

## ABSTRACT – DRAFT FOR GSTC ACADEMIC SYMPOSIUM 2024

*GSTC Academic Symposium - In conjunction with the GSTC Global Conference Sweden April 23, 2024.*

**Authors:** Doimo Ilaria, Catte Martina, Bosco Federica, Fiorentino Alessia, Orio Nicola, Posch Arthur, Dominik Mühlberger, Shane O’Sullivan, Zametter Thomas Friedrich

**Title:** **New challenges call for new skills: providing quality education for sustainable destination managers with the WeNaTour project.**

### EXTENDED ABSTRACT

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism finds itself having to manage challenges of different nature, showing its resistant and innovative capacity. However, the current tourism landscape is profoundly different than it was until 2019, and it is in strong need of finding new solutions to foster its sustainable development. According to many, this situation can be seen as an **opportunity to change the development path rather than return to business as usual**<sup>1</sup>. Given that sustainable development in tourism can only be achieved by human capital investments<sup>2</sup>, the need for hybrid professions with new skills enabling them to deal with the complexity of the nowadays scenario appears crucial.

Therefore, [WeNaTour](#) project fund by Erasmus+ programme, will work across Italy, Romania, Austria, Ireland, and the Netherlands **to increase the capacity of educational institutes and businesses to integrate research results, innovative practices, and digitalisation into a first-class educational offer to foster sustainable tourism** while supporting the creation of new products and services in two emerging markets: **company welfare**, and **green care tourism**.

#### 2. APPROACH

Tourism is a complex phenomenon that requires a **systemic perspective** capable of bringing long-term benefits for its development to be successful<sup>3,4</sup>. *Sustainable Tourism Destination Management* appears to be the approach that guarantees a shared vision of long-lasting development for which integrating tourism international sustainability standards and approaches is essential. From this perspective, the coherence and closeness between the philosophy guiding WeNaTour and the GSTC approach is evident: using the GSTC framework as a reference to guide the sustainable development allows both to build a solid foundation and to have a valid guide supporting the destinations in a continuous improvement process. For this to be effective, it is essential to have adequately trained human resources implementing the improvement process on the ground. However, tourism lacks specific interdisciplinary and governance skills that generally refer to *Sustainable Tourism Destination Management*, while HEIs and VETs<sup>5</sup> are currently lacking

---

<sup>1</sup> Gössling, Scott, e Hall, «Pandemics, tourism and global change: a rapid assessment of COVID-19».

<sup>2</sup> UNWTO, «UN Tourism News. Edition 76.», 5.

<sup>3</sup> Byrd, «Stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism Development and Their Roles».

<sup>4</sup> Franch, *Marketing delle destinazioni turistiche. Metodi, approcci e strumenti*.

<sup>5</sup> HEI and VET stand respectively for Higher Education Institutions and Vocational Education and Training.

training that fosters the ability to solve sustainability and innovation challenges<sup>6,7,8</sup>.

### 3. INNOVATION AND ACTIONS

The most innovative aspect of WeNatour stems from training **new multi-disciplinary professions** for students and professionals, framing the new skill set for the *Sustainability Managers for Tourism Destinations*. Moreover, given the focus on the emerging markets, additional positive externalities will be brought in terms of development and testing of new services (i.e. welfare plans for companies and green care tourism services).

WeNatour will pursue its aims by:

- assessing innovation and market potential of the two mentioned emerging markets;
- developing high-quality multidisciplinary training integrating international sustainability standards and approaches for tourism as the GSTC framework;
- testing and developing new services in two Associated Partners GSTC-certified destinations: Valsugana-Lagorai (Italy), and Nassfeld-Presegger See, Lesachtal and Weissensee (Austria);
- creating the first business-research cross-sectoral international **Alliance on Sustainable Tourism**.

### 4. CONCLUSION

Sustainable tourism is no longer considered an element of competitiveness but an imperative condition for the long-term development of territories<sup>9</sup>. The general aim of WeNatour is finally to contribute to a future-proof tourism system by providing quality training in the fields of sustainable tourism destination management to foster the innovation capacity of destinations and their actors.

---

<sup>6</sup> Dale e Robinson, «The Theming of Tourism Education».

<sup>7</sup> Chang e Hsu, «Development Framework for Tourism and Hospitality in Higher Vocational Education in Taiwan».

<sup>8</sup> Chen, Yi, e He, «Analysis on the Demand Characteristics of Tourism Talents Based on Recruitment Information of Three Recruitment Websites».

<sup>9</sup>News release (2020). "Sustainability as the new normal. A vision for the future of tourism."  
[www.unwto.org/covid-19-oneplanet-responsible-recovery](http://www.unwto.org/covid-19-oneplanet-responsible-recovery)