



# EMPOWERING RURAL TOURISM IN EUROPE

*Understanding The Educational Needs Of A Rising Sector*

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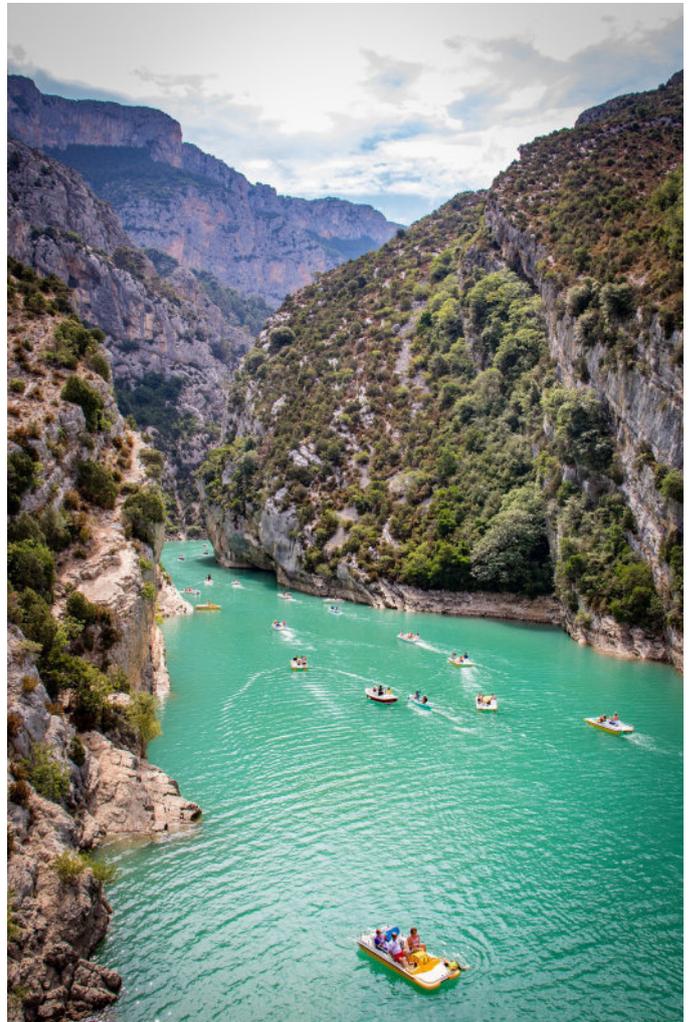
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# Preface

*By Michele F. Fontefrancesco*

Empowering rural tourism in Europe. Understanding the educational needs of a rising sector, is one of the results of the European Erasmus+ project “The European Network for the Promotion of Culinary and Proximity Tourism in Rural Areas” ([www.gastrotourism.eu](http://www.gastrotourism.eu)). It presents the results of the field research conducted by the partners of the project (Pôle Métropolitain Pour L’entrepreneuriat Le Carburateur, Igor Vitale International Srl, Balkan International Academy, Rivensco Consulting Ltd, Association for Education and Development of Disabled People, EUROASIA Innovative Society Association, Asociația De Dezvoltare Intercomunitară Harghita, University of Gastronomic Sciences), under the scientific coordination of the University of Gastronomic Sciences.

The book is divided in three parts that guide the reader in understanding better the characteristics of the project (Part I), in exploring the results of the research (Part II) and acquiring the tools needed to replicate the research (Part III).

Specifically, Chapter 1 introduces the European project and its aims and goals. Chapter 2 presents the partnership. Chapter 3 presents the research and its methodology. Chapter 4 explores the common needs of rural tourism in Europe with specific attention to education. Chapter 6 discusses the results highlighting the suggested areas of educational intervention. Chapter 7 presents the contents of the theoretical and methodological toolkit of which tools are illustrated in the following chapters (from 8 to 11). The volume is concluded by the bibliography.

The present book is edited by Michele F. Fontefrancesco and includes materials from all the partners. The authors of the individual chapters are indicated in the opening of each one, while the descriptions of areas as well as the summary of the individual focus group discussion has been provided by the partners operating in each location.

All the partners want to thank the organizations that supported the field research and all the participants to the discussions that allowed the completion of the research.

# PART I

## THE PROJECT AND ITS PARTNERSHIP

# 1.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE ERASMUS+ PROJECT**

### **“THE EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR THE PROMOTION OF CULINARY AND PROXIMITY TOURISM”**

*by Mariella Segreti, and Igor Vanislav Vitale*

“The European Network for the Promotion of Culinary and Proximity Tourism” ([www.gastrotourism.eu](http://www.gastrotourism.eu)) is an Erasmus+ project funded by the European Commission. The European Commission, in fact, every year funds and supports multiple projects with the aim of helping all the generations of Europeans to become active citizens, with the skills, knowledge and experience to face the challenges of social and working life, both now and in the years to come (European Commission, 2022).

These challenges include the following main points: unemployment; climate change; and digitalization. In this regard, the European Commission has the purpose of helping people move towards a more green and safe economy, where pollution is minimized.

As the name suggests, the Erasmus+ project presented in this book has the aim of promoting Culinary and Proximity tourism in rural areas. Over the last decade and during the pandemic period, the interest of tourists towards rural areas has increased, as well as interest in artisanal and agricultural products. Due to the change in tourists’ preferences, restaurants and hotels in rural areas

are increasing. This is an advantage in the context of green transition, because tourism in rural areas often implies briefer and greener trips.

On the other hand, employees and managers involved in touristic sectors often lack the skills to meet the market requirements. Furthermore, the lack of ecological knowledge is noticeable and common, and it reflects on the food production. In this context, the ecological transformation and the priorities set by the European Green Deal can represent an important framework for the promotion of proximity, culinary and ecological tourism in the European Area.

According to the European Commission, the processes of food production must change considerably in line with the guidelines of the European Green Deal, which is a set of initiatives with the aim of making the European Union climate neutral by 2050. The Farm to Fork Strategy, instead, is an initiative developed by the European Commission to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally sustainable. A normative and community legislative basis for rural tourism should take inspiration from these initiatives. In the official document published by the European Commission (2020), it is possible to read:

*European funds, including for rural development, will help rural areas to harness opportunities in the circular and bioeconomy. The Commission will reflect this in its long-term vision for rural areas. It will pay particular attention to the role of outermost regions in the European Green Deal, considering their vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters and their unique assets: biodiversity and renewable energy sources.*

The topic of rural areas is also taken up by the Farm to Fork Strategy. In the official document published by the European Commission it states:

*All rural areas need to be connected to fast and reliable internet [...]. Access to fast broadband internet will also enable mainstreaming precision farming and use of artificial intelligence. It will allow the EU to fully exploit its global leadership in satellite technology. This will ultimately result in a cost reduction for farmers, improve soil management and water quality, reduce the use of fertilizers, pesticides and GHG emissions, improve biodiversity and create a healthier environment for farmers and citizens (European Commission, 2019).*

Therefore, the Erasmus+ project was not created with the sole aim of empowering tourism in European rural areas, but also with the purposes of understanding the educational needs of this rising sector, responding to the workers' needs and transforming the processes of food production in line with the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy. Naturally, the main target groups of our project are hotel/restaurant/catering (HoReCa) small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and professionals in rural areas, vocational education and training (VET) centres and trainers.

With the aim of achieving these objectives, the partners involved in this project have conducted a Qualitative Needs Analysis for SMEs and NGOs involved in the promotion of the local territory through culinary and proximity tourism. This analysis was based on 13 focus groups carried out by different facilitators among seven Southern European countries (Italy, France, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Turkey and Bulgaria), with a total of 72 participants. The answers of the participants from these focus groups have allowed relevant problems and recurrent needs in all these countries to be detected, providing us with a comprehensive look at the main issues in the sector of rural tourism in Southern Europe. Through the exploitation of the analysis of the results, the VET centres will be able to determine the real training needs for SMEs in the touristic and hospitality sectors.

Furthermore, "The European Network for the Promotion of Culinary and Proximity Tourism in Rural Areas" will determine several tangible digital results that can help all members of the target groups in the promotion of culinary tourism. In addition to this book, a digital course for the empowerment of culinary and proximity tourism will be produced.

The production of the digital course for the empowerment of culinary and proximity tourism will increase the knowledge of workers in the hospitality and tourism sectors (restaurants and hotels) through a flexible tool will be available at any time. In reality, companies and restaurants located in rural areas and isolated places often find that access to dedicated trainings are difficult due to the distance and the lack of personalized content. Their limited access to dedicated training also impacts negatively on economic performance, which represents an important resource. Therefore, it was crucial to create a digital product that is

always available.

Finally, the last goal of this project is to provide these tools to VET centres in order to stimulate them in replicating courses in culinary and proximity tourism, which will be supported by the provision of flexible VET digital materials, a model for the needs analysis, and a clear definition of competences related to culinary and proximity tourism.

## **REFERENCES**

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# 2.

## THE PARTNERSHIP

*By “The European Network for the Promotion of Culinary and Proximity Tourism” consortium*

### INTRODUCTION

The “European Network for the Promotion of Culinary and Proximity Tourism in Rural Areas” is run by eight international partners, from seven countries of Southern Europe. The partnership involves public and private institutions actively working in the field of education, local and professional development, and tourism.

The partnership is led by the Pôle Métropolitain pour L'Entrepreneuriat “Le Carburateur” in France and includes the following other partners:

- ADI Harghita
- Association for Education and Development of Disabled People (Greece)
- Balkan International Academy (Bulgaria)
- EUROASIA Innovative Society Association (Turkey)
- Igor Vitale International Srl (Italy)
- Rivensco Consulting Ltd (Cyprus)
- University of Gastronomic Sciences (Italy)

The chapter introduces all the partners, their expertise and experience that have been at the basis of their activity in the project. The partners are presented in alphabetic order.

# ASOCIATIA DE DEZVOLTARE INTERCOMUNITARA HARGHITA



Asociatia de Dezvoltare Intercomunitară Harghita (ADI Harghita) was founded in 2009 at the initiative of the Harghita County Council and it is operating with the support of 50 local administrations with the aim to create and maintain long-term cooperation with the county's local administrations and organizations working in the field of tourism, carrying out national and international projects, the purpose of which is to improve tourism, as well as maintain culture and the environment. At the same time, the association's goal is also to protect the environment, popularize the county's tourism, as well as launching services pertaining to the development of these. The main activity of the organization is the development and

popularization of tourism in Harghita County. The organization is charged with the management, maintenance and popularization of the Visit Harghita app and website. This is the only platform that answers all the questions a tourist has to know before visiting the county. The association has made a significant contribution to the preparation of the tourism strategy of the county and is responsible for its implementation: it facilitates access to development possibilities for tourism operators and improves the institutional framework of the sector; interacts with individual stakeholders – hotels, restaurants, travel companies, decision-makers and other businesses – in order to attract more tourists; organizes conferences and participates in fairs and exhibits to strengthen the cooperation between different tourism actors and helps them to promote their services more efficiently and to provide better quality tourist offers. ADI Harghita promotes training opportunities (communication, marketing etc.) for local SMEs to acquire the knowledge of using different tools to attract new customers and offer new and quality services. The team creates publications, contributes to thematic projects (e.g. Mary's Way), promotes religious, cultural and culinary tourism and develops programmes and projects in the field of tourism in general.

# **ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE**



**ASEDDEDIPE**

The Association for Education and Development of Disabled People (Greece): our Association wants provide the opportunity to our members to also be involved in many sectors. The institution organizes courses in collaboration with other institutions, such as courses on computers, accountancy, language etc. On the other side, the objective of our association through our activities is to provide the possibility for our educational personnel (sociologists, professors etc.) to acquire experience and knowledge for the right pedagogic practice concerning people with special needs

and for vocational training. All learners are people with special needs. In addition, we aim through our activities to provide disabled with skills so as to ensure employment. Unfortunately, the level of unemployment among disabled people in Kavala is very high, not only because of the lack of skills on the part of those who are disabled but also because employers are not used to giving them a chance to work. They often believe that they will not manage to fulfil their expectations. The collaboration with different organizations will enrich their knowledge and experience since they will have the chance to meet new people with different ideas and cultures. The Association was founded by members who were mainly disabled and their families so as to offer employment, education and professional rehabilitation to disabled people. The creation of the association was a means to improve the everyday life of the disabled and furthermore to give a collective character to members' demands.

The association supports the disabled by offering:

Advisory and Psychological Support to trainees and their families

Socialization and Education Circulation programmes

Pedagogical programmes

Computer and accounting courses

Domestic Economy programmes

Gymnastics and Athletics programmes

Entertainment and Creative Occupation

The association was founded to fill a gap in the city of Kavala. We have voice and presence, hope and perspective. For this reason, the acceptance of this effort by the local community is positive and encouraging. Members and staff of our association are professional adult educators or experts in those fields that are relevant to the field of adult education. All of them are involved in the materialization of education or research projects and have

great experience in this sector. Our Association has materialized EU-funded projects and our staff is very experienced and has a full knowledge of the rules and economic management etc. for the materialization of a project.

Our main target in this project is to contribute to the creation of the methodology of a training/education process through culinary activities originating from our local historical and cultural heritage. Our region, East Macedonia and Thrace, has a tradition of combined cooking and cultivating traditional culinary cuisine. This training/education process will combine traditional and historical cooking with the modern trend in agritourism. Participants will also learn about European cultural and culinary heritage. They will learn basic entrepreneurship skills and also develop their creativity through the use of creativity strategies used during this culinary and cultural education. As part of the educational process, participants will develop key competencies such as: literacy, basic language skills, digital skills, entrepreneurship as well as creativity and cultural awareness through active participation in the exercise of cultural and culinary heritage.

# **BALKAN INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY FOUNDATION**



Balkan International Academy (BIA) is an independent non-profit legal entity for a public mutual benefit. The organization works primarily in the field of education and research, and to achieve its goals uses both traditional and modern methods. The main mission of BIA is focused on organizing symposia, conferences, conventions, seminars, and all providing educational services that will help the exchange of scientific knowledge. As such, it is an entity providing opportunities for innovation, promoting

educational and professional development, advocating the interests of populations, differing views of the public good, and reform.

The provision of educational materials, editing, and teaching in every possible form and environment, such as also meeting online education standards, are all considered tools for fulfilling what is seen today as a crucial mission. The organization aims to accomplish this by recruiting and selecting highly educated experts.

# **EUROASIA INNOVATIVE SOCIETY ASSOCIATION**



**EURASIA INSTITUTE**

EUROASIA Innovative Society Association is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that aims to bring people together regardless of their age, gender, nationality, colour, religion, opinion and perspective. EUROASIA Innovative Society Association is located in Eskişehir/Turkey where it is the most preferred learning destination at university level. Our association is an education association that specializes in the creation of sustainable, digital, green, and accessible education materials for teacher training in: PE.STEM, CLIL, climate change, literacy, etc.

We have teacher hub of 100 teachers. Since our association is set up based on education, we reach 20,000 students and 500 teachers with more than 50 local schools across our territory.

The main goals of our association are to:

- promote ICT, science technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) content and language integrated learning (CLIL) education in the digital era and digital age;
- promote meditation, self-sports, healthy eating and well-being among young people;
- promote environment protection and graduate climate resilient generations;
- promote technology usage in environmental protection, such as vertical farming and farming technologies;
- prevent the risk behaviours of children and youth through adapting those in the fast-changing world;
- prevent mental health issues such as chronic stress, sadness, desperateness and depression;
- initiate peer education through leading youth in having a green mindset;
- fight against climate change by taking actions and promoting eco-friendly activities.

We aim to ensure smart and sustainable growth and development of our territory. We focus on school education, providing courses where, with personal and professional development tools, they can use their own resources and succeed in school education. Among our priorities and expertise "Green jobs and digitalization" are our main field of studies that we want our generation to have for their future fulfilment.

Our association works with schoolchildren and teachers in ensuring excellence in education

We have close relations with technology-related EU-wide associations and collaborate and cooperate in technological transformation and exchange of good practices.

Our EU wide partners are:

France career guidance association,

East Finland University,

Kajaani University,

Wittenborg University

VIA College Denmark,

DNS College Denmark,

Gratz University Austria,

Global School Alliance,

Save the Children,

Blue Moon.

Our expertise and human resources have deep knowledge on the followings:

STEM;

Designing and Technical VET workshops;

Delivering non-formal trainings;

Delivering soft skills development training;

Developing and implementing educational curricula, pedagogical strategy, tool-kit, OER, developing eLearning;

Platforms and user-friendly mobile apps;

Farming and farming technologies;

Project management, risk management, time management, evaluation and research.

Our association is an organization skilled in managing innovation projects and we have a wide experience gained over many years of working on different Structural Funds projects, etc. Our organization has expertise in assessing and developing soft skills, developing and implementing new learning methods, working out new strategies, methodical materials and programmes regarding effective literacy skills development. In addition, we are skilled in pilot training, e-learning, module creations, language programme developments, quality assurance and dissemination. EURASIA Innovative Society Association is especially specialized in IT-related developments. In particular, we are developing, implementing, documenting, and maintaining IT application platforms, using specific technologies and development environments, ensuring access to data securely and meeting the criteria of “usability” and quality required by established standards. Our association conducts numerous research and educational projects and cooperates with various educational, health care, sport organizations.

## LE CARBURATEUR

# LE CARBURATEUR

PÔLE DE L'ENTREPRENEURIAT

As a hub of resources, expertise, advice and networking, the Carburateur's mission is to support and host the creation, start-up and consolidation of young businesses. Because it is located in an area – the northern district of Marseille – where revitalization is a major challenge, it actively contributes to the economic development and social cohesion policies of its immediate environment. At the initiative of the Métropole-Aix-Marseille-Provence and with the unanimous support of the other local authorities, the Public Investment Bank of France and the State services, the Carburateur opened its doors in September 2016. It was awarded the Fabrique à entreprendre label (Enterprise Factory) as soon as it opened in partnership with the Caisse des Dépôts (public financial institution). Its governance: the networks of support and financing for business creation.

Its DNA: the creation of connection with the territory and its economic players which supports Le Carburateur's resident companies and more widely the Top 20 companies in the

Métropole-Aix-Marseille-Provence.

Its strength: the diversity and wealth of activities and profiles hosted. Benefiting from the entrepreneurial dynamics of northern Marseille, the Carburateur is an accelerator of initiatives and growth, thus promoting local employment and the attractiveness of the area.

In figures:

- 1,800 project leaders welcomed each year, 45% of whom are women
- 1800 m2 in the ZFU- TE (Urban Free Zones-Entrepreneurial Territories), 21 individual production and storage spaces meeting the needs of start-up craftsmen, 15 offices and 12 workstations in an open space
- 37 resident companies
- Approximately 60 jobs created (excluding managers) per year

In the restaurant sector, “80% of restaurants close before their fifth year”, says Cindy Chagouri, director of Docks Village (Marseille, partner of Le Carburateur), because they do not master their management perfectly, because they struggle to recruit or because they are unable to take hold of the digital tools for promoting their business, which have become vital at the time of the COVID-19 epidemic – hence the idea of developing a recipe for a more secure start-up for these entrepreneurs. This is the essence of the FoodClub, concocted from several ingredients (commercial strategy, communication, business management, adaptation of its offer, etc.). Le Carburateur and its partners then opened the FoodClub, the first culinary incubator launched in Marseille. The FoodClub enables people with an entrepreneurial project in the restaurant industry to move forward in the best possible conditions. They benefit from theoretical and technical training on managing a business in the restaurant sector, support from experienced professionals who are benchmarks in their field, and networking with major local economic players.

