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Covid-19 Recovery through Sustainable Tourism Growth
and SME Support

(SMP-COSME-2021-TOURSME)



Open Call Guide

MSME's support
on circular tourism

May 2023

Disclaimer

This call is co-funded by the European Union.

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Table of Contents

1.	About ECOTOURS _____	5
2.	Key info _____	6
3.	Why should MSMEs participate? _____	7
4.	Eligible activities covered by the Call _____	8
5.	Who can apply? _____	10
6.	Application & Evaluation _____	12
6.1.	Application Process _____	12
6.2.	Languages _____	13
6.3.	Questions _____	13
6.4.	Evaluation process _____	13
6.5.	Award Criteria _____	14
6.6.	Results announcement _____	18
6.7.	Objections _____	18
6.8.	Grant Agreement _____	18
7.	Financial support _____	19
8.	Beneficiaries' obligations and commitment _____	20
9.	Confidentiality _____	20
10.	Abbreviations _____	21
	Annexes _____	22
	Annex 1 – Application Form _____	22
	Annex 2 - Declaration of Honor _____	28
	Annex 3 - Acknowledgment of receipt _____	29
	Annex 4 – Grant Agreement _____	30
	Annex 5 – Call announcement _____	35

1. About ECOTOURS

The ECOTOURS “Empowering local communities turning them into laboratories for co-development of circular and sustainable tourism ecosystems” (www.prisonline.eu/ecotours) is a project co-funded by the European Commission under the Single Market Programme (SMP SMP/SME Pillar) under agreement No 101085853. The project foresees the provision of direct services and financial support to MSMEs provided by the consortium partners for promoting the adoption of sustainable development practices and turning marginal areas that experience socio-economic challenges due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, into circular, green, and sustainable tourist destinations.

The project targets MSMEs and local communities in Italy, Greece, France, Hungary, Spain and Cyprus, focusing on natural & cultural heritage of international significance, that are currently facing new common socio-economic challenges due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ECOTOURS enhances the capacity of tourism’s MSMEs and community tourism’s ecosystems to promote circular tourism and to uptake environmental principles, practices and standards in their businesses. Overall, the project contributes to turn marginal coastal and rural areas that are experiencing an economic slowdown, into circular, green and sustainable tourist destinations that offer significant travel experiences based on people to people exchange, holistic discovery of territory, its natural environment and biodiversity, its cultural and traditional heritage, while at the same time promoting sustainability principles and practices, fostering environmental protection, the reduction of wastes and natural resources consumption (energy, water, soil, biodiversity), the use of clean energy and green transport means, the recycling and reuse of materials/products, the promotion of locally based food and craft productions.

The project consortium is made up of 7 organisations from 6 EU countries:



PRISM Impresa
Sociale s.r.l.
(Italy)

prisonline.eu



CFTA Community
Foundation of
Agrigento and Trapani
(Italy)

fcagrigenotrapani.it



Enoros Consulting
Ltd (Cyprus)

www.enoros.com.cy

Universidade de Vigo

UVIGO University of
Vigo (Spain)

www.uvigo.gal



PPC Petra Patrimonia
Corsica (France)

www.petrapatrimonia-corse.com



CSMKIK Chamber of Commerce
and Industry Csongrad-Csanad
County (Hungary)

www.csmkik.hu



ANKO West Macedonia
Development Company
(Greece)

www.anko.gr

Ecotours main objectives are:

1. To increase sustainability, competitiveness, and economic regeneration of rural destinations in Europe through circular tourism.
2. To increase the capacity of tourism's MSMEs and community ecosystems in the EU to incorporate and promote sustainable strategies and practices on circular tourism.
3. To boost the transition process of tourism MSMEs by increasing their capacity to uptake and incorporate sustainable and circular principles and standards.

2. Key info

The call is addressed to MSMEs willing to improve eco-tourism related services and co-develop new circular and sustainable tourism itineraries by participating in 5 activities:

1. Activity 1 – 80 hours of Consultancy and coaching for circular business development.
2. Activity 2 - Sustainability consultancy and certification.
3. Activity 3 - Participation at a transnational study visit.
4. Activity 4 - Support to the creation of a circular ecotourism itinerary
5. Activity 5 – Participation at the innovation contest

The table below, Open Call Key Info Table, presents key information on the Call.

Open Call Key Info Table	
Participants:	96 MSMEs from tourism related fields (16 per each partner country represented in the consortium) from the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italy (IT) • Greece (EL) • France (FR) • Hungary (HU) • Spain (ES) • Cyprus (CY)
Call opening:	Wednesday, 10 May 2023, 09:00 CET
Submission deadline:	Thursday, 10 August 2023, 17:00 CET
Financial support:	Indicatively €6.650,00 per selected beneficiary

Application process:	It's easy. 1. Check the eligibility criteria 2. Check the award criteria 3. Fully complete the online Application Form_(see Annex 1) and Declaration of Honor (see Annex 2) on the call's website.
Call website	http://ecotours-project.eu
Help desk email	ecotours@enoros.com.cy A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document will be available on the open call website, and it will be regularly updated.
Evaluation:	1. Applicants meet all six eligibility criteria. 2. Applicants are evaluated on eight award criteria (maximum of 100 points). The evaluation will be performed by a three-member internal Evaluation Committee. The applicants will be informed by email about the evaluation results within six weeks from the application deadline.
Further steps:	Selected beneficiaries will sign a Grant Agreement and participation commences.
Indicative Activities timeframe:	October 2023 – February 2025, Duration: 17 months

The Call will be carried out by respecting the principles of excellence (selected beneficiaries must demonstrate a high quality and result-oriented attitude towards the topics set out in the Call), transparency, fairness, impartiality, and confidentiality as defined in the «Guidelines for Awarding Financial Support to Third Parties (Tourism SMEs)»

This guide aims to support potential applicants to apply for the Open Call of the ECOTOURS Support Programme for tourism SMEs. It is provided for information purposes only and is not intended to replace consultation of any applicable legal sources. Neither the European Commission nor the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) can be held responsible for the use made of this guidance document.

