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WP6 Dissemination, Exploitation and Sustainability Strategy



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IMMEDIATE UNIVERSITY OF RUSSIA
FACULTY OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT
OSPITALITY HUBS



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<u>Glossary</u>	
CBE	Consultative Body of Experts
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
D.x.x	Deliverable
DigComp	The European Digital Competence Framework
DMO	Destination Management Organization
EOPPEP	National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications; Vocational Guidance (Greece)
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EntreComp	The European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
ESCO	European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations
EU	European Union
FG	Focus Group
GreenComp	The European Green Competence Framework
HE	Higher Education
HZZ	Croatian Employment Service (Hrvatski zavod za zapošljavanje)
HyPro4ST	Sustainable Hybrid Project Management for the Tourism Sector
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OER	Open Educational Resources
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SOK	Slovenian Qualifications Framework (Slovensko ogrodje kvalifikacij)
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VOOC	Vocational Open Online Course



1. Executive Summary

The European tourism sector is at a critical inflection point, challenged by the urgent need to navigate the green and digital transitions. To remain competitive and sustainable, the sector requires a workforce with new, hybrid skills that bridge the gap between sustainability, digital fluency, and effective project management. This policy paper, based on the validated findings of the HyPro4ST project, presents a roadmap for modernising vocational and higher education to meet this demand.

The HyPro4ST project identified significant skills gaps across the EU and responded by developing, testing, and validating the **"Sustainable Hybrid Project Manager"** job profile. This new role equips professionals to lead complex tourism projects that are economically viable, socially equitable, and environmentally responsible. The project created a full suite of tools, including a comprehensive curriculum, open-access online training (VOOC), and a modular certification scheme aligned with EU standards.

Based on extensive research, pilot training, and stakeholder engagement across six countries, this paper puts forward the following key policy recommendations:

- 1. Formalise and Integrate the New Skills Profile:** National authorities should formally recognise the "Sustainable Hybrid Project Manager" job profile within National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) and endorse its associated certification scheme to signal its value to the industry.
- 2. Modernise Curricula for Future-Proof Skills:** Educational policy must mandate the integration of sustainability, digital tools, and project management as core components of all tourism curricula. Support for modular, flexible learning pathways, such as **micro-credentials**, is essential to upskill the existing workforce efficiently.
- 3. Strengthen Industry-Education Collaboration:** Systemic change requires fostering deep public-private partnerships. This includes incentivising SME participation in work-based learning, co-designing curricula with industry experts, and creating "Tourism Innovation Labs" to solve real-world challenges.
- 4. Invest in Educators and Lifelong Learning:** To deliver modernised training, we must invest in upskilling educators through dedicated "train-the-trainer" programs. Furthermore, policies promoting lifelong learning, such as training vouchers for SMEs and paid study leave, are crucial for building a resilient and adaptive workforce.

These evidence-based recommendations provide a practical framework to update the **EU Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills in Tourism**. By implementing them, policymakers can build a future-ready tourism workforce, accelerate the green and digital transitions, and ensure the long-term resilience and sustainability of this vital European sector.



2. The HyPro4ST Project: Objectives and Deliverables

The HyPro4ST project was designed to develop a sustainable, innovative, and inclusive training approach for tourism professionals, directly addressing key EU policy priorities. Its core objective is to build capacity within vocational and higher education to tackle the challenges and opportunities presented by the **Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development**, the **European Green Deal**, the **EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism**, and the **New Skills Agenda for Europe**.

The project's central innovation is the creation and validation of the **Sustainable Hybrid Project Manager** job profile (**D2.2**). This new professional role is defined by its capacity to lead complex tourism projects by blending agile and traditional project management methodologies with a core focus on sustainability and digital fluency.

To achieve this, the consortium employed a concise methodology that encompassed several key activities:

- Developing the new job profile for a Sustainable Hybrid Project Manager.
- Creating a comprehensive curriculum and open educational resources (OER).
- Designing and implementing training to improve the qualifications of VET and HE teachers.
- Developing a robust certification scheme for the new job profile (**D5.4**).
- Increasing the capacity of participating organisations to collaborate at a transnational level.