# IGOR VITALE INTERNATIONAL SRL



Igor Vitale International Srl is a small and medium-sized enterprise located in Foggia, Puglia specialized in applied psychology services in several fields of intervention including: clinical, social, forensic, work & organization, environmental, tourism, disability, sports, and school psychology. Igor Vitale International srl includes a network of 100 experts in psychology and human sciences operating at the national and international level with the mission of favouring social inclusion, education and sustainability through applied psychology. Igor Vitale International Srl bases its action on the multidisciplinary interaction among several professions connected to psychology and human sciences, selected and proposed based on the nature of the project and including experts from the field of technology (IT experts, graphical experts, video makers, UX design experts, web developers) and from the human science sectors (including

sociologists, anthropologists, researchers, teachers, trainers, etc.) in order to reach its final goals: to promote social inclusion in schools, training, universities, adult and work sectors; to promote behavioural and attitudes change for sustainability and ecology, to increase the quality of education in schools, training, universities and work sectors through the aid of psychology, digital products and human sciences. During 2021, Igor Vitale International srl has trained more than 1000 learners in Rome and Milan through training courses, conferences and workshops about Emotional Intelligence, Crime Prevention, Risky Behaviour prevention, Non-Verbal Communication and Psychology of Communication, Public Speaking, Web Marketing, Psychotraumatology, Victimology, Relaxation methodologies, Environmental Psychology and Social Inclusion. The members of the target groups of consultancy and trainings offered by Igor Vitale International srl are very broad and include – among the most representative subgroups, the following categories: school students, university students, adults, adult educators, VET trainers, psychologists, law enforcement members, lawyers, NGO activists, social workers and educators. Igor Vitale International Srl founds its sharing and promotion strategies through digital means consisting in the adoption of multiple online resources: the educational official website of the organization about applied psychology, with a history of more than 10 million views and approximately 2500 articles; the educational YouTube channel with a history of 2.9 million views and 18,200 active subscribers; the educational email automated system including 28 introductory educational materials (produced in video and ebook format) in several fields of applied psychology, downloaded more than 100,000 times, and having an active newsletter system of 61,000 members. The existing digital channels of Igor Vitale International srl represent a source for reaching target group members in the area of interest for the project, demonstrated by their registration in the dedicated platforms related to the different fields of intervention in psychology.

## **RIVENSCO CONSULTING LTD.**



Rivensco Consulting Ltd is an innovating company that aims to establish itself as a major link between the academic and business world. Rivensco maintains offices in all major cities in Cyprus and it provides training in different subject areas, such as business, social enterprises, information technology and hospitality. With our experience in EU projects, we support local businesses to participate in European and national funding projects, including the local Chamber of Commerce, local colleges, universities, ministries, municipalities and other stakeholders. The effectiveness of our operations requires the cooperation with several small businesses and local stakeholders, including local media. We pay particular attention to the pivotal role of new technologies and the competitive advantage they offer. Our daily operations with several enterprises make our company ideal for work placement, since it is in a privileged

position to provide real experience in different fields. The highly specialized professional staff includes psychologists, teachers/trainers and problem consultants who can provide training in different fields. In 2014, Rivensco joined forces with a particular Vocational and Technological Training Centre in order to improve its training capacity, expand its network, and provide more courses. Rivensco Consulting offers specialized courses for interview preparation, CV preparing, while it accustoms its trainees with personality tests and different national tests. This has enabled Rivensco to focus on the training of young Entrepreneurs. The courses include real-life examples that engage participants actively and make them think in a critical way and thus, learn to adjust to the specific circumstances of the business world. They aim to develop an out-of-the-box thinking, giving emphasis on business ideas, innovation and creativity. We stress the importance of personal qualities, such as a thirst for continuous education, personal drive and motivation, strong goals and ambition, clear vision, and always, a great deal of passion in whatever you do. Rivensco Consulting represented the COSME programme of Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs in Cyprus, providing information and financial support to new entrepreneurs from Cyprus travelling to host entrepreneurs in other countries to gain managerial skills. We have strong experience in Erasmus KA1 Mobility projects in hosting schools for training in Cyprus and we also participate in KA2 strategic partnership projects on entrepreneurship and training modules. We have hosted trainers and inspectors from Romania in training courses. Rivensco Consulting is run by trainers and consultants who provide support for the training needs of professionals and job-seekers from a very vast spectrum of fields. We provide preparation seminars to different target groups for professional interviews, communication and interpersonal skills. We have a solid cooperation with local stakeholders, media and digital companies. Thus, we are in a privileged position to offer placements for trainees and we have strong experience in different mobility programmes.

# UNIVERSITY OF GASTRONOMIC SCIENCES



University of Gastronomic Sciences  
Università degli Studi  
di Scienze Gastronomiche

The University of Gastronomic Sciences (UNISG) is an international leader for the study, research, transmission and innovative processing of knowledge in the field of Gastronomic Sciences, focusing in particular on the relationship between food, ecology and sustainability.

The university was founded in 2004 in Pollenzo by Slow Food, in collaboration with the regions of Piedmont and Emilia-Romagna. It is a private institution with legal recognition from the Italian government. UNISG creates gastronomes, new professional figures with multidisciplinary skills and knowledge in the fields of science, culture, politics, economics and ecology of food, working to apply them to food production, distribution and sustainable consumption.

UNISG research specialization is founded on the multidisciplinary that characterizes the gastronomic context. The methodological

approach springs from the university's founding principles and is based on the issues of sustainable food as a form of sustenance and of improvement of the planet's human and natural conditions.

The research activities of UNISG aim to increase knowledge and promote innovation in the field of gastronomic studies and are developed through collaborations at national and international level, with universities and research institutions, with UNISG partners (supporting partners or strategic partners), and other third parties (private or public) that can sign suitable agreements with the university.

UNISG Research is based on three interdisciplinary areas – namely, environment, perception and quality, and mobility.

UNISG research projects, related to one or more of these areas, involve specific skills of UNISG researchers and professors and of the experts who collaborate with UNISG (contract professors, visiting professors, etc.). These projects ensure relevant scientific and economic results for the scientific community, the stakeholders and the whole society, while increasing UNISG visibility and strengthening its network.

For more information: <https://www.unisg.it/en/academic-research/>

# PART II

## THE RESEARCH

# 3.

## **EXPLORING THE NEEDS OF A SECTOR**

*By Michele F. Fontefrancesco*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Rural tourism has been on the rise in the past 20 years and, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, has seen a fast and steady growth. In the face of this positive trend, the sector still shows substantial shortcomings in terms of the professionalization of its key actors, entrepreneurs and personnel. Despite this awareness, the actual educational needs of those involved are not clearly spelled out in the public and academic debate and require a specific analysis in order to articulate a prompt and effective educational response.

This chapter introduces the sector and, specifically, the research conducted within the “The European Network for the Promotion of Culinary and Proximity Tourism” (CPTRA) project in order to identify the needs of the professionals, with a particular focus on the countries involved in the projects. The chapter opens by presenting the main features of rural tourism in Europe, then moves on to present the methods of the research. The results are presented in the following chapters.

# RURAL TOURISM IN EUROPE

Tourism is a key sector of the local economy and includes a vast array of services (e.g. travel, transport, hotels, food) that provides 10% of the European GDP (COM/2020/550 final.) The sector in Europe counts 2.3 million enterprises, mainly small and medium-sized (SMEs), employing around 12.3 million people. In 2018, the sector employed 5.1% of the total active population (corresponding to approximately 11.9 million jobs). The importance of the sector for the continent is also demonstrated by the fact that in 2019, European countries received 1.5 billion tourists, covering about half of the entire market. Since 2020, the COVID-19 crisis has impacted severely on this sector especially in 2020 when the World Tourism Organization estimated a loss of between 60 and 80%. The pandemic severely affected Southern Europe. The results of Bulgaria (-53,1%), Cyprus (-76%), Greece (-55,8%), Italy (-68,5%) and Romania (-60,3%) are significant in this respect (Pernice, 2022). Specific restrictions in international mobility (Stanisic et al., 2022), as well as the impact of the long periods of lockdown (Fontefrancesco, 2022), however, represented a fundamental opportunity for the development of local, proximity tourism, and specifically the area that comes under the rubric of rural tourism (Galvani et al., 2020).

Rural areas are, in the collective imagination, areas where traditional and cultural values are found, as well as the beauty of the landscape. These features are the main driver for a sector that has grown over time, attracting people from the urban areas (Robinson, 2021) to visit communities otherwise deeply affected by a growing socio-economic marginalization (George et al., 2009; Reid, 2003). For these communities, tourism has represented a fundamental opportunity for economic diversification and growth (Turker, 2013), promoting the revitalization of minor settlements and improving the quality of life of residents (Andereck & Vogt, 2000). In the past 20 years this has expanded, thanks to local initiatives and new investments aimed at intercepting a growing trend (Brooker & Joppe, 2014).

Rural tourism is an umbrella concept (Lane & Kastenholtz, 2015) that covers different types of tourism that take place in rural environments and involve

the fruition of environmental and socio-cultural elements of the place visited (Leroux & Pupion, 2014; Roman & Grudzień, 2021). There are a limited number of parameters that specifically identify the sector (Darau et al., 2010; Donaldson & Momsen, 2011; Petroman et al., 2016): the location outside an urban area; the presence of small or medium-sized accommodation facilities; the easy access to natural/agricultural environment; the centrality given to local resources in the articulation of the touristic product; and the involvement of local personnel and ingredients. Unlike other touristic sectors, rural tourism relies mostly on the activity of SMEs, often family businesses that are run as a second job or side activity of specialized farms. In this respect, the sector has to cope with a scarce professionalization of the entrepreneurs and the personnel as well as the structural socio-economic marginality of the location: this is particularly evident in the most remote areas, such as the mountains areas, recently at the centre of new interests of urban tourists (Chiodo et al., 2019), where the problems related to communication and mobility, as well as the impact of depopulation and ageing are more severe issues (Salvatore et al., 2018). While in order to thrive, the sector needs constant innovation and the ability of the economic actors to understand the emergent needs (Kuščer et al., 2017), the entrepreneurs show the need for further support to help and guide them in dealing with the changes and the opportunities opened by the pandemic (Paluszak et al., 2021).

## **THE RESEARCH AND ITS METHODOLOGY**

CPTRA aimed at filling this gap through a qualitative study that involved desk and field research conducted in the seven countries involved in the project. The research was conducted between March and October 2022. The activity was primarily conducted by the research team of the University of Gastronomic Sciences, involving the teams of the other partners in the completion of the fieldwork.

The first phase of the research involved a preliminary literary review. This investigated scientific and grey literature resources in English. The research aimed at:

- clarifying how “rural tourism” was expressed across the continent and specifically in the seven countries;
- identifying the specific needs of the sectors with particular attention paid to the educational needs of the entrepreneurs.

Using digital search engines (EBSCO, SCOPUS and Google Scholar), the research identified 121 sources investigating the specific services provided by and the needs of the rural tourism sector in Europe (e.g. see Chapter 9). The results of the literary review guided the second phase of the research, which involved the conducting of focus group discussions with professionals of the rural touristic sector in the partner countries.

The main objective of a focus group is to collect ideas, considerations and suggestions expressed by a group of individuals belonging to the appropriate target audience, who are invited to discuss freely and spontaneously a selection of topics relevant to the research. The research aimed at exploring the needs and understanding of the professionals in the field. In this respect, the focus group involved 4–5 participants who were selected among people working in SMEs and NGOs involved in the promotion of local rural territories, located in geographically isolated places, and interested in promoting the proximity and culinary tourism (Tab. 1). At least 70% of the participants in each discussion worked in an enterprise working in the touristic sector.

Organization	Possible informants
Small restaurants (max 30 places)	Owner, exec manager, chef, maître de salle
Medium or large restaurants (more than 30 places)	Owner, Exec manager, chef, maître de salle
Hotels	Owner, exec manager, managers of the food & beverage services
Agritourisms / farm houses	Owner, Exec manager, chef, maître de salle
Bed & breakfasts / Room for rent	Owner, exec manager

Vineries, farms or food producers who organize visits in their plants	Owner, exec manager
Tourism promotion agencies	Directors, Presidents, Exec members of the board of directors
Local NGOs involved in the touristic development of the area	Directors, Presidents, Exec members of the board of directors
Local professional schools, training centres, and universities specialized in the tourism sector	Head, Director/Convenors of the programs

Tab. 1: Indicative list of the profiles of the participants of the focus groups

Overall, the research involved 14 focus group discussions (Tab. 2). Each partner oversaw the organization and conducting of 2 focus group discussions, based on the shared guidelines provided by the University of Gastronomic Sciences researcher (see Chapter 11).

Nation:	Facilitators:	Areas:
Italy	Michele F. Fontefrancesco	Alessandria Province
Italy	Mariella Segreti	Greccio, Acilia and Genziano
France	Ionel Fedida	Corsica
France	Marina Berhault	Provence
Cyprus	Michalis Papatherapontos	Nicosia, Limassol, Protaras and Pafos
Greece	Georgios Konsoulas	East Macedonia and Thracia
Romania	Székely Zelma and Márton Júlia	Harghita County
Turkey	Etibar Mikayılov	Eskisehir and Central Anatolian Region
Bulgaria	Iva Vasileva	South-West Bulgaria

Tab.2 Localization of the focus group discussions

All the focus groups were conducted between June and September 2022. None of the discussions extended over 2 hours and all were based on four questions:

- 1) What are the main assets in your area in terms of developing the sector of proximity and culinary tourism?

- 2) What are the biggest needs to be met and the most urgent initiatives required in order to develop proximity and culinary tourism in your area?
- 3) Have the last two years of the pandemic emergency created major problems or have they also been an opportunity for innovation in the tourism sector?
- 4) What are the best ways to create synergies between tourism operators, institutions, local population and tourists?

Each question was discussed for a maximum of 30 minutes. Each participant expressed her/his point of view on the matter (max. 5 min each) and then discussed the topic with the others. All the discussions were recorded, then summarized by the facilitators through a specific report sheet.

The data collected from the discussion were coded, identifying the most recurrent topics of concerns using a specific digital tool: NVIVO 12 plus®. Coding was completed using keywords whose frequency was calculated to analyse the perceived urgency of specific topics within the same country/territory and among all the participants of the study. On the basis of the frequency, the hierarchy of needs was elaborated.

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# 4.

## COMMON NEEDS

*By Michele F. Fontefrancesco, and Amedeo Boscolo*

### INTRODUCTION

What are the most common needs of rural tourism entrepreneurs?? This chapter offers an answer to this crucial question based on an extensive literary review that investigated over 100 publications concerning the status and trends in rural tourism. Specifically, it identifies and investigates six main areas of concerns that deal with different aspects of the business that appear recurrently in the debate and highlight a complex articulation of fragilities that the sector has to deal with. Specifically, they refer to:

- 1) Collaboration skills
- 2) Communication and IT skills
- 3) Entrepreneurial and managerial skills
- 4) Environmental and cultural skills
- 5) Innovation skills
- 6) Professional skills

The next paragraphs discuss in depth each one of the above and identify the educational needs each one covers.

# COLLABORATION SKILLS

The first need that affects entrepreneurial activity in rural tourism appertains to the collaboration among the various players of the sector (Bornhorst et al., 2010; Peroff et al., 2017; Pilving et al., 2019). First, the need originates from the limited scale shared by the companies in the sector, which is expressed by the enterprises' scarcity/paucity of capital and the limited possibilities left for managing and supporting communication campaigns as well as applications for public funding. In this respect, Kazlouski et.al (2020) demonstrate that once the local companies are able to activate forms of professional collaboration, they are able to perform better economically, generating a higher and more stable stream of revenues. Moreover, the creation of more stable relationships with institutional stakeholders on which to base the development of the business appears result in stronger sustainability for the business, both in terms of economic performance and environmental and social preservation (Potočnik-Slavič & Schmitz, 2013). More specifically, collaboration appears key in generating synergistic effects for the tourism promotion of a specific area (Hall et al., 2007). Thus, while collaboration appears a promising objective for the sector, it is often limited, first by a common competitive culture shared by the entrepreneurs, and then/and next/and second by personal antagonism (Kizos & Iosifides, 2007b).

As Caffyn (2000) and Wondolleck and Yaffee (2000) taught, collaboration is not something that happens automatically among economic players but rather a process that can be supported by specific educational training aimed at reinforcing the soft skills of the entrepreneurs and fostering daily opportunities of dialogue with the stakeholders. This is a first area of educational intervention.

# COMMUNICATION AND IT SKILLS

IT skills, for example the use of social networks and / or the management of a web page, and linguistic skills, such as the fluent use of English as the international lingua franca, are fundamental for the development of companies

in the sector, especially in the pandemic and post-pandemic period, when the public has largely become familiarized with new media in order to escape from isolation (Rahimizhian & Iran, 2021). These skills, however, appear to be shared by only a minority of professionals in rural tourism (e.g. Yildirim & Kilinc, 2018).

Over the years, the Internet has evolved and revolutionized the tourism market. The birth of online travel agencies has allowed the tourist to independently manage their holiday and access the tourist product (Pierobon, 2018). Moreover, the creation of new e-commerce, and social media services has offered the opportunities for small enterprises to advertise directly to international consumers, bridging language and economic barriers. Direct experience and direct contact between firms and consumers reinforced the power of the word of mouth (Giglietto & Tommasucci, 2012), which is the key driver of publicity for small touristic firms (de Sensi, 2016), in particular in the field of rural tourism (Sidali & Spiller, 2009).

While ten years on from the analysis of Potočnik-Slavič and Schmitz (2013) the need for new platforms and e-services appears less urgent (van Sandt et al., 2018), the necessity of learning how to effectively use the tools available and to properly articulate a message that appeals to the consumer resonate as cogent, despite having been discussed for many decades (Baron & Markman, 2003; Gladstone & Morris, 2000;). In this respect, the education needs are linguistic (focused on acquiring at least a basic knowledge of the most common international languages), technical (focused on learning substantial marketing skills in order to articulate convincing messages and effective marketing strategies), and technological (focused on the familiarization with the most common platforms and social media).

## **ENTREPRENEURIAL AND MANAGERIAL SKILLS**

It is recognized that the business development of rural tourism brings various benefits to communities by promoting job creation and mitigating the

phenomenon of abandonment (Surugiu, 2009). In recent years, this trend has even been reversed thanks to the high number of citizens, particularly young people, who move from urban areas to develop work projects in the agricultural and tourist fields, rediscovering the connection with nature and the rhythms of life (Parameswaranaik, 2019; Riethmuller et al., 2021). The opening of new facilities and the relaunch of pre-existing ones has revitalized the economic milieu, improving the standard of living in the area, increasing the income of the population and boosting the revenues for local authorities (Chiodo et al. 2019; Karabati et al., 2009; Provotorina et al., 2020; Sin et al., 2022).

Despite all these positive outcomes, these new businesses frequently rely on the enthusiasm of new entrepreneurs, often without specific previous experience in this sector (Kizos & Iosifides, 2007a). Difficulties concerning the administration of the firms, as well as the organization of the activities of the firms, are widely reported, in particular when they scale up, moving from an ancillary occupation to the primary business for an individual or a family (Khazami & Lakner, 2021). In this respect, basic training concerning how to run a business efficiently is crucial. This issue is incorporated in the entrepreneurial vision required for the development of a business.

