

Webinar “Bridging Skills and Practice: Data-driven tourism for destinations and SMEs”

5 June 2026, 13.00 CET

Webinar Summary

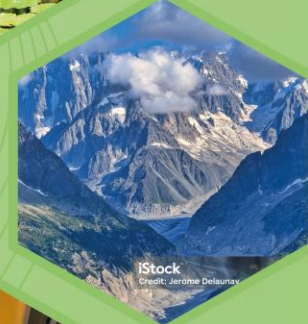




Table of contents



Transition pathway for EU tourism

Introduction	<u>3</u>
Agenda	<u>4</u>
Speakers	<u>5</u>
Webinar in numbers	<u>6</u>
Key discussion points	<u>7</u>
Conclusions	<u>9</u>

Introduction

Scope and objectives of the webinar



Target audience

DMOs, SMEs, larger companies, Industry Associations, academia and VET institutions, National, regional and local authorities, tourism professionals.

Scope and objectives

The tourism ecosystem is increasingly expected to take decisions that are data-driven, sustainable and resilient, yet many destinations and tourism SMEs still face significant challenges in accessing, managing and effectively using data. These challenges are not only technical, but also organisational and skills-related, often limiting the ability of tourism actors to translate available data into meaningful insights and concrete action.

Against this backdrop, the FACILITATE project has been designed to support destinations and tourism SMEs in embracing smarter, data-driven approaches, by identifying skills gaps, lowering barriers to digitalisation and connecting existing European initiatives, tools and expertise into practical support pathways.

This webinar aimed to introduce the FACILITATE project and its objectives, while creating a structured dialogue around two critical dimensions of the digital transition in tourism:

1. The skills and capacity needs of tourism actors related to data management and data driven decision making, with a focus also on organisational changes needed, and
2. The practical application of digital solutions and tools through concrete use cases and best practices from SMEs and destinations

Agenda

13:00 – 13:05 **Welcome and Introduction**

13:05 – 13:20 **Scene Setter “Presentation of the project FACILITATE”**

- **Dolores Ordóñez**, Director, AnySolution and Co-chair of the T4T Digital Subgroup
- **Jessika Weber**, Professor of Digital Transformation in Cultural Tourism, Breda University of Applied Sciences

13:20 – 13:50 **Roundtable “Skills needs in tourism actors”**

- **Éric Dresin**, Secretary General, ECTAA
- **Ana Maria Camps**, Head of Research & Training, CEHAT
- **Urška Starc Peceny**, Chief Innovation Officer, Lead of Tourism 4.0 Department, Arctur d.o.o

13:50 – 14:15 **Uses Cases and Best Practices**

- **Katerina Shearer**, Head of Global Initiatives, Booking.com
- **Pablo González Armenteros**, EU Project Manager, TUR4all Travel Agency
- **Vlaho Margaretić**, Senior Tourism Advisor Specialist, City of Dubrovnik

14:15 – 14:25 **Q&A session**

14:25 – 14:30 **Closing remarks and next steps**

- **Vanguelis Panagiotis**, Chair of the Skills & Resilience subgroup
 - **Elfa Kere**, Policy Officer – Tourism, DG MOVE
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Speakers

Moderator:



Dolores Ordóñez
Director, AnySolution and
Co-chair of the T4T Digital
Subgroup



Jessika Weber
Professor of Digital
Transformation in Cultural
Tourism, Breda University of
Applied Sciences



Éric Dresin
Secretary General, ECTAA



Ana Maria Camps
Head of Research &
Training, CEHAT



Urška Starc Peceny,
Chief Innovation Officer,
Lead of Tourism 4.0
Department, Arctur
d.o.o.



