OPEN CALL FOR PILOTS

Related WP	WP4	Document Reference	Call for Pilots
Related Deliverable(s)	D4.1, D4.2	Dissemination Level (*)	Public

Project consortium – Coordinator: ANYSOLUTION– ANYSOL (ES)			
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1. The D3HUB Pilot Peer-Learning Community

In the framework of the D3HUB – Tourism of Tomorrow Data-Driven-Destinations Hub project[1], funded under the call PPPA-2022-TOTOLAB – EU Competence Centre to support data management in tourism destinations, the D3HUB consortium is building a community of passionate local, regional and national destination management organisations (DMOs) in order to co-design and test a competency support scheme. The objective is "to test the European Competence Centre theoretical support scheme by a critical mass of destinations to solve real challenges with real data and tools .Within the framework of the D3HUB, the "support scheme" refers to the portfolio of services that the future Competence Centre will offer to European tourist destinations such as consulting, training and capacity building, project development or actions for the dissemination of knowledge and best practices, among others. Therefore, 30 applicants will be selected and organised in clusters around four topical destination challenges. Each cluster will be facilitated by members of at least two D3HUB consortium partners, based on the internal talent map and supported by selected external experts. The 30 selected applicants will participate in a peer-learning scheme of 12 months, a programme made up of online activities, intending to foster collaboration and knowledge transfer between participants.

The community will exchange and learn methodologies, tools, and practices fostering green and digital destination transformations through a data-driven approach supported by data collection and dashboard visualisation. Starting from the shared challenges linked to a variety of tourism ecosystems, the selected participants will be at the heart of a learning journey that will focus on adopting data for decision-making and sustainable destination development.

Applications to join the D3HUB pilot community can be submitted by completing the online form at **https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/D3HUB_CallForPilots** until **1 December 2024, 18:00 CET.**

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[1] See project website https://www.d3hub-competencecentre.eu/

2. The D3HUB project in a nutshell

D3HUB stands for Data-Driven Destinations Hub. The overarching goal of D3HUB is to assist tourist destinations (composed of DMOs, SMEs, and public-private stakeholders) in finding the right technologies, frameworks, tools, and methodologies for adopting a data-driven management approach and measuring their sustainable development by identifying the right data sources for defining sustainable indicators. The Competence Centre will develop a support scheme aimed at increasing data proficiency and contributing to competency-building to assist in data interpretation and sharing.

Title of project	Tourism of Tomorrow Data-Driven Destinations Hub
EU call	PPPA-2022-TOTOLAB
Service	EISMEA.I.02-SMP/SME Pillar
Starting date	15/11/2023
Duration	36 months
Coordinator	AnySolution SL (ES)
Partners	● Assessoria Juridica Balear SL (ES) *(Affiliated Entity)* ● Network of European Regions for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism ASBL (BE) ● Empresa Pública para la Gestión del Turismo y del Deporte de Andalucia, SA (ES) ● Ministero Del Turismo (IT) ● Institut für Tourismus- und Bäderforschung in Nordeuropa GmbH(DE) ● Arctur Racunalniski Inzeniring DOO (SI) ● Toerisme Vlaanderen (BE)

Europe is undergoing a significant transformation in its economy and society by promoting a green and digital shift within the EU's industry and ecosystems to enhance sustainability, competitiveness, and long-term resilience. In the tourism sector, the European Commission, in collaboration with key players in the tourism ecosystem, has developed the Transition Pathway for Tourism[2]. This plan outlines key actions, targets, and conditions to help the sector meet these goals. Notably, the pathway focuses on areas such as digitalisation and upskilling, with specific objectives like: (i) improving data-sharing practices to foster innovative tourism services and better manage destinations sustainably; and (ii) investing in workforce skills to ensure a qualified labour pool and attractive career opportunities within the ecosystem. These objectives highlight some of the main challenges facing the tourism sector, including: (i) limited data availability, standardisation, and interoperability between tourism stakeholders and destinations; (ii) a lack of knowledge, skills, and resources for stakeholders to successfully navigate the digital transition and fully leverage new technologies and existing data; and (iii) the absence of a unified framework for sustainability monitoring, along with the need for effective management tools to address seasonality and tourism density.