The growth of the sector requires small and medium businesses to choose a precise path forwards in terms of services provided and positioning in the market. In this respect, rural tourism appears particularly suited for addressing themes and promoting actions concerning environmental protection (Vanzella & Brambilla, 2022). Thus, entrepreneurial and managerial education should encompass tools and knowledge concerning green marketing (Delafrouz et al., 2014; Delmas et al., 2012; Handriana & Ambara, 2016a), in order to avoid a mismatch between the expectation of the consumers, potentialities of the business, and the services provided (Aggrawal, 2010; Chin et al., 2018).

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL SKILLS**

While tourists look at rural destinations in order to enjoy environmental and cultural heritage, often they are not equipped with sufficient knowledge and

competences required to understand the specificities of a place and appreciate its characteristics. In this respect, an entrepreneur in rural tourism, whether they provide accommodation or food, is potentially a cultural interface able to guide the tourist in the exploration of the new location (Corvo, & Fontefrancesco, 2019). This particular and highly valued service (Chiu et al., 2014) is provided by sharing specific knowledge, indicating routes or places to visit, or providing specific and formalized services such as tours, or organizing workshops and training concerning traditional craftsmanship. In this respect, professionals express specific educational needs concerning the acquisition of traditional knowledge, environmental knowledge and local history (Kizos & Iosifides, 2007a).

While the professionals turn into a guide to the local space, they can play a further role in supporting the tourists in acquiring an environmental awareness and knowledge, promoting ecologically responsible behaviours (Chiu et al., 2014; Fosse & et.al, 2021; Kuşat, 2016). When this is not perceived as an imposition of new constraints but a way of furthering the engagement with the environment, this approach is appreciated by tourists (Handriana & Ambara, 2016b) and reinforces the commercial identity of a rural touristic experience. In this respect, the professionals identify a double educational need that expresses both in the direction of a better understanding of ecological preservation and the teaching methods to disseminate this knowledge and form of conduct.

## **INNOVATION SKILLS**

Rural tourism develops on the margin of other, more established forms of tourism. It does not rely on the presence of large hospitality facilities and services, but has developed through the proliferation of smaller and simpler businesses, such as B&Bs, small camping sites and agritourism (Chiodo et al., 2019). In this respect it expresses higher flexibility, however it is also faced with the necessity of responding quickly to the changing needs of the sector. The capacity to create a deep connection with the local food production (Chiodo et al., 2019), or renting out “recreational transport” services such as, among others, bicycles, rafts or canoes, horseback tours or guided visits to places of greatest interest (Roman

& Grudzień, 2021) are examples of this grassroots innovation that answers the need for “authentic experiences” (Sims, 2009). In this regard, the entrepreneurs express the need for more information concerning the new trends in the sector (Belias et al., 2018; Hall, 2019; Jęczmyk et al., 2021) and, above all, the acquisition of tools aimed at analysing the changing market and implementing positive innovation.

## **PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

The lack of qualified personnel in the hotel and gastronomic sector, especially the seasonal one, has been a known problem for some time, along with low levels of training, little retraining and a lack of high-level training of staff, and the almost total absence of scientific bases for tourism are common issues that affect all the sectors of tourism (Shedenov et al., 2019). In rural tourism, this problem is fostered by multiple factors. Considering the very high percentage of family-run companies in this sector, the employees are often the family members themselves (Polo & Frías, 2010) who, in most cases, have no experience in any of the main touristic services. Moreover, often the firms are run as a secondary and ancillary business (Chiodo et al. 2019) Finally, even in the case of professionals with secondary or tertiary education in the field, achieved in the few years after graduation, may end up being inadequate because they are unable to understand and anticipate the growing needs of tourism (Banabakova, 2007; Klark, 2006). In this respect, entrepreneurs express a marked need for basic and advanced professional training, dealing with all the aspects of touristic services in order to be compliant with the expectations of the consumers (Kilimperov, 2017)

## **CONCLUSION**

The research and current literature on this topic highlight six areas of urgent educational needs that deal with the hard and soft skills and knowledge required by the market. To date, these are needs that educational institutions (e.g. vocational schools, universities) and professional institutions (e.g. chambers of

commerce, business associations) are only partially able to satisfy, leaving space for new initiatives aimed at sustaining the development of professionalism and entrepreneurship.

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# 5.

## **GRASSROOTS NECESSITIES**

*By Michele F. Fontefrancesco, and Amedeo Boscolo*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The current scientific and professional debates identify six macro-areas of possible intervention for any educational programme in support of rural tourism entrepreneurship. These are shared throughout Europe and represent common, shared needs. Thus, while they are a first guide in understanding the educational dynamic of the sectors, considering the consistency of the literature and the uneven attention given to specific geographical areas, there is an urgency to explore in more detail the specificities of the individual communities, territories or geographical macro-areas in terms of necessities and challenges faced every day.

In this respect, the CPTRA project involved empirical research aimed at exploring qualitatively the needs perceived by the professionals in different areas of Southern Europe. The research was organized in order to create a substantial knowledge base concerning the macro-area, and a grassroots understanding of the educational needs of the sector. Information was collected combining desk research and observation of the different countries, and the completion of focus group discussions with professionals. Research was supervised by the University of Gastronomic Science research team, and each project partner had the task of completing the field activity investigating specific regions selected in accordance with the research coordinator. Overall, each region represents an arbitrary

location (Candea, 2007) in which rural tourism has developed, and which shows a precise articulation in terms of the political, social, cultural, environmental and economic issues that shape the location's specific needs. Specifically, the focus group discussions shed light on the perception concerning, on the one hand, the strengths of the sector, in terms of the main assets to develop, and on the other, the main challenges faced in terms of the structural needs of the sector and the impact of the pandemic. Considering the centrality of collaboration among economic actors and with the stakeholders, the discussions also wanted to investigate the possible direction in which cooperation can be developed.

This chapter represents this variety by introducing the individual territories where the research has been conducted, their geographic specificities, and the actual needs of their professionals. The territories are clustered on their national position. The characteristics of each territory are described, and the results of the single focus group discussions are described and considered. The results are presented through an analytical apparatus of tables that highlight the frequency of specific topics recurring in the discussion through a five-star frequency index (Mihaescu, 2010), which is calculated on the number of occurrences of the individual topic and the general agreement of the participants on the subject. Reference is also made to the respondents who support the issues relating to the results and discussion. The personal data of the informants were anonymized.

# SOUTH-WEST REGION (BULGARIA, BALKAN INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY)

## *The territory*

The south-western region of Bulgaria is one of the six regions in Bulgaria, which includes the districts of Blagoevgrad, Kyustendil, Pernik and Sofia. Its area is 20,306 km<sup>2</sup> and its population is approximately 2,133,406 people. Its territorial structure is represented by 46% agricultural territories, 47.1% forest and 4.9% urbanized. The significant operational and potential mineral water reserves are of particular economic importance to the Southwest Planning Area. Their complex use has a high socio-economic and ecological effect. The hydrothermal resources of the region open up unique opportunities for the development of multi-season medical tourism, greenhouse production, geothermal heating, etc. These activities can be developed in the conditions of free entrepreneurship and market economy with wide participation of private investors.

## *Focus group analysis*

The focus groups were held by Iva Vasileva in Sofia, involving ten participants. Five out of ten of the group members work in guest houses (four cooks and one manager), two were agritourism managers, one the owner of a catering service, one the owner of a winery and one was a hotel chain owner.

Main assets	Gastronomic Heritage	*****
	Landscape Feature	***
Main needs	Advertising and Promotion (Places and Products)	**
	Improve Managerial Aspects	****
Pandemic's impact	No Opportunity for Innovation	*****

Opportunity of cooperation	Creating Events	*****
	Collaboration and Cooperation (Public Institution)	**
	Advertising	**

Tab. 3. Key issues emerged during the focus group discussions conducted with informants from the Southwest region in Bulgaria

The main asset of the interviewees' territory is the local cuisine and the tradition linked to it, together with the specific landscape of the region. In fact, other important assets mentioned are the thermal waters, which attract a lot of tourists, as well as the quiet atmosphere and the nature of the small villages.

While rural tourism appears to be on the rise, the sector presents some fundamental needs, the first of which concerns the necessity to increase the media presence and visibility of the region on an international level (3-BG; 9-BG). While on a national level the region is advertised through numerous services and websites, this exposition is limited to domestic travellers (9-BG).

Together with the aforementioned concern, informants pointed out the necessity for a better organization of touristic services so as to be more competitive and adherent to the expectations of the tourists (5-BG; 9-BG). This is linked to the need to develop managerial skills among companies (5-BG), as well as the need for collaboration, in particular with regard to the organization of events and festivals to promote typical dishes (4-BG; 5-BG; 9-BG).

The needs concerning improvement, refocalization, and intensification of touristic services has become more urgent since the pandemic (8-BG), which deeply affected the business in a negative way (4-BG; 5-BG; 7-BG).

Overall, entrepreneurs felt the need for further collaboration among economic actors and stakeholders, aimed at improving the touristic offer, communication and the planning of shared development projects (7-BG).

Therefore, key areas for education intervention should aim at strengthening communicational and IT skills, entrepreneurial and managerial skills, and innovation skills.



Winery Villa Melnik



Rodopa Mountain



Fotinski waterfall



Mineral Springs Complex Ognyanovo

# **NICOSIA, LIMASSOL, PROTARAS AND PAFOS (CYPRUS, RIVENSCO CONSULTING LTD)**

## *The territory*

Nicosia, Limassol, Protaras and Pafos are some of the most iconic places of Cyprus and, thanks to the relatively small size of the island, visitors can explore them in just a single visit. The cities are the doors to a vast agricultural and natural landscape that is widely appreciated by tourists and represents one of the assets of this crucial industry for the island's economy. The sector has been at the centre of relevant national development policies, such as the "Rural Tourism Marketing Plan 2007–2013", which contribute to further expanding the sector.

Heritage as well as the local culture and its long history in hospitality are key assets of tourism in Cyprus, which attracts more than 4 million visitors every year (4.5 times its population). Moreover, the development of rural tourism is deeply linked to the opportunities provided by the local food heritage. On the one hand, the gastronomic tradition of the island is based on the Mediterranean diet and is expressed by numerous high-quality foods (e.g. halloumi, potatoes, zivania, and the broad range of fruit and vegetables) produced by local farmers and artisanal firms. They result in an important attraction for the sector. On the other hand, wine and wine culture are important touristic resources that attract thousand tourists every year in areas such as Limassol, who come to visit the winemakers and enjoy the products. This success has spurred new forms of collaboration, such as the creation of specific partnerships among wineries in order to promote the product more efficiently to an international audience.

## *Focus group analysis*

The focus groups were held by Michalis Papatherapontos in Pafos with ten participants. Five of them worked in hotels (two assistant managers, one chef, one housekeeper and one working in marketing), four in restaurants (two managers and two owners) and one participant in a travel agency as an agent.

Main assets	Gastronomic Heritage	**
	Primary Production	**
Main needs	Advertising and Promotion (Places and Products)	**
	Create Events	*
	Collaboration and Cooperation	**
	Improve Gastronomic Aspects	*
	Innovation	****
	Need of Professional Training	***
	Public Funding	**
	Understanding Trends	***
Pandemic's impact	Shown the Necessity of Innovation	*****
	Create Economic Problems	*****
	Loss of Personnel	*
	Loss of Working Contracts	*
Opportunity of cooperation	Collaboration and Cooperation (Public Institution)	****
	Creating Events	**
	Professional and Managerial Training	**

Tab. 4. Key issues emerged during the focus group discussions conducted with informants from the rural region around Nicosia, Limassol, Protaras and Pafos in Cyprus

The discussions highlighted the characteristics of a vibrant sector that faces the pressure of a changing market that is more and more interested in enjoying unique experiences, fully accessing the specificities of the country and its countryside. In this respect, the participants highlighted the key aspects that should be improved in order to further develop the sector. First, they felt the necessity to maintain a strong sense of authenticity (3-CY; 5-CY), together with a constant innovation in the touristic offer (1-CY; 2-CY; 6-CY; 7-CY; 9-CY). Moreover, the term "quality" is quoted by various participants (1-CY; 8-CY; 10-CY), specifically in order to ensure health and safety standards (4-CY). In this respect, they mention the need for further investment in improving the skills and training of the employees (4-CY; 5-CY; 8-CY; 10-CY) as much as the overall quality of the working environment (2-CY).

The culinary aspect is crucial in characterizing the local offer. In this respect, the informants suggest the necessity to further develop the offer in order to

maintain the specificity of food (3-CY; 5-CY), while leaving space to also include international products and recipes (4-CY). Overall, the need to ensure the sustainability of local cuisine is perceived as important (3-CY). In this respect, they indicate product promotion as a fundamental issue for the development of proximity and culinary tourism (2-CY; 3-CY; 5-CY), specifically by improving the use of a digital marketing strategy (9-CY), and implementing new events (2-CY; 4-CY)

Cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders is one of the most urgent needs for the development of this kind of tourism (1-CY; 4-CY; 6-CY; 7-CY), with the support of local authorities such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Deputy Ministry of Tourism (1-CY; 4-CY; 6-CY).

The COVID-19 pandemic has created serious problems for all of the tourism sector, from small to large businesses, with various consequences (1-CY; 2-CY; 3-CY; 4-CY; 5-CY; 6-CY; 7-CY; 8-CY; 9-CY; 10-CY). It also affected the human resources with the loss of qualified personnel (2-CY; 8-CY) as well as the loss of many working contracts (6-CY; 7-CY). In spite of everything, the pandemic provided the opportunity to develop new strategies and identify new opportunities (6-CY). The necessity for innovation to overcome this kind of emergency is recognized by all the participants (1-CY; 2-CY; 3-CY; 4-CY; 5-CY; 6-CY; 7-CY; 8-CY; 9-CY; 10-CY). Companies must be prepared for this kind of situation (9-CY) and respond quickly and effectively (7-CY; 8-CY; 9-CY; 10-CY).

Therefore, in terms of educational needs, the informants, prioritize Innovation and professional skill development together with the improvement of collaboration skills aimed at reinforcing the social capital of the local enterprises.



View from Tsangarides winery



Preparation for traditional Kleftiko



Traditional Oven with bread in Sophias  
Traditional House – Agrotouristic restaurant



Spring Image in Kathikas  
Village Agrotouristic unit



Traditional Decorations in Sophias  
Traditional House – Agrotouristic restaurant



Synergies with local farmers  
Tsangarides winery

# PROVENCE AND CORSICA (FRANCE, LECARBURATEUR)

## *Territory*

The research investigated two key Mediterranean areas of France, Provence and Corsica.

Provence is a territory within the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region and corresponds roughly to the departments of Bouches-du-Rhône, Var, Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, Vaucluse and Alpes-Maritimes (with the exception of the Roya Valley). Provence, the Alps and the Côte d'Azur are undeniable tourist assets. With more than 30 million visitors each year and 18 billion euros in economic income, tourism is a key sector for the regional economy. The territory is endowed with a renown natural environment marked by more than 300 days of sunshine a year. Moreover, the region has the highest number of animal and plant species in France. Mediterranean and Alpine, rich in numerous endemic species, it has a remarkable natural, cultural and landscape heritage of great diversity. This biodiversity also transpires from a rich gastronomy. The main local products are wine, olive oil, cheese, among the others and can be tasted on the Provence wine route, the lavender route, the scents and flavours route or directly from the craftsman, the cellar, the producer and in the numerous restaurants and bars known as "Bistrot de Pays".

Corsica is the French region with the largest share of rural communes. Corte is the historical and cultural capital of Corsica, the fourth largest Mediterranean island. The small town occupies a central position on the island between Bastia and Ajaccio, the two economic centres of Corsica. Corte has just over 6,000 inhabitants (excluding students, who only live there during the university year). Being located in a mountainous area, the city has a strong agro-pastoral character. Local shepherds have adapted to meet the growing demand of tourism in the region. Corsica benefits from a strong culinary heritage. More specifically, the central region is strong in cheese production and many specialities are known beyond the island borders. Despite its fame, many shepherds have abandoned

the mountains and if the production of cheese remains sufficient, the milk is often imported from abroad for industrial production. Charcuterie has undergone the same treatment as cheese and producers generally do not have sufficient meat for charcuterie production. Although there are producer group initiatives, they are unfortunately not sufficiently structured to meet consumer demand.

### *Focus group analysis*

The interviews concerning Provence were held by Marina Berhault in Marseille with a total of four participants. Their professional profiles were: one owner of a hotel; one countryside guide; one freelancer consultant in rural development and heritage enhancement; and one Tourism and Culture Officer.

The focus group concerning Corsica was held by Ionel Fedida in Corte with five participants, including two hotel managers and two restaurant managers (one chef and one owner).

Main assets	Gastronomic Heritage	***
	Cultural Heritage	*
	Landscape Feature	***
	Primary Production	***
Main needs	Advertising and Promotion (Places and Products)	**
	Improve Logistic	**
	Innovation	*
	Collaboration and Cooperation	**
	Rural Development	**
Pandemic's impact	Opportunity for Innovation	***
	Create Problems	***
	Tourist Behavioral Changes	**
Opportunity of cooperation	Collaboration and Cooperation	****
	Creating Events	*

*Tab. 5. Key issues emerged during the focus group discussions with informants from France.*

The informants in Provence indicated gastronomic heritage (7-FR; 8-FR) as the main asset for rural tourism in the region due to the large agricultural presence and local products (7-FR; 9-FR). This is strictly related to the cultural heritage of the area (6-FR; 9-FR) and the savoir faire of the local producers. The landscape features (6-FR; 9-FR) of Provence make it a well known area for naturalistic and hiking activities that are well promoted online (6-FR). Another crucial asset is the strong collaboration (7-FR) between institutions and farmers.

Conversely, in Corsica, one of the most recognized assets is linked to the strong island identity with its sea and mountainous landscapes (1-FR; 2-FR; 5-FR). This identity is strictly related to the culinary heritage of the island (2-FR; 3-FR; 4-FR; 5-FR) with its wide variety of local products (1-FR; 2-FR; 3-FR; 5-FR).

In Provence, regarding the most urgent needs, all the interviewees replied differently according to their professional profile. The first interviewee expressed the need to improve the gastronomic aspects and the inadequacy of professionals in the processing and service sector (6-FR). The following participant expressed the need for improved logistics for better access to many villages and more hotel services to allow tourists to stay longer (7-FR). Participant 8-FR expressed the necessity for more advertising and promotion, as well as the need to innovate and organize events in order to amplify the touristic offer. The last participant expressed the need for more market opportunities for the craftsmen and local products, with more collaboration among all the people that are living there.

On the other hand, with regard to the urgent needs in Corsica, the development of agriculture and handcrafters' products is required from participants (1-FR; 2-FR; 3-FR; 5-FR) as much as the return to agriculture (2-FR; 5-FR) and rediscovering its past culinary heritage (5-FR). Many farmers do not take into consideration the possibility of creating an agritourism in order to improve their business (4-FR), so communication between politicians, tourism professionals and farmers should be implemented (4-FR) in order to diversify activities. Transport on the island is another issue that needs to be improved in order to favour the access of local goods (2-FR). The promotion of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) products in a more effective way is also urgently needed (1-FR).

