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Project. No: 2022-1-FR01-KA220-ADU-000086999

Module 5

**Resources for the development of
community tourism, forward-looking
learning centres and
a database of resources**

Developed by CCIN



Co-funded by
the European Union



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LEARNING OUTCOMES

After you have completed the module, you will:

Knowledge

- Recognise the importance of creating community-based tourism.
- Identify the community's unique cultural, natural, and historical assets that could attract tourists.
- Understand the local culture, customs, traditions, heritage, and ability to integrate cultural elements into tourism products and experiences while respecting and preserving cultural authenticity.
- Gain knowledge about sustainable tourism principles and practices, including environmental conservation, socio-cultural preservation, economic viability, and the ability to implement sustainable initiatives that minimise negative impacts and maximise benefits for the community.

Skills

- Be able to involve individuals with common interests and interactions in the development of community tourism and the decision-making process, ensuring their participation and support.
- Hold meetings, workshops, or surveys to gather ideas and experiences related to tourism development from the members of several communities.
- Engage and collaborate with diverse stakeholders (including





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residents and businesses, government agencies, and NGOs with tourists). This should pursue the aim of ensuring inclusive decision-making and communities' participation in tourism development.

Competences

- Allow tourists to take part and feel part of the tourism experience aiming to create a sense of interconnection between them and the broader world.
- Actively contribute through tourism activities to the restoration and well-being of the visited destination.
- Prove proficiency in marketing techniques, branding strategies, and promotional activities to raise awareness of the destination, attract visitors, and create demand for community tourism products and experiences.

Duration

This module requires a commitment of approximately 20 hours of preparatory and practical phases, including instructional time and on-field activities, like workshops, surveys, and meetings.





MODULE IN A NUTSHELL

In today's rapidly changing travel industry, there is a growing emphasis on regenerative tourism, which seeks to transform the way travellers experience and interact with destinations. Module 5 is a key component of the Agora project dedicated to the concrete development of this kind of tourism. This module aims to establish innovative learning centres and create a robust database of resources to support sustainable tourism initiatives. By focusing on these areas, the project endeavours to enhance the economic, social, and environmental benefits of tourism for local communities, ensuring a tourism development that should be inclusive, resilient, and beneficial for all stakeholders involved.

Extensive research has identified and analysed best practices in promoting destinations and local producers within and beyond the European Union. Innovative learning centres will serve as hubs for knowledge exchange and skill development, promoting collaboration among tourism stakeholders. These centres will offer valuable opportunities to share resources and training, to support the implementation of community-based tourism initiatives, ensuring that tourism practices are both sustainable and inclusive.

Additionally, a comprehensive database of resources will be developed to provide essential information and tools for stakeholders. This database will facilitate the sharing of best practices, innovative approaches, and practical tips, empowering participants to evaluate



the advantages and challenges of connected experiences in regenerative tourism.

Overall, this module aims to equip participants with a thorough understanding of how to develop and sustain community tourism initiatives, fostering long-term positive impacts for both travellers and local communities through the following units:

- **Creation of community-based tourism: the active role of local communities and tourists in sustainable tourism and forward-looking learning centres.**

Local communities will acquire all the tools they need to implement sustainably developed tourism, preserve cultural heritage, and empower residents. At the same time, tourists will acquire the knowledge that will enable them to integrate and engage with the culture, traditions, and communities they are confronted with during their tourism experiences.

- **How to create common policies in developing community tourism and existing European policies in the matter.**

Learners will dispose of the knowledge linked to the importance of developing common policies and principles, regulating CBT. These should aim to ensure the sustainability, empowerment, and equitable distribution of benefits within the community.

- **Associations and micro-businesses: the agricultural and wine sector.**

This unit presents a complete analysis of two concrete examples of sustainable activities put into practice by local businesses, particularly active in the field of tourism.





5.1 Creation of community-based tourism: the active role of local communities and tourists in sustainable tourism and forward-looking learning centres.