The above-mentioned challenges are especially relevant for DMOs at various levels, many of which are struggling to incorporate the right technologies needed to improve their data-driven destination management and determine which indicators to use for destination monitoring and sustainability measurement. The D3HUB project was selected after a competitive selection procedure to complete a 36-month project with the main objective to design, test, pave the way and sustain a self-sustainable European Competence Centre to support tourism destinations and their ecosystems (with special attention to SMEs) in their data-driven green and digital transition as well as to increase collaboration and knowledge transfer between tourism stakeholders and tourism destinations. D3HUB is designing

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[2] Directorate-general for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (2022). *Transition Pathway for Tourism.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Doi: 10.2873/344425

actions to foster leadership and partnership of European DMOs as crucial elements for overcoming these challenges that will be the core of the support scheme that will be developed and tested within 30 diverse pilots during the project's runtime. The objective is to join forces with each other, the D3HUB consortium partners and a selection of external experts, through active involvement in a peer-learning scheme and capacity-building activities. The analysis of relevant data sources and the development of tailor-made dashboards that will be developed during the pilot phase, will support this strategy. These destinations will further help to finetune a service portfolio that can support all European destinations and their DMOs in their data-oriented, green, and digital transition.

3. What's on offer?

Peer-learning and knowledge transfer are central to the D3HUB pilot approach. Local, regional and/or national Destination Management Organisation representatives will learn from and reflect on experiences gained during the pilot activities that aim to provide data-driven insights on a selection of destination challenges. Selected applications will enter a training and partnership programme of 12 months. There is no budget foreseen for participation. D3HUB cannot cover any potential expenses. No travel or face-to-face meetings are foreseen, with the entire training programme being developed online. The only expense to be taken into account is, therefore, a dedication of staff time.

The peer-learning programme focuses specifically on four central clusters, outlining a variety of challenges that destinations might be confronted with:

1. Managing the balance between residents, visitors, and stakeholders

This cluster for pilots aims to balance the needs of residents with the demands of visitors, especially in tourist-heavy areas. We propose to explore the following lines of work:

- Understanding Population and Tourism Dependency: analysing the economic and employment impacts of tourism through dashboards and official statistics.
- Tourism Intensity and Density: studying the ratio of tourists to locals and their presence in different areas of the destination.
- Impact of Short-Term Rentals: addressing the issue of short-term rentals driving up housing costs and displacing locals by using AI and data from different short-term rental providers to assess their effects.
- Resident Attitudes: exploring concerns around housing, cruises, traffic, noise, accessibility, inclusivity, and safety using focus groups, surveys, and sentiment analysis.
- Cultural preservation, protection, conservation: exploring concerns about tangible and intangible cultural preservation and protection under influence of tourist interest and visitation.
- Forecasting & Prediction: By using data models and AI, creating scenarios for different situations of visitor numbers, housing pressures, and resource demands.

The goal is to manage imbalances caused by tourism, focusing on the efficient use of shared resources. The pilot seeks sustainable solutions that benefit both residents and visitors, aligning with the vision of "Better Places to Live, Better Places to Visit."

2. Climate change mitigation and adaptation

This cluster for pilots focuses on aligning tourism with climate action goals. We propose to explore the following lines of work:

- Glasgow Declaration Commitment: Provide support/information about commitment to the global climate action framework outlined in the Glasgow Declaration.
- Tourism Climate Action Plan (CAP): Provide support/information for implementing a Tourism CAP that aligns with the destination's broader climate action plan to support the entire regional economy.
- Mitigation Indicators: Develop compatible indicators with the Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) system to track progress in reducing tourism's carbon footprint.
- Carbon Footprint Calculation: Establish methods to measure and reduce the carbon footprint of tourism activities.
- Tourism Sector Competencies: Identify areas where destinations can take direct action, such as energy management, water conservation, waste management, solar panel installations, and using sensors (noise and pollution measurement, etc) for personalized impact metrics to promote sustainable behaviours.
- Future Data Integration: Explore the integration of PMS (Property Management System) data with European data spaces for water, waste, and energy management.

- Adaptation Indicators: Create indicators to measure the effectiveness of adaptation efforts in the tourism sector.

3. Redistributing tourist flows in space and time

This cluster for pilots will address the uneven distribution of tourists across time and space, tackling challenges like seasonality, crowding, and overtourism. We propose to explore the following lines of work:

- Tourism Intensity and Density: This involves studying the ratio of tourists to locals and their presence in different areas of the destination.
- Seasonality Analysis: Using techniques such as time series analysis and the Gini index, we will identify patterns in tourism peaks and off-seasons. This data will guide policies that manage seasonality, using official sources to benchmark regions and incorporating local contexts (NUTS2 level).
- Impact on Employment and local resources: We'll examine the relationship between tourist flows and job creation, helping destinations better understand how to balance tourism with local economic growth.
- PMS Data Integration: We'll leverage Property Management System (PMS) data to gain insights into tourist flows and optimize management. Future integration with European data spaces for water and energy will support a comprehensive analysis.
- Forecasting & Prediction: By using data models and AI, creating scenarios for different situations

This pilot will provide strategies for managing tourist volumes, improving efficiency, and promoting balanced tourism growth across destinations.

