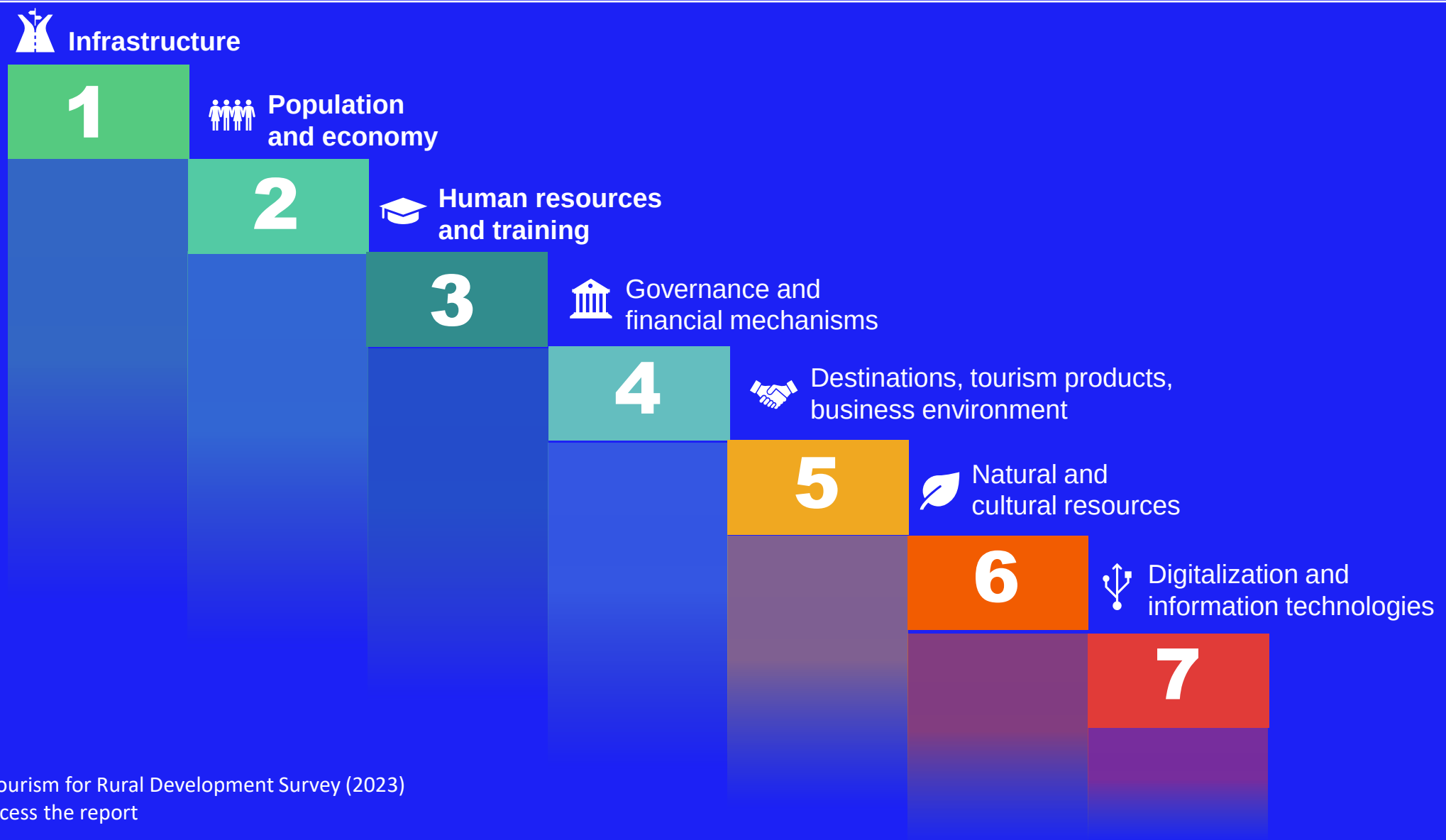

Source:
UNWTO Tourism for Rural Development Survey (2023)
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Rural tourism challenges

Top 3 topic priorities per region

UN Tourism

Prority rank
1 is the highest priority

	1	2	3
Africa	Infrastructure	Human resources and training	Destinations, tourism products, and business environment
Americas	Infrastructure	Population and economy	Natural and cultural resources
Asia and the Pacific	Infrastructure	Natural and cultural resources	Destinations, tourism products, and business environment
Europe	Infrastructure	Population and economy	Governance and financial mechanisms
Middle East	Governance and financial mechanisms	Population and economy	Infrastructure

