

**Interreg**  
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union



RESILIENT ECONOMIES AND COMMUNITIES

**Light in the Dark**

## Increasing resilience in rural and coastal tourism in the northern Baltic Sea Region by developing off-seasons experiences

Baltic Sea Tourism Forum | 4.6.2024  
James Simpson, Project manager

Novia University of Applied Sciences, Turku, Finland

<https://interreg-baltic.eu/project/light-in-the-dark/>





## The project partners and the regions they represent

FINLAND & ÅLAND  

*The Åland islands are an autonomous part of Finland*

Novia University of Applied Sciences, Turku and the Archipelago Sea

Cursor Oy, The East Coast of Finland

Åland University of Applied Sciences, Åland Islands

Visit Åland, Åland Islands

SWEDEN 

Stockholm Business Region

The Stockholm Archipelago

ESTONIA 

Hiiumaa Development Center, Coastal areas and islands of North and West Estonia

Estonian Rural Tourism NGO, Coastal areas and islands of North and West Estonia

Estonian University of Life Sciences, Coastal areas and islands of North and West Estonia

LATVIA 

Kurzeme Planning Region, Kurzeme Region

LITHUANIA 

Klaipeda University, The Coast of Lithuania

Nida Culture and Tourism Information Centre "Agila", Curonian Spit Nationalpark and Neringa

# Project results

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- Detailed analysis of eight key markets,
  - 4000 respondents,  
easy to use personas for SMEs and DMOs
- SME challenge inventory in five countries,
  - 239 respondents plus 30-50 semi-structured interviews.
- New business and product concepts co-created transnationally.
  - September 24 – February 25
- Production of marketing materials for SMEs and DMOs.
  - Oct 24 – May 25
- Transnational piloting and testing of these concepts, packages and materials.
  - 2025
- Findings and results published on the website and disseminated to stakeholders in six countries.
  - 2026



# Visitor analysis & Challenge Inventory

## CREATING LIGHT IN THE DARK EXPERIENCES

Online webinar 10.4.2024

Inspiring examples of  
companies and  
destinations innovatively  
developing their region  
throughout the year.

Challenges and possibilities for low season  
tourism in the Baltic Sea Region **10<sup>th</sup> September**

Presentation of both the Visitor Analysis and  
Challenge inventory online.

<https://network.novia.fi/Events/269/Apply>

### **Past event:**

“Creating Light in the Dark experiences”  
Webinar 10.4 Recording on:

[www.interreg-baltic.eu/project/light-in-the-dark](http://www.interreg-baltic.eu/project/light-in-the-dark)

### SPEAKERS



**Pernille Kofod Lydolph**

Former Director of Destination Bornholm, Denmark



**Eriks Lingeberzins**

Director of Balticvision and assistant professor at the Faculty of International Tourism, Turība University, Latvia



**Andy Fairburn**

Director of Nordic Tourism Collective, United Kingdom



**Maria Pick**

Tourism developer, Kimitö Islands and Öro, Finland

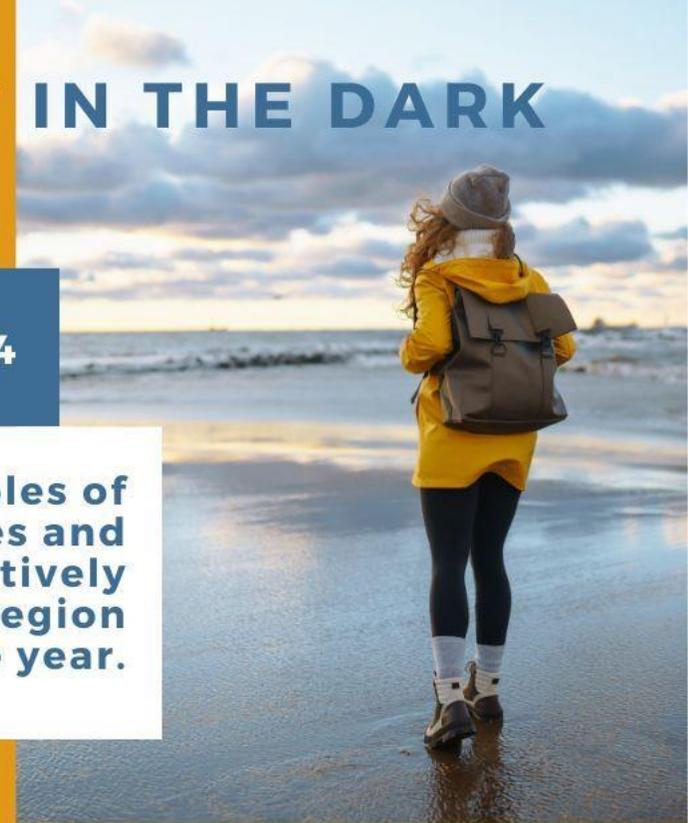


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# SMEs answers – main challenges for the destination

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Marketing of the main season /  
Destination brand

Tourists don't know the destination is  
open

Off-season accessibility – ferries,  
flights, transport





# SME challenges

## What can I do?

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### **Other companies are closed**

