

Quo vadis: Current status and future scenarios in digital realities for tourism

The INTERREG Europe project Digitourism explores the status quo and the road to go on policy making for digital realities in tourism. Where other markets like the U.S. or Asia are fast progressing on developing digital standards or rapidly implementing AR and VR solutions in travel and tourism, the European market needs to follow by creating digital ecosystems and infrastructure to enable new digital business models.

The DigiTourism project explores best practice examples of digital realities in the partner regions of Auvergne Rhône-Alpes (France), Oppland (Norway), Surrey (UK), Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship (Poland), Pécs (Hungary), Grand Paradis (Italy), Canary Island and Aragon (Spain). Within the learning community, partners share their best practices and learnings around digital realities during field visits to the destinations and knowledge workshops facilitated by Breda University of Applied Sciences, the advisory partner on the project.

The **first workshop** of DigiTourism organised early 2019, aimed to gain a general understanding of the status quo of digital realities in the respective regions. A **LEGO® Serious Play workshop** was conducted to share the regional experiences through model building and storytelling techniques. The guided workshop covered topics such as (1) the current situations of digital reality implementations in each region, (2) expectations of digital realities within the near future and (3) barriers and constraints reaching the anticipated future.

In the first stage of the 3 hours workshop, partners gave an overview of cross-industry developments and latest AR/VR implementations in their region. In many cases, **digital applications were initiated by SMEs unrelated to tourism**, who explore the tourism field as a rich application playground enhancing museums, cultural heritage sites, theme parks, or whole cities. However, all partners see potential for the development of digital realities in tourism in their destination.

A picture of the aspirational future was created in a second step of the workshop. All partners envision a prosperous vertical and horizontal intra-industry collaboration between policy-makers, technology developers, content providers, tourism decision makers and travel and hospitality stakeholders. To create a multi-layered and well-connected ecosystem for AR/VR, **some barriers have been identified** by the group in the last stage of the workshop. One concern was, that stakeholders are often loosely connected without formal structures of collaboration and shared vision. These fragmented initiatives are primarily driven by early adopters who have the skills, knowledge and the financial means to experiment with new technology. As a result, these micro-initiatives are focused on a single touchpoint integration as opposed to a seamlessly digital integrated destination brand identity throughout the whole customer journey.

Within the course of the Digitourism project, the partners and their stakeholders work on establishing profitable conditions for companies inside and outside tourism to create an **agile ecosystem** for digital realities.

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