Source:
UNWTO Tourism for Rural Development Survey (2023)
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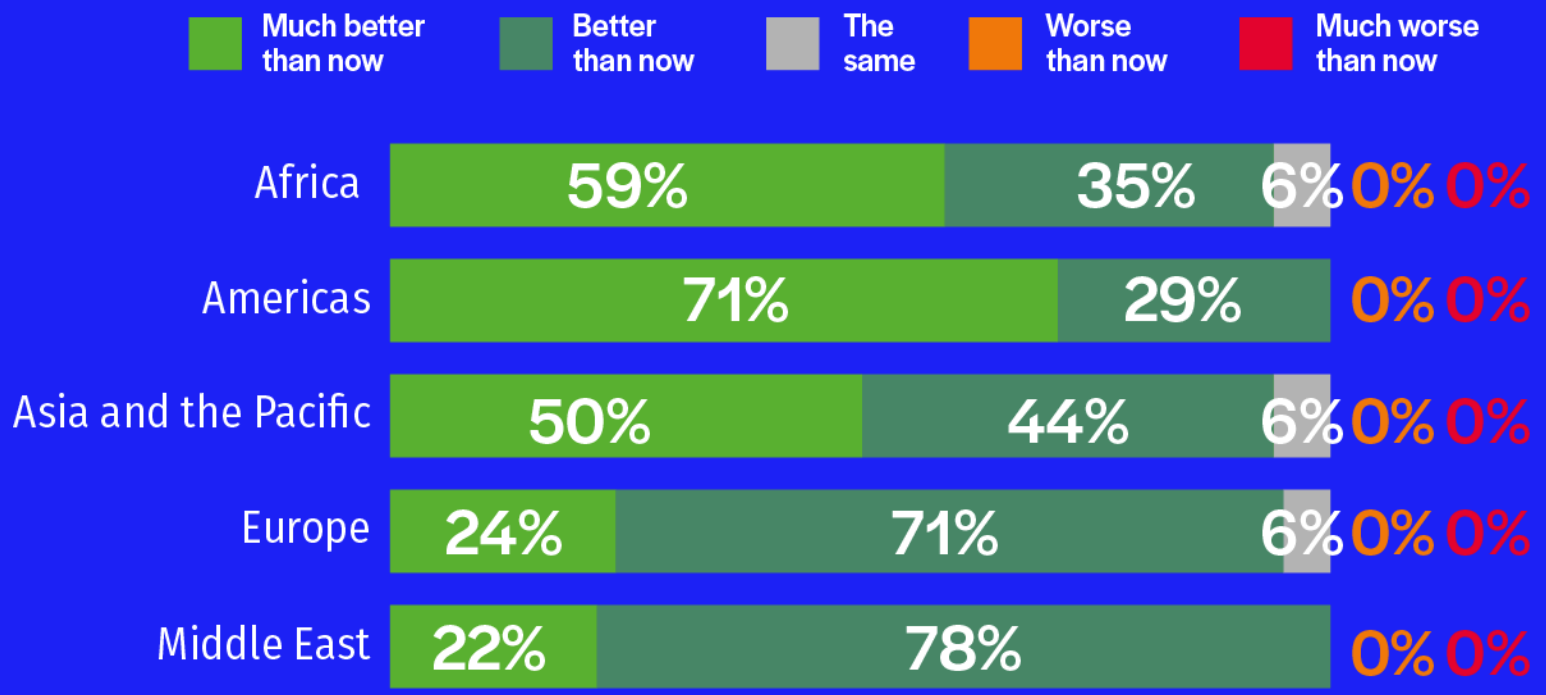
What are the rural tourism prospects?

By the end of this decade, what are the prospects for rural tourism in your country?
Number of countries and percentage from total responses

UN Tourism



Source:
UNWTO Tourism for Rural Development Survey (2023)
Scan to access the report

The Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO recognizes outstanding examples of rural destinations that implement tourism in a sustainable way and as a key driver for rural development and community well-being.

How are villages performing?

Average results of +200 villages' candidacies to BTV initiative in 2021 & 2022 editions

Results for the 9 areas of evaluation

UN Tourism

Source:
Tourism and Rural Development: Understanding Challenges on the Ground (2023)
Scan to access the report

What are the most frequent challenges for the villages?

Top 5 challenges mentioned by villages in their candidacy documents.

UN Tourism

Conservation of cultural resources

Challenges on how to preserve tangible and intangible cultural heritage due to mismanagement or depopulation.

Conservation of natural resources

Challenges on how to preserve the natural heritage due to overuse, inadequate use or lack of management.

Education and skills development

Challenges to improve capacities in tourism issues, but also in schooling and other skills related to rural areas.

Infrastructure

Challenges on how to improve access to basic services, communication, connectivity, health and financial services.

Conflicts

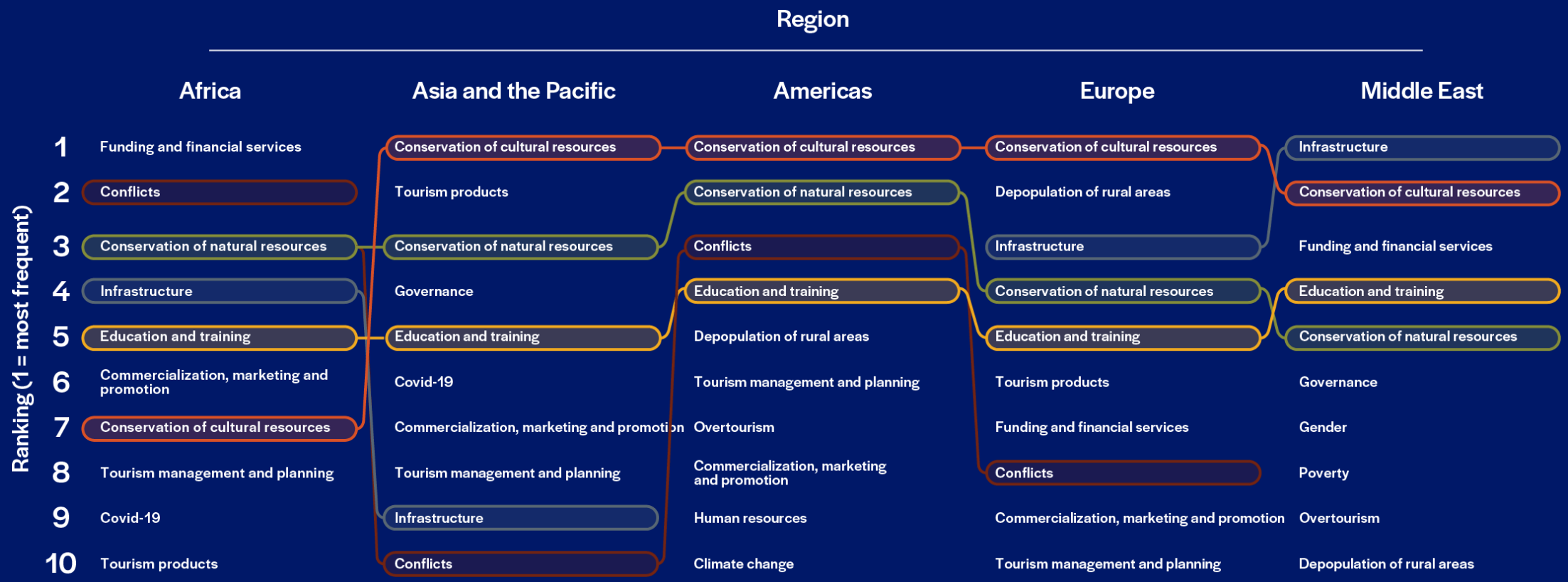
Challenges on how to manage discordances due to differences in types of use, distortions of the local economy, land tenure or changes in traditional ways of life.

