HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-06

Future-proofing sustainable cultural tourism

A Research and Innovation Action on AI, foresight and community-centred models that make cultural tourism a driver of regenerative local development.

Destination Innovative Research on European Cultural Heritage and Cultural and Creative Industries

Deadline	Topic budget	Per project	Type of action
23 September 2027	**€14.5 million**	**€4.0–4.8 million**	**RIA**
Single-stage, opens 13 May 2027	About 3 projects funded	Lump sum grant	Research and Innovation Action

Key data

Topic identifier HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-06	**Type of action** HORIZON-RIA – Research and Innovation Action
Call HORIZON-CL2-2027-01 – Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society – 2027	
Programme Horizon Europe, Cluster 2 (Culture, creativity and inclusive society), Cultural Heritage	
Funding model HORIZON Lump Sum Grant (HORIZON-AG-LS)	**Status** Forthcoming
Planned opening 13 May 2027	**Deadline** 23 September 2027 (single-stage)
Topic budget EUR 14,500,000 (2027), for about 3 grants	**EU contribution per project** EUR 4,000,000 – 4,800,000

Rationale

Destination

Innovative Research on European Cultural Heritage and Cultural and Creative Industries (2026-27)

Europe’s rich cultural heritage and strong creative industries not only reflect our past but also shape our future. It is by building on this foundation and developing our strengths that we can face the great challenges of our time with confidence and shape a desirable common future.



Mont Saint-Michel, France

Cultural consumption is a universal right

Europe's cultural heritage originates from the interaction between people and places through time and is constantly evolving. Every citizen has a right to engage with the cultural heritage of their choice, while respecting the rights and freedoms of others, as an aspect of the right to participate freely in cultural life.

Culture, a driver for development and SME growth

Europe’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage and its cultural and creative industries (CCIs) are strategic assets. They strengthen social cohesion, resilience and a sense of belonging, employ more people than the automotive industry and match the trade balance of food, drinks and tobacco combined. Alongside multinationals built on European heritage and creativity, the sector sustains many SMEs and micro enterprises that create jobs, especially for young people, and drive innovation across the whole economy, strengthening Europe’s competitiveness and future prosperity.



FIMU festival, Belfort


Culture Compass for Europe

Culture Compass for Europe

R&I activities under this destination will be aligned with the main principles and objectives of the Culture Compass for Europe and support objectives such as circular and just fashion and textiles value-chains, social cohesion and resilience through arts, design and cultural practices and creative entrepreneurial ecosystems for regional development. R&I activities under this destination will support and strengthen European cultural heritage and cultural and creative industries essentially along the following lines:

Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness

Unlocking the innovative power of cultural heritage and the CCIs is key to Europe's future prosperity and competitiveness. The CCIs drive innovation in their own sector and across the economy, shape new technologies and feed user-driven, open and cross-sectoral innovation, while adding cultural wealth, social cohesion and resilience. Research and innovation will focus on creative start-ups, the impact of AI on creativity and its fair deployment, artistic intelligence and soft skills, the circular economy, and global partnerships in cultural policy and the CCIs.

Supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model

R&I actions under this area will focus on boosting the role of culture, the arts and creative industries in contributing to well-being, to the social economy and in general the societal impact of cultural heritage. R&I actions will explore and strengthen the role of culture, heritage and CCIs in shaping the technologies of the future and focus on safeguarding intangible heritage and linguistic diversity, on sustainable cultural tourism and on countering illicit trafficking of cultural goods, among others.

European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage (ECCCH)

Projects that use or generate data should draw on existing European infrastructures: the European Open Science Cloud, the ESFRI research infrastructures and the European Data Spaces. Data and digital tools useful to cultural heritage institutions or researchers should link to, or be integrated in, the European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage (ECCCH), and all data produced should be FAIR: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable.


The Cultural Heritage Cloud



EIT Culture & Creativity

EIT Culture and Creativity

The innovation ecosystems created and nurtured by the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), in particular the KIC "EIT Culture and Creativity", may contribute to actions under this destination, and may as appropriate be considered by applicants. Furthermore, applicants are invited to consult funding opportunities in other parts of the Horizon Europe Work Programme, including for instance the funding opportunities for companies, high potential start-ups, entrepreneurs and innovative researchers offered under the European Innovation Council.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

R&I actions under this Destination will help ensure Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness, support people, strengthening our societies and our social model, contribute to protecting our democracy, upholding our values and boosting a global Europe, leveraging our power and partnerships. They will contribute to reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals and to building a stronger, more participatory and crisis-resilient society and economy.



