



Co-funded by the European Union

Single Market Programme (SMP/SME Pillar)

“COVID-19 Recovery through Sustainable Tourism Growth and SME Support”
(SMP-COSME-2021-TOURSME)



TRACE

**SMES TRANSITION FOR A EUROPEAN
CIRCULAR TOURISM ECOSYSTEM**

Announcement of a 2nd open call for recipients of financial support

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SMEs TRAnSition for a European Circular tourism Ecosystem

SMEs TRAnSition for an European Circular tourism Ecosystem: TRACE

2nd OPEN CALL FOR SMEs SUPPORT IN BELGIUM AND SPAIN

GENERAL INFORMATION

Opening date: 21 March 2024

Deadline model: single-stage

Deadline dates: 18 April 2024 17:00 (Brussels time)

Expected duration of participation: 12 months

Total funding available: € 86400

Project acronym: TRACE

Full name of the EU funded project: SMEs TRAnSition for a European Circular tourism Ecosystem

Grant agreement number: 101085893

Topic: COVID-19 Recovery Through Sustainable Tourism Growth and SME Support

SUBMISSION & EVALUATION PROCESS

Submission process

Interested applicants from the two eligible countries (Belgium and Spain), represented by legal representatives of tourism SMEs, are requested to apply online and answer all mandatory questions at: [TRACE Application Form](#) link.

Applications are submitted by the SMEs on the EU Survey platform which include questions related to the TRACE programme and specific acknowledgment to the conditions of the programme.

EUSurvey platform will be the entry point for all proposals that will be submitted to TRACE programme.

Questions on the application process can be addressed at: support@iniziativa.cc

The open call guidelines can be downloaded at the following link <https://www.ispc.cnr.it/en/2023/02/21/trace/>

Evaluation process

The applications will be collected, analysed and assessed by an Evaluation Board composed of TRACE Consortium members. Applications will be sorted and selected following three main steps:

- Admissibility and Eligibility check
- Proposal evaluation
- Ranking and final selection.

It is important to note that if admissibility/eligibility criteria will be met and if applications will reach the threshold of 9/15 in the score, early registrants will receive priority consideration for program selection on the basis of the 'first come, first served' approach. A prompt registration



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ensures a higher likelihood of being among the first cohort selected for the TRACE Support Programme.

An application will be eligible only if all the following eligibility criteria are met:

- proposals must be compliant with all eligibility criteria set in Section 2.2 of the Open Call;
- each SME may submit only one (1) proposal. In case an SME submits more than one proposal, only the last application will be accepted;
- the SMEs that participated in the Open Call and were not selected for the funding support, will be qualified to participate for free within TRACE programme to benefit of capacity building and networking activities.

A manual filtering process will be used to discard ineligible proposals. The admissibility/eligibility criteria check will verify:

- The proposal was submitted before the call deadline electronically via EUSurvey portal [Y/N]
- The proposal is complete and contains all the requested information in the Application Form [Y/N]
- The proposal is written in the English language [Y/N]
- The applicant is a legal entity established in the eligible countries described in Section 2.2 [Y/N]
- The applicant is an SME as defined in Section 2.2. [Y/N]
- The applicant SME is operating in the tourism sector as described in Section 2.2. [Y/N]

A Proposal is admissible/eligible if all answers to the previous criteria are Yes.

A team of experts of TRACE project will be defined to evaluate the applications: two (2) experts will evaluate remotely the proposals and will assign individual and final scoring.

Applicants must demonstrate:

- *a clear set of objectives aligned with the definition of the TRACE goals and with the general objectives of the project;*
- *the expected outcomes and impacts of the TRACE support programme and its contribution to SME circular development;*
- *credible evidence that the project team is committed to learn/grow and has the necessary skills and management experience to be able to implement the circular economy transition.*

At the end of the evaluation process all applications will be ranked in 2 country-based lists (refer to list of eligible countries in Section 2.2). The criteria for the ranking are described in the Section 4.3 of the Open Call.

The applicants will be informed about the decision made by the Evaluation Board by the end of May 2024 via email.

The final decision will also be published on TRACE project web page.

FURTHER INFORMATION

‘SMEs TRAnSition for an European Circular tourism Ecosystem’ project – in short ‘TRACE’ – is a project co-funded by the European Commission under the Single Market Programme (SMP SMP/SME Pillar), which aims to provide sustainability services such as strategies, training activities



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and tools for tourism SMEs willing to innovate their business models and enhance their performance from a sustainability and circularity perspective (<https://www.ispc.cnr.it/en/2023/02/21/trace/>).

The TRACE Support Programme will involve directly SMEs that will be projected to become “champions” of sustainability and inspire other micro and small-sized enterprises in their local contexts.

Activities will focus on sustainability aspects such as analysis of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) emissions, development of sustainability plans, support for application to EU eco-label and other certification processes, and monitoring of a set of key indicators for the level of sustainability and circularity. Particular attention will be given to the enhancement of skills and capacities of the involved SMEs internal staff, through training and capacity building activities, and a series of direct support services dedicated to certification processes, sustainable finance and innovation management. Thus, the whole TRACE Support Programme aims at supporting tourism SMEs in taking their first steps towards the sustainability journey, starting a process which has a large potential to bring benefits not only to the single enterprise but to the entire territory/society.