Katerina Shearer
Head of Global
Initiatives, Booking.com



**Pablo González
Armenteros**
EU Project Manager,
TUR4all Travel Agency



Vlaho Margaretić
Senior Tourism Advisor
Specialist, City of Dubrovnik

Webinar in numbers



160 Registrations



96 Participants

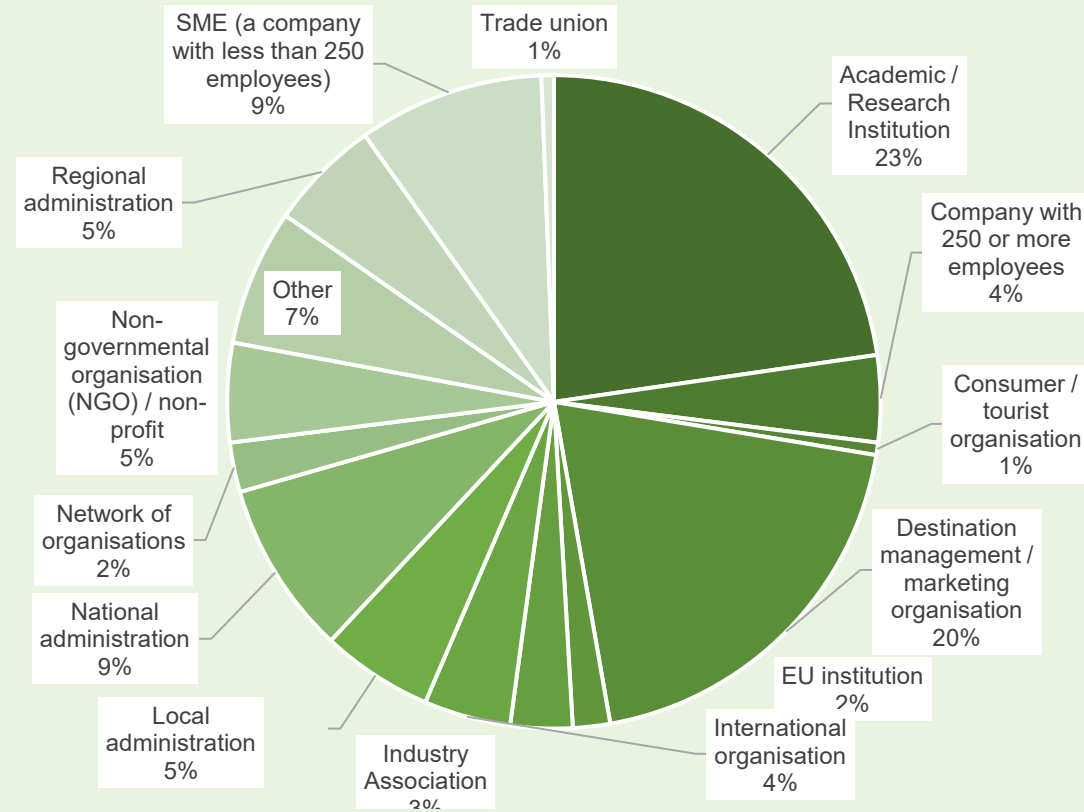


Participants from **23 EU MS**



7 Speakers

Participants' Organizations



Results of the post-webinar survey



100% of the respondents were satisfied with the webinar



75% of the respondents found that the webinar provided useful information.



100% of the respondents feel that they have obtained a better understanding and knowledge of the topic after attending.

Key discussion points (1/2)

Representatives from **AnySolution, Breda University of Applied Sciences, ECTAA, CEHAT, Arctur, Booking.com, TUR4all Travel Agency, and the City of Dubrovnik** discussed the following:

1

Session 1: Scene Setter: Presentation of the project FACILITATE

- **Dolores Ordóñez (AnySolution)** and **Jessika Weber (Breda University of Applied Sciences)** positioned the FACILITATE project within the broader European policy context of the twin green and digital transition. It was strongly highlighted that data is central to building a competitive, resilient and sustainable tourism ecosystem, while a critical capacity gap still limits how effectively destinations and SMEs collect, share and use data for decision-making. It was further underlined that this gap is not only technological, but also organisational and skills-related, constraining the ability of tourism stakeholders to fully leverage emerging infrastructures such as the Tourism Data Space. In response, FACILITATE was presented as a coordination and support mechanism, building on EU initiatives such as D3HUB and DEPLOYTOUR, and offering guidance, training, digital tools and a collaborative framework. The project was ultimately framed as a bridge between data availability and real-world impact, with a clear focus on fostering a data-driven culture and strengthening the capacity of DMOs and SMEs to enhance performance, improve sustainability practices and support more informed decision-making.