3. Why should MSMEs participate?

ECOTOURS provides an opportunity for participants to enhance both their sustainability and competitiveness, while supporting the transition to a stronger circular economy while also contributing to the protection and valorization of the natural and cultural heritage. The benefits of participating in ECOTOURS include:

1. **Participation in circular tourism itineraries:** A significant objective of the project is the development of business and public/private partnerships leading to the establishment of a label promotion association. The itineraries will offer unique, memorable and significant travel experiences on circular tourism. Therefore, selected MSMEs will strengthen their marketing strategy and sensibilization on the concept of "circular tourism" and reinforce transnational cooperation, business development and capitalization processes.

2. **Increased sustainability:** By adopting circular and eco-compatible approaches, MSMEs can enhance the sustainability of their operations, prevent pollution, reduce their environmental footprint, and increase their social corporate responsibility.
3. **Get Certified:** The project not only aims at adopting circular and eco-compatible approaches by participants, but it provides the knowledge and financial resources to certify their commitment. If already certified, this is an advantage because the project encourages participants to expand their certifications.

4. Eligible activities covered by the Call

Each selected beneficiary will have the opportunity to participate in five main activities.

1. Activity 1 - Consultancy and Coaching for Circular Business Development (Duration 17 months, 01/10/2023 – 28/02/2025)

Consultancy and mentoring services are provided by external service providers and covered by a financial support up to €2.000,00 per beneficiary. It includes 80 hours of tailored coaching, mentoring, advisory and consultancy services. Support includes services for a business analysis (such as SWOT, to identify weaknesses and potentialities) and guidance/training to develop staff key competences in digital tools, marketing, and economics. The coaching, mentoring, advisory and consultancy services will focus on one or more of the topics listed below:

- Business analysis for development
- Digitalization and innovation
- Sustainability branding

2. Activity 2 – Sustainability Consultancy and Certification (Duration 17 months, 01/10/2023 – 28/02/2025)

The second activity focuses on the **design and implementation of individual growth paths** to improve business performances in terms of environmental sustainability provided by external service providers and **certification to applied methods and tools**.

Each selected beneficiary will receive a support of up to €4.000,00 covering the consultancy services and certification.

Some of the proposed tools and methods include, but are not limited to:

1. ISO 14001:2015, www.iso.org/standard/60857.html
2. Travelife, www.travelifesustainability.com
3. Green Key, www.greenkey.global
4. Green Globe, www.greenglobe.com
5. Green Tourism, www.green-tourism.com
6. Earth Check, www.earthcheck.org/what-we-do/certification

7. Biosphere sustainable, www.biospheretourism.com
8. The EU Ecolabel Tourist Accommodation, www.ecolabel.eu
9. Tourcert, www.tourcert.org
10. Ecocook, www.ecocook.com
11. Corporate Sustainability Navigator, www.imp3rove.de/services/benchmarking
12. Similar methods and tools recognized at a national level

3. Activity 3 – Participation at a transnational study visit

ECOTOURS will promote peer-to-peer learning and good practices exchanges between countries, facilitate matchmaking and cooperation among tourism MSMEs and stakeholders, whilst collecting useful information on participants' needs and peculiarities to be used then for tailored individual support. Six transnational study visits, (with a duration of 5 days including arrival and departure days) will be organized. The table below details a tentative schedule of the three days devoted to the visits and topics.

Location	Dates	Topics
Agrigento, Sicily, Italy	22-24/11/2023	Circular tourism & community innovation. Promoting relational and experiential tourism.
Nicosia, Cyprus	24-26/01/2024	Towards a Plastic-Free Tourism: the reduction of wastes and natural resources consumption (energy, water, soil, biodiversity).
Vigo, Spain	6-8/03/2024	The use of clean energy and green transport means, recycling, and use of eco-compatible products/services in the frame of circular tourism.
Bastia, Corsica, France	8-10/05/2024	The EU Green Deal and the Farm to fork strategy in the frame of circular tourism: the promotion of organic and locally based food and rural experiences.
Szeged, Hungary	29-31/05/2024	Circular Business Models and green transition management in tourism SMEs and community ecosystems.
Kozani, Greece	18-20/09/2024	Sustainable marketing & destination management in the frame of circular tourism.

Each selected beneficiary will attend a transnational study visit with one participant, receiving an amount of €650,00 for the participation at an overseas transnational study visit or €350,00 for the one implemented at local level in its own country. This amount will cover traveling, accommodation, and subsistence costs (additional cost to be covered by selected beneficiaries).

All selected beneficiaries must indicate in the application form their availability for at least three out of the six transnational study visits reported in the table above.

4. Activity 4 – Support to the creation of a circular ecotourism itinerary (Duration 6 months, 01/07/2024 until 31/12/2024)

The scope of activity 4 is to create six digital itineraries promoting circular tourism, one in each partner country (Cyprus, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Spain) based on the guidelines provided by the project partners.

Each itinerary will be unique, and it will use interactive maps to present, describe and promote experiential and relational experiences on circular tourism. The itineraries shall include unique, memorable, and significant travel experiences on circular tourism that are based on people's holistic discovery of territory, its natural environment and biodiversity, its cultural and traditional heritage through people-to-people exchanges and direct relations. At the same time, the itineraries will promote sustainability principles and practices, such as reuse / reduce / recycling of materials/products, reduction of waste and natural resources consumption (energy, water) protection of biodiversity, use of clean energy, promotion of green transport means and promotion of local food and products.

