The CHARM project will create a transnational route with 10 European charming villages from 7 different countries which will offer 70 activity products based on the cultural and natural heritage of rural Europe

- **CHARM is a project co-financed by the European COSME Program that aims to boost the competitiveness of European tourism and promote the image of Europe as a global tourist destination of excellence.**

- **The overall objective of the project is internationally positioning Europe as an integral destination of quality and excellence for cultural tourism, by promoting its most charming rural villages and making the most of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) technologies to provide an unforgettable experience to visitors.**

The Immersive Experiences in European Charming Villages (also known as The CHARM project), a submission under the COSME proposal (2018) of the Catalan Tourist Board, has recently been successfully selected for funding by the European Union. CHARM will implement a smart strategy under the vision of sustainable tourism. It aims to take advantage of the growing trends of tourism in Europe by creating new flows towards rural or less touristic areas, to help decongesting areas and cities with high concentration of visitors. Furthermore, a concept taken into account in this project is to preserve and promote the historical and traditional heritage of the villages and rural areas, as well as its architecture and landscape by creating innovative experiences thanks to CCIs engagement.

The project is currently being implemented by 7 partners from 6 different European countries with the leader being the Catalan Tourist Board. It started on March 15th, 2019 and after the 24 months of the project implementation phase, a route of 10 villages from Belgium, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain will be part of a transnational offer with more than 70 new tourism products and activities, an exciting way to explore and unveil the cultural and natural heritage of rural Europe.

In fact, the project started with its first international meeting on 29th and 30th April 2019 in Barcelona (Palau Baró de Quadres) and Rupit by inviting all partners to one of the possible hidden gems of this area: Rupit

The core element of the transnational route are these hidden gems from rural Europe, villages (and surrounding areas) perceived as charming by visitors because of their identity or personality linked to history, traditions, gastronomy, architectural elements, other cultural and natural assets, etc. Knowing that there isn't a common vision of this 'charm', the project will work towards the definition of a common ground for European charming villages, based on previous initiatives undertaken worldwide at local level and by consultation of a wide array of European stakeholders. Once agreed, the project will select 10 villages fulfilling these criteria and become part of this first European route of charming villages. By applying a common methodology to create new tourism experiences in the pilot villages, CHARM will allow the visitor exploring this other reality of Europe in an exciting way and in a multi-activity combination adapted to the reality of each village. These local assets and activities will be introduced to the tourists with the help of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality

(AR) technologies which makes the storytelling interesting, engaging and highly attractive to today's visitors' needs.

The new tourism offer will be structured around the collaboration of public and private authorities. In fact, at least 110 Small and Medium-size enterprises (SMEs) will be part of the new products, combining different expertise and added-value to deliver the most exciting experiences. Options will be diverse, from day activities to 1 or 2 overnight stays, thus targeting different tourism segments. CHARM's goal is to promote this route to local, mid and long-range markets. By fulfilling its objectives, CHARM will contribute to the diversification of the tourism offer, to the development of the local economy (mainly job creation and local SME support), to face seasonality, to contribute to decongestion and to furthermore foster territorial cohesion by mitigating tourism concentration.