The seven partner that constitute the consortium are based in five different countries:

- CNR – Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (Italy);
- Haute Ecole ICHEC – ECAM – ISFSC (Belgium);
- Iniziativa Cure S.r.l. (Italy);
- ADR - Agentia Pentru Dezvoltare Regionala Nord-Est (Romania);
- ANETEL - Anaptyxiaki Etaireia Eparchion Larnakas – Ammochostou Ltd (Cyprus);
- ATP Basilicata - Agenzia di Promozione Territoriale della Basilicata (Italy);
- Diputacion Provincial de Teruel (Spain).

Who can apply?

As described in Section 2.2.6 of the Open Call, the applicants must:

- be a Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME):
 - An SME will be considered as such if complying with the [European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC](#) and the [SME qualification guide](#);
 - SMEs that do not have yet annual turnover or balance sheets are also considered eligible given that they fulfil the mentioned criteria of the SME definition;
 - In case an SME enters the TRACE Support Programme, it will remain eligible even if, at a certain point during the programme execution, it does not fulfil criteria of the SME definition;
- be SMEs working in tourism sector, ideally demonstrating or aiming for innovation in tourism, *preferably* within the following categories, in line with these Eurostat classes¹:

¹https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Tourism_industries_-_employment#Data_sources



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- I5510 — Hotels and similar accommodation
- I5520 — Holiday and other short-stay accommodation
- I5530 — Camping grounds, recreational vehicle parks and trailer parks
- I5610 — Restaurants and mobile food service activities
- I5630 — Beverage serving activities
- N7710 — Renting and leasing of motor vehicles
- N7721 — Renting and leasing of recreational and sports goods
- SMEs in other sectors (e.g., R - arts, entertainment and recreation) can take part in the selection process, while they need to demonstrate that their activities are linked to the tourism sector
- be a legal entity established in one of the following countries:
 - Belgium
 - Spain
 - Applicants that are legal entity SMEs established and based in the other European Union or EU Associated Countries² are eligible to participate in TRACE Support Programme (e.g., action-learning trainings, awareness raising towards sustainability and circular tourism webinars, networking activities etc.) but are excluded from receiving funding support;
- not have had convictions for fraudulent behaviour, other financial irregularities, unethical or illegal business practices;
- not have been declared bankrupt or have initiated bankruptcy procedures;
- are not under liquidation or is not an enterprise under difficulty according to the [Commission Regulation No 651/2014](#), art. 2.18;
- are not excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of either national or EU authority.

What do we offer?

The services support under TRACE Support Programme for tourism SMEs will be delivered by the TRACE Consortium members and are divided in three interconnected phases, the Phase 1: Capacity Building Support, the Phase 2: Assess & Recommend and the Phase 3: Circular Business Direct Support. The support within Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 for SMEs provided by TRACE Consortium members under the form of services are valued approximately EUR 4,000 per SME. In addition to these services provided by the Consortium, within Phase 4 beneficiaries will be awarded with direct funding in the form of grants of maximum EUR 7,200 to deploy their Sustainability Plan.

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/smp/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_smp_en.pdf



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The Financial Support programme (Phase 4) is expected to start in June 2024 and close in December 2024 and will last 7 months for the beneficiary SMEs in this timespan.

The granted SMEs will be called to deliver Inception and Final reports where they will describe respectively the services to be acquired and their results. The costs must be incurred within the duration of the Financial Support programme.

The Inception report is due by the end of month 1 from the start of the Financial Support programme.

The Final report is due within 30 calendar days after the end of the Financial Support programme. Monitoring of the progress of the Financial Support programme implementation will be made at mid-term and at programme closure.

Payments will be made after positive assessment of the reports. The Consortium commits to evaluate all reports within one month of delivery and complete payment procedures within three weeks after the acceptance of the report.

Payment scheme will be as follows:

- 40% as pre-financing after contract signature and submission of the Inception report;
- 60% as final payment after the acceptance of the Final report and costs incurred.

TASK DESCRIPTION

TRACE tailored services will be delivered as follows:

Phase 1: Capacity Building Support (*at least 100 SMEs including those of Phase 2*). The aim of the activities under Phase 1 is to strengthen the capacity of the involved tourism SMEs to add value to modern business and society. TRACE Consortium will provide the SMEs with tools and methodologies aimed at recognizing and maximizing opportunities for tourism while putting sustainability, circularity, regeneration and positive societal impacts at the core of their business models. The main objectives are: enhancing skills and capacities of selected SMEs through action-learning training, workshops & peer learning; raise awareness and inspire SMEs through study visits & awareness raising activities; establish new cooperation activities of involved tourism SMEs through matchmaking, knowledge sharing, and best practices exchange.

Phase 2: Assess & Recommend. The involved tourism SMEs will be provided with a self-assessment questionnaire in order to map and assess their needs and challenges towards sustainable and circular tourism. Based on the self-assessment feedback, training, peer learning and knowledge exchange under Phase 1, the involved SMEs will be able, also with the support of the Trace mentoring programme, to develop their Sustainability Plan.

Phase 3: Circular Business Direct Support (*at least 30 SMEs*). SMEs will be supported in order to enhance sustainability strategies and practices related to circular and sustainable tourism, providing direct support to 30 individual tourism SMEs selected between those participating Phase 1 and Phase 2 activities. Direct support will be provided with a focus on the environmental assessments and certifications towards circular and sustainable tourism; and strategic business development for sustainability and circularity, including business modelling, business planning, and investment strategies to enhance sustainability, resilience, cooperation and competitiveness of the SMEs.

Phase 4: Direct Funding (*100 SMEs 20 SMEs per each eligible country*). Beneficiaries will be awarded with direct funding of maximum EUR 7,200 to deploy their Sustainability Plan.