A researcher (for the measurement part) and a practitioner (for the management part) will moderate the cluster.

4. Supporting emerging destinations to attract quality and sustainable tourism

This cluster for pilots aims to help emerging destinations attract quality tourism. We propose to explore the following lines of work:

- Develop profiles of "quality tourists" based on data insights, targeting visitors who respect and protect local culture and engage in sustainable activities.
- Create and monitor environmental, socio-economic, and cultural impact indicators to track the effectiveness of sustainable tourism strategies integrating those already existing initiatives running in the destinations.
- Support emerging destinations in integrating with regional and global tourism frameworks, ensuring they benefit from global sustainability initiatives while maintaining local identity and autonomy.
- Promote collaboration with other destinations to share best practices and strategies for sustainable tourism development.
- Conduct focus groups and surveys to understand community expectations and concerns about tourism, aligning development with local aspirations.

For successful applicants, the peer-learning programme will start on 1 February 2025 and run for 12 months, including an Active phase (months 1 to 10) and a Wrap-up phase (months 11 to 12). After that, members of the D3HUB consortium will conduct an internal evaluation phase. The foreseen peer-learning programme and structure are outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Peer-learning programme
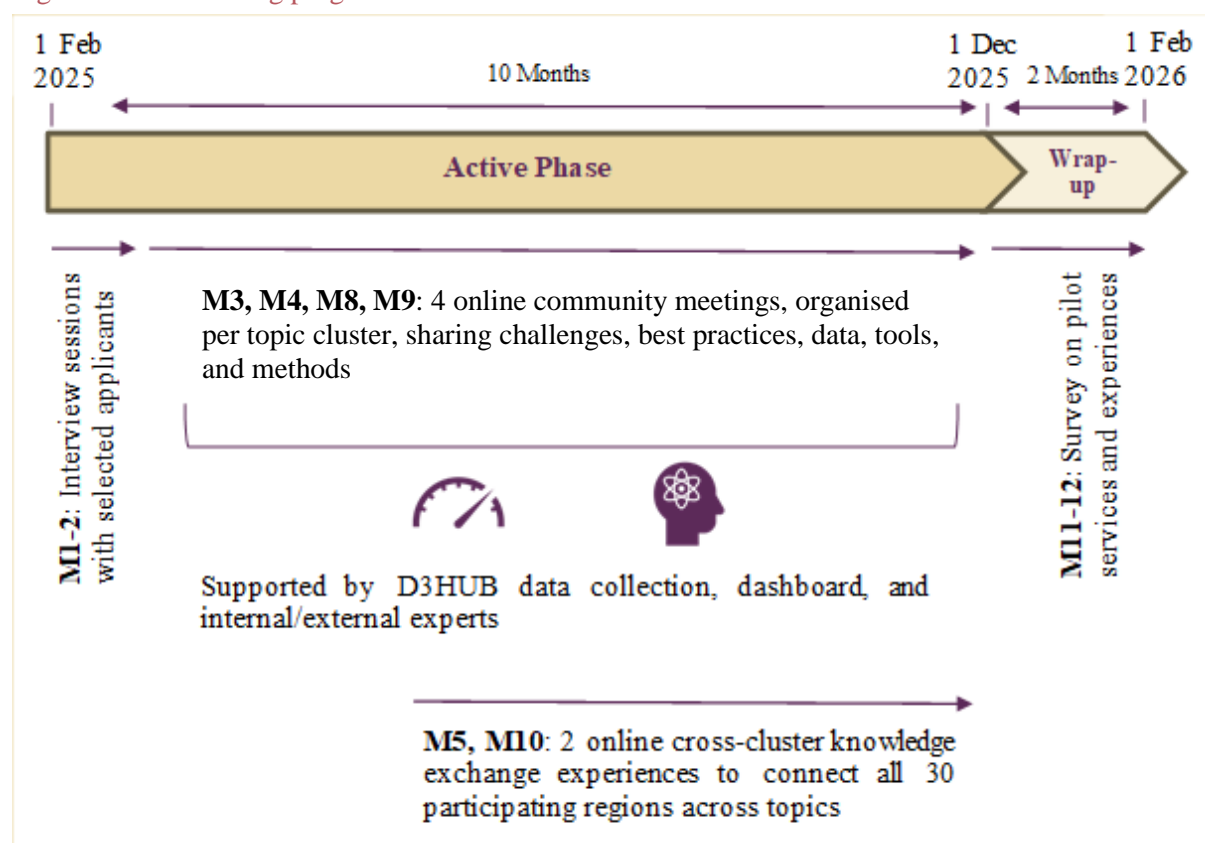
The peer-learning program includes:

1. Interview sessions (February 2025 – March 2025)

The 30 selected applicants will first be interviewed by a member of one of the consortium partners within the first month. The objective is to gather information on the local context, the challenges and experiences linked to the pilot topic, and the available data and/or research that might be shared with the D3HUB consortium and within the peer-learning activities. The interview will also cover specific learning needs and expectations in order to help shape the peer-learning activities.