Community tourism, also known as community-based tourism (CBT), refers to tourism initiatives that are owned, managed, and operated by **local communities**, aiming to foster sustainable development, preserve cultural heritage, and empower residents. In community tourism, visitors have the opportunity to engage with local culture, traditions, and people in an authentic and immersive way, often through homestays, cultural performances, guided tours, and participation in community activities.

- Why is it important to create community-based tourism?

Community-based tourism is important because it **allows local communities to conceive and develop local tourism in collaboration and interaction with one another.**

This type of tourism aims to involve groups of individuals living in the same region with common interests and interactions in the collaborative planning of tourism experiences, embracing all the phases from conception to active participation. Community-based tourism seeks at the same time to **support communities** with the main goal of **improving the development of the area and locals' quality of life.**

Through the involvement of local communities in the tourism industry, community-based tourism (CBT) allows them to take ownership of



their resources and culture. This empowerment can lead to economic development, as locals gain more control over tourism revenue and are less reliant on external sources of income.

CBT promotes the **interaction and exchange between tourists and residents** as well, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

By getting closer to local communities, travellers can therefore gain insights into different ways of life, values, and perspectives, promoting tolerance and respect for cultural diversity.

Another important point to make is that CBT can **create commercial and social value for specific destinations**, local businesses as well as residents.

At the same time, it **offers rich, immersive cultural experiences** that can enhance the tourists' involvement when visiting different communities. No less important is the fact that sustainable CBT approaches can **improve the local economic development (LED)** of communities by reducing economic leakages from the tourism industry. Destination managers and tourism businesses aim in this regard to engage in sustainable tourism practices and to make strategic use of local resources, to maximise linkages in their economy. In addition, by distributing tourism benefits more evenly across communities and by encouraging travellers to visit off-the-beaten-path destinations, CBT can help **mitigate the negative impacts of over-tourism in popular destinations** and reduce pressure on overcrowded tourist hotspots.





The purpose of the present module is therefore to outline a theoretical model that clearly outlines the business model to implement sustainable CBT strategies. These strategies can ultimately result in **opportunities for economic growth of tourism businesses** and may **increase the competitiveness of specific areas**, whilst safeguarding the environment and addressing their carrying capacities.

- What are the benefits of CBT for travellers?

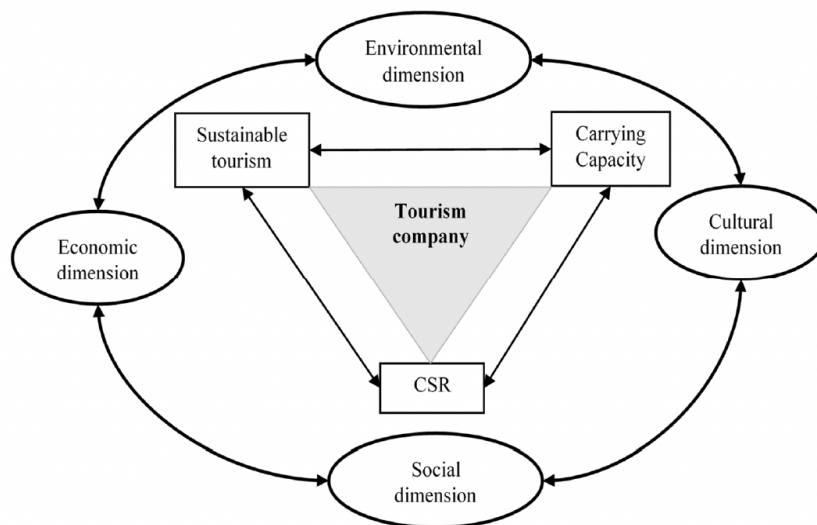
Community-based tourism often offers travellers the opportunity to **engage in meaningful ways with local communities**. Thanks to CBT tourists have the opportunity to **enjoy authentic experiences conceived by locals** as a reflection of their everyday life.

On these occasions, travellers can for instance take part first-hand in local activities, such as sharing meals with families, learning from local artisans, creating meaningful connections and cross-cultural exchanges, staying in locally-owned accommodations, or purchasing locally-made goods. This translates into the fact that community-based tourism also represents a **possibility for travellers to combine different tourism experiences in the same area** (thus including simultaneously social, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions).