UN Sustainable Development Goals

To maximise the impacts of R&I under this Destination in line with EU priorities, international cooperation is encouraged whenever relevant in the proposed topics.

Scope

Cultural tourism accounts for about 40% of global tourism[1] and continues to grow as travellers seek unique, authentic, and immersive experiences.

In addition to its economic benefits, cultural tourism enriches societies through cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding. The sector faces major transformation driven by technological advancement, shifting consumer expectations, climate change, sustainability imperatives, environmental degradation and threats to cultural integrity – including commodification and heritage degradation. Furthermore, there is a growing emphasis on inclusive and meaningful travel experiences, including accessibility for travellers with disabilities and others with specific needs.

This topic takes a multidimensional approach to future-proofing sustainable cultural tourism amid technological, social and environmental change across the EU and beyond. Proposals should select either Focus 1 or Focus 2 and clearly state their selection.

Focus 1

Transformative AI integration and strategic foresight for cultural tourism resilience

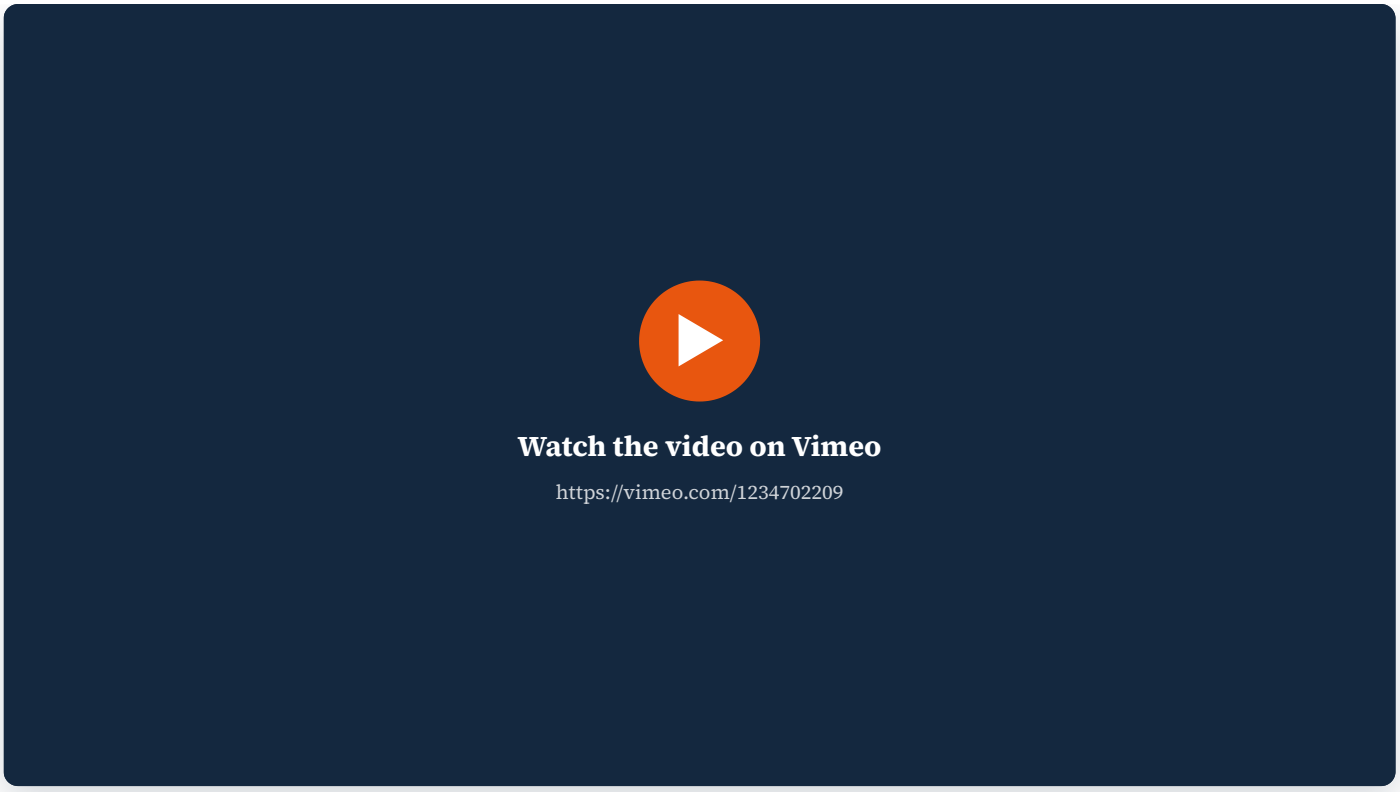
Proposals are expected to explore how integrating AI-powered tools and other emerging technologies with cultural tourism can strengthen its resilience, inclusivity, and sustainability. Additionally, through AI-assisted participatory foresight proposals should address the need for tourism systems to move from reactive management to anticipatory governance models, building resilience to global challenges.