2. Measurement of sustainability indicators (February 2025 - May 2025)

As part of the services, a common methodology for measuring tourism sustainability will be developed, and relevant indicators will be collected to assess and monitor economic, social, and environmental sustainability, allowing for the measurement, monitoring, and benchmarking of pilot destinations.

3. Additional data collection and data visualisation (February 2025 – December 2025)

An open standard data dashboard will be populated for the 30 participating destinations, combining open data with additional data provided by the destinations themselves, to further support data-driven management decisions within the participating regions.

4. Four online community meetings (April 2025 – December 2025)

Representatives of DMOs will be clustered according to selected priority topics. Per topic, four online community meetings of approximately 2 hours will be organised, envisioned to take place in April, May, September, and October 2025. These meetings will provide a space for dialogue to exchange ideas and best practices on methodologies, tools, data interpretation techniques, and data sharing approaches, both among partners and by inviting external speakers with specific expertise of interest.

5. Cross-cluster knowledge exchange (June 2025, November 2025)

To ensure that knowledge of cross-cluster relevance does not remain fragmented, in addition to the topical-based community meetings, two online cross-cluster knowledge exchanges will be organised, estimated to take place in June and November 2025. These exchanges will summarise best practices across topics, identify shared learnings and best practices, and create a community of data-driven destinations.

6. Survey on pilot scheme services and experiences (December 2025 – January 2026)

To validate the D3HUB Competence Centre support scheme, participants will be invited to complete an online survey to outline their experiences during the peer-learning program.

7. Webinar series (June 2025 – August 2025)

Organised by the D3HUB consortium and internal/external experts will select particularly relevant topics, tools, and methodologies for a webinar series. These webinars will be exclusively aimed at and limited to the participating pilot destinations.

The peer-learning clusters' more detailed content will be defined at a later stage, in accordance with the needs and expectations identified via the participant interviews. In addition to the activities that will take place specifically within the pilot activities, the D3HUB consortium might provide additional competence-building activities that are open but not exclusive to pilot participants.

4. Why join?

Engage in a peer-learning programme for decision-makers and researchers

At least 30 selected DMOs, representing various administrative levels and tourism-related characteristics, will have access to a peer learning program which includes:

- A solution-driven approach to common tourism destination issues, leveraging existing and new data.
- First-hand access to tools, methodologies, and resources adopted in the frame of the project by experts of the consortium.
- Exchanging best practices in data availability, data collection, data sharing, and interpretation for planning and policy purposes.
- Identifying opportunities within the wider European ecosystem, such as the European Tourism Data Space and the EU Tourism Dashboard.
- Quarterly online community meetings between pilot representatives and members of D3HUB, establishing a vibrant, collaborative environment.
- Webinar series on relevant topics and methodologies.
- Cross-cluster knowledge exchange to share best practices for handling diverse tourism challenges.

Be inspired by data

The D3HUB's project and peer-learning pilot scheme will support destinations with a selection of destination sustainability indicators and further assist in identifying data sources and proposing quantitative/statistical and/or qualitative tools to translate existing data—either publicly available or based on sets of data provided by applicants—into evidence-based policies directed at problem solutions.

Improve destinations through data-driven understanding

Learn how to identify and interpret relevant data, focusing on solving challenges at a destination level and supporting sustainable, green, and digital transitions. The D3HUB pilot participants will be able to follow closely how different destinations make use of data for data-driven destination management, with its opportunities and challenges, receive support from external experts, and reflect on how this data-driven management approach contributes to the creation of sustainable and flourishing destinations.

Shape the European Competence Centre for Tourism of the future

The D3HUB project aims to test the viability and procedure of a self-sustaining Competence Centre for Tourism. As such, the pilots are crucial in identifying the existing needs at various levels and testing the optimal approach for general competency building. Participation in the pilot scheme and reflection on this process will help shape the future of a competence centre that is useful and valuable for all European Destination Management Organizations and its wider tourism ecosystem.

Increase the visibility of your work and destination

Working closely with your peers in a European network, many of which are tackling similar challenges, participants will be able to provide inputs and showcase their own best practices. This content will be featured on a dedicated webpage and the consortium's social media channels that will be updated regularly according to the activities carried out. With a large network of EU stakeholders, D3HUB will

ensure considerable visibility of your successful data-driven destination management strategies and innovations.

5. Eligibility criteria

Who can apply?