Moreover, without doubt the COVID pandemic strongly affected Provence's tourism, creating a total vacuum (7-FR) and numerous problems (6-FR), but it also led to tourist behavioural changes, increasing the culinary and proximity tourism (8-FR) and outdoor activities (6-FR). Moreover, it led to a technological development (9-FR) – for instance, with virtual visits helping the online commerce. In Corsica, the pandemic saw a hard time for tourism, which accounts for 40% of the island's total income (2-FR; 5-FR), but after the lockdown more tourists were seeking outdoor activities and this led to problems bond to the

huge presence of tourists on the GR20, the most famous trail in Corse (1-FR); but it also led to the rediscovery of abandoned paths, giving an economic boost to different areas (1-FR). The pandemic was perceived as a rethinking and reinventing moment for most of the Corsicans (2-FR; 3-FR; 4-FR; 5-FR). The forced stop showed them that Corse can live without tourism, even with difficulties, but this should lead to an increase in sustainable tourism (5-FR).

Among professionals in Provence, collaboration among the stakeholders is considered to already be in place. However, one of the best ways to create synergies among the stakeholders is certainly better cooperation and collaboration between all the economic actors and institutions (6-FR; 7-FR; 8-FR; 9-FR). There is a need to retrain people and have second jobs (7-FR), and cultural and culinary events are needed to bring people together (9-FR). Conversely, informants in Corsica felt the need for better cooperation and collaboration between stakeholders and institutions (1-FR; 3-FR; 4-FR; 5-FR). Consultations and communication with institutions must be improved (1-FR), organizing meetings before every summer season (3-FR) and knowing better the policy that parties will follow (5-FR). Some areas are “deserted” because of a lack of transport choices (1-FR). Cultural and culinary events are needed to bring people together and create a coalition (2-FR).

Overall, in the two areas, despite the lack of consensus among the participants, the key educational needs appear to be linked with the improvement of professionalism and communication, and collaboration skills.



Landscape Bonifacio



Corsica nature



Genoese tower ile Rousse



Restaurant Provence



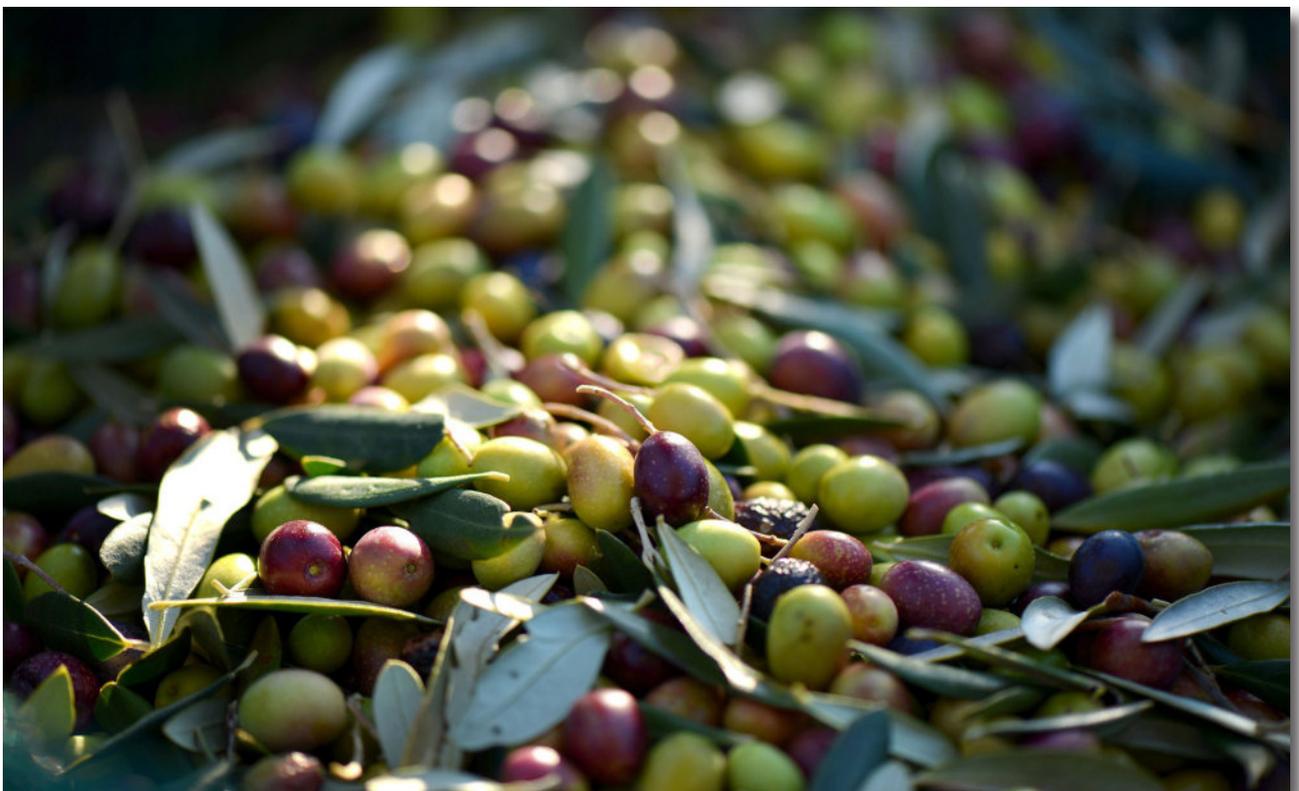
Lavender field Provence



Vineyard Provence



Olive branch



Olives



Verdon Gorges

# **EAST MACEDONIA AND THRACIA (GREECE, ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE)**

## *The territory*

The Region of East Macedonia and Thrace is a main gateway to Europe and at the same time a place with an ancient history. It is characterized by a high concentration of touristic resources appertaining to natural and cultural heritage: imposing mountains; rich and unique flora ecosystems of high ecological and aesthetic value; various aquatic systems; beautiful coastlines; special geological formations; interesting anthropogenic environment; cities and traditional settlements of historical, cultural and architectural interest; churches, monasteries, festivals and events that contain the echo of elements of ancient Greece and of the Byzantine tradition; a rich musical tradition, which is still functionally integrated in modern life; museums of history, culture and natural history; forts and citadels; archaeological sites; well-known local products; and excellent cuisine.

Rural tourism has bene developed and throughout the region there are numerous ecotourisms, shelters, climbing slopes, mountain trails and hostels, service packages with many types of alternative activities (trekking, rafting, canoeing-kayaking, archery, horse riding, mountain biking, paragliding, flying fox, gorge zipline, 4x4, ATV, birdwatching etc.), and three forest villages in Xanthi and Drama. Similarly, wine tourism is developed thanks to the action of the Wine Route of Dionysus, part of the Wine Roads of Northern Greece. In the northern part of the region ski tourism is present, with resorts in Drama and Kavala. Finally, in Alexandroupolis there are conference facilities and casinos.

## *Focus group analysis*

The focus groups were held by Georgios Konsoulas in Kavala with ten participants. Hotels were the most represented with five participants (one owner, two chefs, one restaurant manager and one bar manager), two restaurant owners, one winery (marketing manager) and one Vocational Education Centre (manager).

Main Assets	Gastronomic Heritage	***
	Cultural Heritage	**
	Good Logistic	*
Main needs	Advertising and Promotion (Places and Products)	**
	Collaboration and Cooperation	*
	Create Events	**
Pandemic's impact	Opportunity for Innovation	**
	Tourist Behavioral Change	**
	No Opportunity for Innovation	*
Opportunity of cooperation	Collaboration and Cooperation (Economic Actors)	****
	Collaboration and Cooperation (Public Institution)	**

Tab. 6. Key issues emerged during the focus group discussions with participant from East Macedonia and Thracia in Greece

The mild climate allows tourism throughout the year (8-GR) and easy access to destinations of interest, making it possible to combine gastronomic activities with many others (landscapes, museums and archaeological sites) (7-GR). In fact, the informants recognize the culinary tradition and history that emerge in the quality, cooking methods and production techniques of local products as one of the most important assets of the region (1-GR; 2-GR; 3-GR; 4-GR; 6-GR). More specifically, East Macedonia and Thracia is a well-supplied area in terms of food and wine services (1-GR; 3-GR; 5-GR; 6-GR; 7-GR; 8-GR; 10-GR). There is a wide variety of restaurants and a variety of dining options, either good restaurants, taverns or street food (1-GR). In addition, wine, is a valued tourism asset of the area thanks to the abundance of wineries and vineyards that offer wine and food tasting (5-GR); also present is a network called "Wine Routes" (9-GR). Moreover, the cultural and religious tourism opportunities of this area are a strong asset for tourism (2-GR; 4-GR; 6-GR; 7-GR).

With regard to the needs of the sector, the informants highlight the necessity to communicate more to the public about the proximity and culinary tourism of our region (6-GR), thanks to the creation of applications for mobile phones, a central thematic website for culinary tourism and special thematic portals on existing websites of the municipalities of the region (4-GR; 8-GR). There is a

need for cooperation between hotels and restaurant owners with producers to provide local fresh products for their customers, connecting hospitality with the primary sector (2-GR; 3-GR).

The pandemic slowed the economy and many industries in the tourism sector were severely affected by the measures taken (6-GR; 9-GR). However, COVID-19 has led to changes in the behavioural patterns and preferences of travellers, pushing them to lower the risk of infection by travelling to rural proximity destinations. The countryside has been more at the centre of attention among tourists after COVID because they want to be close to nature, in less populated areas (1-GR; 5-GR; 8-GR). This has created a greater awareness of sustainable travel (3-GR). Moreover, the pandemic led to the experimentation of new digital technology in the sector (2-GR; 7-GR; 10-GR).

The role of collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders is highly recognized (1-GR; 2-GR; 3-GR; 4-GR; 6-GR; 7-GR; 8-GR; 9-GR; 10-GR) and is crucial in order to create a stronger culinary identity and stimulate the sector's growth (3-GR; 6-GR; 7-GR). A good response to development in this area could be the creation of culinary festivals (1-GR) and culinary routes (7-GR), following the wine roads example. Moreover, the creation of excursion and experience packages, combining the utilization of local vineyards and archeological sites and museums, can be a lever for the development of culinary tourism and local development (5-GR). For some operators, cooperation and the development of rural tourism must be coordinated by the municipality or the region (1-GR; 7-GR) so as to create a common local touristic strategy (3-GR) and find sponsorship (5-GR). The complex relationships between public and private actors make it desirable to create specific spaces for dialogue and to strengthen the role of existing spaces for shared reflection. These spaces should favour synergies between stakeholders (e.g. in terms of provision of culinary and cultural activities), as well as ensure a higher profile for culture in the dialogue about tourism (9-GR).

Therefore, in terms of educational needs, the informants highlight the usefulness of the further development of collaboration, communication and innovation skills.



Landscape



Landscape



Landscape



Organic farming



Organic farming



Traditional food



Traditional food



Traditional food



Landscape

# **ALESSANDRIA PROVINCE (ITALY, UNIVERSITY OF GASTRONOMIC SCIENCES)**

## *The territory*

The province of Alessandria is in the southeastern area of Piedmont, in north-west Italy. The largest part of the territory is used for farming, with hazelnuts, wine, wheat and corn the key local production.

In 2010 the census reported 10,723 farms with 23,454 employees. The number of farms was practically halved (-47.4%) over the first decade of the third millennium while the cultivated area was substantially maintained (-5.1%), a sign of a progressive expansion of the agricultural land cultivated per farm. This figure, however, must be read against a decline in the margins produced by the crops to which the territory is most suited, namely the production of cereals or corn (37.45% of the total agricultural area) and grapes (9.14%). These data tell of a sector in transformation, but above all one faced with systemic difficulties that affect its potential development. In the following decade, data show that the rise in the rate of business closures progressed at an annual rate of 2.58%, the worst in Piedmont.

Rural tourism has grown in the past three decades. More specifically, the strong link between food production and rurality have driven the sector and is at the basis of its articulation. The hospitality sector is largely based on small structures, mostly family businesses (e.g. B&B, agritourisms, etc). Wine is a key distinguishing element for the firms, and it is linked with the production of several PDOs. Historical and artistic heritage complete the touristic offer.

In 2014 a significant part of the province was identified as a UNESCO world site.

## *Focus group analysis*

The focus groups were held by Michele F. Fontefrancesco in Alessandria with five participants in each. They were mainly agritourism owners (eight out of ten), with four of them also managing a didactic farm, one was a beekeeper and one officer was in charge of an Italian agritourism association (Terra Nostra –

Coldiretti).

Main assets	Gastronomic Heritage	****
	Landscape Feature	*****
	Good Logistic	
Main needs	Collaborations and Cooperation	***
	Innovation	*
	Public Founding	**
	Overcome Conservatism	**
Pandemic's impact	Opportunity for Innovation	*****
	Tourist Behavioral Change	*****
	Profitability of Side Businesses	*
Opportunity of cooperation	Collaboration and Cooperation (Economic Actors)	*****
	Collaboration and Cooperation (Public Institution)	**
	Advertising	*

Tab. 7. Key issues emerged during the focus group discussions with participant from the Alessandria province in Italy.

The majority of the participants were well aware of their local cultural and gastronomic heritage and considered it a key asset for the development of the sector (9-IT; 10-IT; 12-IT; 14-IT; 15-IT; 16-IT; 17-IT; 18-IT). Moreover, all of them mentioned the landscape's beauty and characteristics as another main asset (9-IT; 10-IT; 11-IT; 12-IT; 13-IT; 14-IT; 15-IT; 16-IT; 17-IT; 18-IT).

In terms of urgent needs, the first is to strengthen the collaboration and cooperation among the actors of the sector and with the stakeholders (9-IT; 10-IT; 11-IT; 12-IT; 15-IT; 17-IT). This appears to be linked with another problem, which is a widespread conservatism among the entrepreneurs and the stakeholders that limits the possibility of further development (9-IT; 10-IT; 11-IT; 13-IT). In conjunction with this, the informants highlighted the need for easier access to public funds (13-IT; 15-IT; 17-IT, 9-IT).

In the Alessandria Province participants perceived the COVID-19 pandemic as a great opportunity for innovation despite the forced closure of activities (9-IT; 10-IT; 11-IT; 12-IT; 13-IT; 14-IT; 15-IT; 16-IT; 17-IT; 18-IT). The most recognized

trend was that of the behavioural change of tourists preferring the rural areas with the need to escape urbanity (8-IT; 9-IT; 10-IT; 11-IT; 12-IT; 13-IT; 14-IT; 15-IT; 17-IT; 18-IT)..

Most of the participants recognized collaboration and cooperation as the key for creating synergies between tourism stakeholders (9-IT; 10-IT; 11-IT; 12-IT; 13-IT; 14-IT; 15-IT; 16-IT; 17-IT; 18-IT). Moreover, this can help the relationship with institutions – for instance, in updating legislations, improving services and maintaining the territory(9-IT; 11-IT; 17-IT). Participants from the Alessandria area show the necessity of creating common goals for tourism development, mutual support (9-IT; 10-IT; 11-IT; 12-IT; 13-IT; 14-IT; 15-IT; 16-IT), and improving the touristic offer by integrating the products developed by the different enterprises already active locally (16-IT; 17-IT).

Therefore, in terms of educational needs, the participants predominantly expressed an urgency for the development of collaboration and entrepreneurial skills.



Lu and the UNESCO site of Monferrato.  
Photo: M.F.Fontefrancesco, 2022



Food Festival in San Salvatore Monferrato.  
Photo: M.F.Fontefrancesco, 2014



The Fortress of Carrega Ligure. Photo:  
M.F.Fontefrancesco, 2021



The Fortress of Carrega Ligure.  
Photo: M.F.Fontefrancesco, 2021



A detail of Montechiaro d'Acqui town center.  
Photo: M.F.Fontefrancesco, 2021



The Orba river in Casalcermelli.  
Photo: M.F.Fontefrancesco, 2022

# **RURAL LAZIO**

## **(ITALY, IGOR VITALE INTERNATIONAL SRL)**

### *The territory*

Lazio is located in the central part of the Italian peninsula. It is internationally known for its capital, Rome, one of the three main international tourist destinations in the country. Despite the presence of this site, and other established sea destinations, the region offers a rich scene in rural tourism. In this respect, the focus groups investigated different locations across the region that are distinguished for their touristic offer. The area was investigated through three case studies, namely Greggio, Genzano di Roma, also known simply as Genzano, and Acilia.

Greccio is an old hill town of the province of Rieti and is situated in the region of Lazio, Italy. This village is small (17 km<sup>2</sup>), with a total population of 1,505 inhabitants. Greccio is surrounded by an oak forest, and is perched on the slopes of Mount Lacerone, 705 metres above sea level. The historical centre of this ancient village is well preserved, fascinating and evocative, but the nature of this small hill town is also worthy of mention: the beauty of the landscape,; mountains; botanical varieties (oak forests, woods and underbrush); and water sources. The main reason why Greccio is famous is its close link with St Francis of Assisi (in Italian: San Francesco D'Assisi). Greccio has earned the title of "Town of Cribs"; in fact, here there is also the famous National Museum of Cribs, also called the "Nativity Scenes Museum", which is the most interesting socio-cultural element in the village. Moreover, each year this small town organizes the historical re-enactment of the original living nativity scene, with the participation of people in medieval costumes. Nowadays, this village has become the symbol of Christian religion, and it follows that it is also the symbol of fraternity and peace, overcoming all race, religion and language-based differences. In addition to religion, Greccio attracts tourists because of its typical dishes: "Bignè di San Giuseppe", "Fettuccine al tartufo" and the "Cannelloni allalateauolia" are really famous. As regards desserts, Greccio is known for its pastry with walnuts, gingerbread, ricotta tart and tarts with sour cherries, lateauolii and chocolate. In

the village there are many shops where you can buy these delicacies.

Genzano and Acilia are two small neighbourhoods located in the city of Rome. Genzano is located on the slopes of a volcanic crater and overlooks the famous Lake of Nemi; it has an altitude of 435 m. Given its geographical position, it represents a beautiful area where it is possible to admire a beautiful lake surrounded by a forest. In fact, usually the reason why tourists visit this rural area is for its nature.

Acilia is crossed by the Tevere river, the main and most famous river of Rome. As opposed to Genzano, Acilia is not characterized by the presence of nature. Nonetheless, in this small town it is possible to discover and admire ancient Roman ruins that are mostly unknown to the public. Genzano is best known for its famous Infiorata, a special event that attracts people every year, during the month of June and more specifically during the religious Feast of Corpus Christi. As the name suggests, the Infiorata is characterized by the presence on the streets of beautiful flowers from the local luxuriant cultivations. Every year, artists of Genzano create real works of art by using flower petals spread over the whole Via Bruno Buozzi. In both these towns there are high-quality traditional dishes, especially because in the restaurants it is possible to find the most famous dishes of Roman cuisine. For example, it is possible to eat "Fettuccine all'uovo con ragù", "Spaghetti alla carbonara", and "Bignè di San Giuseppe". Also, wine is a speciality of Genzano cuisine, and the most famous winery in this town is "Cantina Costantini". In the focus group related to Genzano, we had the opportunity to interview the owner of this important winery.

### *Focus group analysis*

The focus groups were held by Mariella Segreti in Greccio and Acilia with four participants in each. With regard to Greccio there were three restaurants and an agritourism (three owners and a maître de salle), in Acilia the group comprised two restaurants, one hotel and one winery (three owners and one chef).