Source:
Tourism and Rural Development: Understanding Challenges on the Ground – Lessons learned from the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Initiative (2023)
Scan to access the report

What are the most frequent challenges for the villages?

Top 5 challenges mentioned by villages in their candidacy documents by region.

UN Tourism



Source:
Tourism and Rural Development: Understanding Challenges on the Ground – Lessons learned from the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Initiative (2023)
Scan to access the report

Knowledge for action

How can tourism help rural development and territorial cohesion?

1 Economic diversification and benefits sharing

- Major **employment engine**.
- Encourages **growth of small businesses** and entrepreneurship.
- Enhances **economic linkages** between rural value chains.

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Knowledge for action

How can tourism help rural development and territorial cohesion?

1. Economic diversification and benefits sharing
2. Social benefits and community empowerment

- Particularly can benefit **traditionally disadvantaged groups** (i.e. women, youth, Indigenous people).
- **Empowers and involves** local communities in planning and decision-making processes.
- Stimulates **investment in infrastructure**, amenities and services.
- Supports **capacity-building** initiatives to enhance the skills of local populations

UN Tourism

Knowledge for action

How can tourism help rural development and territorial cohesion?

1. Economic diversification and benefits sharing
2. Social benefits and community empowerment
3. Conservation and promotion of natural and cultural resources

- Creates **incentives for the conservation** of rural landscapes and their biodiversity, as well as cultural and historical heritage and rural lifestyle.
- Encourages the adoption of **sustainable practices**.

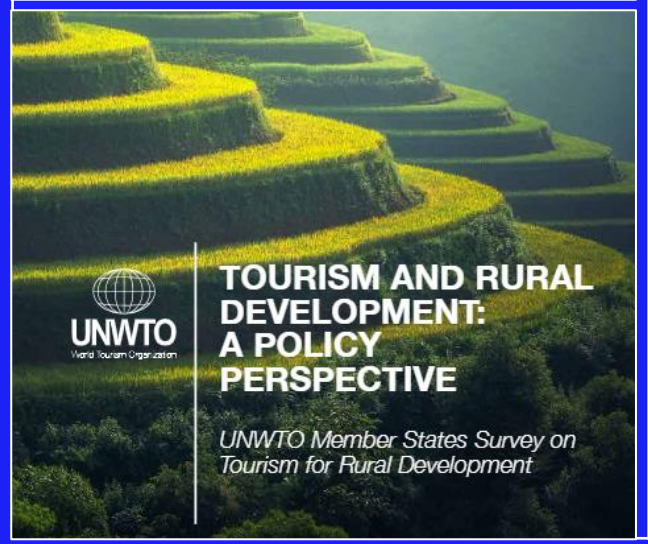
UN Tourism

Publications

https://www.e-unwto.org

UN Tourism

Scan to access the library



UN Tourism

STAR Self-Assessment Tool to Assist Rural Destinations

Why a Self-assessment tool to Assist Rural Destinations?

- To **empower local communities** in rural destinations.
- To generate insights for **sustainable, inclusive and smart** tourism development.
- To create opportunities for **better governance**.
- To generate **knowledge for action and territorial cohesion**.

UN Tourism

Rural destinations **face unique challenges and opportunities** to fully benefit from tourism as a driver for sustainable development.

UN Tourism and other UN agencies have and will continue to produce valuable knowledge.

STAR allows users to link to the available knowledge to promote tourism as a driver for rural development.

STAR’s main features

Modular self-assessment (5 axes with simple questionnaires that can be saved and completed in several sessions).

Generates a tailored **Recommendation Guide** based on the current situation of each destination.

Allows **Member States and destinations** to establish action points to develop tourism strategies and policies at both the local (destination) and regional or national levels.

Allows making global and regional **comparisons and benchmarks** between destinations.

Who can use STAR?

Open to all tourist destinations in **rural areas in UN Tourism Member States**.

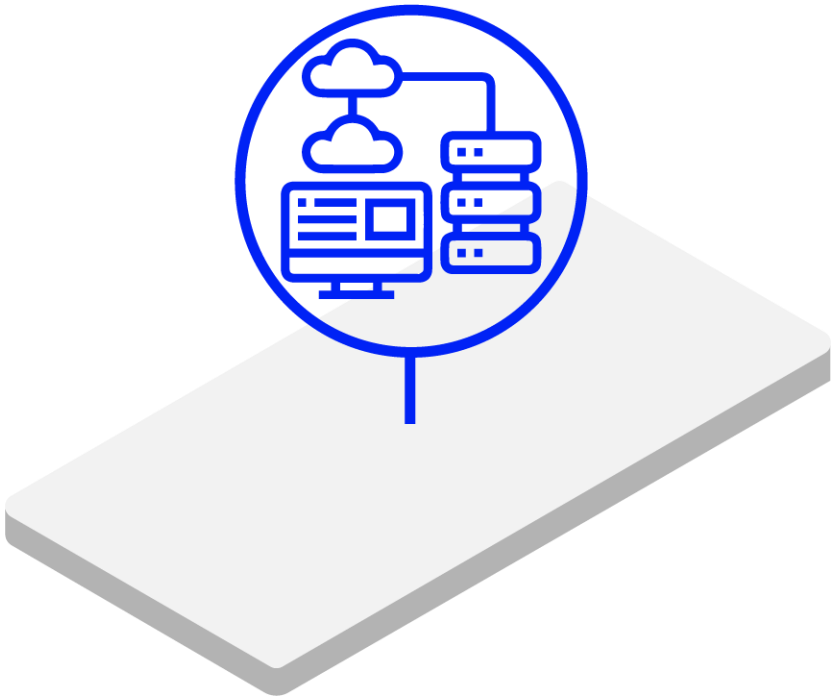
Focused on **local governments representatives**, DMO or other authorities and/or destination managers.

How does STAR work?

