



Escape2

Supporting the Development of Thematic Rural Tourism Strategies

Module 1 Potential For Rural Tourism in your Region

Focus on Rural Tourism SMEs in Europe

www.escape2project.org



Training Course

How to Develop a Successful HQRTS
(High Quality Rural Tourism Strategy)



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Introduction

This Module introduces concepts related to the development of rural tourism in different areas of Europe. The terms “rural” and “rural areas” are explained, as a basis for further discussion on the different forms of rural tourism and their relevant activities. The Module also includes the advantages and the potential risks from the development of rural tourism in a specific area and concludes with the factors which need to be considered and researched in order to decide on the potential for rural tourism development in different areas.

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Learning Outcomes

- Know the difference between **rural areas** and **urban areas** and the different types of rural areas
- Understand the meaning of **rural tourism**
- List **potential activities** related to rural tourism
- Identify the potential for the **development of rural tourism** in different region
- Classify **areas** and **regions** as rural
- Describe the **different types** and **activities** involved in rural tourism
- Give **examples of activities** organized in rural tourism
- Analyze and determine the **advantages** and **disadvantages** of the development of rural tourism in a region
- Evaluate and judge the **potential of a region** to organize and pursue rural tourism activities
- Determine the **factors to consider** regarding the development of rural tourism in a given region
- Consider and justify the **potential of rural tourism** in their own region



01

Rural Areas

Rural



Before discussing about rural tourism, let's consider the term “**rural**”.

The term “*rural*” mainly indicates what is typical of the countryside or more generally of non-urbanized areas. It encompasses concepts such as country, cross-country, agricultural, peasant, georgic, rustic, bucolic, etc.

All these terms indicate a productive and social system based mainly on the use of natural resources.

Rural areas

“**Rural areas**” are all the territories whose economies are based on the use of natural and agricultural resources.

The elements that help us define an area as **rural** are:

- the prevalence of the natural landscape over the urbanized one
- the presence of small inhabited centers, whose urban characteristics and housing typologies are determined by the prevailing activity (present or past) of the local agricultural economy
- outside the inhabited centers the rarefied and widespread presence of real estate assets
- the pre-eminent territorial agricultural vocation
- the permanence of knowledge linked to local agricultural production traditions
- the low impact of the industrial sector on the local economy
- the configuration of most of the territory as a result of agricultural activities.



Rural areas

The Council of Europe employed the term “rural area” to denote the following characteristics:

A stretch of inland or coastal countryside, including small towns and villages, where the main part of the area is used for:

- Agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, and fisheries.
- Economic and cultural activities of country-dwellers.
- Non-urban recreation and leisure areas or nature reserves.
- Other purposes such as housing.



Is this rural?



Rural

Often the term **rural** is associated with the concept of backwardness, while the new definition deals with a natural environment characterized by the predominance of green space, a reserve of cultural values and traditions.



The **rural** has almost begun to take on the connotations of modernity. Why?

Rural

The **rural** has almost begun to take on the connotations of modernity. Why?

- rediscovery of typical cultivars
- increase in the appeal of rural life
- diversification of rural activities (elements related to social services, environmental education, tourism, sport, digital detox, etc.)
- introduction of more and more efficient technological instruments (robotics) to support production activities
- use of new forms of social communication applied to corporate marketing (agricultural storytelling)



Rural areas: data for Europe

Demography: 0.6% of the EU's population lives in rural areas. Rural and remote areas have the lowest shares of the EU's population in age groups below 50 years.

Social inclusion: The percentage of population at risk of poverty and social exclusion is higher in rural areas than in towns and cities

Employment rate: At an EU level, the employment rate is higher in rural areas than in cities. Since 2012, the employment **rate** in rural areas for people aged 20-64 has increased across the EU from 68% to 73%. However, the total **number** of employed persons has not increased, suggesting that *the increase in the employment rate is due to the decrease of the rural active population.*

