PRESS RELEASE

The European Project CHARM comes to an end with the creation of a European Network of 10 villages in 6 different countries

- **The project had the aim to create tourism flows towards the rural areas or the less tourist ones, and contribute to the decongestion of the areas and cities with a high amount of visitors**

- **During two years, more than 50 activities and more than 20 tourism products planned for stays of 1 or 2 nights have been developed throughout Europe**

After two years of implementation, the "**CHARM: Immersive experiences in European Charming Villages**" project, co-funded by the COSME programme of the European Union and led by the Catalan Tourism Board, has come to an end with the development of a European Network composed by 10 villages from 6 different countries.

CHARM has contributed to the diversification of tourism offer, the development of the local economy (mainly through the creation of jobs and support to SMEs), mitigating seasonality, promote decentralisation of tourism zones, while contributing to a better territorial cohesion. On the other hand, the project has contributed to boosting the competitiveness of European tourism and promoting the image of Europe as a global tourist destination of excellence.

Promoting charming villages in rural areas

The CHARM project, with a budget of 533,280 euros, aimed to create flows to rural areas having low tourism density, and contribute to decongesting areas and cities with a high concentration of visitors, as well as to preserve and promote the historical and traditional heritage, architecture and landscapes of rural areas, through innovative experiences. The idea was to introduce them to the advances that new technologies can bring to rural villages to offer an unbeatable experience to visitors.

During these two years, the project was piloted by the **Catalan Tourism Board** with 6 partners: **Turismo Vivencial** (TUVI), Travel4experience (**PORTGALL**), **Institut für Tourismus und Bäderforschung in Nordeuropa** gmbh (NIT), **Tour Guide Fox** (TGF), **Software Engineering Italia - SWING:IT** (SE IT) and Network of European Regions for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism (**NECSTouR**).

As a result of the project, a European Network of 10 charming villages in 6 different countries has been created: **Rupit** and **Taüll** (Catalonia); **Burg-Reuland** (Belgium); **Sortelha** and **Monsaraz** (Portugal); **Oravi** and **Mathildedal** (Finland); **Cunziria** (Italy); **Seiffen** and **Friedrichstadl** (Germany). **A glance of all 10 charming villages in Europe can be enjoy in this video.**

The project has also worked on the promotion of more than 50 activities and more than 20 tourist products of 1 to 2 nights aiming to involve the visitor in the daily life of the chosen destination, to participate in its lifestyle and traditions and to live a unique experience. Moreover, the partners have also developed a website, an app and several newsletters so as to gather information about the project and the villages.

Thanks to this initiative, the chosen European villages and their immediate surroundings have benefited from training in the creation of tourism products, as well as in everything related to dissemination and promotion at European level.

Even though the CHARM project is coming to an end, the network of people and villages developed throughout these two years will continue working together, in order to give visibility to the villages and to add new ones to the European Network.

Best practices to enhance rural destinations

One of the main actions carried out in the framework of this project has been the promotion of best practices to enhance the knowledge of rural destinations through a guide based on examples from different destinations around the world (**Guide for Promotional Practices of Destinations**)

The aim of the guide is to give ideas to the villages and provide them with guidelines on the techniques they can apply to promote and market their destinations highlighting values such as sustainability, community development, innovation and the evolution towards new digital environments. The guide was created based on various successful examples specifically selected from other destinations around the world.

Finally, special mention to the 2 events organised in the frame of the project, mostly online due to the current sanitary crisis:

In October 2020, the **CHARM Bridge Event** took place in the frame of the Forum TurisTIC 2020 in Barcelona. The session included a presentation of the project, a round table about "Technologies applied in rural areas: adding value to the tourist product" and an online guided networking activity to foster the encounter and the collaboration between the tourism industry and the technology providers.

Finally, the **Final Conference** of the project was held in March 2021 under the theme "Charming villages: empowering the rural destinations of Europe" with more than 120 viewers. The event, organised by NECSTouR, was attended by CHARM project partners, tourism experts and speakers specialised in rural and digital tourism. The aim of the event was to share the results of this initiative and to present the project as one of the possible solutions for tourism in a post-covid-19 world.

All the information about the CHARM project can be found on the website:

https://www.charmingvillages.eu/