

Best Practices in Tourism

Product tourism



Co-funded by
the European Union



PRODUCT-BASED TOURISM – EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES

NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Zero Waste Recipe Lab
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	BULGARIA
THEMATIC AREA	Product-based tourism / ESG – Environment (E)
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE:</p> <p>Zero Waste Recipe Lab is a practical educational initiative implemented since 2023 at the HRC Culinary Academy in Sofia. The practice consists of organizing culinary workshops for students and professional chefs, aimed at designing meals in line with the zero-waste philosophy. Participants learn techniques for full ingredient utilization (e.g. peels, stems, seeds), portion planning, food preservation methods, and creative processing of food leftovers.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE AND IMPLEMENTATION METHOD (How was it carried out?)</p> <p>As part of the workshops, participants also analyze the environmental and financial impact of food waste on households and restaurants. This enables them to integrate sustainable development principles into everyday kitchen practice. The project combines culinary education with environmental responsibility and represents an attractive culinary tourism offer, drawing environmentally conscious participants from different countries. The practice can be easily adapted by other culinary schools, agritourism farms, or hotels as part of building a responsible culinary offer.</p> <p>RESULTS (Quantitative and qualitative effects)</p> <p>Since 2023, more than 150 participants have taken part in the workshops – students, graduates, and professional chefs. Waste audits showed a reduction of organic kitchen waste by 25–30% per menu after completing the workshops. The program also translated into professional practice – restaurants run by HRC graduates began implementing waste monitoring systems, composting, and new food storage procedures. Participants reported increased creativity in menu design, greater awareness of the environmental impact of kitchens, and better preparation for ESG-oriented gastronomy.</p> <p>SIGNIFICANCE FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT (What did the staff learn?)</p> <p>Both instructors and participants developed skills in raw material management, production planning, inventory control, environmental</p>

	<p>footprint assessment, and ecological responsibility. Participants learned to analyze the entire food production system – from supply chains, through processing, to food presentation. Teamwork competencies were strengthened through collaborative low-emission menu design. Instructors gained experience in measuring learning outcomes related to sustainable gastronomy and integrating green skills into curricula.</p> <p>ANALYSIS (Impact on service quality)</p> <p>Implementation of zero-waste techniques supports efficient kitchen management, reduces costs, and enhances the gastronomic experience for customers. Restaurants operated by graduates reported higher guest satisfaction due to ecological brand storytelling and more creative, seasonal, and sustainable menus.</p>
<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>ANALYSIS – SIGNIFICANCE OF CERTIFICATION</p> <p>The Academy cooperates with international organizations promoting sustainable gastronomy, such as Worldchefs Sustainability Education for Culinary Professionals, although the Zero Waste Lab program itself is not formally certified. However, participants acquire concrete competencies in ecological cooking and efficient resource management, strengthening their professional readiness and labor market position.</p>
<p>SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE</p>	<p>https://www.hrcacademy.com</p>

NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Sustainable Agriculture Field Trips (Educational visits to organic farms)
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	BULGARIA
THEMATIC AREA	Product-based tourism / ESG – Environment (E), Social responsibility (S)
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE: The practice was developed by HRC Culinary Academy in response to the growing need to raise awareness among future chefs about the origin of ingredients and the importance of sustainable agriculture. Contemporary culinary education often overlooks practical aspects of food production, resulting in limited student exposure to real farming conditions. The initiative aimed to bridge the gap between gastronomic education and agriculture, strengthen respect for local producers, promote short supply chains, and develop responsible purchasing attitudes and environmental awareness.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE AND IMPLEMENTATION METHOD (How was it carried out?) The program involved organizing regular educational field trips for students to local organic farms in the vicinity of Sofia. Since the beginning of the project, over 200 participants have taken part. Students visited farms, participated in workshops on crop cultivation, composting, soil care, and biodiversity, and engaged directly with farmers to learn about challenges and realities of agricultural work. Some farms later became permanent suppliers for the Academy’s training restaurant “Talents”. These trips served as a platform for knowledge exchange, inspiration, and building cooperation networks between culinary education and local agriculture.</p> <p>RESULTS (Quantitative and qualitative effects) To date, long-term cooperation has been established with six organic farms supplying fresh products to the Academy. Surveys indicate that 95% of participants reported increased awareness of the importance of seasonality and local ingredients. The initiative also influenced menu planning during international internships, with students more frequently considering local product availability and environmental impact. Farmers gained access to educational networks and increased visibility of their offerings. The practice strengthened integration between gastronomy and local communities.</p> <p>SIGNIFICANCE FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT (What did the staff learn?)</p>