The outputs of these activities were not developed in isolation. They were continuously validated through an iterative evaluation process involving a **Consultative Body of Experts (CBE)** and **national Focus Groups (FGs)**. This evidence-based approach ensures the project's key deliverables are relevant, tested, and ready for adoption. These deliverables, which form the foundation of this policy paper, include:

- The **Labour Market Needs Report (D2.1)**, which identified and validated the critical skills gaps in the tourism sector at the intersection of sustainability, digitalisation, and project management.
- The **HyPro4ST Training Seminars Report (D4.2)**, detailing the pilot and testing activities with trainers across all six partner countries.
- The **HyPro4ST Training Course Rollout and Monitoring Report (D4.3)**, which provides detailed findings from the implementation of the online course at the national level.



- The **Certification Scheme for the new Job Profile “Sustainable Hybrid Project Manager” qualification for the Sustainable Tourism Sector (D5.4)**, a modular framework ready to be integrated into national qualification systems.
- The **HyPro4ST Work-based Learning Report (D4.4)**, offering key insights from the practical training activities conducted in collaboration with industry partners.

Please note: These project deliverables are internal consortium documents and are not publicly available. This policy paper summarises their key public-facing findings.

Together, these validated outputs provide a proven framework that can inform the newly updated and upscaled EU **Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills in Tourism**, offering a practical roadmap for building a more resilient, sustainable, and innovative tourism workforce.

3. Best Practices and Lessons Learned

The policy recommendations presented in this paper are not theoretical; they are grounded in the practical experiences and validated findings from the HyPro4ST project's implementation. The following best practices and key lessons were derived from a multi-faceted evidence base, including the identification and validation of the gap (**D2.1**), design of the certification scheme (**D5.4**), feedback from transnational training seminars, VOOC roll out and work-based learning activities (**D4.2**, **D4.3** and **D4.4**), and structured input from the project's **Consultative Body of Experts (CBE)** and national **Focus Groups (FGs)**.

- **Mainstreaming Sustainability is Non-Negotiable:** The project confirmed a critical deficit in formal education. As one of the four Greek partners noted, "the topic of 'Sustainability in Tourism' is totally absent" from standard VET and undergraduate HE curricula.
 - **Lesson Learned:** For the green transition to succeed, sustainability cannot be an elective or an afterthought. It must be integrated as a core, mandatory component of all tourism-related education. Good practice examples from partner countries, such as Slovenia's Podravje region's *Circular Bioeconomy Strategy*, show that integrating sustainability at a strategic, regional level provides a powerful context for skills development. The HyPro4ST curriculum provides a proven model for doing so.
- **Blended and Modular Learning is Essential for Access:** The tourism workforce is diverse, often seasonal, and dominated by SMEs where time for traditional training is limited. The success of the project's VOOC and blended learning pilots demonstrated that flexible, modular, and digitally-enabled delivery is crucial for reaching these professionals.
 - **Lesson Learned:** Policy must support and incentivise flexible learning models, including online platforms and micro-credentialing, to effectively upskill the existing workforce.
- **Industry Collaboration is the Cornerstone of Relevance:** The most effective training programs are those co-designed and co-delivered with industry. Feedback from partners in Croatia and Slovenia emphasized the need for structured collaboration, a finding strongly reinforced by the **D4.4 Work-based Learning Report**, where participants cited "direct interaction with professionals" and "real-life management examples" as the most valuable aspects of their training.
 - **Lesson Learned:** Policy should foster and fund public-private partnerships that embed industry expertise directly into curriculum development and delivery.



- **Micro-credentials Offer a Pathway to Flexible, Recognised Skills:** The project's findings align with the EU's strategic push for micro-credentials as a key tool for lifelong learning. For the tourism sector, characterised by SMEs and a need for flexible upskilling, this approach is particularly vital. Rigid, long-term educational programs are a significant barrier to upskilling the current workforce.
 - **Lesson Learned:** By supporting the creation of a nationally recognised system for micro-credentials, in line with the 2022 Council Recommendation, policymakers can empower individuals, meet the specific needs of tourism employers, and create a more agile and resilient workforce.
- **Inclusive Design Widens the Talent Pool:** By making the VOOC open-access and designing the training for flexible delivery, the project aimed to reach a wide audience, including those in rural or remote areas.
 - **Lesson Learned:** To ensure a just transition, policy must focus on inclusive access, promoting open educational resources (OER) and providing targeted support to ensure disadvantaged groups can participate in and benefit from upskilling opportunities.
- **Certification and Skills Validation:** Designing the certification scheme (D5.4) with reference to established standards like ISO 17024 provides a credible pathway for skills validation.
 - **Lesson Learned:** For a new job profile to gain traction, a clear and recognised validation mechanism is essential. It provides value for both the learner (career progression) and the employer (quality assurance).



