European Needs Analysis on Crisis Management for Tourism SMEs
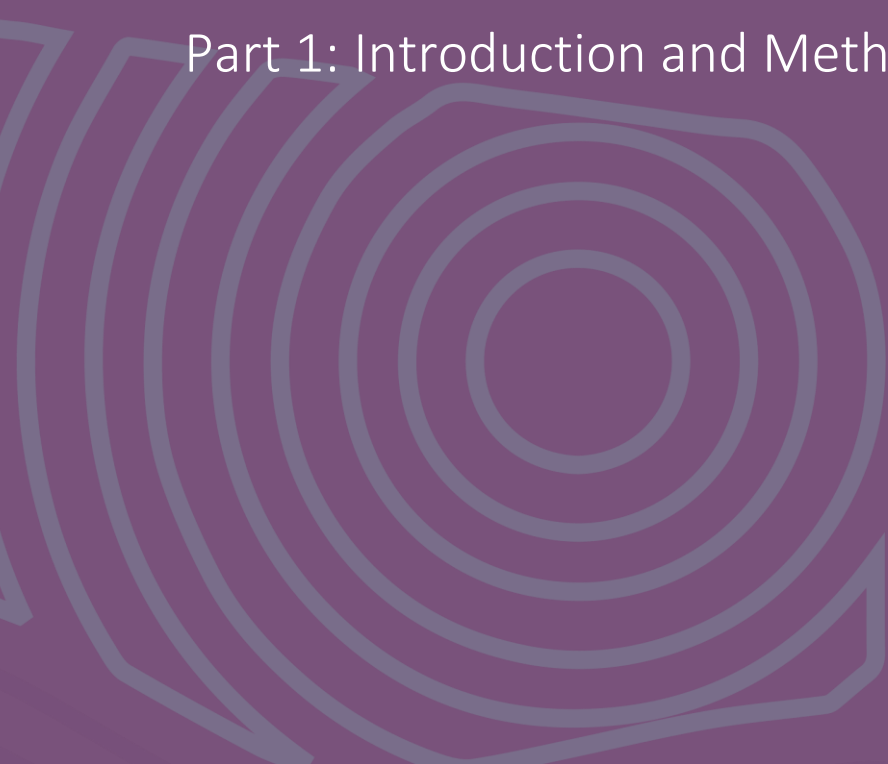
Part 1: Introduction and Methodology

Navigating Tourism
Crisis Recovery

PROJECT AIM

The overall aim of TC-NAV is to develop an HEI curriculum, a vocational education and training package, open-access educational resources and an innovative learning app, all helping tourism SMEs to gain the knowledge and management competencies to navigate their company through crisis and to become more crisis-resilient. The project has partners in Scotland, Iceland, Spain, Ireland and Germany, as well as a 'tech' partner in Denmark. To effect this change, there are four Intellectual Outputs (IO) in TC-NAV:

- International Needs Analysis on Tourism Crisis Management for SMEs (Lead: UHI): comprising an international study / needs analysis on the characteristics of tourism crises and the special needs arising from them for SMEs.
- HEI Tourism Crisis Curriculum (MMS): easy adaptable and modular HEI modules will be developed including learning objectives, lesson plans, assessment guides, and access to a variety of additional teaching content. The modules allow HEI lecturers to implement this important topic as new courses or in modules into existing courses.
- SME Training Package and SME Crisis Navigator (TVW): we will provide SMEs and supporting organisations with a full training package allowing them to extend and professionalise their services with regard to tourism crisis.
- Crisis Navigator App (EUEI): the materials from the other three work packages will be developed into a fully operational, self-directed learning app and digital knowledge exchange platform.

The first Intellectual Output (IO) was to set the stage for collaboration and to gain a better understanding of the risks in the tourism landscape, the impact or potential impacts of crisis on European SME's and regions. To inform us of any gaps and provide us with recommendations of how tourism SME's and regional tourism networks and supports can better prepare, respond and enhance its resilience. This IO will activate the future capacity for project, its collaboration and development IO's 2&3. The study essentially pursued three central objectives:

OBJECTIVE 1 - Filling research gaps: while business crises in general have already been extensively researched, there are still significant gaps with regard to the specific needs of tourism SMEs facing a virulent crisis and the competencies needed and best practices to assess those important areas. As SMEs in the tourism sector have specific characteristics and are especially vulnerable to crisis, specific approaches need to be considered from this perspective.

OBJECTIVE 2 - Raise awareness for the importance of crisis management and adaptive leadership competencies in SMEs in the tourism sector: By publishing and disseminating research results both in the scientific community and among our target groups (esp. HEI, VET trainers, consultants, SME owner/manager and future entrepreneurs), we create a sustainable awareness for the importance of the topic and use the study as a first milestone of our dissemination strategy.

OBJECTIVE 3- Outline of the structure of the subsequent outputs: One central result of IO1 is a framework of the specific characteristics of tourism SMEs, the challenges they face during a virulent crisis, the needs arising from them and the best practices to assess them. This framework forms the structure for both the curricula and learning resources of IO2, as well as for the VET Training Package and SME Crisis Navigator OERs (IO3) based on it. Our approach is to build on the strong foundations provided by the applied research of UHI, our Lead and HE partner and the strong networks especially in the HEI sector of FUNIBER and brings in the perspectives from diverse target groups as represented by our partners.

This paper synthesizes the research undertaken towards objectives 1 forming the basis for objectives 2&3.

INTRODUCTION

The final report for Intellectual Output (IO) 1 contains six elements:

- Introduction and Methodology
- Online Research
- Good Practice Case Studies
- Literature Review
- Analysis of Industry Interviews
- Competence Framework and Conclusions

All of these resources are designed for either self-learning or to be used in a more formal educational structure. This document forms part one: Introduction and Methodology. For the full suite of IO1 reports please visit https://www.tourismrecovery.eu/resources/.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology consisted of a three-part process of online research, academic research and in-depth interviews of tourism SMEs or crisis experts.

1. Online research

   Each of the five partners conducted desktop research within their own country of:

   - Industry reports or policy documents on the impact or potential impacts of crises (with particular emphasis on the pandemic) on European tourism SMEs
   - Case studies and examples of good practice relating to how tourism SMEs navigate their way effectively through crisis
   - Reports/blogs etc regarding the specific issues facing tourism SMEs in crises
   - Identification of crisis management or leadership skills required to help SMEs out of crisis

UHI in Scotland and Spanish partner FUNIBER extended their desktop research to include policy documents and good practice from across the globe.

2. Academic research

FUNIBER, HAK (Iceland) and UHI conducted an academic literature review relating to:

   - The impact or potential impacts of crisis on European SMEs
   - Case studies and examples of good practice relating to how tourism SMEs navigate their way effectively through crisis
   - The specific issues facing tourism SMEs in crises
   - Crisis management or leadership skills

3. In-depth interviews

The five partners each conducted five or six in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, selected through existing databases of contacts. The participants were tourism SMEs, crisis experts, tourism industry bodies, or other appropriate stakeholders, chosen to represent a range of perspectives on tourism crisis recovery and their knowledge of the regional tourism sector. The interviews were transcribed and translated into English as required. The findings were then combined and analysed to pick out key themes under set questions, along with choice quotes that would add depth to the discussions and illuminate participants' voices. All responses were anonymised.