Main assets	Gastronomic Heritage	*
	Cultural Heritage	***
	No specific asset	**

Main needs	Improve Gastronomic Aspects	***
	Improve Logistic	**
	Lack of Outlets	**
	Create Events	*
Pandemic's impact	Opportunity for Innovation	**
	No Opportunity for Innovation	****
Opportunity of collaboration	Collaboration and Cooperation (Economic Actors)	***
	Collaboration and Cooperation (Public Institution)	**
	Creating Events	*
	Professional and Managerial Training	*

Tab. 8. Key issues emerged during the focus group discussions with participant from Greccio, Genzano and Acilia, in Italy.

The informants linked the development of tourism in Greccio to the presence of the Franciscan sanctuary in Assisi (1-IT; 2-IT; 3-IT; 4-IT). Despite the importance of cultural tourism, they highlighted the limits of the local gastronomic tourism. The participants complained about the few culinary resources, the presence of only one typical dish (1-IT; 2-IT; 3-IT) and one of quality saffron and guanciale (cheek lard) (2-IT). Genzano and Acilia face similar problems in terms of specificity of food heritage, inasmuch as they develop their offer by taking cuisine from outside their municipal borders (5-IT; 7-IT; 8-IT). Moreover, they suffer from the proximity with Rome, which drains tourists and attracts the attentions of the visitor away from what the localities can offer (5-IT).

The informants indicated the need for better transportation (2-IT; 4-IT; 6-IT), public facilities (2-IT; 5-IT; 8-IT) and events (8-IT). In particular, they felt the need to reinforce collaborations and to develop new touristic products, as well as a better valorization of local environmental and cultural resources.

The COVID-19 pandemic did not provide the opportunity for innovation for most of the informants because it forced them to close (1-IT; 2-IT; 3-IT; 4-IT; 6-IT; 8-IT). For the few of them that continued working during the lockdown, the period was a period of transformation that involved the experimentation of new online and on-site services (5-IT, 8-IT, 7-IT).

Most of the participants recognized collaboration and cooperation as the key to creating synergies among tourism stakeholders (1-IT; 2-IT; 4-IT; 7-IT). In the

Greccio area religious institutions must also be taken into consideration because the tourism in the area is high, thanks to the Saint Francesco d'Assisi Sanctuary (1-IT; 3-IT; 4-IT). Informants would also consider stronger collaboration crucial to increasing customer flow, and the creation of food events and festivals (3-IT; 4-IT), despite possible competition among economic players (6-IT).

Therefore, the informants highlighted the need to strengthen their cooperation, and environmental and cultural skills in order to reinforce their business and the sector.



Fregnacce alla grecciana

# **HARGHITA COUNTY (ROMANIA, ADI HARGHITA)**

## *Territory*

With a total area of 6339 km<sup>2</sup>, Harghita county is situated in the central part of Romania which consists primarily of mountains, connected to the Eastern Carpathians, such as the Ciuc and Harghita Mountains; volcanic plateau foothills, and the more densely populated river valleys.

Harghita County is primarily a rural area with the majority of the population involved in agriculture or food production. Its main source of attraction resides in the intimate relationship of its inhabitants with nature and in the always renewing, living traditions. Folk culture and traditional husbandry practices are part of everyday life here, which can be easily observed while travelling across the countryside.

Tourists are welcome to take part in organized programmes where they can be initiated in the ins and outs of pottery, weaving or wood carving, are offered the possibility to bake home-made bread or to have rides on horse-drawn carts.

The Transylvanian food, which is an interesting mix of Romanian, German and Hungarian cuisine and the Moldavian, Bucovinean gastronomy, is specific to the Eastern Romanian region. Visitors can enjoy meals served in small restaurants or local guest houses, which serve home-made natural products. These little places use ingredients that come from the local farmers and producers.

## *Focus group analysis*

The focus groups were held by Székely Zelma and Márton Júlia in Miercurea Ciuc, with nine participants working or owning various activities including hotels, restaurant food magazine, tourism centre, travel agency and a brandy distillery.

Main assets	Gastronomic Heritage	*****
Main needs	Advertising and Promotion (Places and Products)	**
	Need of Professional Training	**
	Lack of Outlets	**
	Market Opportunities (Local Products)	**
	Creating Events	*
Pandemic's impact	Opportunity for Innovation	**
	IT Innovation	****
	Change Entrepreneur Strategy Business	**
	Tourist Behavioral Changes	***
Opportunity of collaboration	Collaboration and Cooperation (Economic Actors)	****
	Collaboration and Cooperation (Public Institution)	*
	Creating Events	*
	Professional and Managerial Training	*

Tab. 9. Key issues emerged during the focus group discussions with participant from Harghita County in Romania

One of the main assets of Harghita county is the gastronomic heritage due to the high quality of food and its local produce (1-RO; 2-RO; 3-RO; 4-RO; 5-RO; 6-RO; 7-RO; 9-RO). This is also expressed through the gastronomical events, which are another important asset (2-RO; 3-RO), and gastronomic tours and workshops (e.g. visiting producers, tasting, seeing the process, the authentic locations, eating the food at the source) (8-RO).

Interviewees highlighted the need for professional training in gastronomy (1-RO; 3-RO; 4-R; 6-RO). Some also underlined the need for more services, such as restaurants and resorts (2-RO; 3-RO; 5-RO), as well as better commercial outlets for local produce (5-RO; 8-RO; 9-RO). Further needs are linked with innovation and the diversification of tourist services (2-RO; 9-RO) as well as stronger marketing initiatives (9-RO), considering issues of socio-cultural and environmental sustainable development (2-RO; 7-RO). Some interviewees

expressed the need for education, training and professional employees (1-RO; 3-RO; 6-RO), for instance through organizing ongoing professional gastronomy training (6-RO). Another issue was the necessity for a proper advertising strategy through media, events, expo, networks, institutions and platforms (2-RO; 5-RO; 7-RO; 8-RO), as well as further institutional support (3-RO; 6-RO; 9-RO).

All the interviewees saw the pandemic period as a moment of innovation for the sector, in particular for what concerns investments in IT services (e.g. new digital marketing platforms, food delivery services, and new apps for tourism services) (1-RO; 3-RO; 4-RO; 5-RO; 7-RO). The period has also led to a change in tourists' interests, with an increased attention toward proximity tourism (2-RO; 3-RO; 5-RO) and, from a culinary perspective, with more appreciation for local ingredients (5-RO; 6-RO; 7-RO). All these changes have led to a need to improve staff skills (4-RO; 5-RO), and develop a better tourism strategy (4-RO; 5-RO; 8-RO).

In order to create a better synergy between stakeholders, collaboration and cooperation is perceived as the fundamental tool for networking (1-RO; 3-RO; 4-RO; 5-RO; 6-RO; 7-RO; 8-RO). This collaboration can be helpful in order to create and organize larger events (1-RO; 4-RO; 6-RO, 7-RO).

Therefore, overall, the informants highlighted educational needs that are specific to communication, entrepreneurial and innovation skills.



Hășmaș Hagymás Mountains



Lake Saint Anne



Gastronomy



Ghimeş Gyimes region



## Gastronomy

# **ESKISEHIR AND CENTRAL ANATOLIAN REGION (TURKEY, EUROASIA INNOVATIVE SOCIETY ASSOCIATION)**

## *Territory*

The Central Anatolia region represents the heart of the Anatolic peninsula and has as its key cities Ankara, Konya, Kayseri, Eskişehir and Sivas. It presents a diverse landscape, mostly hilly and surrounded by parallel mountain ranges, and occupies 19% of the total area of Turkey with its 151,000 square kilometres of land.

Despite the presence of large cities, the region is largely rural. Wooded areas are confined to the north-west and north-east, and cultivation is restricted to the areas surrounding the neighbouring rivers where the valleys are sufficiently wide. Irrigation is practised wherever water is available; the deeply entrenched river courses make it difficult to raise water to the surrounding agricultural land, however. For the most part, the region is bare and monotonous and is used for grazing.

Wheat and barley are the most important crops. Other important crops in the region are potatoes, beans, chickpeas and lentils. Stock raising is also important.

The area is internationally known for its craft production, specifically carpet weaving, which is another important income for small villages, especially in Cappadocia and Konya.

The region is an established touristic destination, thanks to its landscape and the array of historical monuments and archaeological sites. Over the course of the past years, the field of rural tourism has expanded providing new opportunities, in particular for smaller centres traditionally marginalized by other forms of tourism.

## *Focus group analysis*

The focus groups were held by Etibar Mikayılov in Eskişehir, Central Anatolian

Region, with a total of ten participants. Five of them were hotel managers, four worked for restaurants, two as chefs and two as managers, and one was a director of a tourism company.

Main assets	Gastronomic Heritage	***
	Cultural Heritage	***
	Primary Production	**
	Landscape Feature	*
Main needs	Collaborations and Cooperation	**
	Improve Logistic	*
	Advertising and Promotion (Places and Products):	**
	Need of Professional Training	***
Pandemic's impact	Create Problems	*****
	Opportunity for Innovation	*****
	Loss of Personnel	***
	Tourist Behavioral Change	**
	Profitability of Side Businesses	*
Collaboration opportunity	Collaboration and Cooperation (Economic Actors)	*****
	Creating Events	***
	Advertising	*

Tab. 10. Key issues emerged during the focus group discussions with participant from Central Anatolia region in Turkey

The main assets recognized are the local cuisine (2-TR; 3-TR; 4-TR; 5-TR; 9-TR) and the landscape in terms of historic sites (monuments and excavations) (2-TR; 3-TR; 4-TR; 9-TR; 10-TR) and natural sites (1-TR; 4-TR). Informants are well aware of the quality of local food products (1-TR; 7-TR; 10-TR) and they are at the centre of the touristic offer.

The most urgent needs encompass the training of the personnel, improving their hospitality as well as their language skills (2-TR; 3-TR; 5-TR; 6-TR; 8-TR). Moreover, the informants mentioned the need for a stronger collaboration between companies and public institutions in terms of the reform of current regulations (1-TR; 3-TR; 4-TR), improving infrastructures (2-TR; 7-TR) and financial support (1-TR), as well as promoting better local products, especially food (7-TR; 8-TR). In addition, collaboration must be improved for advertising

and promoting places and local cuisine (4-TR; 7-TR; 8-TR), as well as through the organization of new events and fairs (2-TR; 3-TR; 6-TR; 8-TR; 9-TR).

The pandemic impacted on the sector, and almost all the interviewees faced problems, difficulties and had suffered big financial losses (1-TR; 2-TR; 3-TR; 4-TR; 5-TR; 6-TR; 7-TR; 8-TR; 10-TR). One of the biggest problems has been the loss of personnel (1-TR; 2-TR; 4-TR; 6-TR; 8-TR; 10-TR). The pandemic, however, also provided a moment of renewing and rethinking the touristic offer (1-TR; 2-TR; 3-TR; 7-TR; 8-TR; 9-TR; 10-TR), improving facilities (1-TR; 7-TR; 8-TR), and services in the face of an increased interest from urbanites towards the rural areas (4-TR; 5-TR; 9-TR; 10-TR).

Therefore, overall, the informants point to specific educational needs in the field of collaboration, entrepreneurial and professional skills.



Alireza mirzabegi



Kübra kuzu



Odunpazarı



Odunpazarı

# CONCLUSIONS

The international case studies present an overall picture of the needs and expectations of the sector. Overall, the specificity of the localization is relevant, but a common pattern emerges from the discussions. This picture is discussed in the following chapter of the volume. Overall, though, it is clear that rural tourism relies on the perceived specificity of the local environment, capitalizing on its cultural and culinary heritage. Overall, the rural tourism professionals perceived the need for further training and support in order to fill the gap concerning their professional and entrepreneurial skills and to effectively tackle the needs concerning new media, communication and marketing. In contrast to other sectors, the knowledge concerning the characteristics of the local milieu and landscape are shared among the professionals, making rural tourism appear a form of tourism deeply rooted and embedded in the local realities. While cultural capital can be considered relatively strong, the development of the social capital of the entrepreneurs is also an aspect of particular relevance to nurturing new collaboration among companies and with the stakeholders.

# 6.

## **AREAS OF INTERVENTION**

*By Michele F. Fontefrancesco, Amedeo Boscol*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The focus group discussions were crucial to highlight the actual needs perceived by the local actors, and specifically to highlight the local diversity that characterizes the sector. When interrogated about their necessities, professionals laid out a complex array of issues that encompasses specific goals to achieve and educational needs to meet.

This chapter explores this complex whole by identifying the goals and the underlying educational needs. They have been identified on the basis of the frequency of their occurrence during all the focus group discussions. In this respect, the knowledge base constituted by the integration of all the data collected during the 14 focus groups was used, without distinction of country or region.

The chapter first focuses on the required goals, then moves on to discussing the underlying educational needs, paving the way for the conclusive recommendation for educational agencies and policymakers.

# ASPIRED GOALS

The results of the focus group discussions highlight the aspired goals the informants considered crucial to prioritize and achieve in order to reinforce the sector. Looking at the occurrence of the topics, it is possible to identify seven shared aspired goals (Tab. 10)

Priority	Description	Frequency
Collaboration and Cooperation	Need for a better and improved collaboration among all the economic actors, public institution and the population of the rural areas.	****
Create Events	Creating events such as fairs, events, exhibitions in order to promote a specific area and its products, achieving in this way a greater visibility while attracting tourists.	**
Need of Professional and Managerial Training	Need of professional training for the operators in restaurants, hotels and all kind of touristic places about IT, marketing, English language, hospitality and knowing more about local foods and traditions. On the other side, improving all managerial and marketing skills of entrepreneurs as well as the working conditions for employees.	**
Advertising and Promotion (Places and Products)	The need of advertising and promoting the rural tourism on a national and international level, alongside the local products and the typical dishes.	**
Improve Gastronomic Aspects	Improve gastronomic aspects such as the education about local food and typical production method and quality at all levels (from schools to tourists), creation of new typical dishes with local resources, improve the use of local resources and support local producers.	*
Improve Logistic	Improve the logistic of the areas in terms of public transportation, roads, parking lots and infrastructures in general.	*

Innovation	Improve managerial and marketing skills of entrepreneurs as well as the working conditions for employees.	*
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*Tab. 10 presents the key areas of interventions to prioritize in support of the sector*

The importance and the need for collaboration between the various players in the sector in order to promote the sustainable development of rural tourism is evident in the literature (Bornhorst et al., 2010; Peroff et al., 2017; Pilving et al., 2019). Results from the focus groups confirm this trend suggesting the urgent need to improve the frequency and intensity of collaboration among all the economic actors of the sector and with public and private institutions. In fact, collaboration is seen as the best way for creating synergies; an understanding shared by over two-thirds of the participants. This goal could be achieved through the creation of networks, facilitating the exchange of goods, information, and knowledge, as well as through designing and coordinating common advertisement campaigns, developing shared projects and improving the sector's legislation.

In this respect, the need for and goal of cooperation entails better communication. From the focus groups this need emerged in terms of advertising and promotion on the national and international levels through both digital and traditional methods. This is shared by almost half of the respondents. The need for communication links with the opportunity to develop new attractive events. Fairs, exhibitions and workshops have the power to promote specific areas and their products, thus achieving a greater visibility while attracting tourists. To achieve good results, however, events should rely on a solid collaboration between all the stakeholders, from entrepreneurs to public institutions and civil society (Fontefrancesco, 2020).

According to Sin et al., (2002) rural entrepreneurship is one of the key points to favour the local labour market as it affects not only the agricultural sector but the whole community. Touristic activity needs efficiency in its operation and management to avoid environmental damage, depredations, contamination of the local culture or destruction of the characteristics of the tourist product; therefore, an efficient activity integrates harmoniously with the environment in which it is inserted, preserving the local culture, protecting, and developing the location (Vanzella & Brambilla, 2022). To create better synergies among all

the stakeholders and tourists, the need for professional training, for hospitality employees to improve their skills in catering and hotels, along with managerial trainings for owners and managers in furtherance of economic and personnel management, as well as the digitalization of the sector were hot topics in all the focus groups. One-third of the participants believed that trainings for workers at all levels is an urgent need; and three-quarters of the respondents shared the conviction that further training can also help in creating better synergies among stakeholders. Together with professionalization comes the need to improve the gastronomic aspect of the touristic offer. While two-thirds of the informants believed gastronomic heritage is a crucial asset for the business, a recurrent topic was the need to improve the present offer in order to better promote local food and to support tourists by providing them with the necessary information to appreciate it.

Overall, the informants indicate a need for innovation that comes together with the need for tools that are useful for intercepting new market opportunities and possible public and private fundings.

While the previous goals have as their main actors the rural tourist entrepreneurs, respondents point out a further common need, linked to infrastructures and logistics. Rural areas are commonly underdeveloped in terms of communication and information infrastructure (Bachtler et al., 2019). This has also led to substantial marginalization in the touristic market. As in the case of rural Corsica or Lazio, where the informants urged for a radical improvement of public transportation in order to make some areas easily accessible, throughout Southern Europe this issue is discussed by the professionals, identifying this point as one of most crucial ones for the future of the sector, despite the risks of furthering urbanization that comes with the development of infrastructure (Ciolac et al., 2011).

# EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Considering the emerging goals, the research identifies specific educational needs that can be clustered around the six typologies defined in Chapter 4 (tab. 11).

Country \ Skill	Bulgaria	Cyprus	France	Greece	Italy	Romania	Turkey	Freq.
Collaboration skills		x	x	x	x		x	5/7 ****
Communicational and IT skills	x		x	x				3/7 **
Entrepreneurial and managerial skills	x				x	x	x	4/7 ***
Environmental and cultural skills					x			1/7 *
Innovation skills	x	x		x		x		4/7 ***
Professional skills		x	x			x	x	4/7 ***

Tab. 11 Identify the most perceived educational needs by the focus group participants

Based on their frequency, it is possible to define an overall hierarchy of needs that sees at its apex, and most urgent, collaboration skills, then a substantial need for entrepreneurial, innovation and professional skills, followed by communication concerns and, finally the limited needs concerning environmental and cultural skills.

This specific configuration first confirms the profound embeddedness (Beynon, 2009) of this form of tourism, which on the one hand relies on a deep knowledge and awareness concerning the characteristics of the local areas among entrepreneurs, and on the other allows a better use of the local assets in order to develop the local touristic offer.

The bulk of the educational needs is concentrated around the four categories that appertain to the everyday running of the business. This may be the result

of the very professional trajectory that characterizes this specific sector, as also seen in Chapter 4. Other forms of tourism, based on more complex facilities and services, and heavily capitalized firms, such as those of tour operators, are structured based on a clear segmentation of functions of the personnel and a strong professionalization of managers and entrepreneurship. Rural tourism, being based on small firms, often developed in order to provide only a secondary source of income to family and farms, and lacks this professionalization and segmentation. Education is often acquired after the involvement in the sector and relies on training and workshops provided by professional organizations or government agencies. The role of educational institutions is limited in this respect. In this context, professionals look for new forms of skills, knowledge and competences' acquisition that do not require the interruption of their professional activity and are able to answer promptly to the needs of the everyday running and planning of the business. Thus, education, both entrepreneurs and their employees in order to maintain competitiveness in the market and to broaden the reach of their action.

The urgency for cooperation is also the result of the very economic and entrepreneurial characteristics of these firms. While rural tourism in all the countries the research investigated is characterized by a plurality of micro and small firms, this reality appears particularly fragmented and often unable to efficiently relate to national and regional institutions, or to create solid relationships among the firms. Moreover, a lack of collaboration can also be the result of local specificities (Putman, 1993). The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has raised awareness among the economic actors of the need to intensify collaborations to achieve better and stronger resilience and sustainability of their business. This creates a new educational demand that public and private institutions should address, moving beyond the perimeters of traditional education in hospitality.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter brings to the fore the emerging goals and needs of a sector that is on the rise. These expectations point to an overall reinforcement of the firms,

moving toward a professionalization of the players and the services. In this respect, the chapter paves the way to some recommendations to the main shareholders of professional education, which include public and private educational institutions and professional organizations.

