

The European Network for the Promotion of Culinary and Proximity Tourism in Rural Areas

Analysing and tackling the education needs of a raising sector

Common educational needs

What are the educational needs of rural tourism professionals?

A systematic literature review conducted on scientific and grey literature retrieved through three research databases (EBSCO, Scopus, and Google Scholar), suggest the following key areas of intervention:

- Improvement of entrepreneurial and managerial skills
- Intensification of communication
- Professionalization of the staff
- Diversification touristic offer
- Creation of stronger collaboration among stakeholders

Field research

Between April and August 2022, to better understand the real needs of the sector, it was conducted an extensive qualitative analysis based on thirteen focus groups conducted in 7 Southern European countries involved in the project (Italy, France, Cyprus, Turkey, Romania, Greece, and Bulgaria) with seventy-two participants chosen among professionals of the sector. The results were coded and analysed.

The needs

The table below presents the recurrent needs that emerged in the focus groups.

ISSUE	DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY
#Advertising and Promotion (Places and Products)	The need of advertising and promote the tourism on a national and international level, alongside local products and typical dishes	***
#Improve Gastronomic Aspects	Improve gastronomical 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	***
#Collaboration and Cooperation	Need for a better and improved collaboration among all the stakeholders and public institution	**
#Need of Professional 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	**
#Public Founding	More public founding for the sector and easiest way to access them	*
#Improve Logistic	Improve the logistic of the areas in terms of public transportation, roads, parking lots and infrastructures in general	*
#Improve Managerial Aspects	Improve managerial and marketing skills of entrepreneurs as well as the working conditions for employees	*
#Innovation	All round innovation of the touristic sector based on the new trends	*

Analysis

The research suggests a more complex picture.

On the one hand, the need for more communication coverage is highly considered. This encompasses individual activities, but above all the need for better communication concerning the place and the area.

In terms of offer improvement, food is the key element that professionals indicate to be improved. This requires both better knowledge and use of the gastronomic heritage and a general improvement concerning the restaurant services provided, so to close the gap between fine dining and the restaurant services provided in rural facilities.

Professional training involves not just the personnel, but the owners and managers of the facilities. It is required a better understanding of the needs of the consumers, better managerial skills, and an advance in hospitality skills (which include better knowledge of the foreign language).

The focus groups highlight some infrastructural and regional needs, that go beyond the needs of the individual enterprise. They point out better logistics, better information services, easier connections with the urban centres and the main transportation hubs (airports, ports, train stations), as well as more investment concerning rural development. In this respect, the need for stronger partnerships between rural tourism entrepreneurs and the public sectors is indicated as the way towards a more competitive and resilient approach to the market.

Recommendations

The development of a new training curriculum thus should focus on different aspects. Some of them are already indicated by the literature, such as gastronomy, communication, and managerial skills. However, the research shows the need for a new field of soft skills concerning networking, problem-solving, and negotiation with public and private institutions.

Project Objectives

The objective of the Project The European Network for the Promotion of Culinary and Proximity Tourism in Rural Areas, KA220-VET-B92DF203 is to increase HoReCa SMEs in rural areas capacity to favour Culinary and Proximity Tourism, according to rules and guidelines of the European Green Deal.

UNISG's Partners

- Pole Metropolitain Pour L'entrepreneuriat Le Carburateur (France),
- Igor Vitale International Srl (Italy),
- Balkan International Academy (Bulgaria),
- RivenSCO Consulting Ltd (Cyprus),
- Syllogos Ekpaidefsis Kai Anaptixis Atomon Me Idikes Angkes (Greece),
- Avrasya Yenilikçi Toplum Derneği (Turkey),
- Asociatia De Dezvoltare Intercomunitara Harghita (Romania).

Duration of the project

24 months (from March 2022 to February 2024)

Funding scheme

Erasmus+, KA220-VET – Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training

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