The D3HUB pilot community and peer-learning scheme targets decision-makers and data professionals at the local, regional and national levels of tourism administration. We are looking for organisations with a commitment to improve the sustainability of their destination to smart data-driven destination management. The applicant needs to be:

- A destination management organisation or government administration involved in tourism planning and development at local, regional, or national level.
- A public or semi-public entity.
- Based in one of the EU member states[3].
- Committed to active participation in the D3HUB peer-learning scheme (certificate of attendance provided).

Which countries are eligible?

Applicants from a country in one of the 27 European member states are eligible. The list of eligible countries is Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

The possibility is left open to expand the list of countries to the EEA members (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), as well as Switzerland, if considered positive for the aim and impact of the project.

What is the ideal profile of an applicant organisation?

- The current level of data literacy or data competency is not important. The call is open for advanced destinations and destinations currently only adopting basic data collection and interpretation. What is more relevant is a commitment to learning and sharing challenges, experiences, and innovative ideas.
- Interest in actively participating in the D3HUB peer-learning scheme, with a clear commitment to participate in the peer-learning programme (see section 6).
- Interest in data and its opportunities to design data-driven destination management strategies, as well as opportunities for data sharing across ecosystems.

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[3] Candidates might also be selected from countries of the EEA members (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), as well as Switzerland, if considered beneficial for the aim and impact of the project.

6. How to apply?

<u>Where to apply?</u>
To apply for the pilot phase, destinations must fill out the online form available at the following link: **https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/D3HUB_CallForPilots**.

<u>Application procedure</u>
- A central point of contact for each organization needs to be provided for any communication regarding the call.
- A letter of intent, signed by the person responsible for the entity, must be uploaded.
- Each destination chooses a preferred cluster among the 4 clusters in which they wish to participate during the pilot phase, i.e., (i) managing the balance between residents and visitors, (ii) climate change mitigation and adaptation, (iii) redistributing tourist flows in space and time or (iv) supporting emerging destinations to attract quality and sustainable tourism. Each candidate also has the opportunity to declare an interest in any of the other clusters as well.
- While each destination will be assigned to one cluster only, it is planned to carry out initiatives during the pilot to exchange experiences and best practices between the different clusters.
- Ideally, and to get the most out of the pilot, the chosen topic should correspond to a challenge that the destination is currently experiencing. Therefore, DMOs are asked to provide a motivation for their selection.

<u>Application deadline</u>
All proposals must be submitted within the deadline, December 1st 2024, by 18:00 CET.

<u>Contact for questions regarding the open call</u>
Questions regarding this open call can be directed to d3hub@anysolution.eu.

7. Expected commitment

Minimal participant commitment requirements

Establishing a minimum level of commitment from all participants is essential to ensuring the smooth execution of the pilots. This commitment will help maintain clear communication, timely task delivery, and overall project success. Outlining these expectations aims to foster accountability and collaboration throughout the process.

The minimal commitment requirements are:

- Dedicated Project Team: Each destination must assign a dedicated team responsible for the pilot's execution. This team should consist of local, regional or national government representatives, tourism professionals, and community stakeholders to ensure balanced decision-making.
- Each participating DMO is required to designate a dedicated Project Coordinator. This individual will serve as the primary point of contact for the pilot, responsible for receiving all communications, coordinating resources, and ensuring the timely execution. The Project Coordinator will also facilitate internal collaboration between stakeholders and ensure the DMO remains aligned with the project's objectives and timeline. This role is critical to maintaining a clear and efficient flow of information between the project team and the destination.
- Regular Attendance to Meetings: Participants are required to attend all scheduled meetings to ensure continuous progress and active involvement in the project.
- Timely Submission of Documentation: All requested documentation, including progress reports, surveys, and other relevant materials, must be submitted promptly as per the project timeline.
- Active Collaboration: Destinations must actively collaborate with other pilot participants, sharing insights, challenges, and best practices to enrich the collective learning experience.
- Access to Data and Resources: Participants must be willing to provide necessary local data, such as visitor statistics, resident feedback, and data with regard to sustainable destination development, to support project analysis and outcomes. Participating DMOs agree that non-confidential, non-commercial data will be shared with the EU.
- Communication Plan: The D3HUB consortium will provide an engagement plan to ensure that relevant stakeholders, including residents and local businesses, are informed and engaged throughout the pilot.
- Commitment to assess the Implementation: Selected destinations should be ready to assess implementation pathways of pilot outcomes and integrate recommendations into long-term tourism strategies.

A signed letter outlining these minimal requirements is mandatory for application. Additional commitments proposed in the application, such as stronger team involvement or deeper local engagement, will be positively evaluated.