All this can lead to several positive effects that reverberate on several fronts: **enhance the authenticity** of the travel experience for visitors, and **provide economic benefits** to the community while also creating a **positive impact on the environment**.



- How is community-based tourism sustainable? How does it contribute to helping the environment?

Many tourists are increasingly concerned about the environmental and social impacts of their travels. CBT proves particularly promising in this regard as its initiatives typically entail sustainable practices, such as **conserving natural resources**, supporting local economies, and **minimising negative impacts on the environment**. By opting for this type of tourism, visitors can consciously pursue a style of travelling that supports their ideals, making them feel at the same time fully aware and proud of their actions, supporting responsible tourism initiatives.

As previously reasoned, the benefits of CBT are indeed numerous and make inroads on several fronts. Its contribution thus impacts positive sustainable development, empowerment, and well-being of local communities, while also providing enriching experiences for travellers.



- Forward-looking centres: what are they and how to create them?

Forward-looking learning experiences are entities (both profit and non-profit) that have educational aims of **providing hands-on experiences for the project target groups**. These can be associations/micro-businesses of local producers, community agents, or adults who want to be involved in the process of teaching and learning.

Creating forward-looking centres for community-based tourism involves tailoring the approach to address the specific needs, opportunities, and challenges within the tourism sector and local communities.

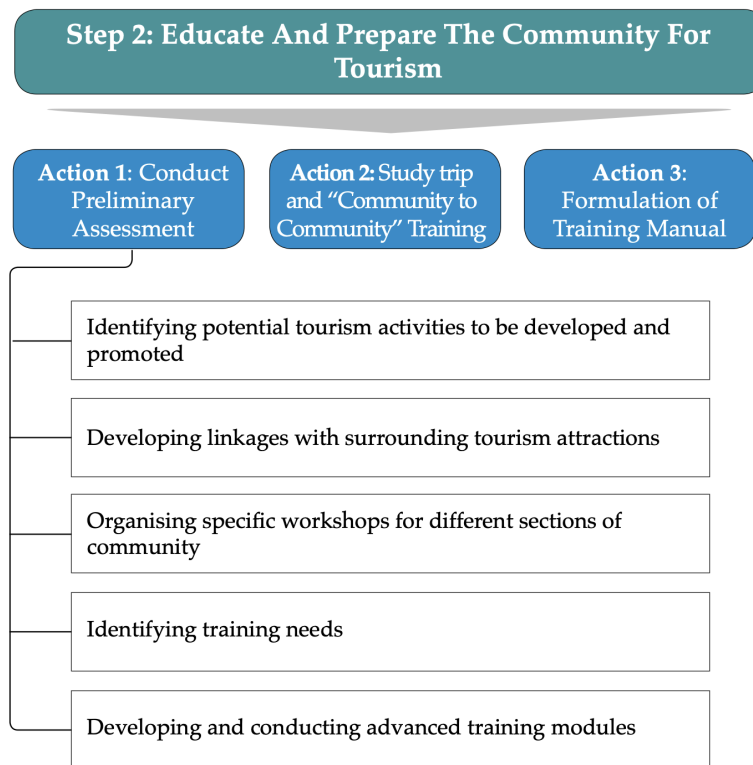
First of all, it is fundamental in this regard to have available **qualified and experienced staff** that knows the dynamics of the tourism market, to **train local communities' workers**. Within this framework, it is subsequently necessary to identify and analyse (in coherence with the place and the context) the interesting aspects of the area viewed from a CBT as well as a visitors' perspective.

As a result, forward-looking centres should aim to dispose of all means to give practical and specific courses to local community workers to train them to design and propose by themselves the appropriate activities for their environment. A really important point in this regard is that the developed **activities should be specifically conceived for visitors to play an active role in their experience**.





Lastly, it is fundamental that the proposed activities remain **as authentic as possible** since the final goal is to make travellers live a truthful and full-immersive experience in their destination.



A meaningful point to develop this nascent sector is to identify and develop connections with tourist attractions attached to the focused area.