Self-Assessment Tool to Assist Rural Destinations

How does STAR work?

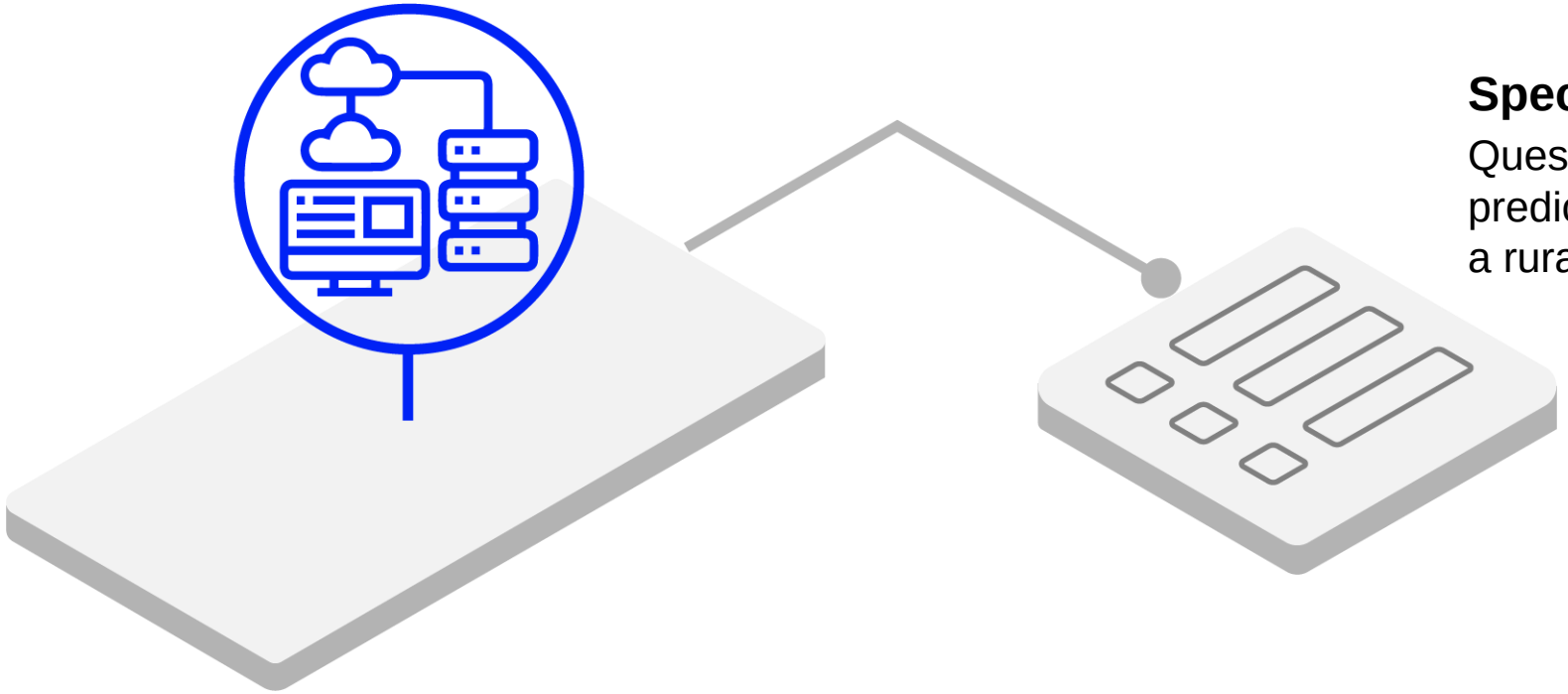
Knowledge base



- UN Tourism resources and publications.
- Resources and publications from other United Nations agencies, specialized institutions and academia.
- Inputs from global and local experts.
- Local good practices (Best Tourism Villages Network).

How does STAR work?