8. How are applicants selected?

As mentioned previously, the D3Hub project seeks to select 30 Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to participate in a 12-month peer-learning pilot program. The selection process of pilot participants aims to establish relevant selection quotas on geographic representation, DMO proficiency levels, variety in governance levels, and destination typologies in order to ensure a broad representation of European DMOs and tourist ecosystems within the pilots. Within the confines of the established quotas, further scoring criteria will be adopted based on motivations and goals, destination strengths and assets, local policy landscape and available resources, networking ambitions, and staff availability and expertise. In the following sections, first the selection quotas will be discussed, aiming to ensure selection diversity. Next, the merit-based scoring criteria are outlined. The final section then highlights the evaluation and selection process to be followed.

8.1. Selection Quota overview

The selection of pilot DMOs will take into account four key criteria to ensure appropriate selection diversity: geographic representation, proficiency levels, governance, and destination typology. Each of these aspects are outlined below, with reference to proposed selection quotas.

1. Geographical representation across European Regions and Countries

To ensure a balanced representation across Europe two quota-based regional selection choices will be introduced:

a. The selection will be divided into 4 geographical areas, with an aim to select at least 4 DMOs from each area.
- **Northern Europe**: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden
- **Western Europe**: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands
- **Southern Europe**: Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain
- **Eastern and Central Europe**: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia

The possibility is left open to expand the list of countries to the EEA members (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), as well as Switzerland, if considered positive for the aim and impact of the project.

b. The selection will aim to include no more than 3 pilot destinations from each Member State[4].

2. Proficiency level in data use

DMOs will be classified into three proficiency levels (basic, medium, and proficient), and for each level, at least 5 DMOs will be selected[5]. The proficiency level will be assessed based on the participants' current experience with data, which will be self-reported via the expression of interest. Following indicators, data and reports can be indicative examples of data-driven policy actions:

- Overnight stays
- Tourist expenditure/tourism revenue
- Arrivals
- Resident satisfaction/acceptance
- Guest satisfaction

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[4] With the exception of not receiving enough proposals to fulfil all country quotas.

[5] With the exception of not receiving enough proposals to fulfil all proficiency level quotas.

- Length of stay
- Occupancy rates
- Results of campaign activities
- Destination image/brand awareness
- Stakeholder satisfaction
- Number of tourist beds
- (Online) bookings
- Seasonality
- Number of visitors at Tourist Information Centres
- Emissions/carbon footprint
- Employment in tourism
- Average Daily Rate (ADR) of accommodations
- Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR)
- Number of day trips
- Accommodation establishment registry (providers/beds)
- Registry of tourism businesses
- Data on residents' perception of tourism
- Number of enterprises and resources with service quality or sustainability certifications
- Regional spread of tourism demand
- Number of flights
- Tourism tax income
- Tourist routes within the destination
- Other (please explain which)

Based on self-reporting of the use of the above indicator/data list, proficiency levels will then be assigned to each candidate as such:

a. **Basic Level:** To qualify as Basic, a DMO must be characterised by:

   - Indicators/Data Used: DMO uses less than 5 indicators.

   - Field of Activity: Focused mainly on promotion and marketing with limited data usage for decision-making.

   - Policy Application: No specific examples of data-driven policy actions.

b. **Medium Level:** To qualify as Medium, a DMO must meet one of the following criteria:

   - Indicators/Data Used: DMO uses more than 5 indicators.

   - Field of Activity: Includes data analysis, support for policymakers, sustainable transformation, or advanced strategic planning.

   - Policy Application: Can provide at least one example of how data has been used to inform a specific policy or strategic action.

c. **Proficient Level:** To qualify as Proficient, a DMO must meet more than one of the following criteria:

   - Indicators/Data Used: DMO uses more than 5 indicators.

   - Field of Activity: Includes data analysis, support for policymakers, sustainable transformation, or advanced strategic planning.

   - Policy Application: Can provide at least one example of how data has been used to inform a specific policy or strategic action.

3. Variety in governance levels

This criterion ensures the inclusion of DMOs from different governance levels—local, regional, and national—to provide a diverse representation of tourism management structures. This diversity allows the Competence Centre's services to be adaptable and relevant to all DMOs, regardless of their administrative context.

The selection will prioritize balanced representation:

- City/Municipal/Subregional[6] Level: 7 DMOs minimum
- Regional Level: 5 DMOs minimum
- National Level: 2 DMOs minimum[7]

This approach reflects the varied landscape of European tourism governance, acknowledging the large number of municipalities, a moderate number of regions, and fewer national entities. The 7:5:2 ratio is a practical balance that ensures all governance levels are fairly represented, with a focus on those most actively involved in tourism management, while still incorporating the strategic insights of national DMOs.