At country level an individual plan will be developed to present which stakeholders are to be involved and how to engage them.

Selected beneficiaries will contribute to the creation of their country's itinerary and promote it during the project and beyond.

5. Activity 5 – Design of a proposal for the innovation contest (Duration 6 months, 01/07/2024 until 31/12/2024)

ECOTOURS will utilize gamification, the application of typical elements of game playing (e.g. point scoring, competition with others, rules of play), for the development of innovative solutions for the tourism sector. The idea is supporting innovative solutions by selected beneficiaries in specialized tourism and digitalization (including Apps, AI, Blockchain, experience marketing) to improve the attraction rate of the area (promoting sustainability and community engagement) and facilitate the management of tourism flow at local level.

Based on the Innovation Contest Call of Proposal, the 96 selected MSMEs will form 6 teams and compete on IT system design based on users' needs and contest requirements. The winning team will be awarded €10.000,00 that will support the winners in the development of the proposed ideas.

5. Who can apply?

An application may be submitted by any legal entity that meets **all** six eligibility criteria:

1. Eligibility Criterion 1 – The applicant is a micro, small or medium enterprise

The applicant is a micro, small or medium enterprise (MSME) as defined by the Commission recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (2003/361/EC):

Company Category	Number of Employees	Annual Turnover	or	Balance Sheet Total	
Medium	< 250	≤ € 50 m			≤ € 43 m
Small	< 50	≤ € 10 m			≤ € 10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ € 10 m			≤ € 2 m

Official EU publications on MSME's definition and explanations are available from:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32003H0361>

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/10abc892-251c-4d41-aa2b-7fe1ad83818c>

The applicant will provide relevant information in the Application Form (see Annex 1) and complete the Declaration of Honor (see Annex 2).

2. Eligibility criterion 2 – The applicant's economic activity is in tourism or other activities that are demonstrating or aiming for innovation in tourism

The applicant works in one of the following categories and/or corresponding Nace codes (Based on NACE Revision 2, <https://ec.europa.eu/11urostat/documents/3859598/5902521/KS-RA-07-015-EN.PDF>):

- a) I5510 - Hotels and similar accommodation,
- b) I5520 - Holiday and other short-stay accommodation,
- c) I5530 - Camping grounds, recreational vehicle parks and trailer parks,
- d) I5610 - Restaurants and mobile food service activities,
- e) N79 - Travel agency, tour operator reservation service and related activities
- f) N7721 - Renting and leasing of recreational and sports goods,
- g) R90 - Creative, arts and entertainment activities that are demonstrating or aiming for innovation in tourism,
- h) R91 - Libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural activities,
- i) R93 - Sports activities and amusement and recreation activities,
- j) other SMEs from the NACE code A - Agriculture, forestry and fishing that are demonstrating or aiming for innovation in tourism.

The applicant declares the main NACE code in the Application Form.

3. Eligibility criterion 3 – The applicant is located in the following eligible countries

The applicant is located in one or more of the following countries:

- a) Italy (IT)
- b) Greece (EL)
- c) France (FR)
- d) Hungary (HU)
- e) Spain (ES)
- f) Cyprus (CY).

The applicant declares the main operating area in the Application Form.

4. Eligibility criterion 4 – The applicant is not a company undertaking in difficulty

The applicant does not present the characteristics of a company undertaking in difficulty, as defined by communication from the Commission Guidelines on State aid for rescuing and restructuring non-financial undertakings in difficulty (2014/C 249/01).

The applicant's legal representative will make a relevant statement in the Declaration of Honor.

5. Eligibility criterion 5 – The applicant complies with national and EU regulations, and it has not applied or received double funding.

The applicant's legal representative makes a declaration on the compliance with the local and EU regulations in the Declaration of Honor. A similar declaration is made for the public or EU funds or support for similar activities (double funding).

6. Criterion 6 – The applicant submits a completed application within the deadline.

The applicant follows the application process (see section 6.1) and submits it before the deadline. All the required fields in the Application Form and the Declaration of Honor are completed.

6. Application & Evaluation

6.1. Application Process

Submission opening date: Wednesday, 10 May 2023, 09:00 CET

Submission deadline: Thursday, 10 August 2023, 17:00 CET

If the submission deadline is changed, the news will be published immediately on the Call page and all registered MSMEs will be informed on the change.

The applicant fully completes and submits the online Application Form (see Annex 1) and the Declaration of Honor (see Annex 2) on the open call website available at <http://ecotours-project.eu>

If the applicant discovers an error in the proposal previously submitted, and provided the call deadline has not passed, the applicant may re-submit the proposal (for this purpose please contact ecotours@enoros.com.cy). However, ECOTOURS cannot guarantee resubmission will be done in time if requested shorter than 2 working days before the deadline.

Following the submission of each application an Acknowledgment of Receipt to the applicant MSME is sent via email (see Annex 3).

Late submissions shall not be accepted. In case of a late submission the applicant shall receive a "call closed" return email.

After the close of the Call no additions or changes to received applications shall be taken into account.

Only one application per applicant is accepted. In case that more than one application is submitted by the same legal entity, the most recent application will be considered.

All provided information will be treated confidentially and stored only for the purpose of this Call.

6.2. Languages

The Call Announcement is available in English (the project's working language) and the partner's country official language (Italian, French, Spanish, Greek and Hungarian).

The Application Form has to be filled in English.

6.3. Questions

Questions on the application process can be addressed at: ecotours@enoros.com.cy

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document will be available on the open call website, and it will be regularly updated.

6.4. Evaluation process

A two-step evaluation (1. Eligibility/Admissibility and 2. Quality Assessment) will be carried out - in parallel in all countries involved - against the Eligibility criteria described in section 5 and the award criteria described in section 6.5.

