
TAAS Approach

Final Version

Author: CERTH/HIT
Contributors: ALL

This document has been produced as part of TAAS project (<https://www.interregeurope.eu/taas>).

TAAS project is funded under the Interreg Europe 2021 - 2027 programme, Policy Objective 'Smarter Europe' and Specific Objective 'Digitalization'.

This deliverable has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The content of the deliverable is the sole responsibility of TAAS Partnership and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and/or IE programme authorities.

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PROGRAMME & PROJECT ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

IE	INTERREG Europe Cooperation Programme
AF	Application Form
PORTAL	Interreg Europe Portal (https://portal.interregeurope.eu/)
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
ICT	information and communication technologies
IPA Participating Countries	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia
JS	joint secretariat
MA	managing authority
MC	monitoring committee
NCP	national contact point
SME	Small and Medium size Enterprises
S.O.	specific objective
LP	Lead Partner
PP	Project partner
The 7 EU candidate countries	7 new Partner States - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine
LL	Living lab
PI	Policy Instrument

1. TAAS Approach: Transforming Tourism

In the heart of the Tourism as a Service (TAAS) project lies an ambitious endeavor to reshape the tourism landscape through a comprehensive approach to transformation. This chapter delves into the holistic vision of TAAS, emphasizing the pivotal role of digitalization and sustainability in revolutionizing tourism practices.

TAAS adopts a holistic approach to transforming the tourism sector, recognizing that sustainable tourism development requires a multifaceted strategy. By integrating various aspects of tourism planning, management, and promotion, TAAS seeks to create a comprehensive framework that addresses the diverse needs of stakeholders while promoting economic growth and environmental stewardship. Through collaborative efforts among its participating regions, TAAS aims to redefine the tourism experience and establish smarter, more sustainable tourism destinations.

1.1 Importance of Digitalization in Tourism

In today's digital age, the importance of digitalization in the tourism industry cannot be overstated. Digital technologies have revolutionized the way travellers plan, book, and experience their trips, offering unprecedented convenience, accessibility, and personalization. By accelerating the digital transformation of tourism, TAAS aims to harness the power of digital tools and platforms to enhance every aspect of the tourism journey. From inspiring travelers with immersive digital experiences to streamlining trip planning and enhancing on-the-ground experiences, digitalization holds the key to unlocking new opportunities for growth and innovation in the tourism sector.

The benefits of accelerating digital tourism transformation are manifold. Firstly, digitalization enables destinations to reach a wider audience of potential visitors, thereby expanding their tourism market and driving economic growth. By leveraging digital marketing strategies and online booking platforms, destinations can attract more tourists and increase visitor spending, stimulating local businesses and creating jobs. Moreover, digital technologies enhance the overall visitor experience, offering travelers greater convenience, flexibility, and customization options. From interactive destination guides and virtual tours to mobile apps and smart city services, digital innovations enrich the tourism experience and encourage repeat visitation.

Furthermore, digitalization plays a crucial role in promoting sustainability in tourism. By reducing the environmental footprint of travel through digital solutions such as virtual conferencing, online ticketing, and smart transportation systems, destinations can minimize their impact on natural resources and mitigate negative environmental effects. Additionally, digital technologies enable destinations to adopt more sustainable practices in areas such as waste management, energy efficiency, and conservation, contributing to the preservation of natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

1.2 Embracing Sustainability Principles

In addition to driving digital transformation, TAAS places a strong emphasis on embracing sustainability principles in tourism development. Sustainable tourism involves minimizing negative impacts on the environment, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting social inclusivity and economic prosperity. By adopting sustainable practices and promoting responsible tourism behavior, destinations can ensure the long-term viability of their tourism industry while safeguarding the natural and cultural resources that make them unique.

Through initiatives such as green certification programs, eco-friendly infrastructure development, and community-based tourism projects, TAAS aims to promote sustainability across all aspects of the tourism value chain. By engaging local stakeholders, empowering communities, and fostering a culture of environmental stewardship, the project seeks to create tourism destinations that are both economically prosperous and environmentally sustainable. By embracing sustainability principles, TAAS aims to not only enhance the visitor experience but also preserve and protect the natural and cultural heritage of its participating regions for future generations.