4. Representation of destination typologies

Since challenges related to sustainable destination management, and associated data requirements, can be dependent on the typology of destinations, a third selection criterion is meant to ensure inclusion of urban, rural, coastal/island, and mountainous destinations within the 30 pilots. This will allow for testing the Competence Centre's support scheme across a variety of destinations with different characteristics and user profiles.

To select the different types of tourism, it is proposed to use the classification used in the EU Tourism Dashboard that distinguishes six tourism typologies: urban (or city tourism), coastal, nature, rural, snowy mountain, and mixed[8]. The pilot selection will aim to include at minimum five rural, five urban, two coastal/island, two nature, and two snowy mountain destinations.**[9]**

Table 1 below summarizes the key quota selection criteria and their expected objectives within the D3HUB pilot programme.

Table 1. Selection quota criteria description and expected outcomes

Selection quota criteria	Description	Expected objective
Geographic representation	Balance and ensure the participation of 4 European regions: Northern Europe, Western Europe, Southern Europe, Eastern and Central Europe. Ensure that no country is overrepresented.	At least 4 DMOs from each area. No more than 3 pilot destinations will be selected from each Member State.

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[6] Groups of municipalities that collectively form a tourist destination with an established formal governance or management structure.

[7] With the exception of not receiving enough proposals to fulfil all governance level quotas.

[8] Source: JRC. Methodology: Batista, E., Silva, F., Barranco, R., Pigaiani, C., & Lavalle, C. (2021). A new European regional tourism typology based on hotel location patterns and geographical criteria. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *89*: 103077. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2020.103077.

[9] With the exception of not receiving enough proposals to fulfil all destination typology quotas.

Proficiency level in data use	Ensure representativeness in the participation of destinations with different types of data literacy: basic, medium and proficient level.	At least 5 DMOs for each proficiency level.
Variety in governance level	Consideration of the different levels of governance existing in the management of tourist destinations.	At least 7 DMOs at city/municipal/subregional level, 5 DMOs at regional level, and 2 DMOs at national level.
Representation of destination typologies	Ensure the representation of the different main typologies of tourist destinations existing in Europe.	At least 5 rural, 5 urban, 2 coastal/island, two nature, and two snowy mountain destinations.

8.2. Selection scoring criteria

The quota selection criteria will ensure a pilot selection that is sufficiently heterogeneous in geography, governance, typology, and data proficiency. In order to further select participants based on a ranking of merits, within the confines of the set quotas, candidacy forms will collect information on participant motivations, destination strengths and assets, policy landscape, networking ambitions, and availability and expertise to prioritise participants that can actively contribute to the peer-learning process. Additionally, interested DMOs must submit a Management Commitment/support Letter signed by the political leader responsible for the destination. This letter, following the predefined Template/Content Guide (Annex 1), will formally confirm the DMO's commitment to the requirements outlined in the scoring criteria. Therefore, five criteria will be scored on a total initial score of 100. Later, in the evaluation phase, stepwise weighting will be applied based on the established quotas (as discussed further below).

1.   Key motivations and destination goals (20%)

The first scoring criterion assesses the motivation to join the D3HUB pilot programme and the alignment of the DMO objectives with the goals of the D3HUB project. Priority will be given to DMOs where tourism is a relevant aspect of the territory and participation in the pilot programme translates in a clear commitment to action.

2.   Destination strengths and assets (20%)

Since the peer-learning pilot programme is structured around a number of destination challenges, in this scoring criterion, the alignment of the DMO and its existing territorial challenges is assessed against the topical choice in order to consider participants with a clear felt need whereby the D3HUB pilot participation can leverage strengths and assets against existing issues.

3.   Local policy landscape and available resources (20%)

For data-driven transformations to take place at a destination level, it is important that DMOs are integrated and cooperate closely with the local tourism ecosystem and that there is a policy framework in place with clear data-driven green and digital transformation objectives to be pursued. This will ensure that the efforts of the D3HUB pilot have a higher chance of leading to actual change.

4.   Network ambitions (20%)

A relevant aspect of the D3HUB pilot peer-learning programme is the network opportunity provided to European DMOs. As such, motivation to collaborate and actively participate in the network is an important consideration and can be shown both by a historic integration in existing networks and by a willingness for future shared endeavours.

5. Staff availability and expertise

Since the success of the D3HUB pilot programme depends on active involvement of the selected candidates, staff availability, expertise, and available resources will be considered during the selection process. Any involvement of cross-departmental teams will be positively evaluated as well, considering the multidisciplinarity of tourism.

Table 2 provides a schematic overview of the five selection scoring criteria discussed above that will be adopted in order to score each application on its initial merits.

