



## EXperiential TOurism for sustainable Rural development

**WP2:** Success stories and needs mapping for VET renewal in rural tourism

**A2.1:** EU collection of success stories and analysis of national trends



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Analysis of the current national status of rural tourism and related VET offers

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**Focus Group National Report - Infodef**

**FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION**

*Please add the main information about your focus group(s).*

**COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION:** Spain

**CITY OF IMPLEMENTATION:** Valladolid

**NUMBER OF FOCUS GROUPS:** 1

**DATES OF THE FOCUS GROUP(S):** 28th May 2024

**VENUES OF THE FOCUS GROUP(S):** Online

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (per focus group if more than one):** 3 people. It was very difficult to get more people involved and to arrange all the agendas.

**TARGET GROUP AND STAKEHOLDERS:** professionals related to VET: educators and trainers, professionals linked to adult education.

**FOCUS GROUP DESCRIPTION**

*Please provide a detailed description of the focus group(s).*

- **Number of focus groups implementers and description of their background:**

Two people were in charge of implementing the focus group:

- To dynamize the conversation: an expert in the design of innovative training and learning methodologies and the evaluation of employment and educational programmes. Involved in coordination and management in more than 100 European funded projects.

- To engage people, introduce the project and coordinate the task: a professional in marketing and communication.

- **Number and description of the participants' background:**

Two experts in rural tourism and digitalisation. An expert in regional development in rural areas. Both of them have participated in educational projects and have developed courses and trainings for upskilling and re-skilling professionals in VET.

- **Duration of the focus group(s):**

One hour approximately.

- **Main structure and agenda of the focus group(s):**

Welcome and presentations

GRPD and acknowledgment to take pictures during the focus group

Introduction to Extor project

Explanation of the focus group purpose

Description of the focus group

Focus group questions

Conclusions and further comments

- **Description of any group and/or interactive activities:**

No

- **Level of engagement of the participants:**

The participants exchanged viewpoints and discussed the issues raised animatedly. Everyone participated openly and respectfully. Topics that were scheduled for later discussion emerged ahead of time because everyone was very engaged.

- **Main comments and evaluation points from participants (the most important suggestions and recommendations, improvement points etc.):**

1. **Trends and opportunities:**

- a. Escaping the periphery.
- b. Valuing intermediate destinations over traditional ones, focusing on itinerant destinations.
- c. Coastal villages are becoming popular, though less so.
- d. Slow tourism, sustainability, and local culture.
- e. Experiential tourism.
- f. Gamification.
- g. Murals.
- h. Events leading to occasional overcrowding.
- i. Astrotourism.

2. **VET offers/programs available:**

Tour guides. Training for free tours should be implemented.

3. **Engagement of the authorities/community:**

Efforts by authorities:

- Marketing and communication by provinces lack strategy and monitoring, and need significant improvement.
- Few improvements in infrastructure, both in access and transportation.

#### 4. Suggestions/Recommendations

- Main obstacles:
  - Limited training opportunities.
  - Sustainability is already included in all digital programs.
  - Digitalization does not focus on older adults, who manage most rural accommodations.
  - More involvement from authorities is needed.
  - Training is not innovative, mostly basic management.
  - Tourism stakeholders need to self-promote due to the lack of authority involvement.
- It would be beneficial for rural tourism VET providers:
  - Connection between companies and students.
  - International mobility to see practices in other countries as a professional development opportunity.
  - Practical training.
- To improve VET in rural tourism in Spain, it is necessary to:
  - Promote innovative initiatives.
  - Enhance mobility.
  - Focus on experiences.
- **Any challenges faced during the focus group(s):**

No

- **Main conclusions of the focus group(s):**

**Trends in Rural Tourism in Spain:** Participants identified trends such as escaping urban peripheries, valuing intermediate destinations, slow tourism, sustainability, local culture, experiential tourism, gamification, murals, events, and astrotourism.

**Most Popular Sector and Employment Opportunities:** Responsible, regenerative, and experiential tourism are prevalent, especially in northern Spain. Opportunities include packaged destinations, experience networks, and free tours.

**Existing VET Programs:** Participants mentioned tourist guides and the need for free tour training.

**Professional Development Programs:** Limited knowledge, with mentions of digitalization and enotourism.

**Efforts by Authorities:** Marketing and communication lack strategy, with few infrastructure improvements.

**Gaps in VET Offerings:** Limited training opportunities, a focus on sustainability in digital programs, lack of focus on older adults, need for more authority involvement, and basic management training.

**Support for VET Providers:** Connection between companies and students, international mobility, and practical training.

**Recommendations for Improvement:** Promote innovative initiatives, enhance mobility, and focus on experiential learning.

