

Ecotourism trainings for handicraft entrepreneurs: a driver of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians

At a time when mass tourism is intensifying and concentrating on a few cities and destinations in Europe, with significant impacts on the environment but also on the lives of local people, it is crucial to promote a more responsible tourism. This can be achieved on the one hand by promoting other countries and territories as tourist destinations and on the other hand by encouraging more environmentally friendly tourism practices. In the Carpathians, these two aspects were combined in workshops targeting craftsmen and small businesses to provide them with the key tools for attractive and sustainable tourism in mountain areas.

MORE INFO

How to build ecotourism workshops for mountain entrepreneurs?

Exhaustive trainings: from territorial marketing to ecotourism practices

In 2017, 4 ecotourism [workshops](#) were organised in the Carpathians, in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Czech Republic, to train local handicraft entrepreneurs and other rural tourism professionals on how to implement sustainable tourism practices. The initiative aimed at increasing the visibility of rural and ecotourism in mountain areas.

For 3 days, participants were introduced to different aspects of tourism through various modules. For instance, they learned more about global tourism trends and how to better attract tourists in rural and mountainous destinations, far from the main dreamed cities, thanks to alternative tourism practices such as rural tourism, active tourism and ecotourism. They were also trained to use social media and other marketing tools in order to increase the visibility of their products and services.

Moreover, participants attended a specific module on ecotourism, where they discovered various good practices and discussed the connections with other tourism practices such as rural tourism. This module was also an opportunity to reflect on the possibilities to promote local products through ecotourism and to focus on the positive impacts these practices can have in terms of tourism development in mountain areas, environmental awareness of tourists and territorial development of the area.



Credits: Carpathian tourism

	Activity-specific sectors	Location-specific sectors	Group-specific sectors
Active tourism	equestrian tourism	Rural tourism	Senior tourism
	hiking tourism	Urban tourism	Youth tourism
	cycling tourism	Mountain tourism	
	active water tourism	Beach tourism	
	hunting tourism	Ecotourism	

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Among the good points of these workshops: the 3 day-training ended up with an individual session for each participant to reflect on his tourism targets and explore development possibilities with experts; an individualised follow-up made possible by the format of the workshops with a maximum capacity of 15 participants only.

Furthermore, participants received a certification at the end of the workshop.

Resources needed

The 4 workshops were organised in the course of the CARPATHIAN TOURISM project (CooperAtion of touRism for building PATHways through developng HANdcraft workshops for tourist and rural TOURISM suppliers). The project was funded by the International Visegrad Fund and by the UN Environment Vienna Office Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (SCC) and included associations and tourism offices engaged in the promotion of cultural heritage, with an additional strategic support from the Carpathians Convention and the Ecologic Institute for Sustainable Development Foundation for instance.

The project covered accommodation and meals costs for the participants of the 4 workshops, around 60 persons in total. This good practice is therefore easily transferable and adaptable to local issues and assets.

Benefits of the workshops for the development of sustainable tourism

Developing the attractivity of the Carpathians

Increasing the visibility of the Carpathians among European tourists is important to rebalance tourism flows and encourage a win-win situation for countries suffering from over tourism and countries barely considered as potential holidays destination. Yet, there is no lack of tourism potential: when it comes to heritage sites, Poland counts 15 sites registered on the UNESCO world heritage list when Austria only counts 9 (see [Culture statistics — 2019 edition](#)); attractivity therefore relies on the marketing of mountains rural heritage, such as castles and wooden churches.



Wooden church in Poland
Credits: Carpathian tourism

Tourism, if managed sustainably, can participate to the cultural influence of mountain areas and to their sustainable development with the promotion of quality products such as mountain foods and crafts, and specific tourism services such as mountain cycling or wildlife observation.

A booklet to expand the knowledge on mountain ecotourism

Tricks, Tips and Ideas



To expand the dissemination of the project's training material, a booklet on "[How to Attract Tourists: Ecotourism handbook for rural handicraft entrepreneurs and actors of tourism](#)" was also published. This tool aims at sharing the content from the workshops and should be used as a practice guide by other rural tourism entrepreneurs in mountain areas to better showcase their territory as a tourism destination as well as the quality products and services it can provide.

With this booklet, readers can learn more on how to phrase their communication on social media, adapt their website but also on how to better value natural assets, such as high mountains and specific fauna and flora. Mountain tourism entrepreneurs can also discover more tips on how to develop active tourism, agri-tourism and ecotourism based on the needs and expectations from customers.

Innovative aspect



Training local entrepreneurs to territorial marketing has direct consequences on the attractiveness of the territory. These workshops help in involving the private sector in the development of sustainable tourism practices such as active, rural and eco-tourism.

More information

For more information on the workshops, please visit the CARPATHIAN TOURISM project's [website](#). If you are looking for ecotourism destinations in the Carpathians, you might also want to check the project's booklet "[Places to Visit in Central Europe](#)".

You can also find more inspiration on tourism and cultural heritage in mountain areas in the materials from the [XI European Mountain Convention](#), held in Vatra Dornei, Romania, especially in the [booklet of good practices](#).

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