European Data Space for Tourism

Proposals should investigate AI applications that reshape cultural tourism experiences while ensuring that they remain authentic and respectful of local integrity; enhance inclusivity, including equal access to technology and improved accessibility for persons with disabilities; help manage visitor pressure. They could leverage available public and private data and infrastructures, such as the European Data space for Tourism.[2] Building on recent developments in AI and immersive technologies, proposals could for example use AI-powered virtual and augmented reality to boost visitor engagement and cross-cultural appreciation of cultural sites while preserving historical integrity. They should investigate novel approaches to AI-driven personalisation that develop inclusive, non-discriminatory, tailored cultural experiences, which are ethically managed, and ensure fair representation of minority or lesser-known heritage and cultural expressions.

AI uses for Cultural Tourism

Proposals could analyse the integration of AI in multilingual interpretation and cultural mediation to overcome language barriers and deepen cultural understanding of local contexts or develop and refine AI-powered tools for visitor flow management, real-time heritage monitoring, and balancing preservation with inclusive tourism. Furthermore, proposals are expected to develop methodological frameworks for applying AI-assisted foresight (scenario planning, horizon scanning, among others) to anticipate trends and challenges in cultural tourism – such as shifts in visitor behaviour, cultural commodification risks, and potential disruptions (e.g. related to climate, pandemics, energy crises), enabling the identification of opportunities and risks and fostering proactive, data-informed policy responses. AI-based predictive analytics should be combined with participatory workshops to engage local communities, authorities, and cultural organisations in co-creating forward-looking sustainable tourism strategies.



Speaking Objects

Video by CULTiNVEST, 1 min 57 s. Watch on Vimeo

Focus 2

Cultural tourism as a catalyst for sustainable local development

Proposals are expected to develop sustainable cultural tourism frameworks and strategies tailored to emerging and less-developed destinations, especially in low-income and lesser-known regions seeking to leverage culture and creativity for economic growth and social development, including through addressing depopulation and preventing overtourism. These frameworks may foster creative entrepreneurial ecosystems for regional development. Partnerships with non-EU countries are encouraged.

The Upskilling Revolution

Proposals should investigate cross-border collaboration models that enable mutual learning, upskilling, fair working conditions, knowledge transfer and capacity building between EU and non-EU partners. Proposals should identify and adapt proven sustainable cultural tourism models to diverse less-developed settings (urban, peri-urban, rural) emphasizing equitable benefit-sharing. The research should include the analysis of case studies of successful community integration in cultural tourism decision-making.

Community-led tourism planning

Partnerships among local communities, creative industries (including crafts), local businesses and cultural heritage organisations should be prioritised to co-create economically viable, environmentally balanced, authentic and culturally respectful tourism offerings, potentially using living labs and pilot demonstrations. Projects are expected to establish collaborative networks for small businesses and civil society actors in cultural tourism,

> supporting them through access to researchers, policymakers, expertise, knowledge, resources and collaborative opportunities.