4. Policy Recommendations for a Sustainable, Digital, and Resilient Tourism Sector

4.1. Policy Rationale and Strategic Alignment

The European tourism sector is at a critical juncture, facing the profound and simultaneous pressures of the green and digital transitions. To remain competitive, resilient, and sustainable, the sector requires a workforce equipped with a new, hybrid skillset that transcends traditional roles. The policy recommendations in this document are based on extensive, evidence-based research conducted by the HyPro4ST consortium to identify and address these urgent needs.

The rationale for these recommendations is grounded in the findings of the **D2.1 Labour Market Needs Report**. This comprehensive study, which included quantitative surveys, focus groups, and desk research across six partner countries, identified significant and consistent skills gaps at the intersection of sustainability, digitalisation, and project management. Key findings from partner countries underscore this urgency. In Croatia and Slovenia national findings echo the lessons learned on blended delivery outlined above. In Greece, a critical gap was observed in formal education, where "the topic of 'Sustainability in Tourism' is totally absent" from most VET and undergraduate Higher Education offerings.

In direct response to these identified needs, the HyPro4ST project defined the Job Profile for a "Sustainable Hybrid Project Manager" for the Sustainable Tourism Sector (D2.1). This timely and innovative role is specifically designed to equip professionals with the competencies needed to lead complex projects that are economically viable, socially equitable, and environmentally sustainable.

The following policy recommendations are not proposed in a vacuum. They are designed to provide concrete, actionable pathways for policymakers to bridge these skills gaps while directly contributing to and aligning with key European and national strategic priorities, including:

- The **European Green Deal**, by building a workforce capable of implementing sustainable practices.
- The **Digital Education Action Plan**, by promoting the advanced digital skills necessary for a modernised tourism sector.
- The **European Skills Agenda**, by providing clear pathways for upskilling and reskilling the workforce to meet current and future labour market demands.
- The **Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills in Tourism** and the **Pact for Skills for the Tourism Ecosystem**, by offering a validated framework and training model that can be scaled across the EU.



Furthermore, these recommendations are designed to complement national strategies, such as Slovenia's **"Strategy for the Sustainable Growth of Slovenian Tourism 2022–2028,"** ensuring relevance at both the EU and Member State levels.

4.2. Recommendations by Thematic Pillar

4.2.1. *Integration of the "Sustainable Hybrid Project Manager" Profile in National Frameworks and Systems*

- **Recommendation 1:** Formally recognise the "Sustainable Hybrid Project Manager" job profile within National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) and ensure its alignment with European frameworks such as the EQF and ESCO by referencing the full range of required competencies, including hybrid project management, sustainability, and digital literacy.
- **Recommendation 2:** Establish clear accreditation pathways for the HyPro4ST certification scheme. At the accreditation stage, require educational programs to demonstrate alignment with key EU competency frameworks (GreenComp, DigComp, and EntreComp) to ensure quality and relevance.
- **Recommendation 3:** Collaborate with employer organisations, chambers of commerce, and local/regional bodies to formally endorse the new job profile and actively promote its relevance to the industry.

4.2.2. *Accelerating Digital Transformation in Tourism Education*

- **Recommendation 4:** Support the adoption of modular, micro-credential pathways, enabling tourism professionals to acquire specific digital skills in a flexible and certified manner without committing to lengthy programs.
- **Recommendation 5:** Integrate mandatory modules on data analytics and systems thinking into tourism curricula to equip future professionals with the skills for evidence-based decisions and resilient destination management.
- **Recommendation 6:** Implement hands-on training with industry-standard digital tools for project management and collaboration to build the practical competencies required to manage modern hybrid projects effectively, as defined in the Hybrid Sustainable Project Management model promoted by the HyPro4ST project.
- **Recommendation 7:** Provide incentives and guidance for VET and HE providers to offer training in flexible, blended, or fully online formats, as modelled by the HyPro4ST Virtual Learning Hub.