First of all, the research points out the urgent need for further training that encompasses all aspects of the life of a touristic firm and involves both entrepreneurs and workers. The need is actual and concerns professionals already involved in the sector, thus, tools should be developed that match the limited availability of time and mobility of these professionals. In this regard, the educational offer should move away from conventional long courses, delivered in specific locations, generally in the city centres, while embracing flexible forms of education that can blend e-learning with specific moments of on-site teaching. Moreover, teaching should be directed toward a direct, practical application rather than remaining on a more abstract and theoretical level. While these recommendations refer to the present, prospectively there is the need to expand existing curricula in high and higher education with regard to hospitality and tourism management in order to also encompass aspects concerning the specific needs of rural tourism that have emerged from this research.

Finally, together with professional information, education should address the theme of collaboration, presenting the different tools in order to establish collective actions and to create a solid interface with private and public institutions. In this respect, education should fully embrace the message of coopetition. Far from being new, this concept suggests that even competing firms through the coordination of their actions can achieve better and mutually beneficial market performances (Chim-Miki et al., 2017). This lesson appears particularly useful both for the touristic sector in general and for rural tourism in particular (Machado et al., 2020). In this perspective, it should be embraced in the educational curricula, indicating the strategies through which to reach such coordination and the integration of services in order to achieve a better diversification of the touristic offer as well as a more efficient promotion of the single areas.

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# PART III

## THE TOOLKIT

# 7.

## **THE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS TOOLKIT**

*By Michele F. Fontefrancesco*

The third and final part of this book includes all the tools developed for the research that can be useful to further the analysis and to investigate better and in more detail the educational needs of specific areas and communities.

This second part opens with a reading list, edited by Amedeo Boscolo, concerning rural tourism in Europe and in the seven countries where CPTRA operates. This represents a solid bedrock for the professionals that intend to explore in more depth the issues concerning the sectors and the underlying educational needs.

A presentation of the focus group discussion methodology, made by Paolo Corvo, then highlights the specific opportunities provided by this methodology and the requirements and risks that it entails.

The guidelines for the CPTRA focus group discussion, edited by Michele F. Fontefrancesco, present the methodology used for this research and the specific tools used for collecting and analysing the data.

Finally, the data aggregation shows the results of the research and provides a model of systematization of the data.

The book is concluded by a comprehensive bibliography on the subject.

# 8.

## **A READING LIST FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF RURAL TOURISM**

*By Amedeo Boscolo*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The present chapter offers a comprehensive reading list for those who want to learn more about rural tourism and its impact. Specifically, it is organized around key questions that are addressed by the suggested publications. The questions are articulated around the most important topics of the current disciplinary debate about rural tourism. In its final part, the list offers directions to follow in order to appreciate more about the dynamics that interest the different countries empirically explored in the research.

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# 9.

## WHAT IS A FOCUS GROUP?

*By Paolo Corvo*

The main objective of a focus group is to collect ideas, considerations and suggestions expressed by a group of individuals belonging to the appropriate target audience, invited to discuss freely and spontaneously a selection of topics relevant to the research.

Unlike other interview techniques, they do not require a “one-way” interaction between the interviewer and the individual respondent, nor do they require that the interview proceeds in a rigidly codified manner, as happens, instead, following the procedure established by the succession of questions in a questionnaire (Cry, 2019).

The success of this method is linked, on the one hand, to the activation of group dynamics, that is, to the ability of the participants to give rise to an intense interactive debate and, on the other, to the moderator’s ability to lead the discussion, making sure that it proceeds in an orderly and complete manner, without digressing from the objectives of the research. The idea behind this method is that the considerations or evaluations expressed by each of the participants provoke reactions, comments and reflections from the others, activating a spontaneous and intense discussion that leads to the sharing of further and more in-depth considerations.

During a discussion, a series of cognitive and communicative mechanisms are activated, which can turn out to be either resources or limitations for the purposes of the information produced, and therefore for the quality of the results; these processes can occur in various moments of the group discussion.

When a debate on a topic is opened, a process is triggered – which we can define as attribution of meaning – in which the members of the group assign an area of semantic correspondence and a specific meaning to the terms and expressions that become part of the discussion. A cognitive error that can be incurred at this stage concerns the polysemy of terms; since the link that joins concepts and terms is not rigid, the linguistic code is not fully shared nor is communication perfect. This problem can multiply in the focus group as many times as there are participants.

It is therefore the moderator's task to urge, throughout the discussion, participants to make the meanings of the terms and expressions they use as explicit as possible. The continuous comparison between the social actors in fact allows the clarification of individual positions and for them to be compared with those of others, according to a process of sharing and comparing that leads to the definition and clarification of subjective meanings. In this way, it is possible to collect the many different meanings that are hidden behind the same term or expression (Corrao, 2000).

Another cognitive process that is activated during the discussion concerns the retrieval and organization of information; this phase includes the various mechanisms of mnemonic anchoring and association of ideas adopted by the participants to respond appropriately to the stimulus received. It is in this phase that the interaction plays a decisive role in its processes of stimulation of memory, but also of limitations related to the fact that the discussion is articulated in a brief time (maximum a couple of hours) among many people and without a precise order in the shifts (Kamberelis, 2013).

If the interaction between the participants takes place in a serene climate and the discussion is conducted in a way that is not too directive on the part of the moderator, there can be an effect of amplification of the information: the opinions that are gathered will be greater and different from the sum of the opinions that would be obtained by interviewing these people individually; in fact, the comparison favours the intersubjective construction of an argument and even the contradictions within the group are considered resources for the collective negotiation of the topic.

This depends on the fact that in a focus group the synergy of the group can favour

the expression of a plurality of positions and definitions of the same situation, activating the memory of forgotten details and aspects not personally considered; these dynamics do not occur in a two-way interview, where the interaction, although present, is undoubtedly between asymmetrical actors; moreover, in an interview the interaction is only linear, while in the group it is reticular and this expands the stimuli (Bloor et al., 2001). These are the reasons why many authors argue that the focus group is a particularly appropriate technique with which to obtain new responses, unexpected opinions and unexpected aspects, thus stimulating the interpretative imagination of researchers.

While not questioning the heuristic capacity of this technique, to determine the quality of the information gathered, it is good to assess how it was constructed by the actors interacting during the debate. In fact, during the group discussion it can happen that the interaction favours the emergence of information in common between people at the expense of dissimilar information, which can still be useful for the proposed cognitive purposes. To overcome this problem, it can be useful to emphasize to participants that not everyone has the same information, since there is no such thing as one individual equal to another, and however similar some opinions may appear, there are always peculiarities linked to the individuality of each person. It is also important for the moderator to emphasize that everyone's point of view is useful for research purposes and that everyone does not have to agree (Cataldi, 2012).

Another risk to adequate information retrieval is the speed of interaction during the discussion, which does not always allow all issues to be addressed in depth, especially if many points must be touched upon. In fact, overall, the time available to individual participants is short and this does not always allow them to express their opinions and motivations on every aspect of the topics covered (Krueger, 2014). Moreover, since, as already pointed out, interaction in focus groups is reticular, they often proceed by association of ideas; this can lead to continual changes in topics, the dropping of some aspects touched on but not addressed, the focusing of the discussion on different and marginal issues compared to those envisaged by the research, etc.

There is therefore no guarantee that a focus group discussion always involves a complete and adequate analysis of the issues investigated. This finding reduces

the scope of the claims of those authors who attribute to this technique the ability to investigate a new, rare, or little-known phenomenon, obtaining in a brief time and with little cost a lot of information at elevated levels of depth. In these cases, it is as if we are witnessing a semantic overlap of the concept of “non-standardized” with that of “depth”, thus the greater freedom, allowed to participants in giving answers, automatically allows for the communication of more intimate information. However, although undoubtedly the freedom of responses can encourage the emergence of unexpected information, this does not necessarily imply that it is undoubtedly “deep”. The quality of information does not derive from the technique used, but from the type of situation and interaction that is created during a group discussion and the moderator’s ability to put the people who participate at ease.

In order for a focus group to at least aspire to gather “deep” information, it is necessary that the topic under investigation is sectorial and locally located, so as to allow the discussion to be articulated in a few questions, thus giving all group members the possibility to intervene in the short time available; secondly, the topic must be interesting and known by the participants, so as to motivate them to the discussion, putting them in a position to thematize the topic of investigation in a short time. Otherwise, the information obtained will only reflect common sense representations and stereotypes; the discussion will therefore remain at a very superficial level (Hall, 2020).

During a focus group it can also happen that someone changes his or her mind: the comparison and exchange of opinions, in fact, would lead people to examine facts that had not been considered before. This consideration, too, cannot be fully shared precisely because of the observation that the discussion of a focus group is too fast and sometimes superficial for this to happen; it is the less deeply rooted ideas that are the most susceptible to dissonant information and, therefore, most subject to change. In this sense, the focus group can be considered a technique capable of probing the level of stability of an opinion.

During a focus group, the formulation of judgement and the assessment of the appropriateness of the responses to be given can also be influenced by the type of interaction established among the participants (Edmunds, 1999). In the literature, several problems have been identified because of group dynamics: the discussion

can be conditioned by the presence of charismatic figures, who, by imposing themselves on the group, do not allow the free expression of minority positions; this can be the result of individual contributions of people without there being interaction between participants; it can bring out only socially acceptable and conformist opinions.

Sometimes the participants in the discussion can put into action defence mechanisms against the anxieties derived from being in a group or strategies to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of allowing themselves to freely interact with other people; in these situations, in fact, the fear of being judged, of disappointing expectations, of going astray can spread (Bovina, 1996). In focus groups, even if the discussion takes place freely, these cognitive mechanisms can push an individual to conform (at least publicly) to the opinions most widely held in the group, because they are judged standard and shared by society; this then leads the participant to adapt to the situation of the discussion and his or her responses will be the contingent product of the opinions expressed by the majority and the interactions enacted during that conversation (Carey & Asbury, 2012).

Other times conformism can result from the pressure exerted by social conventions, which lead to giving more socially desirable and stereotypical answers or to still say something even on unfamiliar and uninteresting topics; these processes can contaminate the discussion due to the tendency to privilege a convergence of positions, at the expense of the diversification of points of view, leading individuals to give expected answers, thus reducing the level of creativity and spontaneity of the discussion, on the one hand, and the ability of the focus group to produce information through the involvement and interest of group members, on the other (Charmaz K., 2006). This is further evidence against the assumption that attributes to this technique the ability to always produce innovative responses.

A solution to conformism is to have individuals write down their ideas on a given topic and have the moderator read them without tracing them back to the people who wrote them. In this case anonymity is preserved, and the participants in the discussion can feel freer to express their opinion. Obviously, the group will then have to evaluate these ideas, trying to establish their strengths and weaknesses

(Frisina, 2010).

Another problem of fidelity may also occur related to the phenomenon of acquiescence (or public compliance), which is the tendency of participants to show themselves compliant with what they believe to be the moderator's opinions. The relationship between moderator and participants is never equal, nor is it perceived as such by group members, and this can cause strong conditioning; the "power" of the moderator makes their every attitude and signal hyper-significant: their negative evaluation, an overly directive intervention or a particularly active participation heavily influence the group.

The tendency to conformism and acquiesce are often linked to the fact that participants are asked to express themselves on issues that are distant and of little interest to them, hence the importance of inviting to the discussion people who are considered "experts" in the subject to be investigated. These are "privileged witnesses" because of their familiarity with the phenomenon being studied, since it is part of their daily life, they have experienced it or are experiencing directly (Nigris, 2003).

Furthermore, groups should be composed in such a way as to strike the right balance between homogeneity and internal heterogeneity, which are usually achieved on the structural properties of the members themselves (e.g. gender, educational qualification, profession, etc.); homogeneity can facilitate the achievement of greater depth, while heterogeneity facilitates the emergence of a wider range of positions. In fact, the principles of homogeneity and heterogeneity must be sought to avoid, on the one hand, particular inhibitory dynamics (to develop, therefore, among the members of the group equal relationships or those perceived as such), and to favour, on the other hand, a certain dynamism to the discussion, which makes different and even opposing positions emerge.

Some research has also shown that conformism and acquiescence increase in situations of ambiguity, in which individuals rely more on others' definitions of situations to reduce tension. It is conceivable that the situation created during a focus group is perceived by many individuals as ambiguous, since it is unusual and new; therefore, it is likely that this protective mechanism often comes into play.

These considerations lead to also making very complex the issue related to the ability of focus groups, praised by many authors, to favour, through interaction, the formation of an idea to those who do not have any on the subject; this can certainly happen, but only if the discussion concerns topics related to people's direct experiences – an important aspect already previously stressed. This ensures that, in any case, people know what they are talking about and can easily form ideas even if they have never thought about these aspects. The focus group is a technique that facilitates the emergence of awareness to such an extent that Morrison speaks of its use as “a consciousness-raising exercise”: interacting with other people on a topic that is part of everyday life facilitates focusing on aspects that are often taken for granted and increases knowledge of one's own behaviours or attitudes (Acocella, 2016).

For a better success of the focus group, it is also advisable to involve in the discussion people who do not know each other, to allow a discussion of the issues without any inhibition due to previous meetings and/or relationships of daily interaction; in fact, this could hinder the free expression of the participants and limit the originality of the discussion. It is also good to avoid acquaintances because often, when they speak, they take many things for granted, because they are implicit; this can make some accounts fragmentary and difficult to decipher.

One of the factors that has contributed to the revaluation of the focus group in recent years is the interest in the everyday; in fact, this technique is considered suitable for investigating the world of life because, it is argued, it reproduces situations similar to natural ones.

Undoubtedly, a focus group discussion comes very close to an everyday communication, and the use of open-ended questions (which do not include any plan for closing the answers) attributes to this technique the emic ability to gather information while respecting the cognitive perspectives of the subjects, their agenda (the relevant aspects and their order) and the language used, in relation to both analytical and discursive categories (Shamdasani & Stewart, 2014).

In interviews with questionnaires, on the other hand, the interaction between interviewer and interviewee is much more artificial, since the respondent has to adapt his or her judgement to the constraints imposed by the structuring

and standardization of the questions and all the distortions produced by the questionnaire (acquiescence, response set, curvilinearity) arise precisely from this. In this type of interview, in fact, the researcher's reference schemes are usually assumed to be equivalent to those of the interviewees and are imposed by the very rigidity of standardization; therefore, paradoxically, researchers may risk learning more about their own preconceptions and communicative norms than about the problems of the everyday life of the interviewees.

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# 10.

## HOW TO ORGANIZE THE CPTRA FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

By Michele F. Fontefrancesco

### INTRODUCTION

The first project's results are a qualitative needs analysis for SMEs and NGOs involved in the promotion of local rural territories, located in geographically isolated places, and interested in promoting the proximity and culinary tourism.

A needs analysis performed by all the organizations involved, each included at least 10 representatives of SMEs and NGOs located in rural territories, performed through the methodology of focus groups.

At least 70% of the informants should be working for an enterprise working in the touristic sector (in *Italic* in tab. 12).

Organization	Possible informants
Small restaurants (max 30 places)	Owner, exec manager, chef, maitre de salle
Medium or large restaurants (more than 30 places)	Owner, Exec manager, chef, maitre de salle
Hotels	Owner, exec manager, managers of the food & beverage services
Agritourisms / farm houses	Owner, Exec manager, chef, maitre de salle
Bed & breakfasts / Room for rent	Owner, exec manager

Vineries, farms or food producers who organize visits in their plants	Owner, exec manager
Tourism promotion agencies	Directors, Presidents, Exec members of the board of directors
Local NGOs involved in the touristic development of the area	Directors, Presidents, Exec members of the board of directors
Local professional schools, training centres, and universities specialized in the tourism sector	Head, Director/Convenors of the programs

*Tab. 12: Indicative list of organizations involved in focus groups and suggested people*

## **PRELIMINARY PROFILING: REGION**

Each partner should provide an in-depth description of the area where the research is conducted.

The description should be about 2500 words + bibliography and present the main features of the history and landscape of the area, its characteristics in terms of touristic facilities available, and touristic trends, possibly including econometric and socio-demographic data from official statistics.

A copy of the description should be submitted to the UNISG partner.

The UNISG can ask for integrations to the partners.

## **PRELIMINARY PROFILING: INFORMANTS**

Each informant is requested before the interview to complete a short qualitative questionnaire aimed at describing the professional history and education.

The questionnaire can be filled directly by the informant or completed in the form of a structured interview by the partners.

# FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Each partner should organize two focus group discussions with 4–5 participants each.

Each discussion should not extend over 2 hours. Each question should be discussed for a maximum of 30 minutes by the participants. Each participant should express her/his point of view on the matter (max. 5 min each) and then discuss the topic with the others.

The discussion should be recorded.

The partner should summarize the point of view of each participant in the report sheet at the end of the discussion.

An English translation of the completed report sheet should be sent to the UNISG team.

The UNISG can ask for integrations to the partners.

Questions
1) What are the main assets in your area in order to develop the sector of proximity and culinary tourism?
2) What are the biggest needs and most urgent initiatives to be taken in your area to develop proximity and culinary tourism?
3) Have the last two years of pandemic emergency created major problems or have they also been an opportunity for innovation of the tourism system?
4) What are the best ways to create synergies between tourism operators, institutions, local population and tourists?

# REGIONAL PROFILING SHEET

Regional profile	
Country	
Region	
Population of the region	

Description of the trends of tourism in the country (max 500 words)	
Main touristic attraction of the region (max 250 words)	
Main trends of tourism in the region (max 500 words)	
Main touristic facilities available in the region (500 words)	
References and resources	

## INFORMANT PROFILING SHEET

Informant profile	
Name Surname	
Age	
Gender	
Current occupation	
Location of your occupation	
Contact	
What are the main steps in your professional career?	
What are the motivations that led you to hold your current position?	
How have you learned your profession?	

## FOCUS GROUP REPORT SHEET

Focus group report					
Partner		Place		Date	
Facilitator					
Participant	Question: What are the main assets in your area in order to develop the sector of proximity and culinary tourism?				Notes about the discussion
Mr. Green					
Mrs. Red					
Ms. Yellow					
Mr. Brown					
Ms. White					
Participant	Question: What are the biggest needs and most urgent initiatives to be taken in your area to develop proximity and culinary tourism?				Notes about the discussion

Mr. Green					
Mrs. Red					
Ms. Yellow					
Mr. Brown					
Ms. White					
Participant	Question: 3) Have the last two years of pandemic emergency created major problems or have they also been an opportunity for innovation of the tourism system?				Notes about the discussion
Mr. Green					
Mrs. Red					
Ms. Yellow					
Mr. Brown					
Ms. White					
Participant	Question: 4) What are the best ways to create synergies between tourism operators, institutions, local population and tourists?				Notes about the discussion
Mr. Green					
Mrs. Red					
Ms. Yellow					
Mr. Brown					
Ms. White					

# 11.

## DATA AGGREGATION

By Amedeo Boscolo, Michele F. Fontefrancesco

### INTRODUCTION

The chapter presents the results of the focus group discussions indicating for each informant her/his contribution, and point of view. The data has been aggregated on the basis of the four key questions that articulated the structure of the discussion. The personal information of each informants were anonymised. The table, however, indicates the profession and role the informant play in the business together with the identification code and a summary of her/his contribution.