Venice

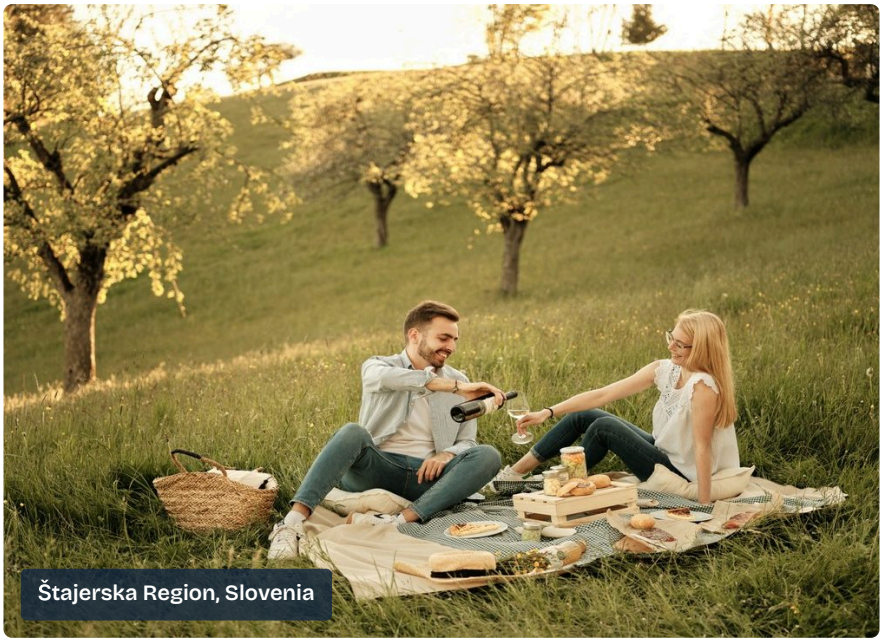

Barcelona


Amsterdam

Venice, Barcelona and Amsterdam: where the tourism experience has become a tourism nightmare with low quality services and experiences.


Câmara de Lobos, Madeira


Burano, Italy


Štajerska Region, Slovenia

Great experiences off the beaten track.

Source: European Best Destinations

Expected outcome

Projects should contribute to the first expected outcome, plus those under either Focus 1 or Focus 2, depending on the chosen focus.

For all projects

- Evidence-based policy recommendations and solutions for integrating cultural tourism into strategies for regenerative sustainability, environmental protection (for example, from degradation or biodiversity loss), digital transformation, social inclusion and gender equality at all levels of government. As a result, cultural tourism becomes a stronger driver of regenerative sustainable development, increases workforce numbers and skills, and improves working conditions. Research impact is maximised through coordinated dissemination and policy co-creation, facilitating implementation of research-based solutions by policymakers and stakeholders.

Focus 1

AI integration and strategic foresight

- A comprehensive analytical framework for ethical AI integration in sustainable cultural tourism balancing sustainable competitiveness with cultural authenticity and inclusivity.
- Methodological frameworks and tools for AI-assisted foresight in cultural tourism enabling policymakers, civil society and stakeholders to anticipate changes and adapt strategies proactively.

Focus 2

Cultural tourism for local development

- Evidence-based, community-centric models and strategies for sustainable cultural tourism in emerging and less-developed destinations, adaptable to diverse contexts within and beyond the EU.
- An international collaborative network for small business and civil society in cultural tourism, focused on cross-border partnerships, regenerative practices and equitable benefit-sharing.

Expected impact

Proposals for topics under this Destination should set out a credible pathway to contributing to the following expected impact of the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan:

- The full potential of cultural heritage, arts and cultural and creative industries and sectors as drivers of both sustainable innovation and a European sense of belonging is realised through a continuous engagement with society, citizens and economic sectors.

Key Results

Frameworks & strategies

- Cultural tourism framework
- Strategies for cultural tourism
- Preventing overtourism
- Analysis of case studies of successful community integration in cultural tourism decision-making
- Frameworks integrating cultural tourism with broader sustainability, digital transformation, and social inclusion goals
- Co-creative policy development methodologies
- Stakeholders involvement (policymakers across various government levels, local communities, NGOs, businesses, industry) to translate research insights into evidence-based strategies and contextually appropriate interventions

Capacity building

- Investigate cross-border collaboration models that enable mutual learning, upskilling, fair working conditions, knowledge transfer and capacity building between EU and non-EU partners
- Identify and adapt proven sustainable cultural tourism models to diverse less-developed settings (urban, peri-urban, rural) emphasizing equitable benefit-sharing

Growth and jobs

- Address emerging and less-developed destinations
- Address low-income and lesser-known regions
- Address depopulation
- Boost cultural tourism as a resource for sustainable development
- Fostering workforce growth and skills
- Improve working conditions in cultural tourism

Regional development

- Creative entrepreneurial ecosystems for regional development
- Partnerships with non-EU countries are encouraged
- Partnerships among local communities, creative industries, local businesses and cultural heritage organisations to co-create resilient tourism offers
- Living labs and pilot demonstrations for viable products
- Collaborative networks for small businesses and civil society actors in cultural tourism, supporting them through access to researchers, policymakers, expertise, knowledge, resources and collaborative opportunities

Horizontal policies

- Policy uptake of existing knowledge, tools, and best practices from past and ongoing EU-funded research on cultural tourism and related areas[3]
- Translate research insights into evidence-based strategies and contextually appropriate interventions
- Establish continuous knowledge exchange mechanisms among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to ensure ongoing relevance and impact

