

On the road!

Our analysis makes it clear that rural tourism providers differ across countries, but share a number of common challenges.

Some of them are due to the difference between rural forms of tourism and the mass tourism centered on large hotspots like cities. Rural tourism cannot rely on the proximity to famous attractions to carry the load for its advertising and must instead provide additional activities, such as tastings and restoration, to attract tourists.

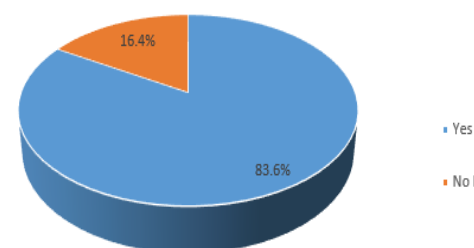
Our research also shows that unlike standard tourism, which relies on quantity, its rural cousin must carefully balance innovation and adaptability with sustaining the natural resources it exploits and preserving the authenticity of its rural environment.

Research has been carried out locally and regionally by our partners. Inova, for example surveyed the local rural tourism area of the Peak District to find out the challenges of rural business operators.

The **EKI-Tour** project, funded by the Erasmus+ programme, will launch a transnational training programme devoted to European rural tourism providers. This will help Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector to utilise digital marketing to be able to operate more effectively.

One of our first activities was to analyse the current situation regarding rural tourism businesses and the use of **digital marketing** by creating and distributing a survey. The survey results identified that there is a strong need to develop marketing aids for rural

Do you think that a better presence online will help your business growth?



Challenges for rural businesses

We have discovered that almost 2/3 of rural tourists find their accommodation through the internet, and while the majority of providers maintain some presence on the web, it cannot keep up with the dynamic environment of internet marketing. Providers across Europe overwhelmingly agree that this is due to a lack of digital marketing and social media skills.

Indeed, statistics show that while rural tourism is primarily internally driven, recent years have seen a larger share taken by international tourists. However, the sector suffers from a lack of integration between the local tourism providers and the community as a whole, including infrastructure and other local businesses. At the same time, the providers themselves rarely share data, leading to fractured market intelligence and contradicting information to be found on the internet.

How providers in different countries answer these challenges largely shapes the tools and good practices available to them:

- SlowFood – collects data to compensate for the scattered nature of rural tourism providers in Italy
- “Rural women in local agrofood production” in Greece makes use of local know-how to enrich the experience provided
- In Spain, commercial platforms like Escapada Rural manage to include “grey zone” providers who predominantly rely on word of mouth.



E-KITtour in Athens

13 participants from the involved partner countries attended the 3rd E-KITour project meeting in Athens, Greece at the Avaca Technologies office. The meeting's purpose was to review the implementation of the E-Kit training modules.

Our Lithuanian partner, KMTF reviewed the training material's content. Every partner prepared material for the provided topics: the Scratch website, SEO, internet, E-marketing, online booking, statistics and analytics, online distribution and social media. The meeting included a discussion of possible forms of tutorials, of which there are a total of 49.

Our UK partners, Inova, were responsible for discussing with the partners the dissemination strategy and the various forms of project promotion. Avaca technologies demonstrated the platform's www.etourkit.eu structure.

Our Italian partner, Eurocrea introduced the ECVET system, outlining its principles and how the training programme will utilize it.

Overall, it was a fruitful meeting and we look forward to the next phase of the project!