Once a community decides to embrace this kind of tourism, educating and specifically preparing the individuals who form part of it is particularly crucial. Before the construction of any form of tourism, physical development, or activity, the local community should therefore be well-informed and trained about the many facets of this domain. The education process should take a longer time for a relatively remote society with low levels of education.



- How to train local communities on community-based tourism?

> Conduct Preliminary Workshops

In the initial stage of the development of CBT, it is fundamental to conduct a series of preliminary workshops.



Preliminary workshops aim to bring together the entire community to **discuss and identify the resources and activities within the place that would appeal to tourists**. In the first place, workshops should take the form of a brainstorming exercise to firstly represent an opportunity for everyone to make suggestions, and secondly, for the workshop to evaluate and rank the proposed activities.



After having identified the potential tourism resources/ activities within the destination and in the surrounding areas, it is important to **determine the role of different sections of the community**. For example, the local youths could be trained to become guides and cultural performers. It is also crucial that the workshop recognize not only those who can be involved, for instance, in the production of handicrafts but also the individuals who have the marketing and management skills to run a handicraft centre.

During these workshops, the community should also pursue the objective of **identifying the gaps in terms of knowledge and skills**. Subsequently, this awareness will provide the basis to **identify the training needs to be fulfilled** during the advanced workshops.

As soon as the community grows at ease with the concept of demand and supply in tourism (as learned through the preliminary workshops), it is then ready to be given **more structured exposure and training**. Essentially, advanced training should be conducted through modules, covering aspects including:

- **Interpretation & communication (proficiency in foreign languages)**
- **Marketing strategies**
- **Visitor management**
- **Service skills**
- **Digital skills**



> Formulation of Training Manual

To ensure that the training is carried out systematically and consistently, it is necessary to formalise a training manual. This step is essential to ensure the sustainability of CBT projects from the perspective of **human resource development**. With the documentation of the training modules and instructions on best practices for community engagement, sustainable tourism development, and effective resource management, the manual will serve as a comprehensive guide. This ensures that even if the management committee and trainers change in the future, the training structure and system will remain intact.



5.2 How to create common policies in developing community tourism and existing European policies in the matter.

For all the reasons we have given above, it is crucial to develop community-based tourism comprehensively and consciously. For this purpose it is necessary to underline that CBT should be well-regulated by common policies.

Common policies and principles of community-based tourism aim to ensure the sustainability, empowerment, and equitable distribution of benefits within the community. To create said policies regarding the development of community-based tourism, it could be helpful to **create associations of individuals and local producers** who share common interests and interactions. The important condition of these associations is to be open to participants (like local producers) who have a genuine interest in **improving the tourism affluence in their territories**.

Such initiatives could represent a procedure of **helping micro-businesses** that operate in not-so-well-known fields or that operate in not very visited areas. Policies should prioritise the **preservation and celebration of local culture**, traditions, and heritage. This includes promoting respect for local customs, languages, and cultural practices among tourists.

Moreover, policies should be focused on the **protection and sustainable use of natural resources within the community's territory**. This involves promoting eco-friendly practices, minimising



negative environmental impacts of tourism activities, and supporting conservation efforts.

It is also important for the policies to promote **responsible behaviour among tourists**, including respect for local customs, minimising environmental impacts, and contributing positively to the local economy.

- National and European policies on CBT

National governments together with the private sector could **allocate resources toward LED and CBT initiatives to trigger business activity in tourist destinations** that will ultimately create jobs and economic growth (Nel & Binns, 2002; Sara, 1993:139). LED is a territorial-based, sustainable tourism approach. It focuses on creating social and economic opportunities for local communities and enterprises.

The success of CBT projects is essentially dependent on leadership and organisation. Government agencies or NGOs often act as the project initiator but the long-term viability of such projects depends on the sense of ownership and buy-in from the local community. Central to the continuous support from the community is the presence of a strong leader who commands respect.