Conditions

Admissibility, page limits and layout Annexes A and E of the Horizon Europe Work Programme General Annexes; page limits in Part B of the Application Form in the Submission System.	**Eligible countries** Annex B of the General Annexes. Some non-EU/non-Associated Countries not automatically eligible have made specific provisions to fund their participants (see the Horizon Europe Programme Guide).
Other eligibility conditions Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks; Annex B of the General Annexes.	**Financial and operational capacity** Annex C of the General Annexes, including exclusion criteria.
Award criteria and evaluation Scoring and thresholds in Annex D, submission and evaluation process in Annex F of the General Annexes and the Funding & Tenders Online Manual.	**Specific conditions** As described in the specific topic of the Work Programme.
Legal and financial set-up Lump sum contributions under the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising lump sums in Horizon Europe, and Annex G of the General Annexes. The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or the exclusive licensing of results (Annex 5).	

Keywords

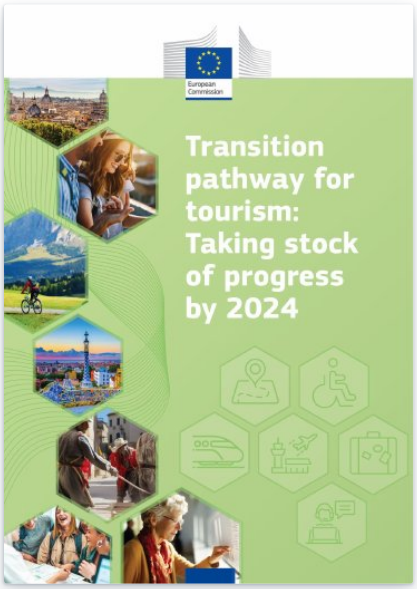
Artificial intelligence, intelligent systems, multi-agent systems · Business models · Capacity building · Data and image processing · Digitalisation/ICT and cultural heritage · Environmental sciences · Experimentally-driven research and innovation · International cooperation · Knowledge transfer · Policy making and economics · Regional development · Social innovation · Social sciences, interdisciplinary · Tourism / Travel · Visual arts, performing arts, design

Library

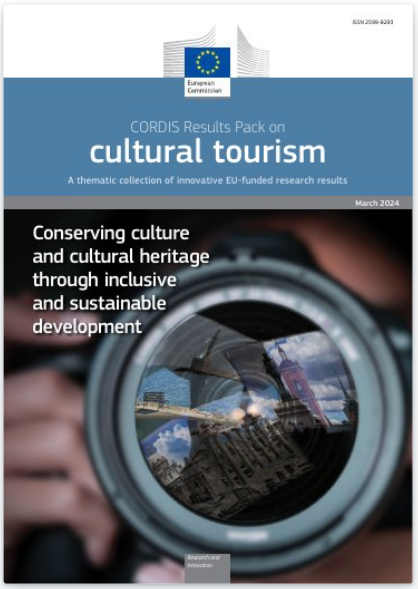
Background documents for this call. Select a cover to download the report.