2. The involved TAAS cases

The 9 TAAS partners (except the LP), each one representing a TAAS case, aim to enhance their tourism related strategies based on the inspiration that will arise via the experience exchange activities of the project on digital solutions applicable in tourism sector (planning and/or services).

TAAS Areas & partners

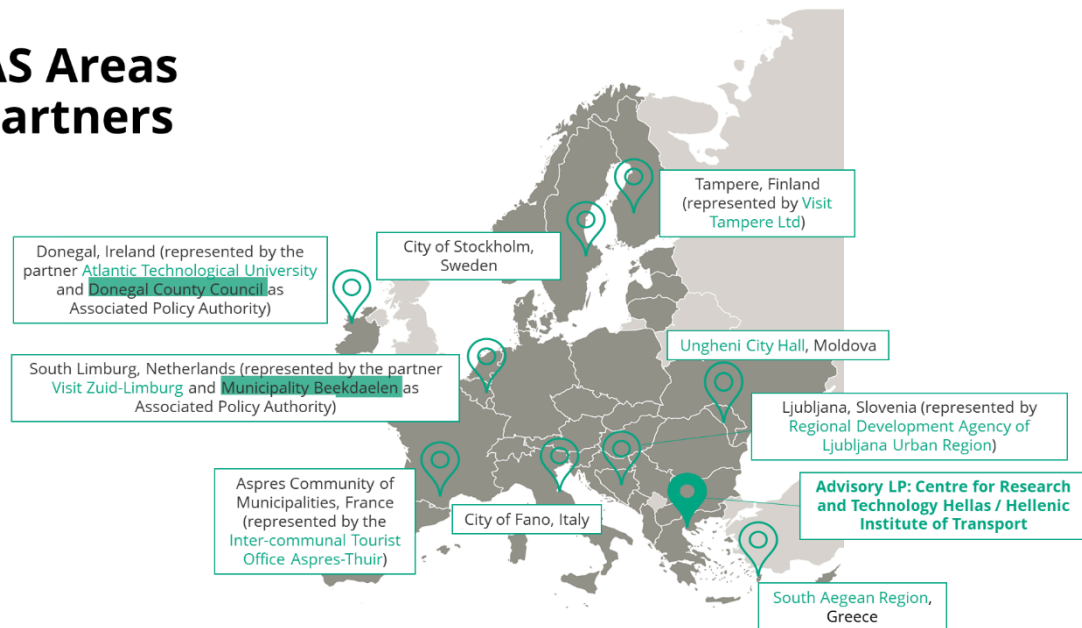


Figure 1: TAAS partners representing TAAS cases (South Aegean, Ljubljana, Tampere, Stockholm, Donegal, Aspres, Beekdaelen, Fano, Ungheni)

In the following figure depicts the PIs to be improved in TAAS.