	<p>Students acquired practical skills in responsible sourcing, on-site quality assessment of ingredients, seasonal menu planning, and environmental footprint calculation. They also learned how to communicate the “farm-to-table” concept, incorporating ethical and ecological aspects into dish presentation. Teaching staff gained new tools for integrating agricultural, environmental, and gastronomic content into curricula, fostering interdisciplinary education.</p> <p>ANALYSIS (Impact on service quality)</p> <p>The practice improved gastronomic service quality by building authentic supplier relationships, enhancing understanding of product life cycles, and enabling responsible resource planning. Restaurants communicating product sourcing methods reported increased customer trust and greater interest in locally based offerings.</p>
<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>The program promoted ecological standards and sustainable agriculture, encouraging implementation of local certification systems. This strengthened awareness of quality, transparency, and responsible product origin. By working with certified products, students learned market requirements and gained practical preparation for working in ESG-compliant restaurants.</p> <p>ANALYSIS – SIGNIFICANCE OF CERTIFICATION</p> <p>Partner farms pursued local organic certifications, improving product quality and competitiveness. Although the practice itself was not part of a mandatory certification process, it encouraged both students and farmers to operate in line with sustainable production guidelines and quality standards.</p>
<p>SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE</p>	<p>https://www.hrcacademy.com</p>

NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Hyper-local Gardening around K59 (Hyper-local gardening at HRC Academy)
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	BULGARIA
THEMATIC AREA	Turystyka Product-based tourism / ESG – Environment (E)
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE: The practice was implemented by HRC Culinary Academy in response to limited access to agricultural land and the need to increase self-sufficiency and model sustainable urban lifestyles. The goal was to demonstrate that even small spaces—such as areas around the K59 training restaurant—can meaningfully impact ingredient supply chains by reducing transport emissions and supporting biodiversity. The garden also became part of the Academy’s visual identity, signaling its green and self-sufficient character.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE AND IMPLEMENTATION METHOD (How was it carried out?) The initiative involved establishing a micro-garden on the HRC campus, directly adjacent to the K59 restaurant. Students participated in planning, planting, maintenance, and harvesting of herbs and vegetables later used in menu preparation. Activities combined urban gardening theory with kitchen practice—students aligned planting schedules with seasonal menu needs and learned natural resource management in limited-space conditions.</p> <p>RESULTS (Quantitative and qualitative effects) The garden supplied over 15 varieties of herbs and vegetables, covering approximately 20% of the restaurant’s fresh herb demand during the growing season. Ingredient procurement costs were reduced by 10%. The practice improved product quality and freshness, appreciated by chefs and guests alike. Garden aesthetics strengthened the restaurant’s environmentally friendly image. Students reported stronger attachment to their work, better understanding of seasonal cycles, and a sense of influence over dish quality.</p> <p>SIGNIFICANCE FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT (What did the staff learn?) Students and staff acquired skills in urban cultivation planning, composting, water and light resource management, and harmonizing cultivation cycles with restaurant menus. They also learned how to communicate the “green story” of dishes—sharing ingredient origins with guests, increasing engagement. Teaching staff gained experience in delivering education combining gastronomy with urban agriculture and food systems.</p> <p>ANALYSIS (Impact on service quality) Restaurant guests appreciated ingredient freshness and origin storytelling, enhancing authenticity of the culinary experience. The initiative strengthened HRC’s reputation as an institution combining education, quality, and</p>

	sustainability, while increasing customer and media interest in ecological initiatives.
LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION	<p>ANALYSIS – SIGNIFICANCE OF CERTIFICATION</p> <p>The Academy considered participation in optional urban gardening certification schemes. Although certification was not required, the practice helped formalize and document student competencies in sustainable production. The project supported development of practice-based curricula.</p> <p>Optional certification enabled formal recognition of acquired competencies, supported green qualification development, and strengthened the Academy’s image as an institution promoting ecological innovation.</p>
SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE	https://www.hrcacademy.com / www.k59.bg

NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Healthy Cooking & Sustainable Sourcing – Erasmus+ Experience Exchange
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	BULGARIA / NORWAY
THEMATIC AREA	Product-based tourism / ESG – Environment and Education
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE:</p> <p>The practice emerged from the need to enhance the competencies of HRC Culinary Academy staff in sustainable gastronomy and hospitality management. Although the Academy had already implemented pro-environmental initiatives internally, it lacked direct reference to standards applied by European industry leaders. The Erasmus+ partnership with the Bristol Hotel in Oslo created a space for experience exchange and observation of best practices in energy efficiency, green procurement, and certification procedures. The project enabled confrontation of theoretical knowledge with real operational practice and adaptation of innovative solutions to Bulgarian conditions.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE AND IMPLEMENTATION METHOD (How was it carried out?)</p> <p>The main objective was to train HRC instructional and managerial staff in low-emission kitchen practices, resource management, circular menu planning, and European environmental certification procedures. Participants observed green operational processes at the Bristol Hotel in Norway and subsequently implemented selected elements in the Academy’s training restaurant “Talents”. The project also included pedagogical knowledge exchange—developing new teaching methods based on operational data and sustainable gastronomy practices.</p> <p>RESULTS (Quantitative and qualitative effects)</p> <p>Following the exchange, participants implemented water and energy saving protocols, resulting in reduced operational costs of the restaurant. An organic waste monitoring system was introduced and integrated into the student curriculum. Qualitatively, the project strengthened ecological responsibility culture among staff—increasing motivation and engagement in shared environmental goals. The Academy gained increased European recognition as an ESG-oriented educational institution through dissemination of project results within the Erasmus+ network.</p> <p>SIGNIFICANCE FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT (What did the staff learn?)</p> <p>Staff developed competencies in sustainability policy planning and implementation in gastronomy, energy and water management, communication of ecological practices to teams and guests, and integration of environmental topics into curricula. Instructors also acquired new didactic skills, such as using real operational data as teaching material. The project fostered reflective attitudes and continuous improvement within the academic team.</p>

	<p>ANALYSIS (Impact on service quality)</p> <p>The Talents restaurant recorded higher guest engagement and positive feedback related to transparent environmental practices. Clear communication of ecological actions increased customer trust and strengthened the Academy’s reputation as an institution supporting green transformation in gastronomy.</p>
<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>ANALYSIS – SIGNIFICANCE OF CERTIFICATION</p> <p>Although the project did not lead to formal certification, it aligned with Erasmus+ green mobility standards and sustainability guidelines for the HoReCa sector. Participants gained knowledge of EU environmental certification procedures, forming a foundation for future formalization processes.</p> <p>Despite the lack of formal certification, participants and partner institutions gained awareness of EU standards and practical knowledge of certification procedures, potentially leading to future applications for international environmental labels (e.g. EU Ecolabel).</p>
<p>SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE</p>	<p>https://www.hrcacademy.com/ https://www.bristoloslo.no</p>

NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Discovering Liguria – Guiding Travelers and Tourism Professionals through the Authentic Soul of the Region
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	ITALY – LIGURIA
THEMATIC AREA	Product-based tourism / Sustainable tourism
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE: Despite its exceptional natural and cultural assets, Liguria remained overshadowed by more popular Italian tourist destinations such as Tuscany or Venice. The practice emerged in response to growing interest in experiential, narrative, and heritage-based tourism. The main objective was to strengthen regional identity through tourism rooted in authentic contact with local culture, craftsmanship, and cuisine, while professionalizing guiding services in line with sustainable development principles.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE AND IMPLEMENTATION METHOD (How was it carried out?) The program included training courses and workshops for local guides and tourism sector professionals, focusing on creating coherent narrative tourism routes integrating Liguria’s culinary heritage, craftsmanship, history, and landscapes. As a result, thematic trails and tourism experiences were developed, designed to emotionally engage visitors while managing tourist flows responsibly. Cooperation with local producers and artisans supported small-scale economies and preserved offer authenticity.</p> <p>RESULTS (Quantitative and qualitative effects) The initiative led to numerous new partnerships between travel agencies, guides, and small local businesses. Interest in Liguria as a cultural destination increased, particularly among tourists seeking authentic and sustainable experiences. Qualitatively, local community engagement in tourism offer creation increased, while visitors reported stronger cultural immersion and deeper understanding of local identity.</p> <p>SIGNIFICANCE FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT (What did the staff learn?) Participants developed competencies in tourism storytelling, heritage interpretation, visitor flow management, and intercultural communication. They learned to design routes around emotional and sensory experiences, combining taste, history, and landscape into cohesive narratives. Guides and operators gained confidence as “ambassadors of Liguria,” not merely service providers. The initiative also encouraged reflection on tourism carrying capacity and responsible visitation planning.</p> <p>ANALYSIS (Impact on service quality) Tourists reported higher satisfaction due to authentic contact with local culture and communities. This increased visitor loyalty and encouraged repeat visits and recommendations of Liguria as a unique destination within Italy.</p>