Low customer demand

Low profitability

Lack of capital investment

Difficulties to get staff out of season

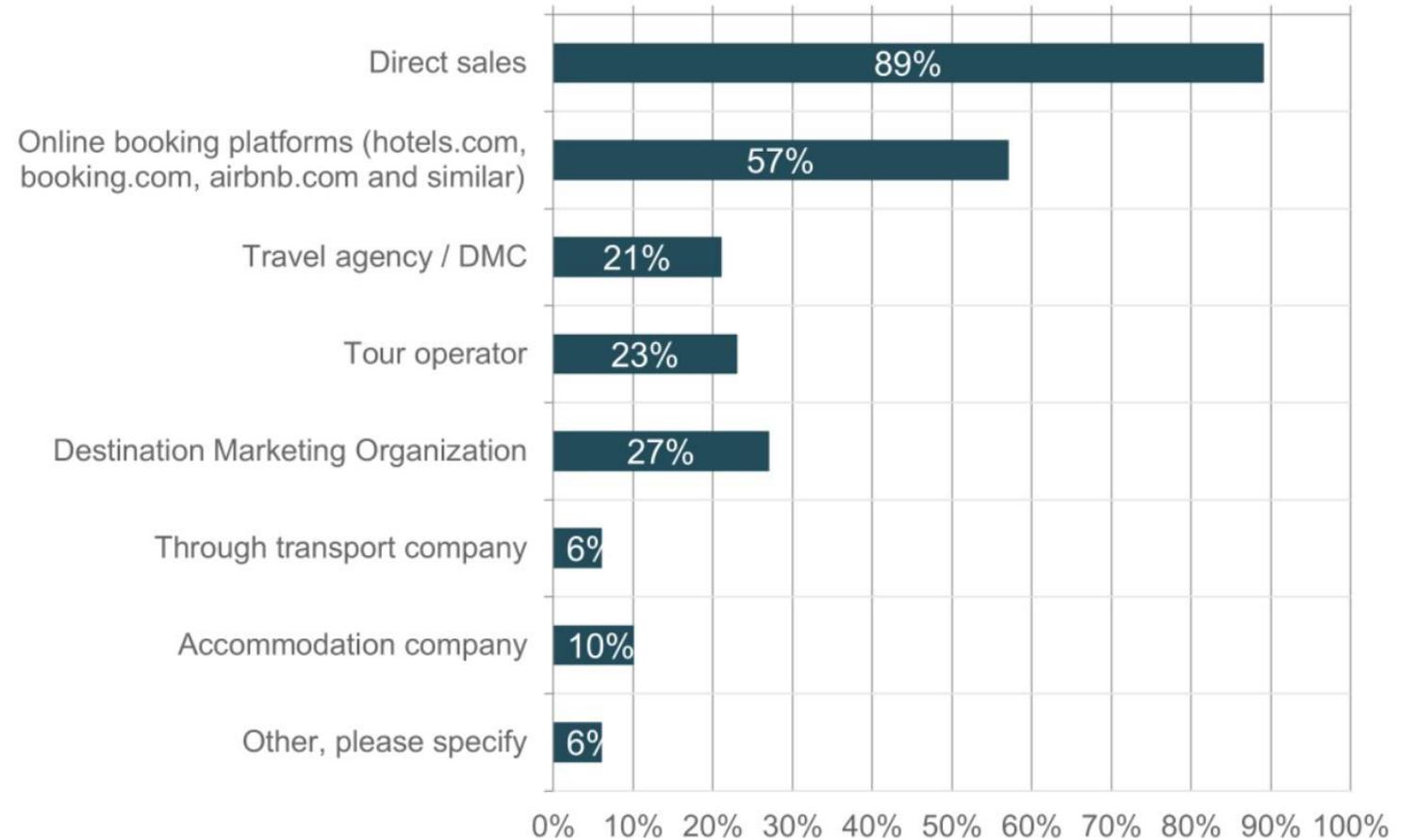
High skills and quality

Work together, local networks!

# Sales channels

## How do you sell your services? (Several options possible)

Number of respondents: 239, selected answers: 572





# A typical SME in the tourism industry

- Is in the accommodation business and offers lots of other activities and services as side business
- Has 1-5 employees
- Less than 50 000 € turnover
- 0-10 % profit of sales
- was established in the 2000s
- Uses mostly direct sales and online booking platforms to sell their services
- Relies on own website, Facebook and word-of-mouth referrals in marketing
- has some certification of sustainability and / or quality
- co-operates mostly with other tourism companies and service providers
- collects customer feedback face to face

# Entrepreneur personas

## **The place Maker (1)**

Preserving living conditions  
Local community and traditions  
Uphold family tradition/family business  
Contributing to community development  
Will to live in a beautiful, nature environment  
Love for the home region  
Will to develop the destination  
Working for a living archipelago

## **The value-driven experience Creator (2)**

Delivering memorable experiences  
Happy customers  
Customer encounters  
Sharing knowledge and skills  
Teaching / Educating sustainability  
Making people value the nature  
Transmitting your values to the visitors

## **The autonomy Seeker (3)**

Independence and autonomy  
Pride in making your own living  
Freedom, versatility, deciding your schedule  
You do what you love  
Living my dream  
Hobby as work  
Fulfilling when you notice the results of your work  
Not having to work 9-5

## **The Developer (4)**

Innovation  
Collaboration  
Networking  
Wants to develop as an entrepreneur  
Wants to develop the business and create new products  
Will to create something new  
Delivering quality  
Desire to promote tourism

# Thank you, Kiitos!

James Simpson

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[www.interreg-baltic.eu/project/light-in-the-dark](http://www.interreg-baltic.eu/project/light-in-the-dark)

[Quarterly newsletter](#)