Each project partner in the targeted country will form an Evaluation Committee consisting of three internal evaluators who will be in charge of the submitted applications. The evaluators shall have solid knowledge on topics related to sustainability, sustainable tourism, capacity building, training, and skills development and therefore their views and opinions will ensure that the most suitable candidates are selected.

The appointment of evaluators will be confirmed after the close of Call, and therefore their selection is without risk of conflict of interest.

The Evaluation Committee will assess each application in a transparent and fair way, respecting the confidentiality of any information identified as confidential at the time it is provided. Evaluations shall be performed applying the highest ethical and moral standards. Each Evaluator will commit by signing an Evaluator's Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest statement.

In case of minor clarifications, the Evaluation Committee may contact the applicants' contact person (declared in the Application Form) to clarify.

The evaluation will be documented by the Evaluation Committee members on the Evaluation Form.

The Evaluation Committee will record score and remarks of an application on a dedicated «Evaluation Form». It will meet or communicate together to prepare the ranking list, representing opinions and scores on which the evaluators agree and which they will sign. All three members of the selection committee need to participate in the evaluation to assign a final score.

Using the overall scores for each application, the evaluators will generate a ranked list. In total 6 lists, one for each participating country will be generated. These lists will be published on the call website available at <http://ecotours-project.eu> and on the project partner's website.

6.5. Award Criteria

The quality evaluation will be based on the following eight award criteria that assign a maximum of 100 points. No minimum threshold is applied. Below each criterion is presented showing the maximum number of points available, its definition and the sub-criterion/a to be assessed:

Award criteria			Value	Points
Criterion 1 (10 points)	Managing the impact of Covid-19 on the business The applicant is asked to demonstrate the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the business	a) Loss of revenue in 2021 compared to 2019 (%)	No loss or revenue or revenue was higher	0
			Loss up to 10%	1
			Loss of more than 10% but less than 20%	2
			Loss of more than 20% but less than 30%	3
			Loss of more than 30% but less than 40%	4
			Loss of more than 40%.	5
		a) Reduction in the number of employees for 2021 compared to 2019 (%)	No reduction in employees	0
			Reduction of up to 20%	2
			Reduction of more than 20% but less than 40%	4
			Reduction of more than 40%	5
Criterion 2 (5 points)	Business viability The applicant is asked to demonstrate its financial viability	a) Turnover (2021)	Less than €20,000	0
			€20.000 to €30.000	2
			€30.001 to €40.000	3
			€40.001 to €50.000	4

Award criteria			Value	Points
			More than €50,000	5
Criterion 3 (5 points)	Location How far is the applicant located from any UNESCO site or national archeological / cultural sites or protected areas?	a) Distance (in Km)	More than 100 Km	0
			51 to 100 Km	2
			25 to 50 Km	3
			Less than 10 Km	4
			Within a site or a protected area	5
Criterion 4 (20 points)	Management strategy The applicant is asked to demonstrate a) circular economy and sustainability principles are adopted in their daily operations or business model and b) the expected outputs bring further expansion of the applicants and the local community sustainability.	a) Number of initiatives and actions to reduce negative environmental impact over the last 5 years	None	0
			1	1
			2	2
			3	3
			4	4
			5 or more	5
		b) Ongoing collaboration with UNESCO sites or protected areas, national archeological or cultural sites and organisations, museums, and local authorities etc.	No	0
			Yes	5
		c) Investments in sustainability and eco-solutions planned for the next 3 years	Up to €2.000	0
			€2.001 to €5.000	2
			€5.001 to €10.000	3
			€10.001 to €20.000	4
			More than €20.001	5
		d) Percentage of employees / associates to be involved in the ECOTOURS project	Less than 10%	2
11% to 30%	3			
31% to 50%	4			
More than 51%	5			
Criterion 5 (10 points)	Cross-cutting The applicant is asked	a) The applicant has one or more certificates related	No	0

Award criteria		Value	Points	
	to demonstrate the impact in developing sustainable tourism (alignment with SDGs), local development, addressing youth employment and/or gender issues	to an environmental, sustainability or circular economy standard, tool, or method	Yes	5
		b) The applicant is led by a youth (less than 35 years old)	No	0
			Yes	2,5
		c) The applicant is led by a woman	No	0
			Yes	2,5
		Criterion 6 (15 points)	Innovative approach The applicant is asked to demonstrate how its current business model contributes positively to innovation.	a) Number of projects, initiatives and cooperations on sustainable tourism (ongoing or for the past 3 years)
1	1			
2	2			
3	3			
4	4			
5 or more	5			
b) Number of processes that were automated over the last three years	None			0
	1			1
	2			2
	3			3
	4			4
	5 or more			5
c) Number of improvements during the last three years that resulted in reduction of 10% or more in the use of energy, fuels, water, material, or chemicals.	None			0
	1			1
	2			2
	3			3
	4			4
	5 or more			5
Criterion 7 (10 points)	Level of current technical skills to participate in the ECOTOURS project The applicant is asked to demonstrate	a) Number of trainings attended by applicant's employees related to environmental protection, sustainability, and	None	0
			1	1
			2	2
			3	3
			4	4

Award criteria		Value	Points	
	adequate technical skills to participate in the ECOTOURS project	circular economy in 2022/2023¹	5 or more	5
		b) At least one employee / associate expected to participate in the project activities is proficient in English	None	0
			Yes	5
Criterion 8 (25 points)	Business commitment toward sustainability The applicant is asked to demonstrate commitment to sustainability through a strategy and action plan	Clear and suitable sustainability vision, mission, objectives, and plans for the next four years	Failure to address the criterion. Extremely vague strategy plans and commitment.	0
			Very limited information on strategy and plans. Commitment is vague.	5
			Limited information on strategy and plans. Commitment is not clear. More information needed.	10
			Sufficient presentation of some aspects of strategy and some actions. Commitment is not sufficient. Missing or no clear information.	15
			Good presentation of most aspects of strategy Clear plans. Commitment is clearly demonstrated.	20
			Excellent presentation of all aspects of the strategy. Clear plans. Commitment is clearly and fully demonstrated. It is also very well organized and clearly presented.	25

¹ Ongoing trainings started before the deadline set for the call can be considered and will be counted.