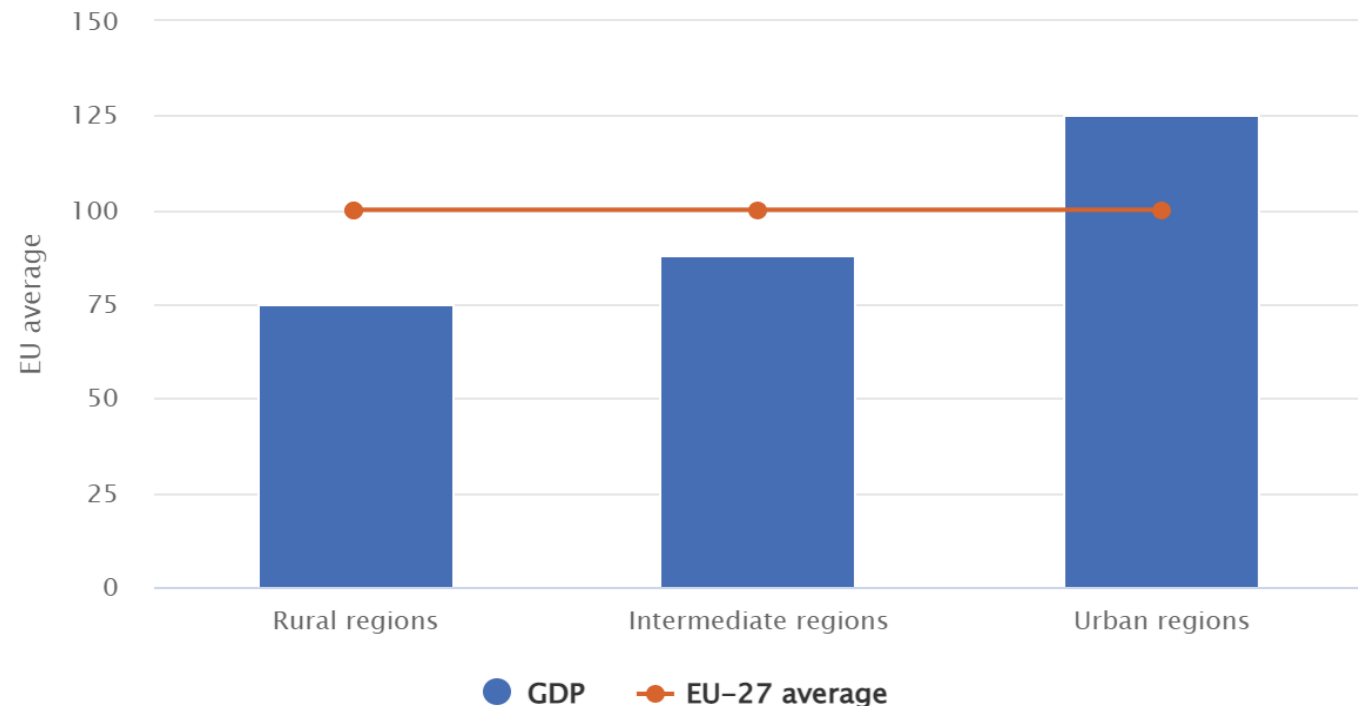


Rural: data for Europe

Economic development: In 2018, the average GDP per capita in rural regions was only three quarters of the EU average.

GDP per capita, 2018 (percentage of the EU average)

Source: Calculations based on Eurostat (online data code: URT_10R_3GDP)



Rural areas and European measures

Rurality is considered one of the **greatest resources** of Europe, supported by the EU rural development policy.

Rural development is the "second pillar" of the Common Agricultural Policy (**CAP**), strengthening the "first pillar" of income support and market measures by strengthening the social, environmental and economic sustainability of rural areas.

The CAP's contribution to the EU's rural development objectives is supported by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (**EAFRD**).

At the base of the rural development policies promoted by the EU are the Rural Development Programs (**RDP**). RDPs are co-financed by national budgets and may be prepared on either a national or regional basis.