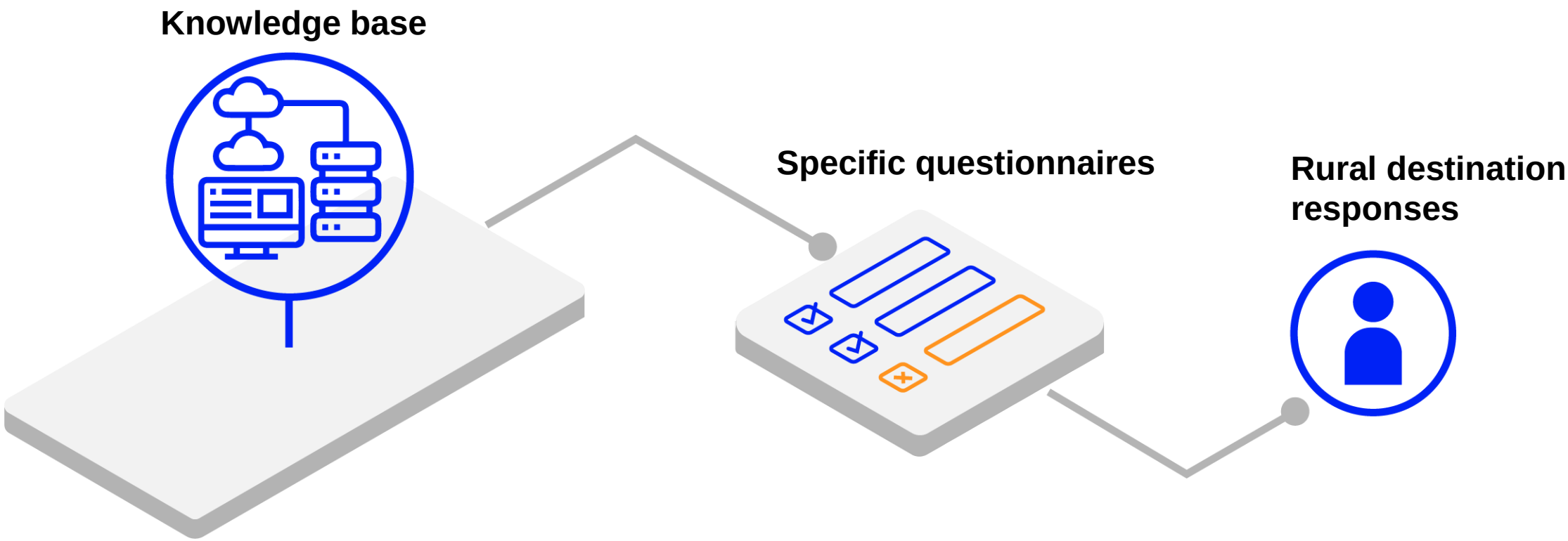
Knowledge base



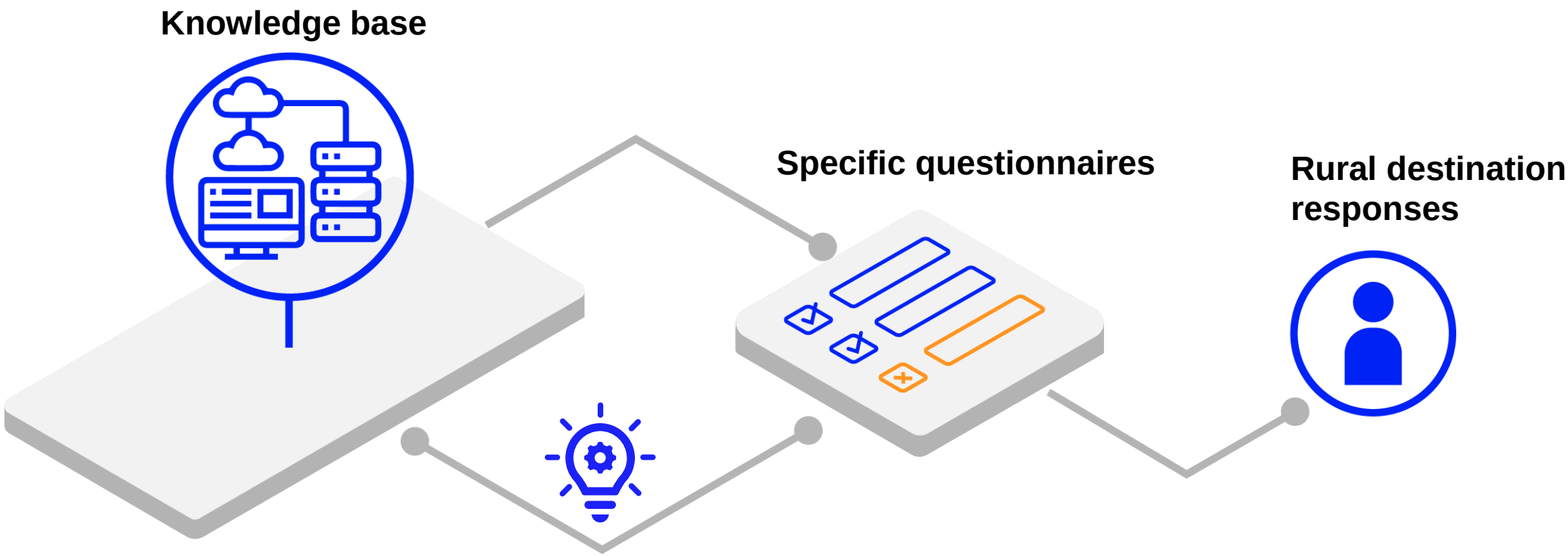
Specific questionnaires

Questions established as the best predictors of the current situation of a rural destination.

How does STAR work?

