# Section 2: Detailed Description of the Project

## 2.1 Rationale

## 2.1.1 Brief history of the project
*Please describe how the project idea and partnership was developed and how the partners were involved in developing the project proposal.*

The rationale of DANTE recognises the potential of Information Society applied to Tourism in remote areas, which represents a strategic economy for rural and mountain territories in Europe. Unfortunately no cooperation initiatives have been launched as yet, aiming at supporting these disadvantages territories, whilst there are on-going initiative sharing tourism practices and ICT, mainly for fully recognised tourist destinations (I-SPEED project). DANTE's rationale aims at bridging this gap: in November 2010 the partners involved in a previous INTERREG IV capitalisation project (B3 Regions) were indeed invited by the European Commission (DG ENTERPRISE) to participate in a conference on ICT and Tourism in remote areas http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/_getdocument.cfm?doc_id=6202). Thanks to this event, some B3 Regions partners (those having tourism departments: Fundecyt, CSI-Piemonte-cooperating on tourism with Provincia di Torino, University and Region of Crete),

decided to share their local ICT experiences on tourism, by replicating the learned project methodology of B3 Regions. Unfortunately this first cooperation action encountered two obstacles:1)limited funding capacity of the tourism departments to support a veritable interregional initiative; 2)uneffective critical mass of the number of practices to be shared. In parellel DG ENTERPRISE suggested to optimise the Tourism good practices collection of the Enterprise Europe Network- sub-group "Tourism" (coordinated at EU level by PromoFirenze). PromoFirenze was then invited to join this cooperation initiative, becoming effective partner of the network. All these conditions built the first interregional ground which appeard to be perfectly consistent with the spirit of the fourth call of the INTERREG IV C programme.

As the focus on rural and mountain area is essential in DANTE, one crucial step was to aggregate additional EU bodies dealing with remote tourism (EuroMontana, Cybermassif, InknowCom and of Ljubjana): some of them were already cooperating under other EU programmes (i.e. INTERREG IV B-North Sea Region) although the outputs were confined within bilateral frontiers. DANTE is an opportunity to share also these relevant results at interregional level. This very promising situation is the rationale of DANTE that will aggregate several innovative projects focused on ICT tools applied to tourism in disadvantaged areas in order to: a)collect the existing fragmented knowled by spreading the benefit of ICT in remote areas; b)support remote regions in developing Digital Agenda for remote tourism. Moreover, in order to exploit synergies with I-SPEED, DANTE already discussed with its representatives how to create links between the two projects.

## 2.1.2 Problem description / issue addressed

*Please describe what problem(s) and/or issue(s) the project will address. Explain the background of the problem(s) / issue(s) and their relevance to the partnership and the INTERREG IVC programme. Please justify the choice of the selected sub-theme.*

DANTE focuses on the theme of Information Society applied to the tourism policy agenda of regional and local governments in Europe, with a particular focus on rural and mountain destinations. As stated in EC Communication (COM 2010-352 final) "Tourism is an economic activity capable of generating growth and employment in the EU, while contributing to development and economic and social integration, particularly of rural and mountain areas..". In the face of the current global crisis, the problem highlighted by DANTE is that access to ICT is a key driver for the European knowledge economy, in particular for the tourism sector, which represents the third largest socioeconomic activity in the EU. In some business sector ICT has already experienced higher than average growth rates in recent years; however the European adoption of ICT applications in some business sectors and in some remote territories remains relatively low, particularly in SMEs and in mountain and rural territories.

In parallel, the European Commission intends to encourage a coordinated approach for initiatives linked to tourism and to define a new framework to increase its competitiveness in order to ensure that Europe remains the first world's destination. However tourism in remote areas faces a number of challenges in the coming years: climate change may determine a restructuring of travel models and affect certain remote destinations, as well as declining snow cover in Europe's mountainous regions may cause a fall in winter tourism. Regional and local tourism policies need to take all these challenges into account, both by taking appropriate measures to relieve structural unemployment in outermost regions and by ensuring their attractivness and competitiveness.One of the main issue addressed in DANTE is therefore that EU regional and local tourism policies must evolve, by taking into accont and promoting the tourism potential of mountain and rural areas through ICT dedicated policies;

this requires a new policy approach in particular at government level, where tourism policy and strategies are defined. DANTE recognises the need to ensure a better integration of the tourism sector into the various political agenda of EU local governments, in particular into their digital agenda. In addition this requires a coordinated effort at EU level to ensure that ICT expertise are able to support tourism local policies, by ensuring that the interests and needs of the tourism remote destinations are fully taken into account when formulating and implementing ICT agenda. This is reflected by the DANTE partnership composition that combines ICT agencies and departments (CSI-Piemonte, Fundecyt, Cybermassif, Crete University, University of Ljubljana) with Tourism Local departments and agencies (Provincia di Torino, Bielsko Biala RDA, Crete Region, Development Centre Litja,etc.).

Moreover this partnership reflects another pillar of DANTE: despite the fact that some of the abovementioned local governments have already developed some innovative ICT tourism strategies or projects in remote areas, a considerable number of less advanced regions still need to plan their ICT tourism agenda, with the pre-requisite to activate first a learning process: this requires a veritable EU framework, but the success of such strategy will depend on the commitment of all stakeholders, which can be ensured only by an interregional framework able to commit local governemnts to work together and to implement a coordinated EU plan/agenda (INTERREG IV C). DANTE can therefore contribute to this approach, by promoting the benefits and adoption of ICT tools tailored to the tourism sector in remote areas, thus encouraging the adoption of a dedicated digital agenda to speed up growth and create the conditions for making tourism more attractive in remote areas.

Acronym: DANTE