4.2.3. Fostering Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Tourism Sector

- **Recommendation 8:** Establish "**Tourism Innovation Labs**" through public-private partnerships, where HE/VET institutions and businesses collaborate to solve real-world industry challenges. These labs should serve as incubators for new business ideas and sustainable tourism ventures.
- **Recommendation 9:** Integrate entrepreneurial skills and start-up methodologies directly into tourism curricula. This should include training on business model creation, access to financing, and pitching innovative ideas, using the HyPro4ST skills as a foundation for managing new ventures.
- **Recommendation 10:** Create dedicated funding schemes or vouchers for students and professionals to develop and pilot entrepreneurial projects focused on sustainable and digital tourism.

4.2.4. Modernising Pedagogy and Curriculum Delivery

- **Recommendation 11:** Integrate Sustainability holistically: Mandate the mainstreaming of environmental, social, and economic sustainability principles, alongside digital and entrepreneurial skills, across all tourism subjects (e.g., marketing, operations, destination management), not just as standalone elective courses.
- **Recommendation 12:** Embed Hybrid Sustainable Project Management in Curricula: Update and upgrade tourism VET and HE programs to include hybrid sustainable project management as a core competency. This includes integrating principles from both agile and traditional project methodologies, anchored in sustainability and digital literacy. Curriculum changes should reflect the HyPro4ST job profile and training model to ensure relevance and industry-readiness.
- **Recommendation 13:** Promote Applied and Work-Based Learning: Encourage educational institutions to adopt experiential learning models. This includes expanding dual training, apprenticeships, and simulation-based internships, particularly in off-season months, and supporting partnerships with enterprises for live projects where students can address real-world challenges.
- **Recommendation 14:** Include real-world case studies on sustainability (e.g., Doughnut Economics model, waste management, circular economy) and Hybrid Sustainable Project Management in training programs to help students connect theoretical knowledge with practical applications. These examples should illustrate how complex tourism projects can be managed using a blend of agile and traditional methodologies anchored in sustainability and digital competence.



4.3. Recommendations by Governance Level

The following recommendations organise the key thematic goals from Section 4.2 by the level of governance, EU, national, and regional/local, best positioned to lead their implementation.

4.3.1. Recommendations for European Union Institutions

- (A) **Facilitate Pan-European Recognition:** Continue to promote the use of EU-wide frameworks like the EQF, ESCO, DigComp, GreenComp, and EntreComp as benchmarks for national curricula and certification. Endorse the integration of new, specialised job profiles like the "Sustainable Hybrid Project Manager" within these frameworks to ensure mobility and common standards.
- (B) **Link Funding to Strategic Skills Development:** Earmark funds within programs like the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), and the Digital Europe Programme to directly support the upskilling of the tourism workforce in green, digital, and hybrid project management skills.
- (C) **Inform the Blueprint for Tourism:** Use the findings and outputs of the HyPro4ST project, including the validated job profile, curriculum, and certification scheme, as a concrete input for the update of the **Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills in Tourism**.
- (D) **Support Transnational Cooperation:** Fund and promote knowledge-exchange networks and skills alliances between VET providers, universities, and industry experts across Member States, using the HyPro4ST consortium as a model for effective transnational partnership.

4.3.2. Recommendations for National Governments and Authorities

- (A) **Reform Curriculum and Accreditation:**
 - Mandate the mainstreaming of sustainability, digital, and entrepreneurial competencies across all tourism-related VET and HE qualifications, moving them from elective to core status.
 - Modernise accreditation processes to recognise modular learning and micro-credentials. Establish fast-track, low-cost pathways for validating EU-funded, industry-led certification schemes.
- (B) **Upskill the National Workforce and Educators:**
 - Fund national "Train-the-Trainer" schemes to build educator capacity in sustainability literacy, digital tools, and hybrid project management.



- Introduce mandatory Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements for tourism educators, linked to professional registration or licence renewal.

(C) Incentivise Industry Adoption and Investment:

- Offer financial incentives (e.g., tax credits, training vouchers) for SMEs that upskill and certify staff in green and digital skills.
- Weight public funding and tourism development grants toward projects led by certified professionals and linked to the adoption of recognised eco-labels (e.g., Green Key).

(D) Modernise Labour Market Frameworks:

- Work with social partners to recognise micro-credentials in collective bargaining agreements as a valid mechanism for pay progression.
- Promote policies that make lifelong learning more accessible, such as paid study leave and portable learning accounts.

(E) Establish National Skills Intelligence:

- Set up a national tourism skills-forecast observatory to provide real-time data that informs curriculum updates, course quotas, and funding calls, ensuring the education system remains agile and responsive.