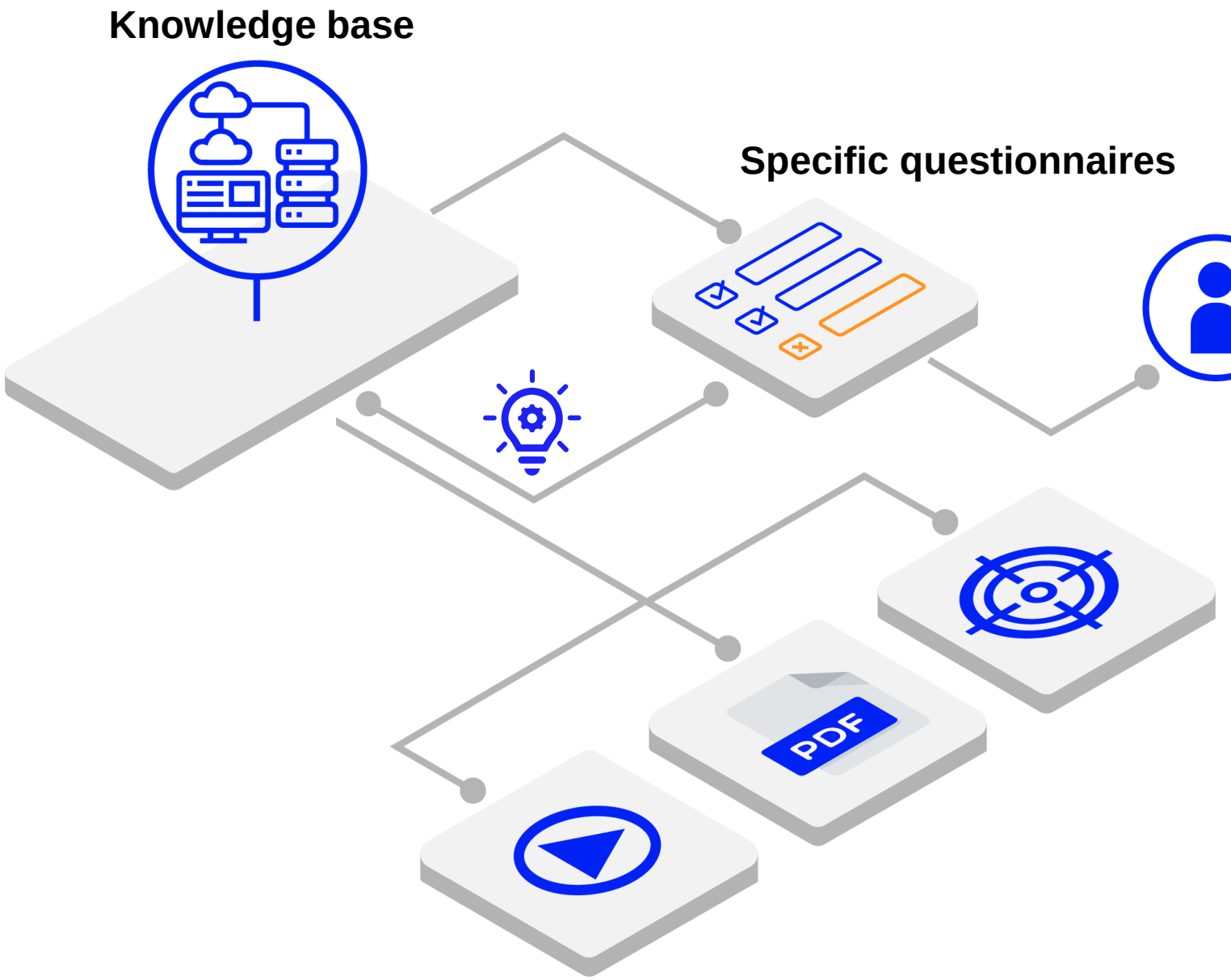


How does STAR work?



The tool's algorithm calculates the **most relevant recommendations** based on the status of the destination.

How does STAR work?



Tailored
recommendation guides

Comparing the destination status with recommended scenarios. Links to external resources available from UN Tourism and other institutions.

+ Periodic updates

Star axes

Tourism governance

The planning, management and coordination of local actors for the development of sustainable tourism in the destination.

Infrastructure

Management of the destination's infrastructure, including accessibility, digital infrastructure and supporting services.

Tourism development

Destination management towards the development of sustainable, inclusive and resilient tourism.

Economic, social and cultural sustainability

Management of opportunities and advancements linked to tourism and social well-being. Management, preservation and promotion of cultural resources.

Environmental sustainability

Preservation, management and promotion of the destination's natural resources.

+ Indicators section

How to access and use STAR?

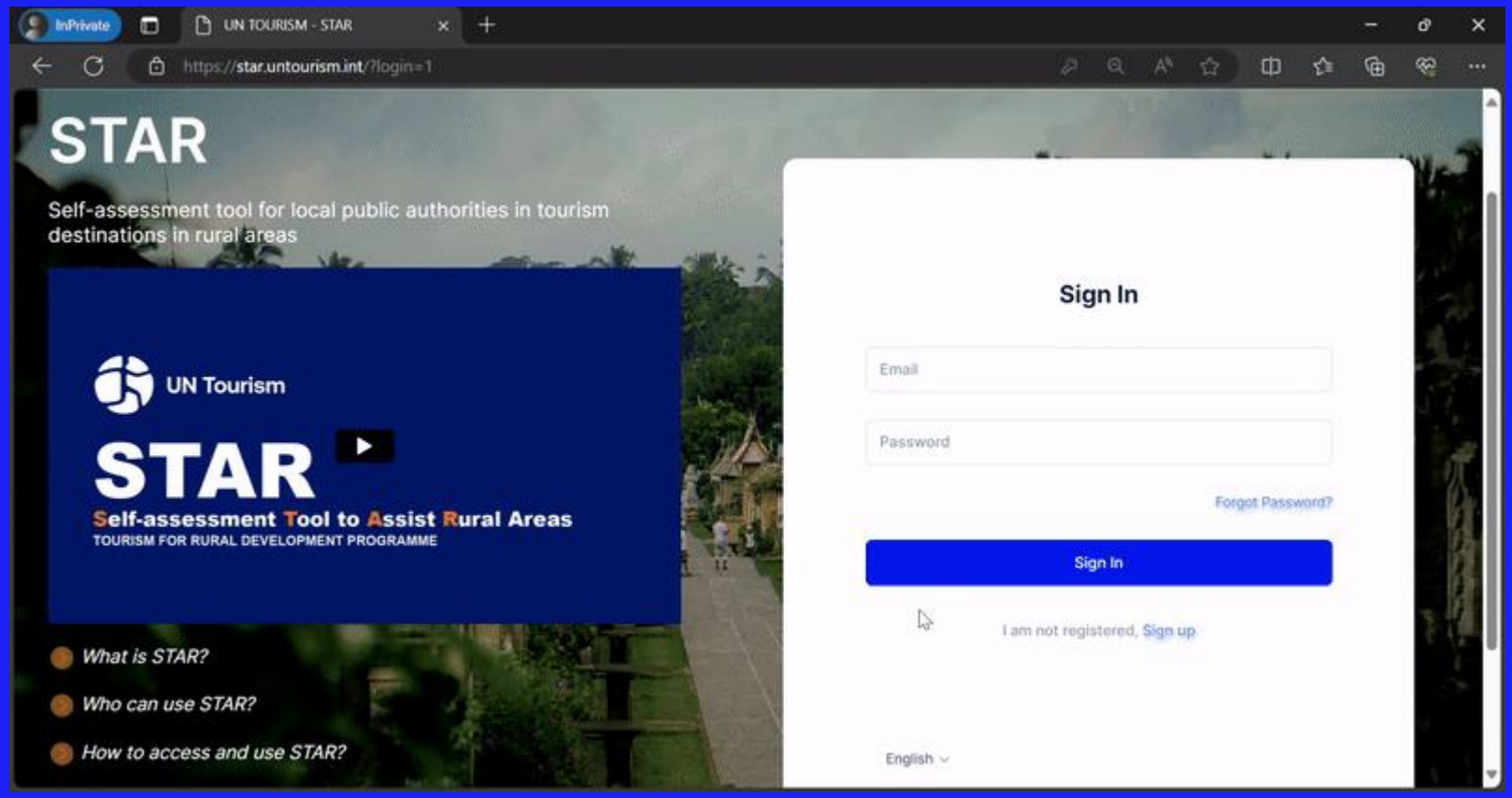
UN Tourism

https://star.untourism.int

01 Create and validate the rural destination account
Select the language to use STAR (English or Spanish).

To create an account, click “Sign up” and fill out your destination information in the form.