6.6. Results announcement

The applicants will be informed in writing about the evaluation results indicatively within six weeks from the application deadline via email.

The notification can be:

- **Successful:** An application has been successful in the Call.
- **Waitlisted (in reserve list):** An application was successful in the Call, but it has been put in reserve list, in case one of the successful applicants does not finally participate. An unsigned version of the consensus report of the evaluation is sent.
- **Not successful:** An application has not been successful in the Call. An unsigned version of the consensus report of the evaluation is sent.

Note that decisions will be published on the ECOTOURS webpage.

6.7. Objections

Applicants have the right to object to the evaluation and selection results.

An applicant may submit a request for objections to the jurisdiction partner, if it believes that there has been a shortcoming in the way its application has been evaluated, within 10 working days of receiving the evaluation results. The request must be:

- Related to the evaluation process or eligibility checks.
- Clearly describe the complaint and reasons for potential consideration.
- Received within the time limit (10 working days) from the communication of the result is delivered.
- Sent by the applicant's legal representative that submitted the application.

A designated and independent review committee comprising of two officers of the partner will examine the requests and will recommend an appropriate course of action. If there is clear evidence that a shortcoming(s) could have affected the eventual decision, it is possible that all or part of the application will be re-evaluated by the internal review committee.

The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definite. This score could be lower than the original score.

Only one request per application will be considered by the committee. All requests will be treated in confidential.

6.8. Grant Agreement

After the Open Call final selection, the project partners will start the Grant Agreement (Annex 4) preparation in collaboration with the successful applicants. The Grant Agreement preparation will go via an administrative and financial checking (and potentially into technical or

ethical/security negotiations). On a case-by-case approach, a phone call or teleconference may be needed for clarification.

Selected beneficiaries will have **10 working days** to accept or reject the Grant Agreement. Therefore, the following scenarios might happen:

- The beneficiary accepts and sends the signed Grant Agreement in time and its execution starts.
- The beneficiary does not send the signed agreement within the 10 working days deadline, so the beneficiary is automatically excluded and the next beneficiary in the reserve list is contacted.

The selected beneficiaries will need to execute the activities within the agreed timeframe to use the funds granted starting from the signature of the Grant Agreement. A limited extension period can be granted if a written justification is provided. The extension can be decided up to a maximum of two months.

7. Financial support

The financial support will be indicatively €6.650,00 for each beneficiary divided in three amounts. The first payment will be up to €2.000,00 and it covers activity 1 - Consultancy and Coaching for Circular Business Development. The second payment will be up to €4.000,00 for activity 2 - Sustainability Consultancy and Certification.

As for activity 3, each beneficiary will receive an amount of €650,00 for the participation of one person at an overseas transnational study visit or €350,00 for one implemented at a local level. This amount will cover traveling, accommodation, and subsistence costs (additional costs to be covered by selected beneficiaries).

Finally, the Innovation Contest foreseen will provide to the winners a total prize of €10.000,00 to jointly develop the destination management system & crowdsourcing portal to be used in local circular tourism itineraries set up, promoting their development during and beyond the project.

The list of eligible activities for receiving financial support is as follows:

- Fitness check for tourism SMEs as regards sustainability practices and strategies, and compliance check for upcoming regulations
- Supporting tourism SMEs preparation and application for sustainability/ environmental certification, such as EU Ecolabel certification and EMAS registration
- Supporting the development of the tourism SMEs sustainability strategy and implementing the improvement measures following the recommendations of the PEF/OEF studies;
- Developing mechanisms for tourism SMEs to transparently share sustainability relevant data and information for use by consumers, national tourism offices and other tourism actors (WP4 innovation contest);
- Supporting upskilling and re-skilling of tourism SMEs on sustainability, digital innovation and data management;
- Boosting innovation in sustainable and resilient tourism through knowledge transfer and cross-sectoral collaboration;

- Increasing the competitiveness of tourism SMEs by improving their capacity and uptake of innovative sustainable solutions geared towards increased resilience;
- Developing sustainable business strategies in line with forward-looking market trends, to facilitate return of investment and the diversification of service offers;
- Developing socially sustainable tourism models, considering the impact and participation of local communities and reducing problems of over-tourism.

8. Beneficiaries' obligations and commitment

Selected beneficiaries shall comply with the obligations set out in this Call Announcement and in the Grant Agreement.

Beneficiaries must play an active role in the project by using their skills, experience, and good practice.

The implementation of the projects' activities is the sole responsibility of the beneficiary with the support of the project's consortium.

Throughout the Grant Agreement's duration, the beneficiaries shall comply with the following:

1. Commit in implementing all the activities described in this Call and get certified to a sustainability tool and method.
2. Accept and follow the articles, rules and requirements of the Call and the Grant Agreement.
3. May not transfer or assign directly or indirectly any portion of the support to other MSME's, organisations or individuals.
4. Provide a contact person to manage the activities, manage all responsibilities arising from the Grant Agreement and lead the communication with the ECOTOURS consortium.
5. Provide any information requested by the ECOTOURS consortium for ensuring compliance with any written request or direction received from EISMEA concerning the proper implementation and management of the project.
6. Provide any information about their businesses and their processes at the beginning, during the execution and at the end of the project to facilitate the evaluation of its impact on the businesses.