<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>ANALYSIS – SIGNIFICANCE OF CERTIFICATION Guides could obtain voluntary regional or industry certifications in ecotourism and cultural tourism, increasing credibility and employability in thematic tourism. Certified guides were more frequently selected for thematic tours and booked in advance, improving market visibility and confirming service quality.</p>
<p>SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE</p>	<p>https://www.sviluppiliguria.it/</p>

NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Discovering Liguria with Fabio Bongiorno – Enogastronomic Storytelling within “Food Circus”
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	ITALY – LIGURIA
THEMATIC AREA	Product-based tourism / Narrative tourism
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE: The practice emerged from the need to modernize regional culinary and cultural heritage promotion methods. Traditional tourism promotion often relied on static formats such as brochures and guidebooks, offering limited emotional engagement. Fabio Bongiorno’s “Food Circus” project responded to the growing role of storytelling and digital media in culinary tourism promotion. The main goal was to connect local producers with a modern audience—young, digitally fluent, and seeking authenticity and deeper experiences.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE AND IMPLEMENTATION METHOD (How was it carried out?) The project produced podcasts and video content in which Fabio Bongiorno—a chef, culinary expert, and narrator—presented local dishes, wines, artisans, and Ligurian landscapes. Collaboration with regional wine consortia, chefs, and cultural organizations ensured coherent regional storytelling. Content was distributed through social media, streaming platforms, and regional websites, reaching domestic and international audiences.</p> <p>RESULTS (Quantitative and qualitative effects) The “Food Circus” podcast gained hundreds of new subscribers and high social media engagement. Visits to featured wineries, farms, and restaurants increased. The project strengthened cooperation among local stakeholders previously operating independently. Qualitatively, it built a modern Ligurian identity—authentic yet communicated through contemporary media language.</p> <p>SIGNIFICANCE FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT (What did the staff learn?) Project participants—from producers to guides and chefs—developed competencies in digital content creation, narrative marketing, and cross-sector collaboration. The initiative raised awareness of storytelling as an educational and promotional tool for sustainable tourism. Bongiorno’s team gained skills in content adaptation across platforms and building destination branding based on emotion and experience.</p> <p>ANALYSIS (Impact on service quality) The initiative strengthened the region’s brand as attractive, modern, and authentic. It facilitated emotional bonds with audiences, increasing loyalty and visitation interest. Tourism professionals were inspired to adopt creative promotion approaches and professionalize services.</p>

<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>ANALYSIS – SIGNIFICANCE OF CERTIFICATION</p> <p>Although not formally certified, the practice aligned with regional tourism strategies and ethical communication standards of sustainable tourism. It inspired professionals to pursue training and certification in digital marketing, storytelling, and culinary promotion.</p> <p>Although the project itself was not formally certified, it inspired professionals to pursue further professional development and obtain certifications in the areas of digital promotion and culinary tourism.</p>
<p>SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE</p>	<p>https://foodcircus.it https://www.visitaly.eu/places/liguria https://www.instagram.com/foodcircus_it</p>

NAME OF THE PRACTICE	CULINARY TRAIL – Participation in the Interreg Project
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	DANUBE REGION / CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
THEMATIC AREA	Product-based tourism
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE:</p> <p>The project was developed in response to the need to protect and promote the culinary heritage of the Danube region, which encompasses numerous cultures, traditions, and ethnic cuisines. Contemporary tourism often marginalizes local flavors in favor of standardized gastronomic offerings, leading to the disappearance of unique recipes and culinary techniques. The practice aimed to strengthen regional identity by positioning cuisine as a key element of the tourism and educational offer.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE AND IMPLEMENTATION METHOD (How was it carried out?)</p> <p>Within the Interreg project framework, HRC Culinary Academy from Bulgaria led the educational component. Dedicated training modules were developed covering ethnic cuisines, gastronomic storytelling, and sustainable local sourcing. The training targeted culinary school students, HoReCa professionals, and tourism guides. The materials were used in cross-border activities and within a shared knowledge platform focused on Danube regional cuisine.</p> <p>RESULTS (Quantitative and qualitative effects)</p> <p>An integrated educational program accessible to project partners across several EU countries was created. The developed training modules increased knowledge of local cuisine and supported restaurateurs in recreating traditional dishes. The program also stimulated interest in culinary tourism across the region. Local recipes were documented and incorporated into promotional materials and tourism routes. Qualitatively, participants gained greater awareness of the value of local traditions and their role in attracting more conscious and engaged tourists.</p> <p>SIGNIFICANCE FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT (What did the staff learn?)</p> <p>HRC staff and project partners developed competencies in designing educational programs that combine culinary heritage with modern teaching methods. They learned how to apply storytelling in gastronomy, integrate cultural elements into menus, and collaborate across borders to promote local cuisine. The project also strengthened skills in project management, international coordination, and use of tools promoting gastronomy as a key component of regional identity.</p> <p>ANALYSIS (Impact on service quality)</p> <p>Restaurants and farms participating in the project began to better highlight local identity, introduce ethnic dishes into menus, and emphasize their cultural background, increasing guest engagement and satisfaction. Through education,</p>