2

Session 2: Roundtable "Skills needs in tourism actors"

- **Éric Dresin (ECTAA)** highlighted that skills are a key driver of performance and resilience in an increasingly data-driven tourism sector. It was emphasized that barriers remain not only technical, but also organisational and human, with SMEs in particular requiring practical and accessible support. It was further underlined that skill needs vary across actors, while effective upskilling depends on organisational change and strong management buy-in. In this context, stronger support frameworks, including training, data access and public-private cooperation, were identified as essential to enable SMEs to fully benefit from data-driven tourism.
- **Ana Maria Camps (CEHAT)** presented survey findings from the PANTOUR project relating to the accommodation sector, confirming the existence of significant and multidimensional skills gaps in the tourism sector. It was highlighted that growing demand spans digital skills, such as data use, artificial intelligence and business intelligence, alongside green skills, including CO₂ management and sustainable product development. At the same time, the importance of core social competences, such as communication and adaptability, was underlined. The skills challenge was therefore framed as requiring a balanced mix of competences to strengthen SME competitiveness.
- **Urška Starc Peceny (Arctur)** highlighted the role of digital innovation hubs in supporting the digital and green transition of SMEs. The DIGI-SI hub was presented as an example offering practical services such as consultancy, testing environments and digital readiness tools. It was emphasized that hands-on support, experimentation and capacity-building are key to enabling tourism stakeholders to translate digital technologies into concrete results. In this way, digital innovation hubs were positioned as facilitators of real-world impact for SMEs.

Key discussion points (2/2)

3

Session 3: Uses Cases and Best Practices

- **Katerina Shearer (Booking.com)** highlighted significant gaps between current and future skill needs in the accommodation sector, based on large-scale survey evidence. It was emphasized that while skills shortages are often underestimated by employers, clear limitations are experienced by employees, with direct implications for career growth and business performance. The strongest impacts were observed in guest-facing and commercial functions, while future needs increasingly focus on digital, data-driven and sustainability-related skills. It was also underlined that training provision is not keeping pace, particularly for SMEs facing cost, time and capacity constraints, despite strong willingness to invest in skills development.
- **Pablo González Armenteros (TUR4all Travel Agency)** presented the OpenAccess Tourism Data (OATD) initiative, being implemented under the Phoenix 4.0 COEMS project, call for SMEs, highlighting the fragmentation and limited interoperability of accessibility data as a key barrier for SMEs and destinations. It was explained that the initiative aims to address these challenges through the development of a standardised and interoperable data model, supported by API-based exchange mechanisms. The importance of skills in data structuring, interoperability and accessibility standards was emphasized. The initiative was therefore positioned as a practical step towards improving data availability, reducing duplication and enabling more inclusive and data-driven tourism services.
- **Vlaho Margaretić (City of Dubrovnik)** highlighted Dubrovnik's transition from managing overtourism to adopting a data-driven approach to destination governance. It was demonstrated how real-time data, research partnerships and smart solutions, such as visitor flow management systems and the Dubrovnik Pass, support evidence-based decision-making and enhanced visitor management. As a results of these tourism management actions, the city was recognized as 2026 European Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism. Key challenges were also underlined, including data interoperability, the need for capacity building and development of common methodologies. The importance of European cooperation and knowledge exchange was emphasized as critical for addressing these challenges and strengthening destination resilience.

Conclusions

-  Position data-driven decision-making as a core competitiveness factor, enabling more integrated and evidence-based management across tourism destinations and businesses. 
-  Recognize that the key challenge lies not in data availability, but in the capacity to use data effectively, requiring stronger skills, tools and organisational readiness. 
-  Address skills gaps through a balanced mix of digital, green and social competences, ensuring tourism actors can translate data into performance and sustainability outcomes. 
-  Support tourism SMEs with accessible, practical and targeted upskilling mechanisms, addressing constraints related to cost, time and internal capacity. 
-  Promote organisational transformation alongside skills development, embedding data-driven approaches into governance structures and decision-making processes. 
-  Strengthen data interoperability and standardisation, enabling effective data sharing, comparability and integration across tourism ecosystems. 
-  Scale hands-on support mechanisms, including pilots, testing environments and innovation hubs, to facilitate the practical application of digital solutions. 
-  Enhance collaboration and knowledge exchange at European level, supporting replication of best practices and alignment with initiatives such as the Tourism Data Space. 

Thank you!

The document has been prepared for the European Commission in the context of the project "Transition Pathway Stakeholder Support Platform: Implementation for Tourism Ecosystem" (the Project) in accordance with the signed contract No EISMEA/2022/OP/0018. This report reflects the views and results of the workshop discussion between the tourism stakeholders and do not necessarily represent the views of the European Commission. The action recommendations, however, do not necessarily represent the position or endorsement of all stakeholder groups nor the position of individual Member States or the European Commission.