If beneficiaries breach any of their obligations under this Call, the Grant Agreement is terminated. Such breaches may also lead to other measures such as rejection of ineligible costs and recovery of undue amounts.

9. Confidentiality

Access to the received applications will be given to the consortium team and its Evaluation Committee. All requested data will be used only in the framework of this Call, in line with art. 13 of the EU Regulation n. 2016/679.

During the implementation of the action and for five years after the payment of the balance to the Consortium, all parties must keep confidential any data, documents, or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at the time it is disclosed ('confidential information').

The confidentiality obligations no longer apply if:

1. The disclosing party agrees to release the other party.
2. The information becomes generally and publicly available, without breaching any confidentiality obligation.
3. The disclosure of confidential information is required by EU or national law.

10. Abbreviations

EU :	European Union
NACE:	Nomenclature of Economic Activities
MSME:	Micro, small, and medium enterprise
V.A.T.:	Value Added Tax

Annexes

Annex 1 – Application Form

This form will be shared with the members of the Evaluation Committee only for the purpose of assessing the application.

*Mandatory fields

1. Business name*:	
2. Name your products and/or services that are related to the tourism sector*:	
3. VAT Registration Number*:	
4. MSME Registration Number or I.D. for self-employed:	
5. NACE Code* (Select one):	
<input type="checkbox"/> I5510 - Hotels and similar accommodation, <input type="checkbox"/> I5520 - Holiday and other short-stay accommodation, <input type="checkbox"/> I5530 - Camping grounds, recreational vehicle parks and trailer parks, <input type="checkbox"/> I5610 - Restaurants and mobile food service activities, <input type="checkbox"/> N79 - Travel agency, tour operator reservation service and related activities <input type="checkbox"/> N7721 - Renting and leasing of recreational and sports goods, <input type="checkbox"/> R90 - Creative, arts and entertainment activities that are demonstrating or aiming for innovation in tourism, <input type="checkbox"/> R91 - Libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural activities, <input type="checkbox"/> R93 - Sports activities and amusement and recreation activities, <input type="checkbox"/> other SMEs from the NACE code A - Agriculture, forestry and fishing that are demonstrating or aiming for innovation in tourism.	
6. Country* (Select one):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Italy (IT) <input type="checkbox"/> Greece (EL) <input type="checkbox"/> France (FR) <input type="checkbox"/> Hungary (HU) <input type="checkbox"/> Spain (ES)	

Cyprus (CY)

7. Average number of employees for 2022* (Select one):

- 1 to 3
- 10 to 25
- 26 to 50
- Over 50

8. Turnover for 2021* (Select one):

- Less than €20.000
- €20.000 to €30.000
- €30.001 to €40.000
- €40.001 to €50.000
- More than €50.000

9. Physical address*:

10. Postal address (If different from above):

11. Full name of legal Representative*:

12. Name of contact person*:

13. Telephone 1*:

14. Telephone 2:

15. E-mail*:

16. Website:

17. What was the loss of revenue in 2021 compared to 2019? *

- No loss or revenue or revenue was higher
- Loss up to 10%
- Loss of more than 10% but less than 20%
- Loss of more than 20% but less than 30%
- Loss of more than 40%.

18. What was the reduction in the number of employees in 2021 compared to 2019? *

- No reduction in employees
- Reduction of up to 20%
- Reduction of more than 20% but less than 40%
- Reduction of more than 40%.

19. What was the turnover for 2021? *

- Less than €20,000
- €20.000 to €30.000
- €30.001 to €40.000
- €40.001 to €50.000
- More than €50,000

20. How far is the MSME applicant located from UNESCO sites, national archeological or cultural sites, and protected areas? *

- More than 100 Km
- 51 to 100 Km
- 25 to 50 Km
- Less than 10 Km
- Within a site or a protected area

21. Number of initiatives and actions to reduce negative environmental impact over the last 5 years*

- None
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

22. Ongoing collaboration with UNESCO sites protected areas, national archeological or cultural sites and organisations, museums, and local authorities e.t.c.

- No
 Yes

23. Investments in sustainability and eco-solutions planned for the next 3 years*

- Up to €2.000
 €2.001 to €5.000
 €5.001 to €10.000
 €10.001 to €20.000
 More than €20.001

24. Percentage of employees / associates to be involved in the ECOTOURS project*

- Less than 10%
 11% to 30%
 31% to 50%
 More than 51%

25. The applicant has certificate(s) to an environmental, sustainability or circular economy standard, tool, or method*

- No
 Yes

Please mention certificate(s)*:

26. The applicant is led by a youth (less than 35 years old)*

- No
 Yes

27. The applicant is led by a woman*

- No
 Yes

28. Number of projects, initiatives and cooperations on sustainable tourism (ongoing or for the past 3 years)*

- None

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

29. Number of processes that were automated the last three years*

- None
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

Please mention them*:

30. Number of improvements, during the last three years, that resulted in reduction of 10% or more in the use of energy, fuels, water, material, or chemicals*

- None
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

Please mention the improvement(s) and reduction(s) achieved*:

31. Number of trainings attended by MSME employees related to environmental protection, sustainability, and circular economy in 2022/2023*

- None
- 1
- 2
- 3

- 4
- 5 or more

32. At least one employee / associate is proficient in English*

- None
- Yes

33. Six transnational study visits will be organized. Each beneficiary will attend a transnational study visit. Select at least three out of the six study visits that you would prefer to participate*

- 22- 24/11/2023 Agrigento, Sicily, Italy
- 24- 26/01/2024 Nicosia, Cyprus
- 6- 8/03/2024 Vigo, Spain
- 8- 10/05/2024 Bastia, Corsica, France
- 29-31/05/2024 Szeged, Hungary
- 18- 20/09/2024 Kozani, Greece

34. Please demonstrate your business commitment to sustainability by presenting your sustainability strategy (vision, mission, objectives) and explaining your plans for the next four years to achieve the strategy* (Maximum 5,000 characters)

Additional information

Please, include any other relevant information that you deem relevant

Authorization

I, the undersigned [ENTER FULL NAME], certify that the information stated above is true, correct, and complete to the best of my knowledge. Likewise, I confirm that the MSME has no objection to the information contained herein being shared with the Evaluation Committee and that there does not exist any conflict of interest.

