

EUROpean Sustainable Tourism And entrepreneurship

EUROSTAR

Project description and summary

Our multifaceted project, **EUROSTAR** (EUROpean Sustainable Tourism And entrepreneurship), aimed at exploring, sharing and preserving the hidden treasures of Europe related to sustainable tourism and at the same time giving participants an understanding of what entrepreneurship is and how this can be linked to sustainable tourism. Approximately 2000 students, 300 teachers and local communities from 5 European countries, namely Cyprus, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Lithuania formed a two-year collaboration on this topic. Due to COVID, the project took three-years to complete, however.

The five partner schools decided that a project of this kind would help their students and teachers to expand their knowledge of sustainable tourism and give them an opportunity to learn how they could start-up their own company related to it. During the 3 year project lectures and seminars were given by experts to the students to provide a professional perspective on sustainable tourism and entrepreneurship.

The first year of the project focused on sustainable tourism in relation to our local environments, cultural heritage and entrepreneurship. The second and third years of the project focused on the creation of 5 start-up companies related to sustainable tourism, which aimed at enhancing sustainable activities. In order to accomplish this, a careful analysis of the region, the environment, its people and their lifestyles was carried out.

In accordance with the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, one of the targets was to improve the quality and efficiency of education and training. It highlighted the importance of smart growth in education by encouraging young people to learn, study and update their skills and to create sustainable conditions in secondary education. We applied these values to the project activities and to the long-term goals of our institutions.

Our students learned about European sustainable tourism sites, about the history and traditions of their own and other cultures, about ecology and the importance of protecting natural biodiversity. They became aware of the threats facing the sites and learned how the international community as a whole is uniting to save our common heritage.

In order to achieve the project outcomes, the following were required: the active use of ICT tools, the designing of a catchy logo, video-making, website designing, advertising, mobile App design etc. Most importantly, students developed entrepreneurial skills and learned how to utilize these in creating their own start-up related to sustainable tourism. The project required participants to investigate and compare different sustainable tourism issues such as culture, natural sites, traditions, art, architecture and local tourism

products supported by collaborative and cooperative learning, innovative educational methodology CLIL and IT technologies. They came into contact with local educational and cultural institutions, communities and authorities around Europe and shared their best practices.

The added value gained through international cooperation was the enhanced development of self (self-confidence, empathy, tolerance, team work, time management), communication, digital and organizational skills and competences. These also strengthened the teaching profiles of the teacher participants - their language and project-based competences and boosted the repertoire of their teaching methods thus earning them the respect of their students and regional community, not only as teachers but also as facilitators of innovative learning, multilingual events and international project cooperation.

The results of the project were disseminated through the project website, newsletters, photo and video-documentation, local newspapers or local TV and the brochure on the project, so that other teachers, headmasters, experts, employees of the Ministry of Tourism and other interested parties could benefit from them.

The project allowed young students from various parts of Europe to work together, sharing ideas, learning from each other, discussing similarities and differences in entrepreneurship related to sustainable tourism and to transfer this knowledge to their start-up companies and schools. The element of developing social skills became more paramount as the COVID-19 pandemic set in. Furthermore, the project gave refugees and students with economic obstacles and / or geographical obstacles the opportunity not only to learn more about sustainable tourism and entrepreneurship but also to travel, thus giving them a lifelong experience which they may not otherwise have been able to have.

The project also addressed social and educational values of European cultural heritage and aimed at contributing to job creation, economic growth and social cohesion within the sustainable tourism field.