TAAS PIs

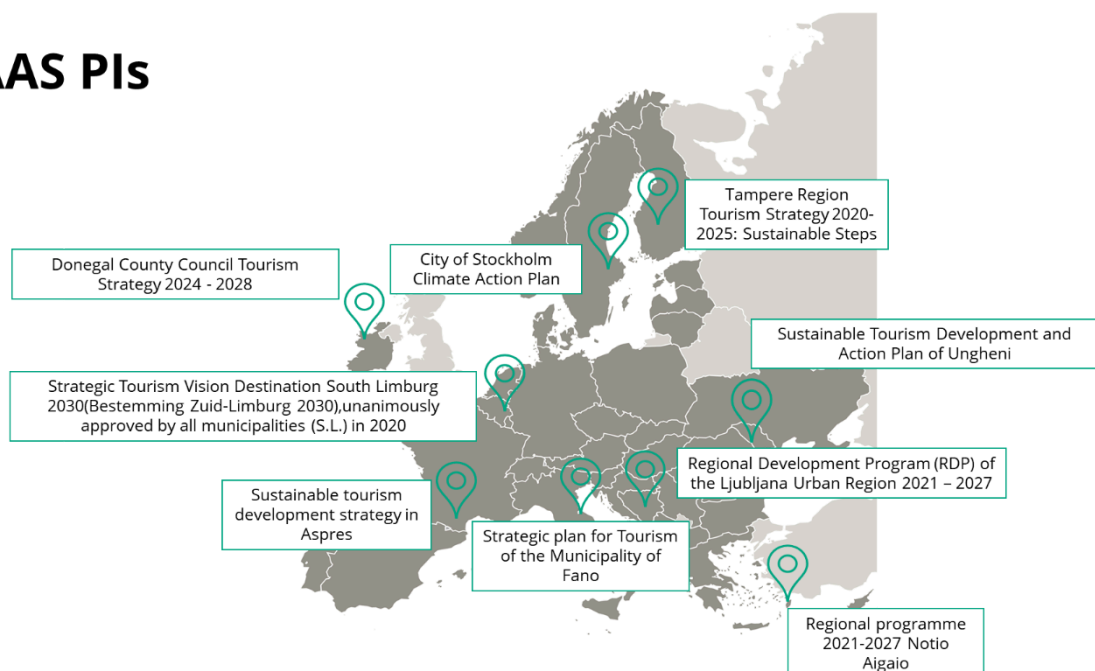


Figure 2: TAAS PIs

TAAS areas will be supported by TAAS mentors in their 'trip' of PIs improvement. In the next chapter, the interaction among TAAS areas and TAAS mentors is described.

3. TAAS Cycle: Phases and Mentors

In the following subchapters, the TAAS cycle approach is described along with the mentoring TAAS philosophy.

3.1 Overview of the TAAS Cycle

The project's holistic approach, the "TAAS cycle", defines the overall vision of exploiting digital tools and new technologies for transforming tourism sector. Four distinct phases: trip imagination, planning, experience on the spot, and influence comprises TAAS Cycle; within each phase, digital technologies are strategically harnessed to drive destinations' economic prosperity and promote environmental sustainability.

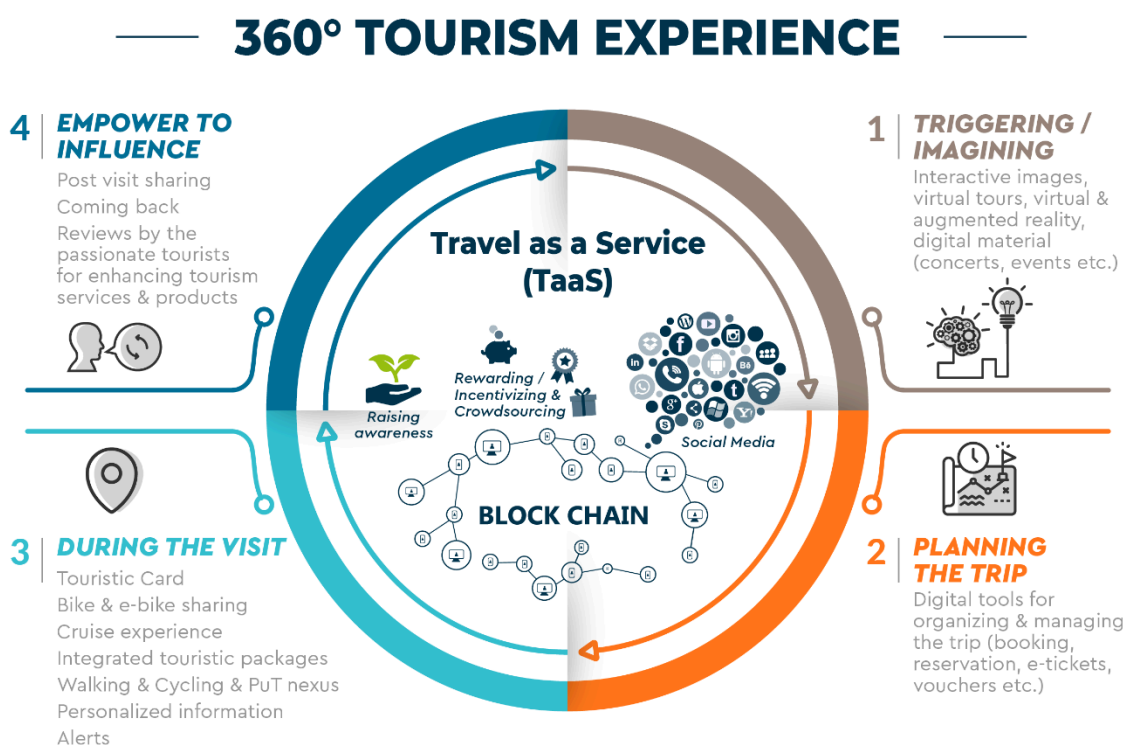


Figure 3: TAAS Cycle, the heart of the project

In Phase A, entitled "Imagining the trip" the focus is on utilizing digital tools to facilitate area selection and generate interest in potential tourist

destinations. This includes the implementation of e-channels that not only showcase the unique features of each region but also cultivate a digital tourist concept. By leveraging innovative digital platforms, TAAS aims to inspire travelers and ignite their curiosity about diverse destinations.