Annex 2 - Declaration of Honor

Declaration of Honor	
I hereby confirm the following statements:	
1. All the provided information in the application is accurate and true.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2. The MSME meets all the criteria defined by the Commission recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (2003/361/EC) as described in https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32003H0361	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3. The MSME has the adequate legal capacity to participate in this Call and to submit all required documents.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4. The MSME complies with its obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which it is established.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
5. The MSME does not present the characteristics of a company undertaking in difficulty, as defined by communication from the Commission Guidelines on State aid for rescuing and restructuring non-financial undertakings in difficulty (2014/C 249/01).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
6. The MSME has the necessary administrative, technical, operational, and financial capacity, necessary to implement the activities describes in this Call.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
7. The MSME has not received funds and support under other EU project for similar activities (double funding is not allowed).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
8. The MSME is not under reimbursement obligation of State Aid deemed illegal or incompatible with the European market.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
9. The MSME and any person legally authorized to represent it has not been involved in fraud, corruption, cooperation with a criminal organization, money laundering or other illegal activity.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
10. The business and any person legally authorized to represent it has not been guilty of grave professional misconduct.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
We hereby declare that the information provided is true and correct. We also understand that any willful dishonesty may render for refusal of this application.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Annex 3 - Acknowledgment of receipt

Thank you for submitting your application for consideration to receive financial support from ECOTOURS project.

The evaluation will take place in the next few weeks. You will be notified as soon as possible after this of whether your application has been successful or not.

On behalf of the consortium of the project we would like to thank you for your interest in our activities.

Yours sincerely,

ECOTOURS team

Annex 4 – Grant Agreement

Agreement for awarding financial support to third-party beneficiaries.

Contract No: ____

Financing partner organisation on behalf of ECOTOURS:

Partner Organization: _____

Address: _____

Registration No: _____

Represented by: _____

(Hereinafter referred to as: the Financing party)

and

Third-party beneficiary:

Company name: _____

Address: _____

Registration No: _____

VAT No: _____

Represented by: _____

(Hereinafter referred to as: the third-party beneficiary)

Article 1

ECOTOURS “Empowering local communities turning them into laboratories for co-development of circular and sustainable tourism ecosystems”, n. 101085853, co-funded by EU , is aiming at establishing international ecotourism itineraries through SMEs and local communities’ capacity building, digital transformation and sustainability principles / certifications. In the framework of the ECOTOURS project [PO name] as financing party is responsible for managing the financial support to MSMEs in [Country].

[The third-party beneficiary’s name] has applied for the Call ECOTOURS respecting the deadline set, it is compliant with all formal eligibility requirements, and it has been selected by the Evaluation commission to be awarded the financial support.

The above contracting parties establish that:

Article 2

Subject of the contract is the implementation of the SMEs project related activities specified in the ECOTOURS Grant Agreement n. 101085853 and reported under art. 3.

Article 3

The ECOTOURS project related activities are the following:

1. Activity 1 – 80 hours of Consultancy and coaching for circular business development (01/10/2023 until 28/02/2025).
2. Activity 2 - Sustainability consultancy and certification (01/10/2023 until 28/02/2025).
3. Activity 3 - Participation in at least a transnational study visit.
4. Activity 4 - Support to the creation of a circular ecotourism itinerary (01/07/2024 until 31/12/2024)
5. Activity 5 – Participation in the innovation contest (01/07/2024 until 31/12/2024).

Article 4

The amount of financial support to implement the activities specified in Article 3 is indicatively €6.650,00 V.A.T. included and it will be paid in three installments as follows:

1. Up to €2.000,00 as a grant after successfully completing Activity 1 - 80 hours of consultancy and coaching for circular business development.
2. Up to €4.000,00 as a grant after successfully completing Activity 2 - Sustainability consultancy and certification.
3. €650,00 before (in advance payment as a lump sum) Activity 3 - transnational study visits or €350,00 as a lump sum before a visit organized in the same region where the MSMEs are based. This amount covers only travel expenses, meaning costs for arrival and departure, accommodation and subsistence costs, and all taxes and charges related thereto (e.g. non-deductible VAT, visitor's tax). In case of additional costs, these will be covered by the beneficiary. The amounts for study visits are provided as advanced payment to MSMEs and reported as lump sums: only a short activity / evaluation report, boarding pass and hotel invoice will be requested to the MSMEs.

For selected beneficiaries out of the Eurozone payments will be made in the local currency. The conversion exchange rate shall be the official EUR-LEX² exchange rate of the month of the invoice settlement from the beneficiary to the service provider.