Download 950 KB



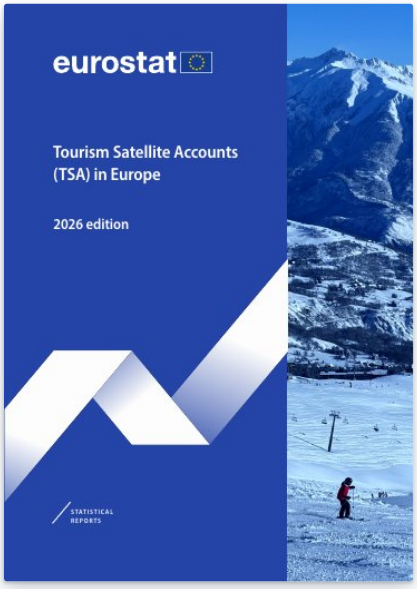
Download 3.0 MB



Download 3.3 MB



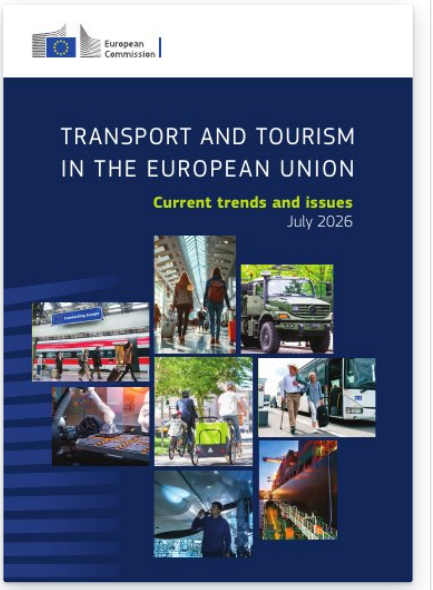
Download 715 KB



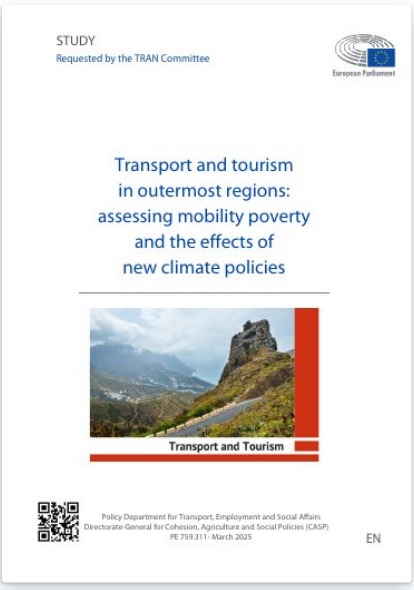
Download 4.1 MB



Download 5.0 MB



Download 18.3 MB



Download 1.5 MB

References

1 UN World Tourism Organization (2018), *Tourism and Culture Synergies*, p. 21. e-unwto.org/doi/epdf/10.18111/9789284418978

2 European Data Space for Tourism: hadea.ec.europa.eu/calls-proposals/data-space-tourism_en

3 This includes projects funded by Cluster 6 topic HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-02-2-two-stage: New sustainable business and production models for farmers and rural communities.

4 European Commission, DG MOVE, *EU Tourism Platform*: Transition Pathway for Tourism. transition-pathways.europa.eu/tourism

5 European Commission, DG MOVE, *EU Tourism Platform*: Tourism Transition Pathway reports, including stocktaking of progress. transition-pathways.europa.eu/tourism/knowledge-and-learning/ttp-reports

6 European Commission: Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport, *Transport and tourism in the European Union – Current trends and issues*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2026, data.europa.eu/doi/10.2832/7133601

7 European Commission: Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, [Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development], *Workshop on tourism data sharing, governance and integration – Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, data.europa.eu/doi/10.2887/263820

8 European Commission: Eurostat, *Tourism satellite accounts in Europe – 2026 edition*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2026, data.europa.eu/doi/10.2785/1839533

9 Eurofound, Rodríguez Contreras, R., Weber, T. and Adăscăliței, D., *Sustainable tourism in a digital age – Preparing the tourism sector for the twin transitions*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, data.europa.eu/doi/10.2806/6354911

10 European Commission: Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, *Interreg GO! – Governance models for tourism & culture in Interreg*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, data.europa.eu/doi/10.2776/8103033

11 European Commission: Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport and NIT, [Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport, NIT], *Guidance for a more sustainable mobility in rural tourism regions*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, data.europa.eu/doi/10.2832/8860953

12 Iodice, S., van Heerden, S., Ribeiro Barranco, R., Bertoni, E., Curtale, R. et al., *Exploring the nexus of housing, tourism, and local liveability – Insights from Paris, Milan, and Rome*, Iodice, S., Ribeiro Barranco, R. and van Heerden, S. (eds), Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/8602103

13 European Parliament: Directorate-General for Cohesion, Agriculture and Social Policies, Gaušas, S., Leiputė, B., Christenko, A., Langham, E. et al., *Role of the longevity economy in the tourism sector – Research for TRAN Committee*, European Parliament, 2025, data.europa.eu/doi/10.2861/1599872

14 European Commission: Directorate-General for Energy, *Repurposing mines for tourism and culture – A combined case study of transformation examples from Dolní oblast Vítkovice mine in Ostrava, Czechia and Golpa-Nord in Lusatia, Germany – Case study*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, data.europa.eu/doi/10.2833/9108193

15 European Committee of the Regions: Commission for Natural Resources, Marcinkowska, I., Maj, A. and Sidło, K., *Tourism and rural development*, European Committee of the Regions, 2024, data.europa.eu/doi/10.2863/099682

16 European Commission: Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, *Jobs and skills in tourism – Helpful EU resources for jobseekers and businesses*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, data.europa.eu/doi/10.2873/33904

PREPARED BY

Dorothea Papathanasiou-Zuhrt

B.A., M.A., M.Sc., Ph.D.

dorothea@cultinvestneteu.com