	<p>tourism services gained new tools for building customer experiences centered on local cuisine.</p>
<p>LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION</p>	<p>ANALYSIS – SIGNIFICANCE OF CERTIFICATION</p> <p>The project was implemented within the Interreg EU program, which supports cross-border cooperation and integrates sustainable development approaches. Both the program and its participants operated in line with EU standards for quality, education, and sectoral certification.</p> <p>Interreg support increased the project’s prestige and facilitated adaptation of its results in other countries of the region. The HRC team used the experience to develop further initiatives related to culinary education.</p>
<p>SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE</p>	<p>https://www.interreg-danube.eu/ https://www.hrcacademy.com/</p>

NAME OF THE PRACTICE	Black Box Challenge with Mapping of Local Suppliers
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	BULGARIA
THEMATIC AREA	Product-based tourism
PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	<p>WHAT DOES THE PRACTICE INVOLVE:</p> <p>The practice was developed to bring future chefs closer to local food sources and to enhance creativity and stress resilience under real-life culinary challenges. In the context of gastronomic globalization, culinary schools increasingly seek ways to promote regional ingredients and cooperation with small producers. HRC Culinary Academy combined education with gamification, creating an experience that teaches, engages, and builds networks between students and the local market.</p> <p>OBJECTIVE AND IMPLEMENTATION METHOD (How was it carried out?)</p> <p>As part of third-semester kitchen classes, students receive a so-called “Black Box” containing a set of mystery ingredients sourced exclusively from small local producers. Their task is to create a full menu—starter, main course, and dessert—within a defined timeframe while adhering to sustainable cooking principles. Students work in teams, developing collaboration, task distribution, and time management skills. Each edition of the challenge includes an analytical component: participants identify and describe suppliers, creating a map of local supply chains.</p> <p>RESULTS (Quantitative and qualitative effects)</p> <p>Since its launch in 2022, more than 120 students have participated in the challenge. Cooperation was established with over 30 local food producers from Sofia and surrounding regions. A supplier contact map was created and later used both in education and by graduates opening their own businesses. Students demonstrated increased creativity and improved ability to work with seasonal and unconventional products. Restaurants run by graduates began sourcing more frequently from local suppliers, positively affecting brand image and dish quality.</p> <p>SIGNIFICANCE FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT (What did the staff learn?)</p> <p>Students acquired skills in menu management under conditions of uncertainty and limited ingredient availability. They became familiar with the local producer landscape and learned to work with ingredients of diverse characteristics. Soft skills such as team communication and stress resilience were strengthened. Teaching staff enhanced their ability to assess innovation and creativity in kitchen work and to design learning situations based on real market challenges.</p> <p>ANALYSIS (Impact on service quality)</p> <p>Through mapping local suppliers, restaurants operated by HRC graduates gained easier access to fresh and authentic products. Dish quality improved, and customers appreciated the promotion of local cuisine and transparency regarding ingredient sourcing.</p>

LINKAGE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE WITH CERTIFICATION	<p>ANALYSIS – SIGNIFICANCE OF CERTIFICATION</p> <p>Although the practice was not part of a formal certification process, it aligns with European standards for sustainable gastronomy education and professional competence development. It may serve as a reference point in training related to culinary certifications and locality-based quality systems.</p> <p>The practice provides strong preparation for obtaining certifications related to ecological and local gastronomy. Students better understand the sustainable market’s expectations and are ready to work in accordance with environmental ethics.</p>
SOURCE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE	www.hrcacademy.com