Here are some already **existing European policies** related to sustainable tourism and community development, along with their names and approximate dates:

1. **European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas** (1996-present): This charter, established by the EUROPARC Federation, provides guidelines for sustainable tourism





development in protected areas across Europe. It emphasises community involvement, conservation of natural and cultural heritage, and sustainable economic development.

2. **Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe** (1987-present): The Cultural Routes program, initiated by the Council of Europe, aims to promote cultural heritage and intercultural dialogue through themed routes across Europe. Many of these routes involve community-based tourism initiatives focused on preserving and promoting local cultures and traditions.
3. **European Green Capital Award** (2008-present): This initiative, launched by the European Commission, recognizes cities that demonstrate outstanding achievements in environmental sustainability. Winning cities often implement community-based tourism projects that prioritise environmental conservation, community engagement, and sustainable urban development.
4. **European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)** (2015-present): Part of the Investment Plan for Europe, also known as the Juncker Plan, the EFSI provides financing for sustainable infrastructure projects, including those related to tourism development. Community-based tourism initiatives may benefit from EFSI funding to support infrastructure improvements and sustainable tourism practices.

These policies and initiatives demonstrate the European Union's commitment to promoting sustainable tourism practices, community involvement, and socio-economic development in the tourism sector.

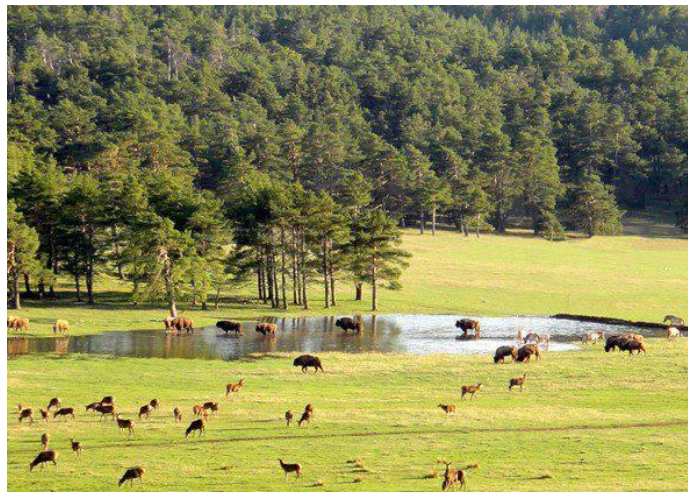




5.3 Common practices in associations and micro-businesses: the agricultural and wine sector

For the Agora project, we have decided to analyse some concrete common sustainable activities put into practice in particular by a local producer operating in the field of agriculture and by another one operating in the gastronomy industry.

“Réserve des Monts d'Azur” - Community experience



The Monts d'Azur Biological Reserve is an animal reserve close to Nice, Cannes (50 km), and Grasse (30 km), where ancestral and astonishing species of European fauna live side by side in the wild: European bison, red deer, wild boar, Przewalski's horse, roe deer, chamois, golden eagle, griffon vulture, wolves, and monks and many more.

In all, several hundred species of all orders, many of which are still very discreet, as the 700 hectares of the Reserve offer a multitude of habitats in which to hide from the gaze of visitors.





- The main focus of the organisation in tourism activities

In the interview with the representative, many topics have been discussed. First of all, the representative talked about how tourism activities focus on the positive impact of wildlife.

“Economic activities must be sustainable. In other words, for them to last over time, we must be able to manage all their impact, all the impact of visitors on the environment.”

It is important, according to the representative, to make the visitors **understand the issues of the territories to create a strong connection** between them and the environment they are discovering.

“In wilderness areas, the issues are not necessarily the same as those in traditional tourist areas. **In wilderness areas we must make sure that tourism exists**, and that it is carried out responsibly by people who understand that they have an impact on the environment through their actions. The characteristics of the territory require us to do things differently.”

- Common activities put into practice by the organisation

“In our reserve, for example, **visits are made pretty quickly and mostly on foot, not by car**, motorbike or bicycle, because that's how we try to respect the environment and to spend as little time as possible in it.”

Another fundamental issue is **limiting the number of visitors**: to practise regenerative tourism effectively in wild territories it is crucial not to have visitors overcrowd the area and, most importantly, not to spoil the environment.





