



# Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourism's action plan

---

Digitourism is a cooperation project aiming at developing the uses of Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality in tourism thanks to the improvement of relevant public policies.

During the Phase 1 of the Digitourism project (June 2018 – May 2021), all partners identified interesting practices and initiatives which could be inspiring enough to lead to an improvement of public policy, or to the duplication of this experience in their territory.

Following these three years, a two years long second phase of the project is starting, when project partners will improve their policies and use the outcomes of the project. This document is the road map of this second phase.

## 1 GENERAL INFORMATION

Partner organisation: Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme

Country: France

NUTS2 region: Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes

Contact person:

- email address: [t.ducloutrier@auvergnerhonealpes-tourisme.com](mailto:t.ducloutrier@auvergnerhonealpes-tourisme.com)
- phone number: +334 73 29 49 40

## 2 IMPROVEMENT OF THE TARGET POLICY

### a. Name of the target policy:

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes ERDF ESF regional operational programme 2021-2027

Priority 1: Research, innovation, digital, competitiveness and reindustrialisation

Strategic Objective 1: A more competitive and smarter Europe by fostering innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity

Specific objective 1.2 Digital uses

- Nature of the target policy:**
- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
  - European Territorial Cooperation programme
  - Other regional development policy instrument

**Name of the managing authority of the target policy:** Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council

### b. Relevance to the Digitourism project

Various initiatives observed in Digitourism partners' regions demonstrated the potential of digital realities in the tourism sector. These initiatives take place at different steps of the customer's journey:

- Before the visit:  
Products like Outdoor 360° created by Odoxo for the Isère Departmental Council are an interesting way to promote an activity and reassure potential visitors on the difficulties and dangers of outdoor activities. VR or 360° videos are interesting tools not only to reassure, but also to promote or inspire.  
Gamification also holds a high potential to arouse interest of the people on specific topics. This is perfectly illustrated by examples given by the Italian gamification designer Fabio Viola, expert of interactions between games, tourism and virtual technologies. Unfortunately, the online character of the study visit of Grand Paradis Foundation didn't allow to investigate this aspect deeper so far.
- During the visit:  
This is probably where digital realities have the most potential. Both AR and VR are excellent media to explain or tell stories.

AR allows to illustrate a topic by adding content on top of reality. Initiatives like the app of Museopic used by the printing museum in Lyon or the Agroverzum center in Hungary take advantage of this technology and get excellent feedbacks from the visitors. The Peer Gynt Hologram implemented in Innlandet County in Norway is also a way to make cultural events more durable by extending the opportunities for the visitors to see a play. Thanks to such an idea, a cultural event lasting a few days can give birth to a tourist site available all year long.

On the other hand, VR does not add to reality, but immerses in an alternative reality. It is most effective to teach people or tell stories, like in the Copernicus House in Toruń, Poland, created thanks to a strong support of ERDF.

- After the visit:

Visitors can immerse themselves again in the places they liked and show it to their relatives. For example, after a real visit of the Copernicus House, they can use the online virtual walk to enjoy it again and show their favourite items to their relatives, which improves quality of word to mouth promotion. Same goes with the Museo Egizio in Turin, the world's oldest museum devoted entirely to ancient Egyptian culture, which developed a new virtual tour.

Such initiatives are only possible when the necessary data is available. Most of the time, the data does not exist and has to be acquired or created. This step can be tricky for companies or territories, as the cost can be significant. The Culture in Range 2.0 policy implemented in Kujawsko Pomorskie region is a good example of how public organizations can help.

Digital Innovation Hubs can also be a key support for tourism companies interested in this topic, as demonstrated by the DIH observed in Aragon Region and Canary Islands in Spain.

So, considering the potential of digital realities, it is important to create favourable conditions for such products to appear, and the best way to do it is through public policies and incentives. Unfortunately, in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes the existing European policies don't meet this need. ERDF dedicated to digitalization does not target the tourism industry, and ERDF dedicated to the support to companies, which can support tourism, is focused on expensive projects exceeding 600 000 €.

