



BY DAVID PACE

The Institute of Tourism Studies is taking part in a three year long Erasmus+ project called VINCI, an acronym for "Virtual & Augmented Reality Trainers Toolbox To Foster Low Carbon Tourism & Related Entrepreneurship", together with the Maltese partner Macdac Engineering Consultancy Bureau Ltd. (MCEB), the Institut za turizam in Croatia, the Politehnica University of Bucharest in Romania, the Social Cooperative Enterprise Drosostalida in Greece, the Institut pro regionální rozvoj in the Czech Republic, and the Sihtasutus Stockholmi Keskkonainstituudi Tallinna Keskus in Estonia.

FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE

The VINCI multi-disciplinary partners applied for this project as a means of contributing to the fight against climate change by focusing on the tourism sector.

There are many human activities that are contributing to the generation of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, which are the main

drivers of climate change and global warming. The European Commission has launched the 'Green Deal' action plan to transform the EU's economy, making it more sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities, and transitioning GHG-producing industries into more sustainable activities.

This is clearly outlined in the EU's action plan, which regards the main economic actors, i.e., EU businesses, consumers, and citizens, as the driving forces behind this transition towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient continent.

One of the EU's economic sectors that contributes to CO₂ emissions, and thus needs to change to reach the ambitious EU 2030 Green Deal target of reducing GHG emissions by, at least 55 %, is the tourism sector. The behaviour and decision making of tourism stakeholders such as passengers, travel agents, hotels, and tour operators, among others, are involved in the three main phases of travel tourism:

(i) the preparation phase;

(ii) the mobility/travelling phase; and

(iii) the activities at the destination phase, which need to be increasingly realigned with low-carbon activities.

The transition towards the 2030 goals also provides considerable opportunities for entrepreneurship, particularly for forward-looking individuals who want to be part of the new industry created by a low-carbon tourism economy. There is an urgent need to address these issues by making tourism stakeholders aware that they are implicitly contributing to climate change challenges, and to provide training with basic skills that help foster low-carbon tourism activities that help control and offset CO₂ emissions.

Tourism stakeholders need to understand the link between Climate Change, Tourism and Transport, Low Carbon Footprint Energy Sources, and concepts such as the designing of Low Carbon Tourism Travel Paths and other green options. At the same time, many of these tourism sector stakeholders are too busy to attend training courses aimed to help

them learn the fundamentals of 'low-carbon tourism'.

To compound the issue more, VET trainers/tourism mentors lack relevant training resources on "basic skills of low-carbon tourism (LCT)" that can help them explicitly target and reach out to tourism learners and stakeholders. EU citizens travelling as tourists also need guidance on decisions they can make to help them follow a 'green travel path'.

There is a need to provide VET trainers/tourism mentors with a set of innovative training resources which they can use together with the help of tourism stakeholders/learners to provide specific learning outcomes according to the pace, time, and location of these stakeholders.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The VINCI project aims to foster a shift towards low-carbon tourism (LCT) and related entrepreneurship across several EU Member States. To do so, the VINCI project brings together several partners from across Europe, purposely chosen in such a way to ensure a good mix and balance between experts in climate change/sustainability, tourism, entrepreneurship, work-based training, VET curriculum development/pedagogy, and digital technologies (AR/VR and m/e-Learning).

In addition, given that tourism and related economic activities vary across Europe's geographic spread, the VINCI consortium brings together partners from both Northern and Southern Europe.

The objectives of these partners to reach the overall aims of the project include:

Objective 1 (OB1) - Develop an innovative curriculum to help foster low-carbon tourism activities and amplify related entrepreneurship;
Objective 2 (OB2) - Raise awareness through 'best practice' case studies of how tourism stakeholders can generate less CO₂ emissions in all three phases of travel tourism;
Objective 3 (OB3) - Develop a set of modular training resources on low-carbon tourism

activities and related entrepreneurship, some of which will be augmented- and/or virtual-reality-based to better engage learners;

Objective 4 (OB4) - Develop the VINCI Toolbox consisting of a repository of digital training resources on LCT including an m/e-Learning platform to help stakeholders acquire skills on LCT (even at their place of work and home);
Objective 5 (OB5) - Develop a Trainer's Guide e-book intended to recommend to VET trainers specific training units and/or training styles relevant to different tourism sector stakeholders; and

Objective 6 (OB6) - Disseminate, in both partner countries and other EU Member States, awareness of the concept of LCT as well as the VINCI project results that can be exploited by the project's target groups, which comprise VET trainers/tourism mentors, VET learners, as well as tourism sector stakeholders including entrepreneurs.

All the partners will pool their multi-disciplinary expertise to design, implement, and review the project results with respect to quality and knowledge transfer effectiveness. They will also work together on a variety of projects, including online training to develop AR and VR educational content, along with the dissemination of deliverables in the form of a project webpage, digital newsletters, and social media channels, and finally construct the VINCI Digital Toolbox with the set of resources by which knowledge on low-carbon tourism and related entrepreneurship can be spread by VET trainers/tourism mentors and acquired by VET learners/tourism stakeholders.

PROJECT RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

On completion, the VINCI project will deliver the following key results (R):

R1: An innovative curriculum to foster knowledge on low-carbon tourism concepts and amplify related entrepreneurship;
R2: A set of twelve AR/VR enhanced case studies of how stakeholders can generate less CO₂ emissions in all three travel phases involved in the tourism sector;
R3: The VINCI 'low-carbon tourism and related entrepreneurship' Digital VET Toolbox; and

R4: The VINCI trainers guide e-book on low-carbon tourism and related entrepreneurship.

Therefore, by the end of the project, VET trainers of tourism stakeholders will have a set of modular resources they can use to effectively train learners (staff members of tourism-related organisations) according to their own learning style and needs. These will include augmented- and/or virtual-reality- (AR/VR) enhanced training resources that are intended to engage learners with a more visual and interactive way to learning on LCT. In addition, the VINCI Toolbox will provide travelling tourists with resources they can use to help them make 'green travel path' decisions during their travel phases.

During the initial stages of the project, the VINCI partners will generate a Project Management Plan, a Quality Assurance Plan, and also a Dissemination and Exploitation Plan to ensure both quality of results as well as project impact/knowledge sharing effectiveness. The project will also result in at least one multiplier event in each partner country targeting VET trainers, and in particular tourism sector stakeholders, including relevant associations and staff members, to make them aware of the VINCI project and its openly available training resources and m-learning toolbox.

The project will also result in several dissemination outputs, including a project webpage, social media presence, digital newsletters, and articles in local media of partner organisations, all aimed at raising knowledge on the concept of 'low-carbon tourism' and of course on the resources being made available by the VINCI project.

Objective 1 (OB1) is already being implemented. Several ITS lecturers, students, and alumni took part in a focus group to examine the level of knowledge regarding low-carbon tourism, while Mr David Pace and Mr Martin Debattista are currently working on the curriculum.

More information is available on the project website at: <https://vinci.eumeb.com/>