- The main challenges encountered in developing and implementing regenerative tourism experiences and community-based tourism

The main challenge in this area has been to get visitors to understand how ecosystems work and to be able to consciously interact with wild animals. In this regard, **visitors must be guided** by experts who can explain the characteristics and the issues of the environment they are in.

"Visitors, to enjoy, need to understand."

"I think it is important to be able to **provide visitors with a little leaflet that they can keep**. It shouldn't just be a piece of paper that people throw away, but a leaflet with pretty pictures to illustrate some central points and to remind visitors of their experience every time they see it."

"The second thing we did was to give an important role to **good explanations**. We have set up an open-air museum with clear and comprehensive presentations so that tourists can visit the area on their own and explore the museum as they wish. Everything to let them understand that we are part of a whole. E.g. What's going on? What are the interactions between man and the environment? Between man and wild animals? Between wild animals and the environment?"

CBT proves to be a good option because working together brings more people to get to know a specific environment. For this reason "successful examples of **regenerative tourism experiences should be communicated** on a large scale to encourage similar initiatives."



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- The role of national and European policies in helping sustainable tourism

“We are really concerned about **current regulations and policies** in Europe. In my opinion, they tend to be **more restrictive than supportive and encouraging** of efforts made by locals in order to conserve wild territories and wildlife.”

Eumelia Organic Agrotourism Farm & Guesthouse



Eumelia Organic Agrotourism Farm & Guesthouse is a guesthouse located in a rural area, which produces organic olive oil. The farm offers guests the opportunity to participate in activities such as harvesting, pressing, and cooking with the local ingredients. The regular usage of regenerative practices such as composting, and crop rotation are common practices of this structure and they aim to reduce waste and energy consumption. Guests can learn, through these practices, how



they can contribute to the health of the local ecosystem.

- The main focus of the organisation in tourism activities

The organisation aims to **promote sustainable and regenerative agriculture practices** by educating visitors about the importance of organic farming and permaculture.

- Common activities put into practice by the organisation

Eumelia Organic Agrotourism pursues the goal of promoting sustainable and regenerative agriculture practices and educating visitors about the importance of organic farming and permaculture. This initiative is rooted in the belief that agriculture can be both productive and environmentally friendly, fostering a harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world. At Eumelia, guests are offered a unique and authentic travel experience that allows them to connect deeply with nature and the local community. Visitors have the opportunity to immerse themselves in Greek culture and traditions, learning first-hand about the customs and practices that have shaped the region for centuries.

A core aspect of the farm's philosophy is to support the local economy by using locally sourced ingredients and supporting local businesses. This commitment ensures that the benefits of tourism are shared with the community, fostering economic resilience and sustainability. Eumelia's kitchen, for instance, features fresh produce from local farmers and artisans, ensuring that each meal is a testament to the region's rich agricultural heritage.

Furthermore, the Greek guesthouse is dedicated to promoting responsible tourism practices and minimising the environmental



impact of tourism on the area. This includes initiatives such as waste reduction, water conservation, and energy-efficient operations. By educating guests about these practices, they are encouraged to adopt similar habits in their own lives, extending the impact of their stay well beyond their visit.

Eumelia also aims to create a community of like-minded individuals who are passionate about sustainable living and environmental conservation. Through workshops, events, and shared experiences, guests can connect with others who share their values and commitment to a greener future. This sense of community is central to the farm's mission, encouraging a network of advocates for sustainable practices who can inspire change both locally and globally.

In summary, Eumelia Organic Agrotourism is not just a destination but a movement towards a more sustainable and regenerative way of living.

- The main challenges encountered in developing and implementing regenerative tourism experiences and community-based tourism

As previously stated the Greek farm works closely with local producers and businesses, supporting the local economy and promoting sustainable agriculture practices in the region. By collaborating with local farmers and producers, Eumelia strengthens the local economy and creates new job opportunities. This partnership extends beyond mere business transactions, as the farm organises educational programs and workshops that raise awareness about sustainable living and regenerative agriculture. These initiatives not only support the local economy but also promote a broader understanding and adoption of sustainable practices within the community.