The list of eligible activities for receiving financial support is as follows:

- Fitness check for tourism SMEs as regards sustainability practices and strategies, and compliance check for upcoming regulations

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/oj/direct-access.html>

- Supporting tourism SMEs preparation and application for sustainability/ environmental certification, such as EU Ecolabel certification and EMAS registration
- Supporting the development of the tourism SMEs sustainability strategy and implementing the improvement measures following the recommendations of the PEF/OEF studies;
- Developing mechanisms for tourism SMEs to transparently share sustainability relevant data and information for use by consumers, national tourism offices and other tourism actors (WP4 innovation contest);
- Supporting upskilling and re-skilling of tourism SMEs on sustainability, digital innovation and data management;
- Boosting innovation in sustainable and resilient tourism through knowledge transfer and cross-sectoral collaboration;
- Increasing the competitiveness of tourism SMEs by improving their capacity and uptake of innovative sustainable solutions geared towards increased resilience;
- Developing sustainable business strategies in line with forward-looking market trends, to facilitate return of investment and the diversification of service offers;
- Developing socially sustainable tourism models, considering the impact and participation of local communities and reducing problems of over-tourism.

Article 5

Each beneficiary has to submit the following documents / evidence:

1. A report(s) that briefly describes the content of actions and the major outcomes of Activity 1 – 80 hours of Consultancy and coaching for circular business development and Activity 2 – Sustainability consultancy and certification.
2. Table(s) summarizing the invoices.
3. Copies of invoices related to activities 1, 2 and 3.
4. Declaration of honor(s) issued by each service providing coach, mentor, advisor, consultant or likewise that provided services in activities 1 and 2.

The due latest dates for submitting the above are:

- For Activity 1: 31/3/2025.
- For activity 2: 31/03/2025.
- For activity 3 within one month from the completion of the study visit.

If the recipient fails to submit the documents / evidence (report(s), table(s) summarizing the invoices, invoices and reports and Declaration(s) of honors by the deadline), this contract is considered terminated, and the beneficiary has no longer any right to the financial support.

Payments will be made after positive assessment of the above-mentioned documents / evidence. The ECOTOURS team commits to evaluate all reports within one month of delivery and complete payment procedures within three weeks after the acceptance of the report.

Article 6

Payment of financial support will be made to the following bank account:

Name of the bank account holder: _____

Name of Bank: _____

Bank address: _____

IBAN: _____

BIC/SWIFT: _____

Article 7

The beneficiary will fulfil the following publicity requirements:

- hanging up a poster showing financial support from EU funds in their business premises (to be provided by ECOTOURS);
- announcing on their website or social media page on receiving financial support from EU funds;
- presenting of the ECOTOURS tourism products on their website or social media page with destination website link (to be provided by ECOTOURS);
- becoming engaged on the ECOTOURS online dashboard.

ECOTOURS will provide all necessary documents and information to the third-party beneficiary to enable them to meet the requirements specified in this article.

Any communication activity related to the activities (including brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via social media, etc.) and any major result funded by this project must:

- display the EU emblem.
- include the following text: "This [insert appropriate description, e.g. report, publication, conference, infrastructure, equipment, insert type of result, etc.] was co-funded by EU

In addition, it is strongly recommended for all selected beneficiaries to spread and share their personal experience in ECOTOURS in their networks and social channels. For that purpose, a communication package can be shared with the selected beneficiaries to motivate them share and spread.

Article 8

The Parties shall and each of them shall cause each of their respective directors, officers, employees, agents and advisors to keep this Grant Agreement and its terms confidential and no Party shall disclose any such information except to its respective professional advisers, the officers and directors of its respective Affiliates and except that any Party may make such disclosures as it reasonably considers are required by law or regulation having the force of law, whereby each Party will notify each other Party in advance of any such disclosure.

The third-party beneficiary gives his consent to the Financing party to collect, record and process all personal data in the documentation (name, address, etc.). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2016/679 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data.

Article 9

The contracting parties shall be obliged to settle all misunderstandings arising indirectly and/or directly from this contract peacefully, i.e., based on the signed agreement, and in case they fail to do so, the jurisdiction of the court in (*PP reference*) shall be agreed. Both the provider and the customer undertake to keep secret any business or company secrets or confidential information that are received or known unless these are generally known.

The parties are aware of the possibility of subsequent verification (audit of the European Commission) on whether the expenses included in this Call were spent in accordance with the rules set by EISMEA and within the ECOTOURS call.

Article 10

This contract shall be signed in 2 identical copies, 1 for each contracting Party.

Financing partner:

Partner Organization

Signature and stamp*:

Place and date:

Third-party beneficiary:

Name

Signature and stamp*:

Place and date:

*In case the third-party beneficiary doesn't use a stamp, please write: *We operate without a stamp.*

Annex 5 – Call announcement



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)



“Empowering local communities turning them into
laboratories for co-development of circular and
sustainable tourism ecosystems”

Announcement of an open call for MSMEs

Disclaimer

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EISMEA - European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them

Announcement of an open call for MSMEs

Project acronym: ECOTOURS

Project grant agreement number: 101085853

Project full name: Empowering local communities turning them into laboratories for co-development of circular and sustainable tourism ecosystems

ECOTOURS is co-funded by the European Union's SINGLE MARKET PROGRAMME (SMP/SME Pillar) under grant agreement No 101085853. It foresees the provision of financial support to MSMEs as a mean to achieve its objectives.

The types of activities to perform for receiving financial support are:

1. Activity 1 – 80 hours of Consultancy and coaching for circular business development.
2. Activity 2 - Sustainability consultancy and certification.
3. Activity 3 - Participation at a transnational study visit.
4. Activity 4 - Support to the creation of a circular ecotourism itinerary.
5. Activity 5 - Participation at the innovation contest.

Opening of the call: Wednesday, 10 May 2023, 09:00 CET

Submission deadline: Thursday, 10 August 2023, 17:00 CET

Expected duration of participation: October 2023 to February 2025

Maximum amount of financial support: indicatively €6.650,00 per selected beneficiary

Language in which proposals shall be submitted: English

Web address for further information (full call text/proposal guidelines):

<http://ecotours-project.eu>

Email address for further information: ecotours@enoros.com.cy