### THE DATA

The informants

	Partner	Code	Area	Type of Activity	Role
1	IT	1-IT	Greccio	Restaurant	Co-owner and chef
2	IT	2-IT	Greccio	Restaurant	Co-owner
3	IT	3-IT	Greccio	Restaurant	Maitre de salle
4	IT	4-IT	Greccio	Agritourism	Co-owner
5	IT	5-IT	Genzano and Acilia	Restaurant	Chef
6	IT	6-IT	Genzano and Acilia	Hotel	Owner

7	IT	7-IT	Genzano and Acilia	Restaurant	Owner
8	IT	8-IT	Genzano and Acilia	Winery	Owner
9	IT	9-IT	Alessandria Province	Association	Officer in Charge
10	IT	10-IT	Alessandria Province	Agritourism & Didattic Farm	Owner
11	IT	11-IT	Alessandria Province	Agritourism & Didattic Farm	Owner
12	IT	12-IT	Alessandria Province	Agritourism & Cellar	Owner
13	IT	13-IT	Alessandria Province	Agritourism & Didattic Farm	Owner
14	IT	14-IT	Alessandria Province	Agricamping & Didattic Farm	Owner
15	IT	15-IT	Alessandria Province	Agritourism	Owner
16	IT	16-IT	Alessandria Province	Didactic Farm (BeeKeepers)	Owner
17	IT	17-IT	Alessandria Province	Agritourism	Owner
18	IT	18-IT	Alessandria Province	Agritourism	Owner
19	GR	1-GR	East Macedonia & Thrace	Restaurant	Owner
20	GR	2-GR	East Macedonia & Thrace	House Accommodation	Owner
21	GR	3-GR	East Macedonia & Thrace	Hotel (Restaurant)	Chef
22	GR	4-GR	East Macedonia & Thrace	Tourist Agency	Tourist Agent
23	GR	5-GR	East Macedonia & Thrace	Hotel (Restaurant)	Restaurant Manager
24	GR	6-GR	East Macedonia & Thrace	Restaurant	Owner
25	GR	7-GR	East Macedonia & Thrace	Agritourism	Chef
26	GR	8-GR	East Macedonia & Thrace	Hotel (Bar)	Bar Manager
27	GR	9-GR	East Macedonia & Thrace	Winery	Marketing Manager
28	GR	10-GR	East Macedonia & Thrace	Vocational Education Center	Manager
29	RO	1-RO	Harghita County	Hotel & SPA	Owner
30	RO	2-RO	Harghita County	Restaurant	Manager
31	RO	3-RO	Harghita County	National Tourist Center	Employee
32	RO	4-RO	Harghita County	Kitchen & Garden Magazine	Editor
33	RO	5-RO	Harghita County	Tourism IT solution & tour orgnsining	Company Administrator
34	RO	6-RO	Harghita County	Kitchen & Garden Magazine	Chef
35	RO	7-RO	Harghita County	Restaurant, Hotel & SPA	Manager
36	RO	8-RO	Harghita County	Travel Agency	Tour Operator
37	RO	9-RO	Harghita County	Brandy Distillery	Manager and Entrepreneur
38	TR	1-TR	Central Anatolia Region	Tourism & Hotel Company	Director and Teacher
39	TR	2-TR	Central Anatolia Region	Restaurant	Manager
40	TR	3-TR	Central Anatolia Region	Restaurant	Manager
41	TR	4-TR	Central Anatolia Region	Restaurant	Chef
42	TR	5-TR	Central Anatolia Region	Restaurant	Chef
43	TR	6-TR	Eskişehir Province	Hotel	Manager
44	TR	7-TR	Eskişehir Province	Hotel	General Manager
45	TR	8-TR	Eskişehir Province	Hotel	General Manager
46	TR	9-TR	Eskişehir Province	Hotel	Manager
47	TR	10-TR	Eskişehir Province	Hotel	General Manager
48	FR	1-FR	Corse	Hotel	Manager

49	FR	2-FR	Corse	Camping	Manager
50	FR	3-FR	Corse	Restaurant	Cook
51	FR	4-FR	Corse	Hotel	Manager
52	FR	5-FR	Corse	Restaurant	Owner
53	FR	6-FR	Provence	Hotel	Owner
54	FR	7-FR	Provence	Freelancer	Countryside Guide
55	FR	8-FR	Provence	Regional Nature Park	Officer
56	FR	9-FR	Provence	Freelance	Consultant
57	BG	1-BG	South West	Winery	Owner
58	BG	2-BG	West	Hotel chain	Owner
59	BG	3-BG	Sofia	Catering	Owner
60	BG	4-BG	Kosovo	Agritourism	Manager
61	BG	5-BG	Trigrad	Agritourism	Manager
62	BG	6-BG	Sapareva Banya	Guest House	Cook
63	BG	7-BG	Sapareva Banya	Guest House	Cook
64	BG	8-BG	Sapareva Banya	Guest House	Manager
65	BG	9-BG	Govedartsi	Guest House	Cook
66	BG	10-BG	Belchin	Guest House	Cook
67	CY	1-CY	Pafos	Restaurant	Owner
68	CY	2-CY	Pafos	Restaurant	Owner
69	CY	3-CY	Pafos	Restaurant	Manager
70	CY	4-CY	Pafos	Hotel	Chef
71	CY	5-CY	Pafos	Hotel	Assistant Manager
72	CY	6-CY	Nicosia	Travel Agency	Travel Agent
73	CY	7-CY	Limassol	Hotel	Assistant Manager
74	CY	8-CY	Paralimni	Hotel	House Keeper
75	CY	9-CY	Limassol	Hotel	Marketing Dep.
76	CY	10-CY	Pafos	Restaurant	Manager

## Recognized assets and problems for proximity and culinary tourism development

		<b>Q1: What are the main assets in your area in order to develop the sector of proximity and culinary tourism?</b>	<b>Q2: What are the biggest needs and most urgent initiatives to be taken in your area to develop proximity and culinary tourism?</b>
<b>Code</b>			
1	1-IT	Few resources they have to use the Sabina area's ones. Only one typical dish. No need of further development of tourism because of the Saint Francesco d'Assisi Sanctuary	No urgent initiatives no need to renew tourism. Lot of people already visit Greccio for its atmosphere: ancient and timeless

2	2-IT	Just one typical dish but other resources such as saffron and cheek lard. People visit Greccio because of the religious history.	There are lot of urgent initiatives. First working to produce and invent other dishes (with saffron and cheek lard). People come and go away after visiting religious sites because there are no services such as transports, bars for young and there is no phone signal.
3	3-IT	Not many assets to develop culinary tourism, we have to use Sabina area's resources. Main assets are religious resources	Produce and invent other dishes to increase culinary tourism
4	4-IT	Greccio is immersed in nature, lots of aromatic herbs. Used to cook famous dish "Le Virtù". Not many assets in tourism, people come to visits Assisi and Cribs	No adequate services: no transport (people must use cars), no phone signal so they want to leave sooner
5	5-IT	Not many culinary resources, they use supermarket's food. Many monuments but tourists prefer to visit Rome	It's necessary to enhance the area because there is almost nothing.
6	6-IT	Few tourists in the area, mainly for sport or business purpose	Public transports must be improved.
7	7-IT	Not many assets that could help in developing culinary tourism, they use resources from surrounding areas.	Abbandond all Covid's obligations such as masks.
8	8-IT	Many pig farms, main resources sausages and salami but people doesn't come because of food.	Make the area more comfortable for tourists and create culinary events
9	9-IT	Provincial rural landscape's features and landscape diversity. Growth in the demand for rural tourism from urban centres also in the province. Quality of products and gastronomic preparations.	Overcoming the fragmentation and the conflict between the local players of the sector. Bureaucracy does not pay attention to the specificities of the sector and its real needs.
10	10-IT	Geographic features of the landscape and local cultural and gastronomic heritage	Lack of network between stakeholders. Logistics' limits of the accessibility to the territories and mental closure of the locals to the changes
11	11-IT	Landscape's characteristics	Closed mentality of locals and local companies and need for better collaboration between companies/farms
12	12-IT	Geographic features of the landscape and local products such as Timorasso grapes.	Weak collaboration between companies. Tendency of companies to find shortcuts that don't pay from the point of view of actual growth
13	13-IT	Characteristics of the territory and the logistic convenience	More services in the area such as the better access to landscape resources. Better access to public funds and incentives through different wording of the calls. Strengthening the culture of tourism and overcoming conservatism.

14	14-IT	Landscape, cultural and cultivation specificity and landscape quality	Achieving a greater visibility and the need for a widespread of innovation culture.
15	15-IT	Quality of the landscape and products	Access to credit and public incentives reviewed on the basis of company needs and characteristics. Greater associative commitment of companies on this problem as well as on the enhancement of the territory
16	16-IT	Product quality	Creation of a widespread culture of tourism. Support to local schools in order to take advantage of local offers without oppressive time limits that are dictated by school bus schedules.
17	17-IT	Landscape specifications (trails, woods) and product quality.	Difficult collaboration between actors (they are always the usual ones to carry out the projects). Access to credit and public funds based on business needs
18	18-IT	Territory and products	Need for new professional figures related to room and reception (lack of staff and adequate training)
19	1-GR	Cooking methods, techniques and local products implemented since ancient years. Wide variety of restaurants and a variety of dining options (either good restaurants, taverns or street food)	Creation of culinary festivals
20	2-GR	The possibility of Cultural and religious tourism. The upgrading and utilization of many historical, cultural and religious monuments and museums	Interconnection with the primary sector production
21	3-GR	Privately owned farms for the supply of raw materials that practically upgrade food and prioritize the quality of gastronomy	Cooperation of hotels and restaurant owners with producers in order to provide local fresh products for their customers (dairy, fruits, vegetables, honey, etc.)
22	4-GR	More than four millennia of recorded history and an abundance of sites, museums and locations	Creation of applications for mobile phones, central thematic website for culinary tourism and special thematic portals on existing websites of the municipalities of the region
23	5-GR	Dozens of local wineries that offer the possibility of wine tasting and local food tasting	Utilization of local vineyards where the package of excursions and experiences and in combination with archaeological sites and museums can be a lever for the development of culinary tourism and local development
24	6-GR	Unique local gastronomy that includes all the kind of preferences. Natural environment and archaeological sights	Informing the public about proximity and culinary tourism of our region

25	7-GR	Easy access to destinations of interest. Ability to combine gastronomic activities with many other activities (natural landscapes, museums, archaeological sites, etc.)	Creation of culinary routes
26	8-GR	Existence of companies dealing with the sector. Mild climate that allows traffic throughout the year	Creating information websites and promoting them
27	9-GR	Existence of small accommodation in rural areas with local cuisine. Wine network "Roads of wine"	Improving access to point the interest by public transport
28	10-GR	Possibility of short routes with yachts / sailboats. Existence of wineries, vineyards, farms, cheese dairies, etc.	The municipalities of our region to prioritize the culinary wealth
29	1-RO	Own cultivation of product and willingness of other producer to cooperate and sell their product	Need for professional training in gastronomy. Education of tourists
30	2-RO	Local food, cultural heritage to promote the gastronomy, gastronomy festivals.	Infrastructure development. Need for quality accommodations. Extending stay with activities diversification
31	3-RO	Gastronomical events, fusion and food quality	Need for promoting the profession and gastronomy studies. Need for restaurant at resorts
32	4-RO	Food quality and locally production	Need for an educational system in gastronomy
33	5-RO	local ingredients and typical food widely appreciated	More tourism service (restaurants). Local producers need to provide ingredients continuously. Diversity in gastronomy.
34	6-RO	Peasant culture, authenticity of cultural and gastronomy offers (gastronomic heritage) Natural and quality food	Professional training of staff and chefs. Kindergarten gastronomic education. Maintaining peasant culture, traditions and gastronomy knowledge.
35	7-RO	Gastronomy heritage. Quality of food ingredients. Multinational gastronomy, including Armenian.	Need for a system that facilitates the legal introduction of local products. Need of a slaughterhouse. Traditional techniques for processing local products
36	8-RO	Possibility for gastronomic experiences/ tours. Visiting producers, tasting, seeing the process, the authentic locations, eating the food at the source.	Support for producers – to keep producing the local ingredients. Collecting local food from local ingredients. Need to return to the authentic recipes, local taste – and having less industrial tourism.
37	9-RO	Using local ingredients, availability of fruits for making brandy. Quality food to be served with the brandy produced. Possibility to have our own orchard.	Need for strong marketing (digital, promotion). Gastronomy experience – tasting tours, visiting locations to see the process. Market opportunities for local producers, making it mandatory for local supermarkets to include a certain amount of local products.

38	1-TR	Natural places far from cities. Seasonal local products	Economic Support and salary and insurance problems of employees must be settled.
39	2-TR	Historic sites, include excavations, historical monuments. Local cuisine.	Handling parking problems for big tour buses. Shops in touristic places. Rural places and streets need improvement. It is important to develop the personnel skills and provide training. The most important thing is to give them language education. (Hospitality-Language)
40	3-TR	Local cuisine it's different (different way of preparation). Excavations and stone writings	Weak collaboration between companies and need for training of employees in this field.
41	4-TR	Local cuisine it's different from other cities. Local festivals held from municipalities. Unnatural beauty (lakes and beaches built on river banks)	If there is an urgent need to bring this cuisine to a place, the thing that needs to be done is to advertise, that is, as long as it is needed (ADV). Municipalities cooperate with big cities to promote local cuisine even if they have limited opportunities.
42	5-TR	Good logistic because close to big cities. Local cuisine.	More places that provide different services should be opened. Therefore, first of all, training should be given to the local people on how to develop tourism in rural areas (training)
43	6-TR	Organizations should be made by the provincial directorate of tourism. For example, balloon tourism, bicycle tourism. Hoteliers should be invited to these organizations. At the same time, environmentally friendly projects should be done. The projects should be supported by the state or municipalities.	First of all, we need to develop our people. Respect the person who came (for example drivers). Safe environment
44	7-TR	Local products should be offered at open buffets in hotels. A very important step for the promotion of local products.	Importance should be given to the use of local brands and local people should be educated about it. Because they think that domestic brands are cheap and of poor quality. Local cuisine transport (logistic)
45	8-TR	It is necessary to bring people who are really educated and volunteer in the tourism and the service sector. They need to hire professional managers. Salaries must be high.	Educated people should manage the tourism sector, especially the hotel business. City guides and brochures should be prepared. Importance should be given to the use of local brands and local people should be educated about it. Because they think that domestic brands are cheap and of poor quality.
46	9-TR	Historic sites, include excavations, historical monuments. Local cuisine.	Informing incoming tourists in advance. They should not expect 5 star service from a 3 star hotel. Festivals

47	10-TR	Territory and local products	Something can be done for students in these places. Because this region is the place with the most students in Turkey, nearly 2 million students. Local cuisine.
48	1-FR	Strong island identity and atypical and diversified products, strong visitor demand	Need to promote PDO & PGI products in a more effective way. Problems with thees and product simply labelled in Corse.
49	2-FR	Corsican specialities, a territory between land and sea that allows us to offer a wide variety of local products.	Favour the access of local goods transport on the territory. To take into consideration as well as to favour all artisan farmers and others for the culinary development and local economy.
50	3-FR	The multiple local products that can be found on the island	I think that Corsica should develop more its agriculture and handcraft, in order to have more local products to offer.
51	4-FR	The culinary heritage of my island	We need to improve communication between politicians, tourism professionals and farmers. It is true that today many farmers find it difficult to set up because they do not know exactly where to do it. Many do not think about agritourism either, although it is an interesting solution.
52	5-FR	We have a very strong culinary heritage here in Corsica, between charcuterie and cheese, Corsica has a lot to offer to tourists and locals	In my opinion, Corsica must rediscover its past culinary heritage. We don't produce enough for ourselves so how can we offer typical products to tourists? I think that we must take the problem differently and first reconcile the Corsicans with agriculture
53	6-FR	Low level of urbanisation which goes hand in hand with the preserved environment. Dissemination of small heritage- no major sites that would pose problems of over-visitation. The hiking offer (walking, cycling, mountain biking) is well identified. Culture: production and rotation of exhibitions and small events and Farmers' markets and producers' groups (shops)	There is wear and tear, fatigue, loss of purpose, as these organisations struggle to maintain their identity and move closer to capitalism by trying to undercut prices. inadequacy of the local offer to professionals in the processing and service sector, as each operator has his own small network
54	7-FR	A fairly rural area with a fairly large agricultural presence, well placed for short circuite, lots of artisanal know-how. We already are making a lot of "agricultural" visits (regularly include visits to farms and small agricultural businesses), some association between the discovery of the region (landscape, visit	Difficulties to access many villages (culinary tourism: cultural visit of the town, visit of a lavender factory, meetings with promotion of local products).