Moving on to Phase B, "Planning the trip" the emphasis shifts to providing tourists with efficient tools for booking, organizing, and managing their travel services. This entails the development of user-friendly digital interfaces that streamline the process of arranging accommodations, transportation, and activities. By simplifying trip planning through digital solutions, TAAS seeks to enhance the overall visitor experience and encourage tourism uptake.

As tourists embark on their journey, Phase C, "During the trip," comes into play, offering integrated smart city passes, micromobility apps, single info e-gates, and personalized e-agents. These digital innovations aim to optimize the tourist experience by facilitating seamless navigation, access to information, and personalized recommendations. By integrating smart technologies into the tourism infrastructure, TAAS endeavors to create more immersive and enjoyable travel experiences.

Finally, in Phase D, "Empowering to influence," TAAS leverages social media as a powerful tool for sharing trip experiences and acting as ambassadors for the visited areas. By encouraging travelers to share their adventures and insights on social platforms, the project amplifies the positive impact of tourism and promotes destination awareness. Through this collective empowerment, TAAS fosters a sense of community among tourists and cultivates a culture of responsible tourism promotion.

Overall, TAAS's comprehensive approach to digital tourism not only enhances the visitor experience but also contributes to the economic vitality and environmental sustainability of the participating regions. By harnessing the power of digital technologies across the entire tourism journey, the project aims to create smarter, more resilient, and more inclusive tourism destinations.

3.2 Mentoring approach

In the context of the TAAS project, mentors play a crucial role in guiding and supporting the project partners in their efforts to improve tourism-related strategies with digitalization solutions. Specifically tailored to TAAS goals, mentors provide expertise and guidance on leveraging digital technologies to enhance tourism experiences, optimize processes, and address challenges in policy instruments. They offer insights into best

practices, emerging trends, and innovative approaches in digital tourism, helping partners identify and implement effective solutions.

Additionally, mentors can assist in various other ways throughout the project:

- **Facilitating Experience Exchange:** Mentors facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge among project partners. They encourage collaborative learning and sharing of successful practices across different regions, enabling partners to draw inspiration from each other's experiences.
- **Providing Technical Assistance:** Mentors offer technical assistance and support to partners in implementing digitalization solutions. They help partners navigate technical challenges, select appropriate technologies, and develop strategies for successful implementation.
- **Monitoring Progress:** Mentors monitor the progress of project activities and provide feedback to partners. They track the implementation of digitalization initiatives, identify areas for improvement, and offer guidance on how to overcome challenges and obstacles.
- **Inspiring Innovation:** Mentors inspire partners to innovate and think creatively about digitalization in tourism. They encourage partners to explore new ideas, experiment with emerging technologies, and adopt innovative approaches to enhance tourism experiences and outcomes.

The role of a mentor can be activated through mutual triggering between the mentor and TAAS project partners. Mentors should proactively engage with partners, offering support, guidance, and encouragement throughout the project lifecycle. At the same time, partners should feel empowered to reach out to mentors for assistance, advice, and inspiration whenever needed. By fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual support, mentors and partners can work together to achieve the project's goals and objectives effectively.