Digitourism learnings tell the main points to consider when building or improving these policies:

- Data acquisition or creation should be eligible (digitization)
- The target beneficiaries should include not only tourist companies and public authorities, but also other bodies that can be involved in the creation of digital products, in particular Social innovation actors and networks, and Digital Innovation Hubs – DIH. The gaming industry should also be concerned, as gamification is a major topic. Not restricting the eligible companies to tourism is a key point.
- The eligibility threshold should be low enough to allow digital improvements to existing products, and not only creations from scratch.

**c. Nature of the action**

With these conclusions in mind, the Tourism Directorate of the Regional Council proposed to make new types of projects eligible to the Priority 1, Strategic objective 1 of the 2021-2027 programme.

The proposed improvement is the following:

*Type of action n ° 1.1.2.1: Supporting companies in their digital transformations.*

*The ERDF will finance the development of digital services in favour of tourism development and regional attractiveness: developing services offering interactive added value for tourist users via e-tourism, the digitization of the offer, digital content and the development of digital realities, both in promotion, marketing and activities or tourist sites managed by public or private tourism players including SMEs.*

The beneficiaries can be of various kinds and will include:

- Local authorities, their groups and their operators,
- State, public establishments
- Regional Tourism Board, Departmental Tourism Boards, Tourist Offices, ...
- Consular chambers,
- Public agencies,
- Public health and education establishments
- Competitiveness poles, innovation poles and clusters,
- Social innovation actors and networks,
- Structures or groups labelled Digital Innovation Hub - DIH,
- Training organizations,
- Digital Region Campus or training organizations labelled Digital Region Campus,
- Associations,
- Companies.

This policy improvement is expected to support a variety of new projects involving the use of AR and VR in the tourism sector, which is the very objective of Digitourism.

**d. Stakeholders involved**

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council, Tourism Directorate and EU Funds Directorate

**e. Expected timeframe of the improvement**

The approval of the new ERDF Operational Programme is expected end 2021 or early 2022

**f. Indicative costs**

The budget dedicated to the "Type of action n ° 1.1.2.1: Supporting companies in their digital transformations" should reach 6,6 Million Euros for the 2021-2027 period. But the tourism related projects are not expected to represent a large part of this budget. A target of 10 % could be realistic.

**g. Indicative funding sources**

The necessary funds will be provided by the ERDF of the improved measure.



### 3 IMPROVEMENT OF OTHER POLICIES

Thanks to the Digitourism project, many interesting practices, initiatives and policies were observed. Some of them offered inspiration to improve the main policy instrument tackled by the project as presented in part 2 of this action plan.

But these learnings can also benefit other policy instruments or local and regional strategies. Digitourism partners intend to make use of as many interesting learnings from the project as possible, to make the most of this project.

This is the reason why, in addition to the actions presented in Part 2 dedicated to the main policy instrument target, we tried to identify all possible contributions from our project to improve other regional, national or EU policies, of course always in relation to the main topic of the project: the innovative use of Digital realities in tourism.

Thanks to the learnings of Digitourism, the Tourism Directorate of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council, Stakeholder of the project, thought of a potential improvement of a regional policy: the "**Outdoor Tourism Sector of Excellence**".

- **Name of the managing authority:** Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council - Tourism Directorate
  
- **Description of the policy:**  
The Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region has made outdoor activities a priority of the region's tourism policy. By assisting "Outdoor Territories of Excellence" in implementing tourism development strategies based on outdoor sports and recreation, the region aims to:
  - Establish tourist destinations and sites dedicated to outdoor sports and recreation by creating a network, making the outdoor tourism offerings of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes clearer and more accessible.
  - Support private and public investment projects on the Outdoor Territories of Excellence, in accordance with the demands of the market and of tourists.
  - Oversee the different structuring phases of each territory: in addition to financial and technical support, the Outdoor Territories of Excellence benefit from the services and tools of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme (marketing, coordination, promotion, certification, professionalisation, commercialisation and assessment of the territories and of the outdoor tourism professionals).
  