After submitting the information, **a validation process is performed**.

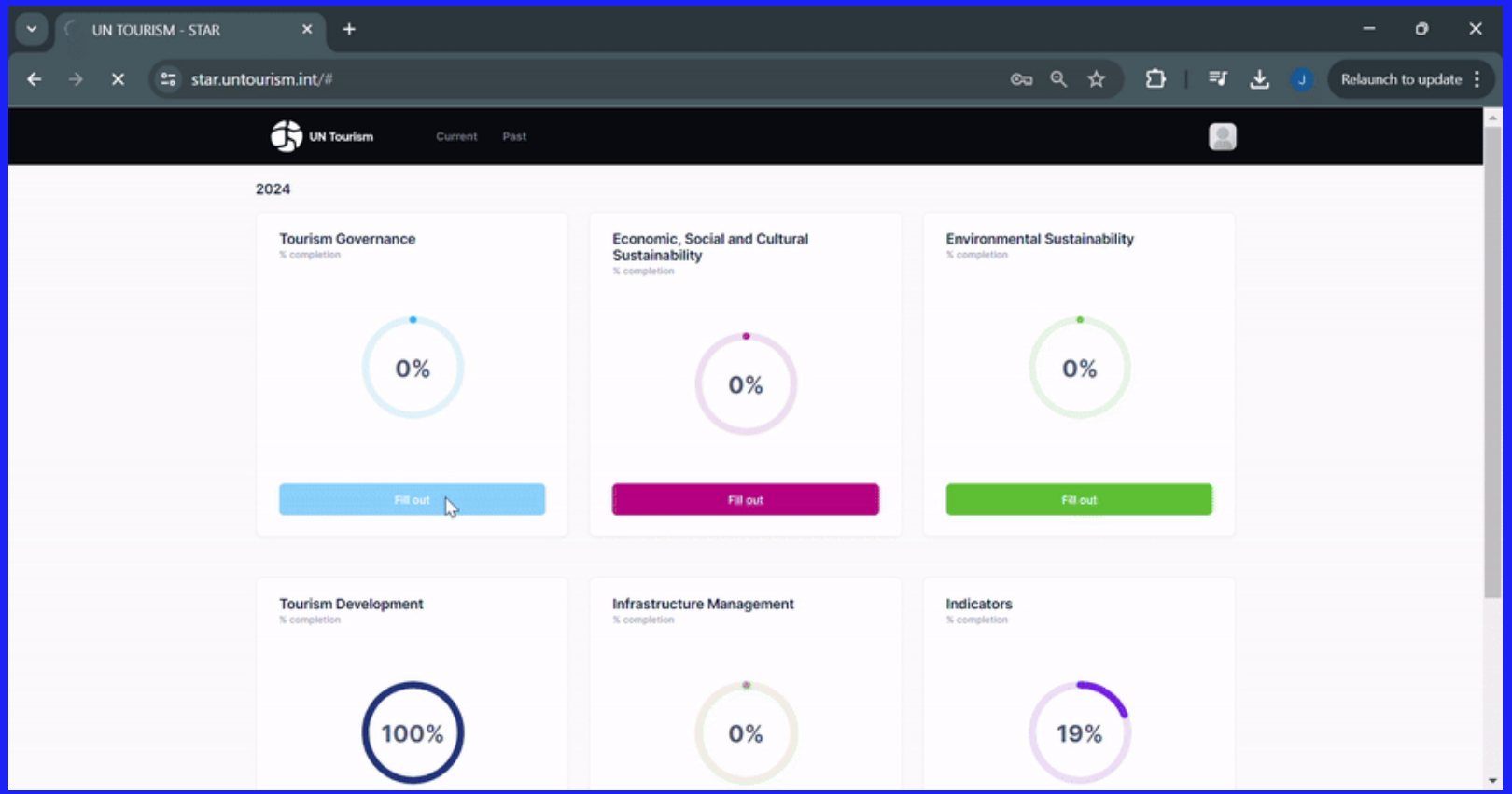


How to access and use STAR?

UN Tourism

02 Create the destination's profile and respond to each axis questionnaires

Fill out the destination characterization form and start filling out the questionnaires. You can save your progress and continue later.