55	8-FR	The excursionists are looking for tasty and emblematic products of the territory (expect meeting with local products)--> Demand for culinary tourism through workshops like culinary workshop (to learn how to cook) – Traditional product of olive oil.	There is a need for volunteers to take over, especially since covid. There is a loss of know-how on Provençal cooking, in order not to lose it the association is organising culinary workshop which have a lot of potential, it also reedited the Provençal cook book to avoid losing the know-how.
56	9-FR	Notion of nature and culture: living space (history of habitation, agriculture and exploitation) and a feeling of belonging. Local products and a body of craftsmen	Need for support and coherence (not individualistic but collective) with quality criteria (landscape/products): meeting with the craftsman (not just about buying the products from the craftsman but experiencing his life, his daily activity in the farm, his production and his products). The development must be sensitive to the scale of the territory. There is a need for coherence between local, regional and national policies.
57	1-BG	In agreement with 3-BG, 4-BG, 5-BG	In agreement with 3-BG, 4-BG, 5-BG
58	2-BG	In agreement with 3-BG, 4-BG, 5-BG	In agreement with 3-BG, 4-BG, 5-BG
59	3-BG	The main asset is the thermal water and the presence of small villages that offer quite atmosphere and conditions for relax	One of the first thing is the promotion of our tourism on international level
60	4-BG	For sure the thermal water is the main asset in our region and also the fact that there is a lot of people who still follow the culinary traditions	Level up the service
61	5-BG	Mainly in the small villages we follow the culinary traditions and we offer to our guests a lot of typical dishes for our region	Developing abilities for managing a touristic activities
62	6-BG	In agreement with 6-BG, 9-BG and 10-BG	In agreement with 6-BG, 9-BG and 10-BG
63	7-BG	we have a lot of typical dishes that are famous in all of the country so this is our main assets	better organization of the touristic services
64	8-BG	In agreement with 6-BG, 9-BG and 10-BG	In agreement with 6-BG, 9-BG and 10-BG
65	9-BG	they come from all over the country just to taste our typical dishes	there is a lot of websites that are promoting this area but only in Bulgaria, may be it could be better to promote also in the international market
66	10-BG	is nearby the capital so it's easy to come also just for the weekend and enjoy the nature and typical dishes	Better infrastructure
67	1-CY	Understanding the changing trends in the sector Focus on Quality Work with the Deputy Ministry of Tourism	Support from the local authorities Business initiatives Innovation
68	2-CY	Providing excellent working environment Being competitive, for all the country Enabling ideas to evolve	Diversification of Products Exhibitions Professional training

69	3-CY	Ensuring the sustainability of local cuisine Delivering exceptional experience to guests Authenticity in Service and local history	Promoting local Products Promoting traditional restaurants and taverns Attracting new people in the profession
70	4-CY	Ensuring Health & Safety Standards Training of the Human Resource Blending local with international products	Exhibitions related to specific needs Working with the local authorities Sending people abroad for training
71	5-CY	Being authentic with Guests Human Resource development Strategy of the Deputy Ministry of Tourism	Promoting local products such as wines Attracting new people in the profession Improved working conditions
72	6-CY	Globalised environment Market understanding Innovation	Working with competitors Working with the Chamber of Commerce Guidance from the Deputy Ministry of Tourism
73	7-CY	Need to adapt to changing conditions Globalisation of tourism Information Technology	Innovation Attracting human experts Developing new networks
74	8-CY	Diversified clientele Need to deliver quality Human asset	Innovation in products and services Training human resource Adapting to the new environment
75	9-CY	Understanding the global market Innovation Social Media	Digital marketing strategy Professional personal development Reaching new markets
76	10-CY	Quality Human resource Digital promotion	Delivering quality Focus on understanding the changing trends Creating new products

## Past and future challenges for proximity and culinary tourism?

		<b>Q3: Have the last two years of pandemic emergency created major problems or have they also been an opportunity for innovation of the tourism system?</b>	<b>Q4: What are the best ways to create synergies between tourism operators, institutions, local population and tourists?</b>
<b>Code</b>			
1	1-IT	Restaurants and hotel have been closed. No need to innovate my restaurant, not able to do delivery. He thinks there is no need of innovation, after the two years things restarted	Create synergies between religious institutions, tourists and locals. It's important to use religion as gathering tool
2	2-IT	Restaurant and hotels closed. They think about doing delivery but there was no request. No opportunities of innovation	Associations to create synergies such as "Associazione Greccio Giovani" that would appreciate to organize ecological and religious trips
3	3-IT	Restaurant and hotel were closed no customers or tourists. Pandemic was not an opportunity of innovation	Organize religious celebrations involving locals and tourist where restaurants could create buffets with traditional Rieti's Province food

4	4-IT	No opportunity for innovation. Locals were frightened and no tourist	Greccio's community centers could organize parties and celebrations such as religious ones.
5	5-IT	Tough time for tourism but they had the opportunity to renew the restaurants by adding home delivery service	Internet could create a perfect synergy between tourists and locals. Exchange opinion through reviews
6	6-IT	No opportunity for innovation because people couldn't leave their houses and hotels were closed	Difficulties in creating synergies because tourists come and go just for sports or business purpose
7	7-IT	They renewed the restaurants by adding lunch service	Create a transport link with the historical attraction nearby
8	8-IT	During this period everything was closed but we tried to save the situation by opening a new tasting room for our products	Best way is to guarantee equity between tourists and locals. Reserve the same treatment to the tourists.
9	9-IT	This two-year period opens up to changes in tourism demand with a strong national leadership and attention to rural specificities	Creation of a table-work (or round table) between companies and institution for updating legislation. Cooperation between companies locking to a mutual promotion for the territory.
10	10-IT	Growth in demand over the last three years (only downturn dictated by lockdown) but lockdown useful as moments of reflection and planning and it led to increased visibility and desirability of rural tourism.	Need for generational handover and overcoming the resistance to collaborate
11	11-IT	Increased interest from the urban public. Covid has led to rethink the type of service to be provided and impacted as a change in the attitude of customers, more demanding, and young people with more marked relationship problems.	Need to create and live the sense of a common goal. Greater collaboration with local and regional authorities for the implementation of new services and revision
12	12-IT	Increased interest from the public in rural tourism. The lockdown led to the closure of the agritourism but a constant growth of the cellar.	Create a more stable synergy between companies through mutual enhancement.
13	13-IT	Increased interest and an increasingly stressed public that looks to come in Agritourism or Farm and experience it as a moment of compensation	Strengthen the work with companies and schools. Strengthen synergy between companies through mutual enhancement of non-competing products
14	14-IT	This two-year period opens up to a change in tourism demand with strong national leadership and attention to rural specificities	Identification of a common goal between companies and entities, development of actions starting from that
15	15-IT	Lockdown was a useful time to redesign services and offer. Change of customer attitude: more interest in outdoor and more and more pretentious.	Collaboration between companies with mutual support and promotion.
16	16-IT	Block of school groups, but a business continuity thanks to e-commerce	Creation of common packages between companies with customer exchange

17	17-IT	Growth of rural tourism by urban public. Greater interest in outdoor activities	Strengthen collaboration with companies and the public on care and maintenance of the territory. Strengthening of a common direction. Creation of tourist packages of the territory
18	18-IT	Continuous growth with expansion of urban and foreign public Moment of relaunching services and products (launch of a new bistro-cellar)	Collaboration too often comes down to small talk
19	1-GR	Covid-19 has led to changes in behavioural patterns and preferences of travellers: lower risk and domestic or regional destinations. Countryside dominant trend in tourism after covid.	They must be coordinated by the Municipality or the Region
20	2-GR	Covid hit businesses significantly but many companies have been able to accelerate their digital transformation, creating a customer-oriented techsolutions.	Must adopt new roles, that will promote the proximity and culinary tourism
21	3-GR	Covid create greater awareness of sustainable travel	All together must create local culinary centers and mixed use facilities and finally create a common local touristic strategy.
22	4-GR	Opportunity to develop health services and infrastructure	Create cooperation networks
23	5-GR	Due to the pandemic, people want to be outside, close to nature, in less populated areas. As a result, resorts will become more popular in the short term compared to densely populated areas.	They must make the right moves to find sponsorship. The revenue generated by visitors should increase with the development of proximity and culinary tourism
24	6-GR	The pandemic forced employees to work from home, slowed the economy and, at some point, caused panic among people, and on a larger scale, many industries were severely affected by the measures taken, including the tourism industry.	All local stakeholders must build a culinary identity and stimulate the growth of museums and other local and regional cultural institutions
25	7-GR	The tourism industry has a unique opportunity to review and renew the prevailing business models, in collaboration with local communities and guided by its most valuable asset, its local treasures.	The local government should promote a more positive relationship between culinary and tourism and promote coordination between local stakeholders
26	8-GR	Opportunity for us was the desire of people to stay close to home in conjunction with making inland trips which are also catered from the feelings of fear of people not to be quarantined in an unknown destination.	The role of culinary and proximity tourism as a transversal element of touristic policy needs to be established more firmly so it is seen by stakeholders as a great tool for tackling the externalities of tourism, as well as other challenges

27	9-GR	A key consequence of the pandemic was countries closing down prevent unnecessary travel, leaving tourism businesses without demanding and jeopardizing their viability.	The complex relationships between public and private actors make it desirable to create specific spaces for dialogue and to strengthen the role of existing spaces for shared reflection. These spaces should favour synergies between stakeholders (e.g. in terms of provision of culinary and cultural), as well as ensure a higher profile for culture in the dialogue about tourism
28	10-GR	The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be the catalyst in the tourism industry in terms of innovation and incorporation of new technology.	To create a cooperation scheme that embraces all private actors directly or indirectly involved in tourism and at the same time enable the participation of any natural or legal person under private or public law
29	1-RO	Innovation in terms of reservations. IT innovation (guest system stat)	Educate youngs for a innovative gastronomy and tourism offer. Collaboration with stakeholders in organising promotional events. Networking btw organizations and platform for strengthening tourism
30	2-RO	Opportunity for structural innovation. Increased proximity tourism. More employees due to border closure	Improved promotion through media, events, expo, networks, institutions and platforms (better advertising).
31	3-RO	IT innovation: online platforms (digital marketing), food delivery, development of apps for tourism services. Increasing networking of family friendly tourism (Family hotel)	Improving communication among each other. Need for professional tourism employee. Institutional financial support.
32	4-RO	Opportunity for planning better tourism strategy. IT investments and improving staff's skills	Cooperate to attracting tourists. Awareness of region as a brand with its values and experiences.
33	5-RO	National tourism increased. Opportunity for attending trainings. IT solutions for tourism. Entrepreneurial	Improved communication towards the tourists (ADV). Involvement of stakeholder (cooperation) and exchange of good practices & experiences
34	6-RO	Strengthened national tourism. More appreciation for local ingredients, as imports decreased. Shortened the supply chain. Flexibility in restaurants to adapt to seasonal, local ingredients. Focus on the culture of preservation of food for the winter.	Creating events, gastronomy festivals, tasting tours in a consequent manner – focusing on quality of the events and products. Organising professional gastronomy training continuously. A department or institution for gastronomy development (networking). Institutions to support and explore the potential of Romanian tourism.
35	7-RO	More appreciation for the peasant traditional culture, local resources.	Marketing activities on a regional level, creating trends that connect all actors. Promoting the location – mutual interests that will create synergy.

36	8-RO	Change of trends as social media became essential. Online booking of tables in the restaurant. Easier promotion online, digital opportunities for marketing	Collaboration for promoting the region as a tourism destination, extending it to promote gastronomy. Dialogue between representatives of tourism facilities. Networks, conferences, associations for management and development of tourism and local gastronomy.
37	9-RO	Rethinking financial sustainability, efficiency, thrift. Subsidies, grants for resilience, infrastructure and business development.	Change of mentality on all levels concerning the potential tourism has in Romania. Awareness of the effects tourism has on the local community and the beneficial impact it has on the tourism and gastronomy facilities and local economy. Investments for developing the tourism industry overall.
38	1-TR	Restaurants suffered a great loss. The supply chain, rather than the restaurants, was affected, especially the food industry. Opportunity to renovate the restaurant, which we thought about for a long time but never found time.	In the courses we hold, we teach our staff how to smile to the customer (to gain the sincerity of the public). We keep tour operators away because they are scamming local tourists. When they travel individually, they will feel cheated and will never return here. Good preference of destination areas of tours by tour operators.
39	2-TR	Uncertainty emerged at the time of the pandemic. For a while we didn't know what to do. Will we be closed again, when will it open, and p. The pandemic has done us great harm. We lost our staff. The only advantage is that we tried to improve the online marketing part during the pandemic. We switched to online sales of ice cream, chocolate and baklava products (Online sells)	There is no connection between institutions and the public, there is a lack of communication. Everyone should meet at least once every 4 months.
40	3-TR	There was nothing good. We had financial difficulties and we went downsizing. Covid has led to rethink the type of service to be provided.	By talking to tourism companies, creating programs, working with contracted companies, we can make guests visit once a week, or we have celebrations, anniversaries, live music. Our aim is to inform the public about such organizations. Keeping the restaurant up to date.

41	4-TR	<p>I didn't see any good side. The number of people coming from the cities increased at first. But at the time of lockdown, we had great losses. We lost our personnel, we had financial difficulties. Then we had to reduce the places in the restaurant, the distance, the obligation to disinfect hurt us. We had to go to get expensive, which reduced the locals' coming as tourists.</p> <p>Increased interest from the public. Lockdown led to the closure of the agritourism but a constant growth of the cellar. (Importance of diversification)</p>	<p>Tourism companies, municipalities and tour operators need to be in touch. Cooperation between companies looking to a mutual promotion for the territory. (Cooperation-Network)</p> <p>Our tour operators do not communicate with local people and institutions in this city. It should be solved.</p>
42	5-TR	<p>Rural lands increased people's interest. People moved away from the city. But since our restaurants were closed during the closure period, we could not see any good side, on the contrary, we had losses.</p>	<p>Strengthen the work with companies and schools. Strengthen synergy between companies through mutual enhancement of non-competing products</p>
43	6-TR	<p>The pandemic hasn't helped us at all. We lost 5 years of trained personnel. We have suffered huge financial losses</p>	<p>Festivals, Fairs, Investments in tourism by the government or private sector.</p>
44	7-TR	<p>We renovated our hotel. We created new ideas and set up plans to prepare for such situations. In general, we saw more harm than good.</p>	<p>Collaboration between companies</p>
45	8-TR	<p>It created a very big and serious problem financially. We suffered personnel losses. Institutions with weak infrastructure faced greater difficulties. During this pandemic, our hotel underwent a revision. During the absence of the guests, we renewed our rooms that needed to be renovated, we created the parts that we needed to make changes, we had construction works.</p>	<p>There should be joint studies between public companies.</p> <p>Festivals and fairs are good steps to create synergy in this respect.</p>
46	9-TR	<p>There were many people who moved here from the cities, but the closure prevented us from making a profit. Lockdown was a useful time to redesign services and offer</p>	<p>Strengthen collaboration with companies and the public</p> <p>Tourist packages should be created</p>
47	10-TR	<p>Huge personal loss. Greater interest in outdoor tourism</p>	<p>Collaboration between companies and public</p>

48	1-FR	A lot of people seeking for outdoor activities, escape and serenity. Problems bond to the huge presence of tourists on the same trail (GR20). But this lead to rediscover abandoned paths giving an economic boost to different areas.	Lack of consultation between the institutions and the local population/tourist operators. Institutions seem to do the same procedure every year. The world is there, in greater numbers, in the same place. Some areas are “deserted” like Boziu, Castagniccia, or Ghjunsani for example dued to the great lack of transport possibilities for these areas.
49	2-FR	Although the business has continued to meet health standards, the cost of benefits has fallen dramatically. But this has allowed us to introduce new means of communication and a new, more accessible approach to business management.	Festive/cultural/culinary events to bring people together and create a coalition.
50	3-FR	The two years of pandemic have been the opportunity for me to learn more about my job and also to reconnect with local customers.	Local governance should contact more with different stakeholders. They should organise meetings before each summer season to organise tourism during the summer.
51	4-FR	It has been an opportunity as we needed to reinvent ourself	We should communicate more and help ourself more than looking for benefits
52	5-FR	Hard period for tourism, it produce the 40% of Corse income. Forced stop was usefull to questions and reinvent ourselves. It shown to Corsicans that they can live without tourism, even with difficulties, but this should lead to increase sustainable tourism instead of the mass one.	Communication with the ATC is satisfactory, even if we would like to be better informed of the directions that tourism will take in the future by the various politicians. Perhaps more frequent meetings with the tourism stakeholders could be beneficial to everyone.
53	6-FR	Who had remained confined, questioned their way of life, they deduced that it was necessary to do something closer, simpler, more natural and this had effects on consumption and holidays. The biggest revelation is on the side of mobility: roaming, the mode of travel of tourists with the bicycle in particular (sustained use) but it is also for economic reasons (price of fuel) that this choice has been made	Tourism will develop with the presence of cool places (shade, swimming, parks...) because the very hot phenomena will recur and there may be a withdrawal of tourists. The area needs elected officials and decision-makers who are aware of and confident in this pole of attraction.
54	7-FR	It creates a total vacuum: no work at all. The young guides had to stop their activity. The problem of this job is that it is seasonal (from april to October) so the guides have to get another activity on side	Problems of involvement of politicians: Need to re-train people and have other jobs besides. each one keeps its own precariousness, is turn towards its own benefit. The territorial limit is also a problem (price-competition) [linked to the territorial funding of public authorities].

55	8-FR	Culinary tourism with opportunities to return to short circuits (dynamics of local consumption - trend of the moment- reconsideration of local products) and desire to return to home cooking + rediscovery of tastes, when we are doing things ourselves and close to our home- Barrier: weakened associations (almost only seniors) + need to re-mobilise the local population to teach them the ancient know-how of the place (on a cultural level- possibility of workshops to learn the Provençal language)	There is an ecotourism contract at the tourism regional level. Deployment of the “Park Value” (Valeur Parc) brand (institutional): being local, meet people committed. We diversify the offer – for example going to the goatherd’s: in what consists his job, cheese tasting, etc. The local population moreover if they are professionals can have an economic spin-offs (national) + the enhancement of their territory.
56	9-FR	Some operators have turned to virtual visits (as an introduction to a possible visit). This has been able to satisfy the public during the confinements: it has also made it possible to obtain information before going there	campaigns which celebrate the craftsmen, their local products, etc. like Ventoux Saveurs which is a big festival (2 months) in autumn which enhance the products and the producers (life of the craftsmen). Moreover the population & the craftsmen must be able to give their opinion and contribute
57	1-BG	In agreement with 3-BG, 4-BG, 5-BG	In agreement with 4-BG and 5-BG
58	2-BG	In agreement with 3-BG, 4-BG, 5-BG	In agreement with 4-BG and 5-BG
59	3-BG	In agreement with 4-BG and 5-BG	In agreement with 4-BG and 5-BG
60	4-BG	This 2 years of pandemic created only difficulties and problems	May be open days or one weekend in different spot of our region to present our traditions and all the nice things to do here
61	5-BG	Unfortunately no innovation during the pandemic period	More festivals or events dedicated on our traditions and typical dishes and costumes
62	6-BG	In agreement with 7-BG and 9-BG	In agreement with 6-BG, 9-BG and 10-BG
63	7-BG	It was a difficult period; we were closed almost for the all period	This kind of European projects may be help
64	8-BG	In agreement with 7-BG and 9-BG	In agreement with 7-BG and 9-BG
65	9-BG	I started to think about what we can improve after the pandemic stops and how to promote our activities	Create interesting events and using the social media to promote them
66	10-BG	In agreement with 7-BG and 9-BG	In agreement with 7-BG and 9-BG
67	1-CY	The pandemic has created serious problems for the industry, a lot of them will never operate again, especially those with limited financial support. Innovation has evolved; however, our business is always focused on that direction	Working with the Deputy Ministry of Tourism Public and Private Partnerships
68	2-CY	The pandemic has resulted in losing valuable human asset, working for the business for long-time. As a small business, we are trying to become more extrovert and be ready for possible future similar situations	Working with the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Exhibitions together with the local authorities

69	3-CY	The pandemic and the restrictions have led to a lot of problems in the industry. Many businesses are facing survival problems. We are trying to retain a balance between Health & Safety and business survival, like most businesses. Innovation is something that we have just started thinking, and I believe is a necessity for the entire industry	National Policy for Innovation in Tourism Promoting local cuisine
70	4-CY	The restrictions were catastrophic, as the industry has suffered for two consecutive years. I believe that it is time for Innovation, with the support and guidance of the Deputy Ministry of Tourism	Training people as part of a national policy Promoting Cyprus as an all-year destination
71	5-CY	The pandemic created serious problems for all the sector. We needed to come up with brainstorming ideas in order to confront the problems. I think is time for the sector to see Innovation as a major priority	National policy that will include all interested parties Incentives for promoting the Country
72	6-CY	The pandemic led to a lot of serious problems; a lot of contracts had been cancelled. It provided the opportunity to develop new strategies and identify new opportunities, despite the existing difficulties	National strategy Strategic global networking
73	7-CY	As a result of the pandemic, we had to cancel a lot of contracts with strategic partners. At the same time, we had to come up with new innovative ideas that enabled us to respond to the changing environment	Guidance from the Deputy Ministry of Tourism Working with new Markets
74	8-CY	One of the main problems is that we lost a lot of valuable human resource, and maintaining the hotel at a good operating level. This pushed us to become more innovative and ensure that the hotel would respond effectively	National policy for Human Resource development Exhibitions across the EU
75	9-CY	The pandemic was a serious issue, but in marketing we always need to be ready for such conditions. Our Crisis planning enabled us to respond effectively, especially when restrictions were lifted	Exhibitions Conferences
76	10-CY	The pandemic had a serious impact on small businesses that were not ready for such conditions. We had to respond quickly and innovate for the future activities as we are running three restaurants in Pafos	Focus on total Human resource national development Educating the young people

# 12.

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