Table 2. Selection quota criteria description and expected outcomes

EOI quality, potential and relevance, scoring criteria	Weight in initial score	Assessment elements
Key motivations and destination goals	20%	• Understanding of the D3HUB objectives and alignment between DMOs expectations and D3HUB services; • Relevance of tourism at the destination; • Level of motivation and commitment to reach results; • Fitness for purpose of organisation interested in participating in the Competence Centre.
Destination strengths and assets	20%	• Adequacy of DMOs background vis à vis D3HUB topics and challenges; • Potential of the DMS to address destination goals based on the existing strengths and assets and existing territorial challenges; • Demonstrated added value of D3HUB in unleashing DMO potential.
Local policy landscape and available resources	20%	• Existence of a relevant local/regional/national policy framework and accompanying resources; • Existence of additional complementary initiatives, especially at EU level; • Evidence of added value of D3HUB with regard to the existing policy framework; • Potential to mobilise relevant stakeholders for the purpose of building local ecosystem; • Potential and commitment to further develop sustainable tourism indicators.
Networking ambitions	20%	• Motivation to collaborate with other DMOs and engage in cross-destination collaborations; • Participation in existing networks; • Capacity to identify actions to be implemented through a collaborative approach at the EOI stage.
Staff availability and expertise	20%	• Availability of team with relevant expertise; • Full composition of team; • Evidence of involvement of cross-departmental stakeholders; • Allocation of sufficient resources to D3HUB.

8.3. Evaluation process

The first phase of the evaluation process is the pre-screening stage, during which the applications will be assessed based on a set of compulsory and eliminatory requirements. This stage ensures that only

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candidates who meet the basic administrative and legal requirements proceed to the next phase. This way, each application will be reviewed to verify that the necessary documents and information have been submitted. Any candidate failing to meet the compulsory requirements will be eliminated from the process. Notifications of non-compliance will be sent to these candidates, explaining the reasons for their elimination.

After the pre-screening phase, the applications that pass the eliminatory requirements will move on to the expert evaluation phase. This phase involves a detailed assessment of each candidate's application based on the predetermined scoring and quota criteria mentioned above. The evaluation and selection process will aim to ensure a heterogeneous representation of the European tourist ecosystem in terms of geography, proficiency level, governance level, and destination typology, where necessary applying weights to ensure a proper balance in pilot participants.

The evaluation will be conducted by a panel of internal experts from the project consortium and potentially with the assistance of a pool of external experts, if needed. Following the individual evaluations, a consensus meeting will take place, during which all scores and evaluations will be discussed and harmonized. This process is aimed at ensuring a consistent application of the evaluation criteria and resolving any significant differences in expert opinions.

9. Annex 1: Management Commitment Letter Template

Interested DMOs must submit a Commitment Letter to be signed by the political leader responsible for the destination following a pre-defined Template/Content Guide:

Commitment Letter Template/Content Guide

[DMO Letterhead]

[Date]

To the D3Hub Selection Committee,

Subject: Commitment Letter for Participation in the D3Hub Pilot Program

Dear Members of the D3Hub Selection Committee,

As the [Title of Political Leader, e.g., Mayor, Regional Minister, or National Director] of [Destination Name], I hereby express our strong commitment to participate actively in the D3Hub Pilot Program. This letter outlines our dedication to the program and confirms our intention to collaborate fully with the D3Hub initiative.

1. Commitment to the D3Hub Pilot Program Objectives

- Description: State your understanding of the D3Hub project's objectives and how your destination aligns with these goals. Emphasize the importance of data-driven decision-making and sustainable tourism management as key priorities.

2. Active Participation and Resource Allocation

- Description: Confirm the commitment of the DMO to participate in all planned activities, including peer-learning sessions, data-sharing initiatives, and collaborative projects with other DMOs.

3. Designation of Responsible Team and Resources

- Description: Identify the specific team members or departments that will be involved in the D3Hub activities, ensuring they have the time and resources needed to contribute effectively.

4. Support for Data-Driven Policy Development

- Description: Highlight the destination's commitment to integrating data-driven insights into policy-making and strategic tourism management. Provide any past examples if relevant.

5. Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing with Other DMOs

- Description: State your commitment to collaborating with other DMOs in the program, sharing knowledge, best practices, and working together to address common challenges.

6. Sustainability and Long-term Engagement

- Description: Express your destination's commitment to continuing the principles and practices learned through D3Hub beyond the pilot program.

7. Authorization and Commitment Confirmation

- Description: A clear statement of authorization from the political leader, affirming the commitment of the destination to the D3Hub Pilot Program.

Example: "As the [Title of Political Leader], I fully endorse our DMO's participation in the D3Hub Pilot Program and confirm our commitment to fulfilling all responsibilities outlined above."

Sincerely,

[Name of Political Leader]
[Title, e.g., Mayor, Regional Minister, National Director]
[Destination Name]
[Contact Information]