4.3.3. Recommendations for Regional and Local Authorities

(A) Foster Local Skills Ecosystems:

- Establish and support local “tourism skills alliances” that bring together municipalities, DMOs, education providers, and businesses to co-design curricula, offer apprenticeships, and monitor local labour-market shifts.

(B) Promote Regional Knowledge-Sharing Networks:

- Facilitate the creation of formal and informal networks for tourism SMEs, DMOs, and training providers within the region. These networks should focus on peer-to-peer learning, sharing best practices in Hybrid Project Management, sustainability and digitalisation, and pooling resources for joint training initiatives.

(C) Promote Destination-Level Innovation:

- Encourage destination-level clusters to share resources such as data, trainers, and innovation labs.



- Pilot innovative training and development projects in partnership with local VET/HE providers, especially during the off-season months.

(D) **Champion Work-Based Learning:**

- Act as a facilitator between local businesses and educational institutions to expand dual training, apprenticeships, and simulation-based internships that provide learners with practical, hands-on experience.



5. A Stakeholder Action Plan for Implementation

For the recommendations in this paper to translate into meaningful action, they must be championed by specific actors within the national and regional ecosystems. The successful modernisation of tourism education and training systems depends on a coordinated effort to embed the core skills of sustainability, digitalisation, and hybrid project management across the sector. The “Sustainable Hybrid Project Manager” profile developed by this project serves as a key framework and catalyst for this change.

This section serves as a practical summary, outlining the most critical actions for each stakeholder group to drive this change forward.

5.1. Government & Policy Authorities

- **Primary Role:** To provide the strategic direction, policy legitimacy, and funding to embed the twin transition in the national tourism agenda. This includes actors like national Ministries of Tourism, Education, and Labour.
- **Key Actions:**
 1. **Update Qualification Frameworks:** Champion the formal recognition of new skills profiles and micro-credentials related to sustainable and digital tourism within the National Qualification Framework (NQF), using the HyPro4ST job profile and certification as a validated, ready-to-use example.
 2. **Align Funding:** Earmark national and ESF+ funding to support SME upskilling, and weight tourism grants toward projects led by certified professionals.
 3. **Reform Curricula:** Mandate the integration of sustainability and digital skills as core components of all tourism-related educational programs, including the adoption of Hybrid Sustainable Project Management as a strategic framework for preparing learners to lead projects that are economically viable, socially equitable, and environmentally responsible.

5.2. Qualification & Accreditation Bodies

- **Primary Role:** To act as the official gatekeepers for the validation and quality assurance of skills and qualifications. National bodies, such as Greece's EOPPEP or the authorities managing the Slovenian Qualifications Framework (SOK), are central to this process.
- **Key Actions:**
 1. **Establish Pathways:** Work with education providers to establish clear, efficient, and low-barrier pathways for the accreditation of the HyPro4ST certification



scheme, which is based on the Hybrid Sustainable Project Management model, and similar micro-credentials.

2. **Promote EU Frameworks:** Ensure that all accredited tourism qualifications are benchmarked against relevant EU competency frameworks (DigComp, GreenComp, EntreComp).

5.3. Education & Training Institutions

- **Primary Role:** To act as the primary delivery agents, equipping the current and future workforce with market-relevant skills. This applies to both Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers and Higher Education (HE) institutions.
- **Key Actions:**
 1. **Integrate Content:** Adopt and integrate the HyPro4ST VOOC, curriculum, and blended learning models into tourism, hospitality, and business management programs.
 2. **Upskill Educators:** Invest in the continuous professional development of teaching staff to ensure they are proficient in sustainability, digital tools, and hybrid project management.
 3. **Foster Partnerships:** Proactively build local skills alliances with industry to co-design curricula and expand work-based learning opportunities.

5.4. Industry & Sectoral Bodies

- **Primary Role:** To act as the vital bridge to the labour market, signalling demand and promoting the value of new skills. This includes national tourism boards, chambers of commerce, and employment services like the Croatian Employment Service (HZZ).
- **Key Actions:**
 1. **Advocate & Promote:** Actively promote the value and relevance of the "Sustainable Hybrid Project Manager" profile to employers.
 2. **Facilitate Collaboration:** Broker partnerships between members and educational institutions for internships, apprenticeships, and live case study projects.
 3. **Inform Policy:** Provide real-time labour market intelligence to national skills observatories and policymakers to ensure training remains aligned with industry needs.