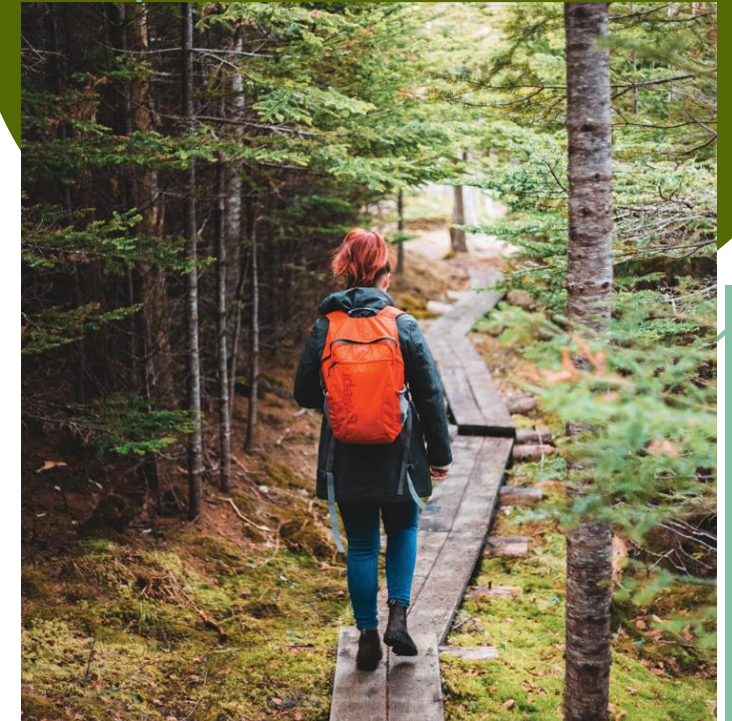
02

Rural Tourism Explained

Rural tourism

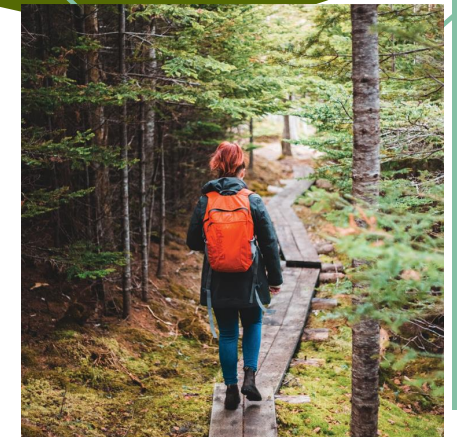
The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021) defines **Rural Tourism** as "a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle / culture, angling and sightseeing. Rural Tourism activities take place in non-urban (rural) areas with the following characteristics:

- i) low population density,
- ii) landscape and land-use dominated by agriculture and forestry and
- iii) traditional social structure and lifestyle"



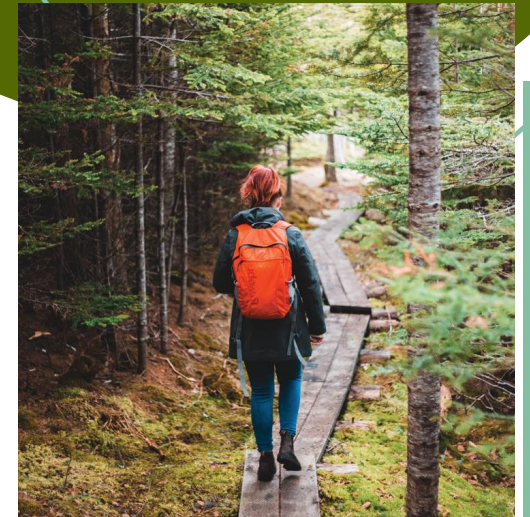
Rural tourism

Any forms of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture, and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as **rural tourism**.



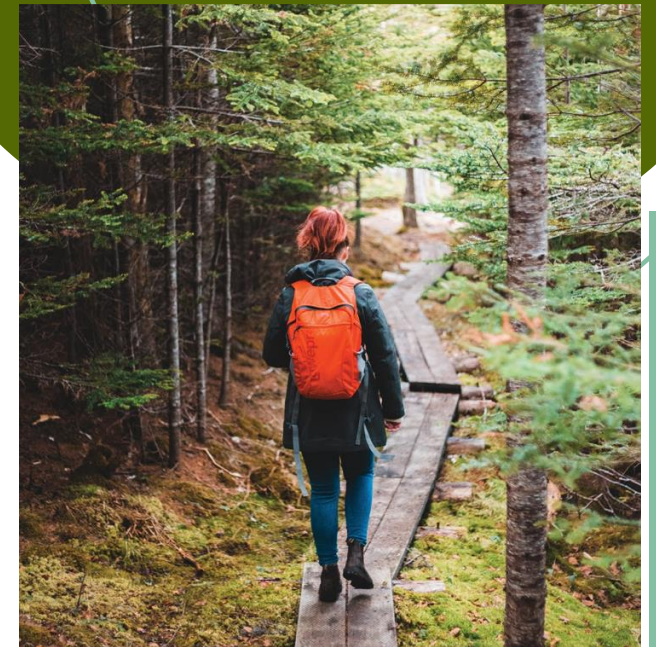
Rural tourism

- Rural tourism is based on **personalized and hospitable service** and on the **traditions** of the regions where it is developed – gastronomy, history, folklore, craftsmanship, etc.
- Rural tourism entails a **comprehensive and diversified product** that integrates accommodations, restaurants, and leisure activities.
- Rural tourism presents a diversified portfolio that integrates diverse types of activities such as hunting and fishing activities, fairs, festivals etc.
- Rural tourism the potential to battle the seasonality associated with other types of tourism (such as Sun and Sea Tourism).
- Rural tourism is **adaptable** to different kinds of audiences and needs.



Rural tourism market

- There is a growth trend in the demand of rural tourism, which was heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, as tourists look for non mainstream destinations/ activities, to avoid crowds that are usually associated with some well established touristic locations.
- The target public are well educated tourists, with an above average economic power, who demand quality, but also search for genuineness in their experience. Thus, the growing levels of education of the European population explain the growth trend.
- Due to its multifaceted approach, rural tourism has been attracting many other types of tourists such as families.