- **Source of inspiration from the project**  
Various good practices have been observed thanks to Digitourism, which demonstrate that, contrary to what one could think at first, digital realities and outdoors are not incompatible but very complementary for different purposes:
  - Promotion of the activity: Isère Outdoor 360 project (owned by Department of Isère, France)  
360 ° videos of a variety of outdoor activities were shot to provide an immersive experience with VR headset (caving, paragliding, Via Ferrata, Kayaking, etc.). These videos are used with different publics (middle school or high school students, tourists on Sunday markets etc) to show them that these activities supposedly extreme or difficult are actually fun and accessible.

- Improvement of product: the Fredericia AR app presented during the study visit to Surrey County.

The Danish town of Fredericia developed an AR app on smartphone offering cultural content to the visitors. Tourists can hike around the town and get cultural knowledge along the way, which is a demand of part of the customers.

The Puerto de la Cruz initiative presented by Turismo de Tenerife during the virtual visit of Innovalia is also interesting in this regard (storytelling and technology used).

- Improvement of the sales through revisits: Summer toboggan run in virtual reality of the Alpe d'Huez ski resort.

In addition to the usual summer toboggan run, a VR product is available which allow the visitor to go down the slope while wearing a VR helmet showing a virtual environment. That way, people can feel the real sensation of the descent while enjoying a virtual setting like a video game.

The interest here is to offer a completely new experience to the customers without heavy investment, as the cost of a VR environment is way cheaper than the cost of a new summer toboggan run. This encourages revisits, and most customers enjoy the experience twice instead of once, hence improving economic results very significantly.

#### - **Description of the expected improvement**

A call for expressions of interest should take place in 2022 to identify new Outdoor Territories of Excellence or new projects in already approved Outdoor Territories of Excellence.

The Tourism Directorate of the Regional Council intends to propose to the Regional Assembly to include in this call a specific part dedicated to the digitalization of the tourism economy and digital realities. If this proposal is approved by the Regional Assembly, projects related to these topics would be made eligible to regional funds.

The improved "Outdoor Tourism Sector of Excellence" regional policy could state the following:

*The digitalization of the tourist economy and the hybridization of the offer with augmented realities are increasingly prevalent in the tourist experience process of customers (before, during, after).*

*To meet these expectations, first of all, the territories can act as a relay for Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme's digital communication strategy by appropriating the digital system for the distribution and online sale of tourist products, including outdoor activities (the "marketplace") which is deployed by ART through the support of departments, their territories and tourism professionals.*

*Then, the territories can set up digital solutions adapted to the profiles and expectations of tourist clientele wishing to practice outdoor activities.*

*More specifically, the development of offers combining the outdoors and virtual or augmented realities makes it possible to meet the expectations of "immersion" and the intensity of the experience of tourist clientele.*

*Several examples from the Interreg "Digitourism" project, the leader of which is Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme and which is dedicated to tourist uses of digital realities (virtual reality, augmented reality), are avenues for reflection that can be addressed at the scale of the territory: promotion / marketing tool (use at trade fairs, distribution of content at home,*

*immersion before purchase, etc.), extension of the customer experience of activities (complement to equipment, improvement of a practice, etc.)*

*Examples:*

- *Isère Outdoor 360 project (Department of Isère): 360 ° video experience with VR headset to promote the practice of outdoor activities*
- *AR visit via a smartphone app of the remains of the Danish city of Fredericia allowing to interact with the landscape*
- *Summer toboggan run in virtual reality of the Alpe d'Huez ski resort: possibility to relive the experience in the form of a 3D game with a VR headset*
- *"Fantasticable" zip line on the Yzeron Plateau in the Monts du Lyonnais: possibility to relive the experience with a VR headset*

This new part would make such projects eligible, hence contributing to the objective to develop new uses of digital realities in tourism.

- **Stakeholders involved**

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council,  
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme,  
The "leaders" in the Outdoor Territories of Excellence

- **Expected timeframe of the improvement**

2022: Publication of the framework document of a call for expression of interest, including the added part on digitalization and digital realities.

- **Indicative costs**

The budget dedicated to this policy instrument is 1,5 Million Euros per year. It is realistic to expect that 5 to 10 % of this amount could be allocated to projects related to digitalization and digital realities.

- **Indicative funding sources**

Regional Funds

**Date: 16/08/2021**

**Name of the organisation: Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme**

**Signature of representative of the relevant organisation:**

  
**Mr Lionel Flasseur, Managing Director**