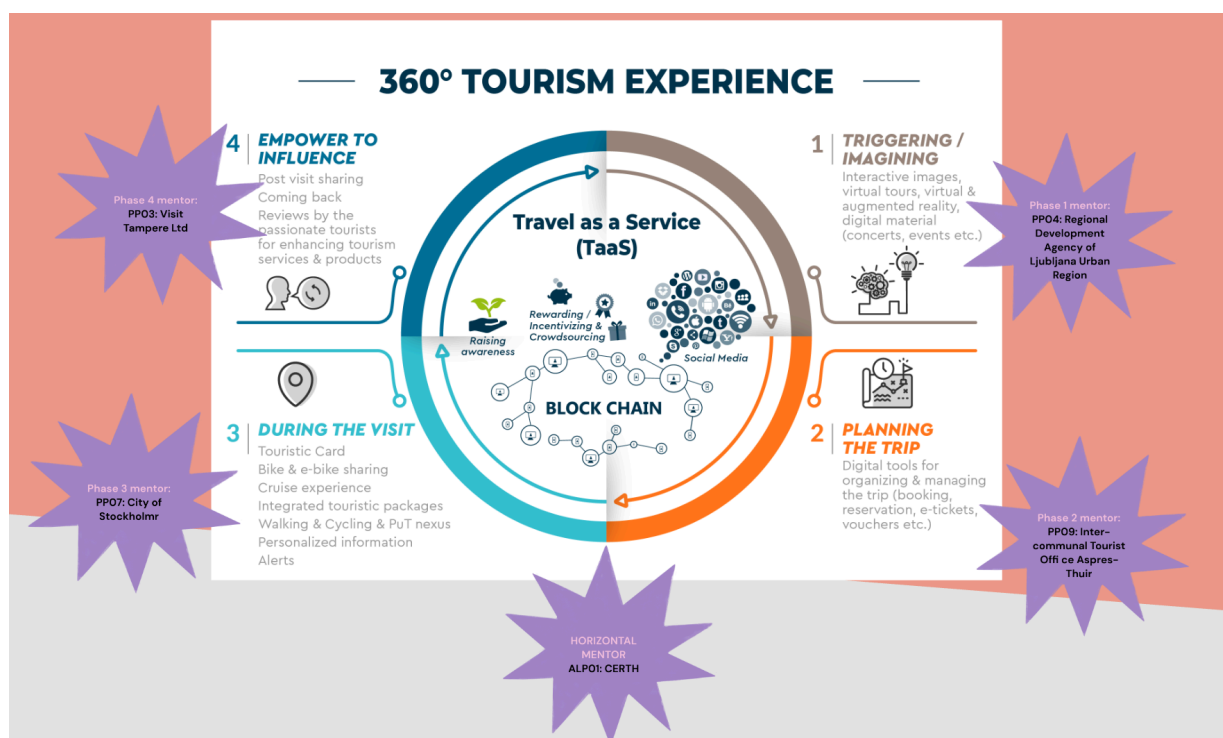


Figure 4: TAAS mentors

Each mentor in the TAAS project will play a vital role in guiding the wider team through their respective phases, drawing from international experience to address digitization challenges and provide solutions. Here's how each mentor's role aligns with their phase and horizontal responsibilities:

Overall TAAS Mentor (CERTH):

- Coordinates and oversees the entire TAAS cycle GPs.
- Provides strategic guidance and ensures alignment of identified GPs with project and cases' objectives.
- Offers expertise in smart data management, crowdsourcing techniques, smart tourism governance, and data-driven solutions across all phases.

Phase A Mentor (RRA LUR):

- Mentors the team during the "Imagining the trip" phase.
- Shares international best practices related to digital tools supporting area selection and e-channels for generating interest.
- Focuses on identifying innovative approaches to attract digital tourists and convert them into physical tourists.

- Provides guidance on leveraging technology to create compelling digital tourist concepts.

Phase B Mentor (Aspres-Thuir):

- Guides the team through the "Planning the trip" phase.
- Offers insights on tools for booking, organizing, and managing services to enhance the trip planning experience.
- Mines international experience for best practices in streamlining booking processes and optimizing service organization.
- Assists in identifying digital solutions to improve efficiency and convenience in trip planning.

Phase C Mentor (Stockholm):

- Supports the team during the "During the trip" phase.
- Shares expertise on integrated smart city passes, micromobility apps, single info e-gates, and personalized e-agents.
- Explores international examples of successful implementations of these technologies to enhance the tourist experience during their visit.
- Provides guidance on leveraging smart city infrastructure and digital tools to improve accessibility, mobility, and convenience for tourists.

Phase D Mentor (Tampere):

- Guides the team through the "Empowering to influence" phase.
- Offers insights on leveraging social media for trip experience sharing and destination promotion.
- Mines international experience for effective strategies to empower tourists to become ambassadors for the areas they visit.
- Provides guidance on utilizing social media platforms to amplify the positive impact of tourism and engage with visitors effectively.

Mentors are also cooperating among them for identifying GPs from other IE projects on similar topic from the current programming period (1st and 2nd call of IE Programme 2021 - 2027).



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