Additionally, Eumelia's approach involves active collaboration with visitors. By educating and involving them in farm activities, the guesthouse aims to inspire a deeper appreciation for the natural environment and the importance of regenerative practices. However, the main challenges encountered with community-based tourism are coordinating various stakeholders and promoting prudence over immediate profits. Convincing stakeholders of the long-term benefits of sustainable practices can be difficult, but Eumelia remains committed to demonstrating that sustainability and economic viability can go hand in hand. Through persistent efforts and community engagement, the farm strives to overcome these challenges and foster a sustainable future for the region.

- The role of national and European policies in helping sustainable tourism

The interviewee didn't actively talk about European policies in the field of sustainable tourism but highlighted in its text the fact that Economic challenges include rising price of raw materials and energy prices, which affects product pricing and may cause financial issues to the organisations involved.

GLOSSARY



**Community-based tourism (CBT):**

Tourism that is owned, managed, or operated by local communities, particularly in rural areas. It aims to provide both environmental and socio-economic benefits to the community by involving them directly in the planning, development, and management of tourism activities.

Sustainable Tourism:

Tourism takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities. It aims to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive contributions to the local economy, culture, and ecosystem.

Carrying Capacity:

The maximum number of individuals or activities that an environment can sustainably support without degrading the natural, social, cultural, and economic environment. In tourism, it refers to the threshold beyond which visitor numbers and activities start causing irreversible damage to the destination.

Supply:

In the context of tourism, supply refers to the total availability of tourism products and services, such as accommodations, attractions, transportation, and amenities, that meet the demands of tourists. It includes both natural and human-made resources.



Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):

A business model in which companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with stakeholders. In tourism, CSR involves businesses adopting ethical practices that benefit society and the environment, such as supporting local communities, reducing carbon footprints, and promoting sustainable practices.

Local Economic Development (LED):

A process by which local governments, businesses, and other stakeholders work together to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation. In tourism, LED focuses on strategies that boost the local economy by enhancing the benefits of tourism for residents, including job creation, infrastructure development, and the promotion of local culture and products.

Economic Leakage:

In economics, leakage refers to capital or income that diverges from some kind of iterative system. Leakage is usually used in a particular depiction of the flow of income within a system, referred to as the circular flow of income and expenditure, in the Keynesian model of economics. Within this depiction, leakages are the non-consumption uses of income, including saving, taxes, and imports.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In order to delve further into the discussed topics and address further reflections on the subject, we invite you to :

- **Reflect on your past experiences as a tourist: on what occasions did you feel to be an integral part of your experience, being integrated into the place and community you were in?** What are the elements that you think contributed to making you feel this way?
- **Thinking back to your past experiences as a tourist, what are the benefits you think you gained from them? Can you identify any learnings you were able to take from these experiences?**
- **Reflect on the sustainable trips you have made in the past: which actions have you consciously carried out in terms of sustainability and of which you are proud?**
- **Are there innovative learning centres in your surroundings that embody the same characteristics as those discussed in this module?** Could you identify precisely these elements? Research in this regard whether and which organisations around you could come close to the objectives pursued by these centres.
- **Deepen the research started in this module by identifying further best practices promoting local destinations and producers within and outside the European Union.**





- **Research and reflect on possible marketing and promoting techniques that could be adapted in this field in order to raise awareness among tourists on the one hand and highlight specific organised activities of regenerative tourism-promoting structures on the other hand.**

WORKSHEETS

Design a possible workshop that aims to identify and discuss concrete resources and activities (connected to CBT) in your area that may be of interest to tourists.

Step 1: Start with brainstorming to give every possible participant a chance to contribute to this cause

Step 2: Determine the role of the different sections of your community

Step 3: Identify the gaps in terms of knowledge and skills and consequently identify the concrete needs your training will have

Step 4: Draw up an outline of a possible training, also taking into account interdisciplinary aspects such as communication, marketing, and digital skills





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Co-funded by
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