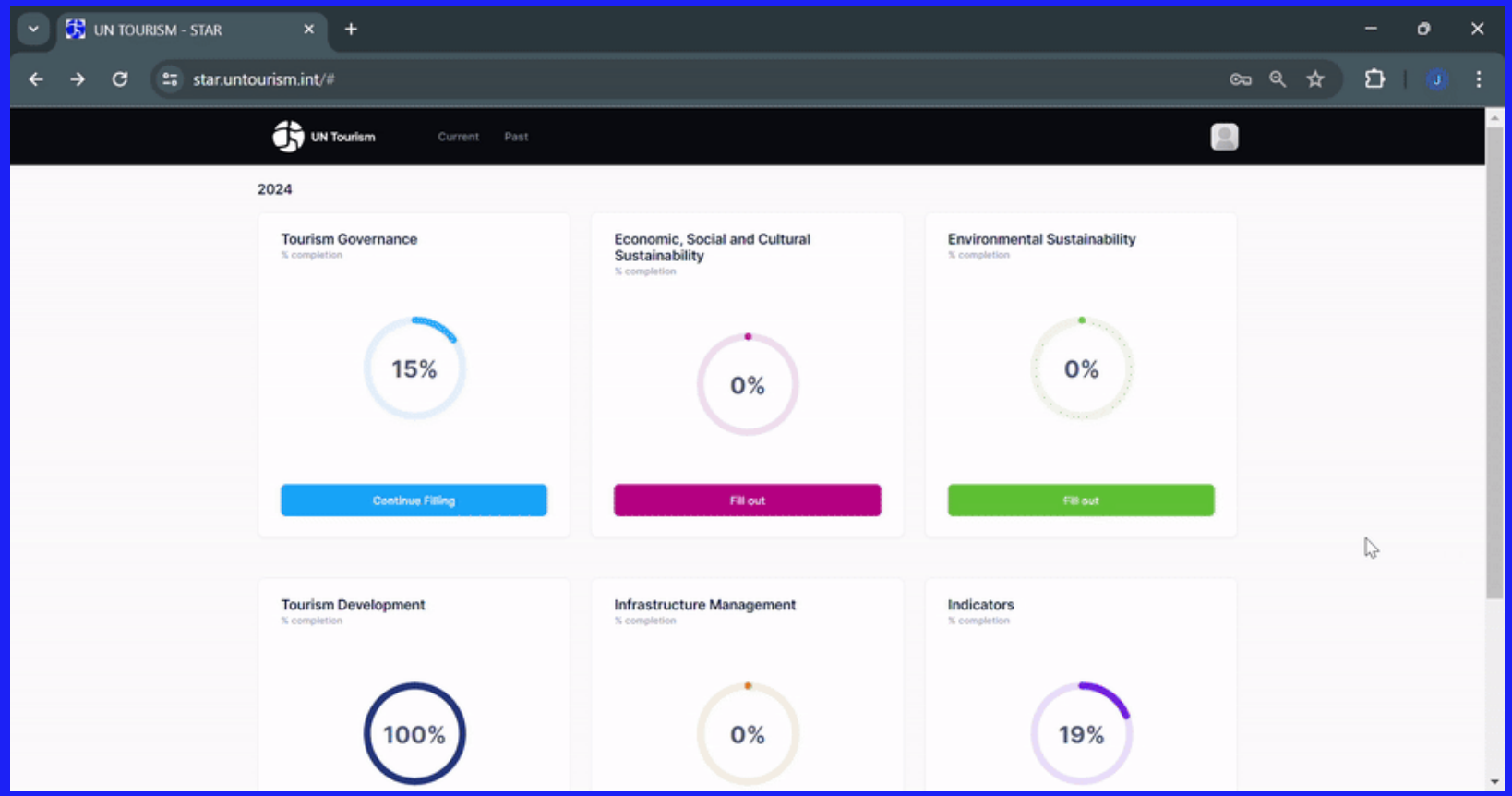


How to access and use STAR?

UN Tourism

03 Finalize each axis questionnaire and access to the Recommendations Guides
A Recommendation Guide is generated per each axis.

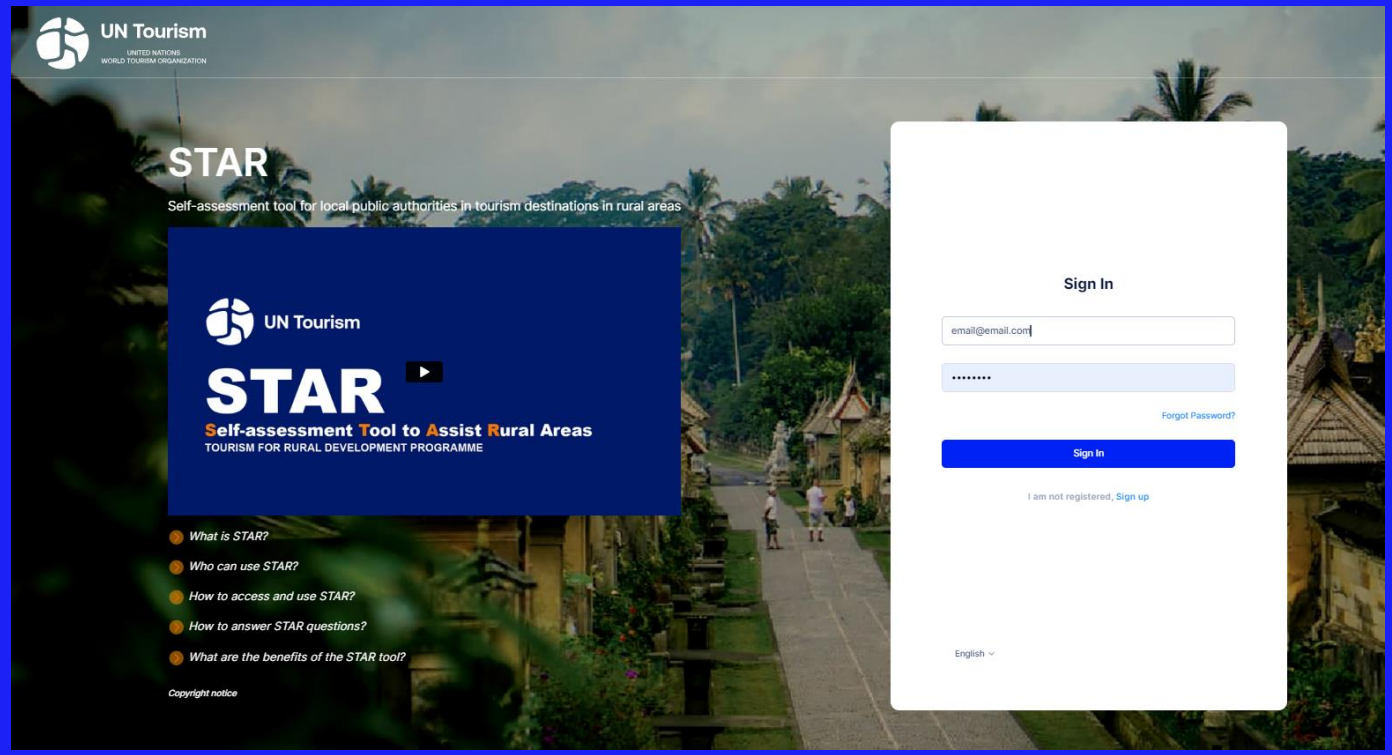
You can review your responses and access to the recommendations at any time.



STAR

UN Tourism

Open to public authorities, DMOs or their delegates in rural destinations within UN Tourism Member States.



Scan to access the tool:

https://star.untourism.int/

Thank you

UN Tourism

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

https://star.untourism.int/
https://www.unwto.org/rural-tourism
rural@unwto.org