

# NEWSLETTER

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## DiscOver55

### The Project



*DiscOver55* is a transnational European project designed to attract senior tourists 55+ in low and medium season to visit **four target areas** in Italy, Austria, Slovenia and Finland. The destinations are linked by the common theme of “Water for Wellbeing” which characterizes the project. *DiscOver55* will create *customized* tourist packages thanks to the expertise brought by a diversified partnership of groups of seniors, experts in the tourist field and under the supervision and with the contribution of a research institute. *DiscOver55* also relies on the strong

**involvement of local stakeholders** in the four areas, in particular tourism SMEs and tour operators, to collect valuable information on the assessment of the tourist offer and to design the final tourism product. As one of the main problems to analyze the tourist market in some areas is the limited availability and consistency of data, it is crucial the direct contribution of tourist services providers since the beginning of the project (to fill out questionnaires, join focus groups and to be interviewed).

The project is financed by the EU – COSME Programme, for the competitiveness of *Small and Medium Enterprises* –and lasts 18 months (from March 2016 to August 2017).

## Senior Tourism in Europe

European countries are facing important demographic changes and, with the 25% of citizens aged between 55 and 80 years old, the population ageing is probably the most challenging one. But demographic change will also bring new opportunities for the tourism sector.

As seniors in retirement ages have more spare time, are often healthier and wealthier than in previous generations and are more flexible in travel patterns and off-peak seasons, their contribution

to tourism industry is significant and should be reinforced to face the challenge of seasonality, stimulating economic growth and jobs in Europe.

Since the Calypso initiative in 2009, the European Commission has financed several projects focused on senior tourism, in order to promote transnational exchanges between different countries during low-tourist seasons. Further information about European projects on senior tourism can be found on the web site: <http://www.ecalypso.eu> and COSME programme web site: [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/index_en.htm) One main outcomes of these projects was to **identify and define the needs of Senior Tourists**, with extensive surveys reporting on their age, gender, travel habits in organizing and managing their holidays. It emerged that senior tourists (55+) are mostly autonomous in the holiday set-up (50%). When it comes to choose their destination they give importance to natural environment, local culture, hotel accommodation, security, cleanliness and healthcare, and availability of medical services. They also pay attention to eno-gastronomy, health and wellbeing, while the spiritual/religious aspects and the sport activities are considered less important.

Furthermore, these projects piloted also **product development**, such as guidelines and senior tourism packages, to offer special conditions for senior tourists, and guarantee a good quality of offer and professional services, and **promotional strategies** for the specific target of senior tourist, such as cards and online platform.

With the new call of 2015, the European Commission confirmed their commitment to increasing low season tourism and encouraging seniors to travel to EU destinations. **DiscOver55**, selected and financed among many other proposals, is going to build on the experiences collected so far, with the aim to create innovative tourism products and forms of promotion well suited for the identified target group.

## DiscOver55 Destinations

All the Discover55 regions have in common two elements: water and green environment. Therefore, the theme chosen to link the four areas and characterize the project is "Water for Wellbeing".



Monte Pisano is a small group of mountains of a moderate height, located in northern Tuscany, it is composed by seven territories between San Giuliano Terme, Calci, Vicopisano, Buti, Capannori, Lucca and Vecchiano. It is a small area characterized by the beauty of nature shaped by the man over the centuries, mild climate, the hospitality of families running farm houses and hotels, the slow pace of the

countryside and of agricultural activities.

Vulkanland Region in the South East of Styria is labelled as European Destination of Excellence (EDEN). The region is very active in promoting tourism, starting from the richness of



local offers that ranges from wellness and spa offers to sports activities (hiking, nordic walking, cycling, gulf, sight- seeing, etc.).



Izola is a small town facing the nord Adriatic sea with 16.000 inhabitants. It is a popular tourism resort due to its pleasant Mediterranean climate, preserved nature and lively medieval old town. It is a destination appreciated by tourists especially for the beautiful landscape that can be explored by walking, cycling or by horse-riding.

The Lake Saimaa is the 4th largest lake in Europe providing attractive environment for holiday making and leisure activities in the lake archipelago. Water is a key element in the reference city of Savonlinna, that is located at the crossroads of Lake Saimaa water routes in a very attractive location. Savonlinna is also well reputed as destination for spas, wellbeing and rehabilitation activities.



## Events

20<sup>th</sup> April DiscOver55 presented at Savonlinna Tourism Forum, Finland

Savonlinna Tourism Forum is an annual meeting place for entrepreneurs in the Savonlinna region. Leading themes were Food, Nature and wellness, and also sustainable tourism.

29<sup>th</sup> April DiscOver55 presented at Infoday Palazzo Boccella, Italy



DiscOver55, has been presented at the Info day held the 29th of April at Palazzo Boccella in San Gennaro (Capannori, Lucca). The aim of the info day, open to all, but especially to the representatives of institutions, organizations that promote activities for seniors and tourism destination observatory of Capannori, it was also to present **ETIS, the European Tourism Indicator System developed by the European Commission** to assess the sustainability of tourist destinations. This system has been chosen by DiscOver55 partnership as the main tool to evaluate DiscOver55 four tourist

destinations. Ms Cinzia De Marzo of the European Commission – DG Grow “Internal Market, Industries, Entrepreneurship and SMEs” joined in videoconference.

## Project partners

The project is coordinated by the Italian SME **Timesis Ltd – Montepisano DMC** <http://www.montepisano.travel/en> with expertise in project management and monitoring and newly born incoming agency.

**SiTI Higher Institute on Territorial Systems for Innovation**, non-profit research organisation jointly set up in 2002 by the Politecnico di Torino and the Bank Foundation Compagnia di San Paolo, based in Turin, Italy; <http://www.siti.polito.it/en>

**Gefas Steiermark**, a non-profit organization for seniors based in Graz, Austria, that raises awareness and spread information about active ageing for a joyful life; <http://www.generationen.at/en>

**ZDUS**, a NGO and non-profit organization, including 503 local associations of pensioners and clubs, and over 233.000 members all over Slovenia; <http://www.zdus-zveza.si/en>

**Municipality of Capannori**, a public authority of the Monte Pisano area (Italy), that implements at local level policies on environment, economic development, welfare and culture; <http://www.comune.capannori.lu.it/node/23>

**Savonlinna Business Services Ltd**, a regional economic development agency, owned by the city of Savonlinna, Finland, and operating with the status of local authority; <http://www.savonlinnanyrityspalvelut.fi/en>

**Spirit of Regions**, an incoming agency operating in Styria, in the south east of Austria, experienced in the field of project conception and implementation; <http://www.spiritour.at/en>

## DiscOver55 Website

For more info, visit our project website [www.discover55.eu](http://www.discover55.eu)