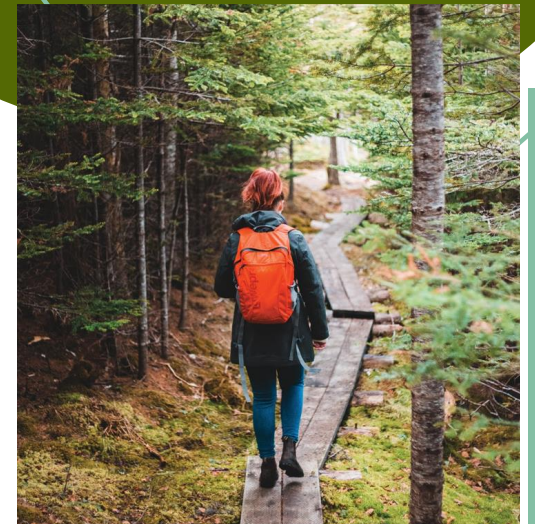
Rural tourism: elements for development

According to the UNWTO (2020), the four main pillars for tourism development are:

- education,
- investment,
- innovation and
- technology.

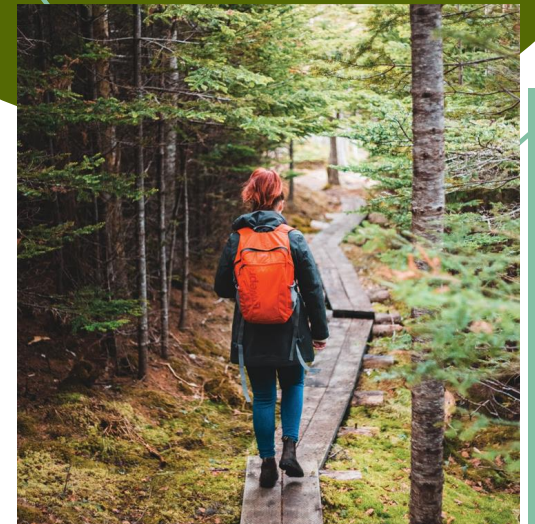
These are not separate spheres of a possible solution, they are in fact intrinsically connected as the sustainability of rural tourism will only be achieved using a comprehensive and multifunctional approach.

what is the content of these four pillars?



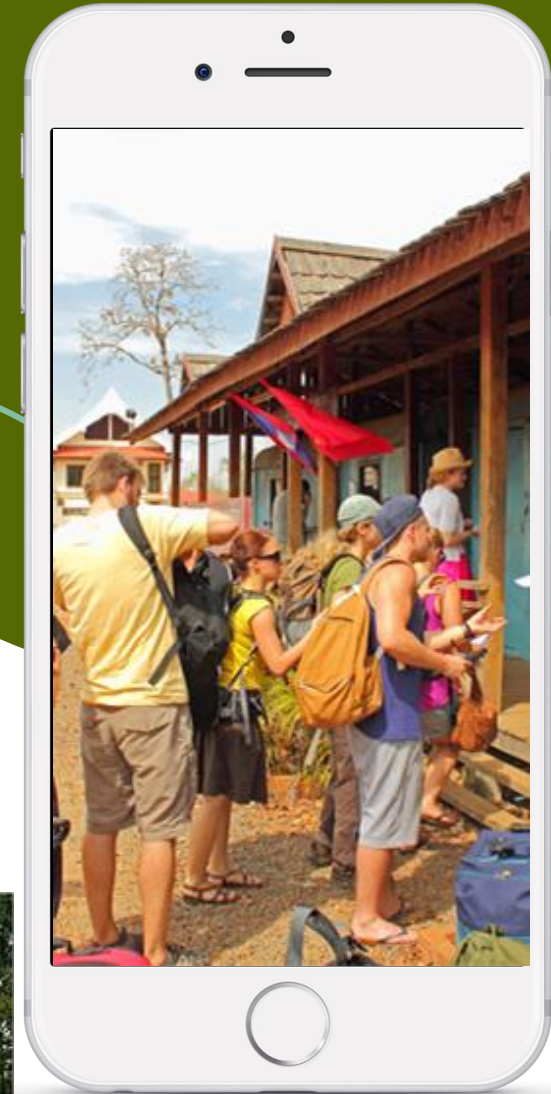
Rural tourism: elements for development

- **Education:** the importance of educating and training local populations in order to develop rural tourism (sustainability and authenticity)
- **Investment:** it should have a holistic perspective that puts rural communities as the main stakeholders (not only public investment but also private)
- **Innovation:** it should be directed to the creation of sustainable practices in resource using, income distribution, heritage preservation, etc.
- **Technology:** it should be used to better plan, measure and manage touristic activity and all that is connected with it.



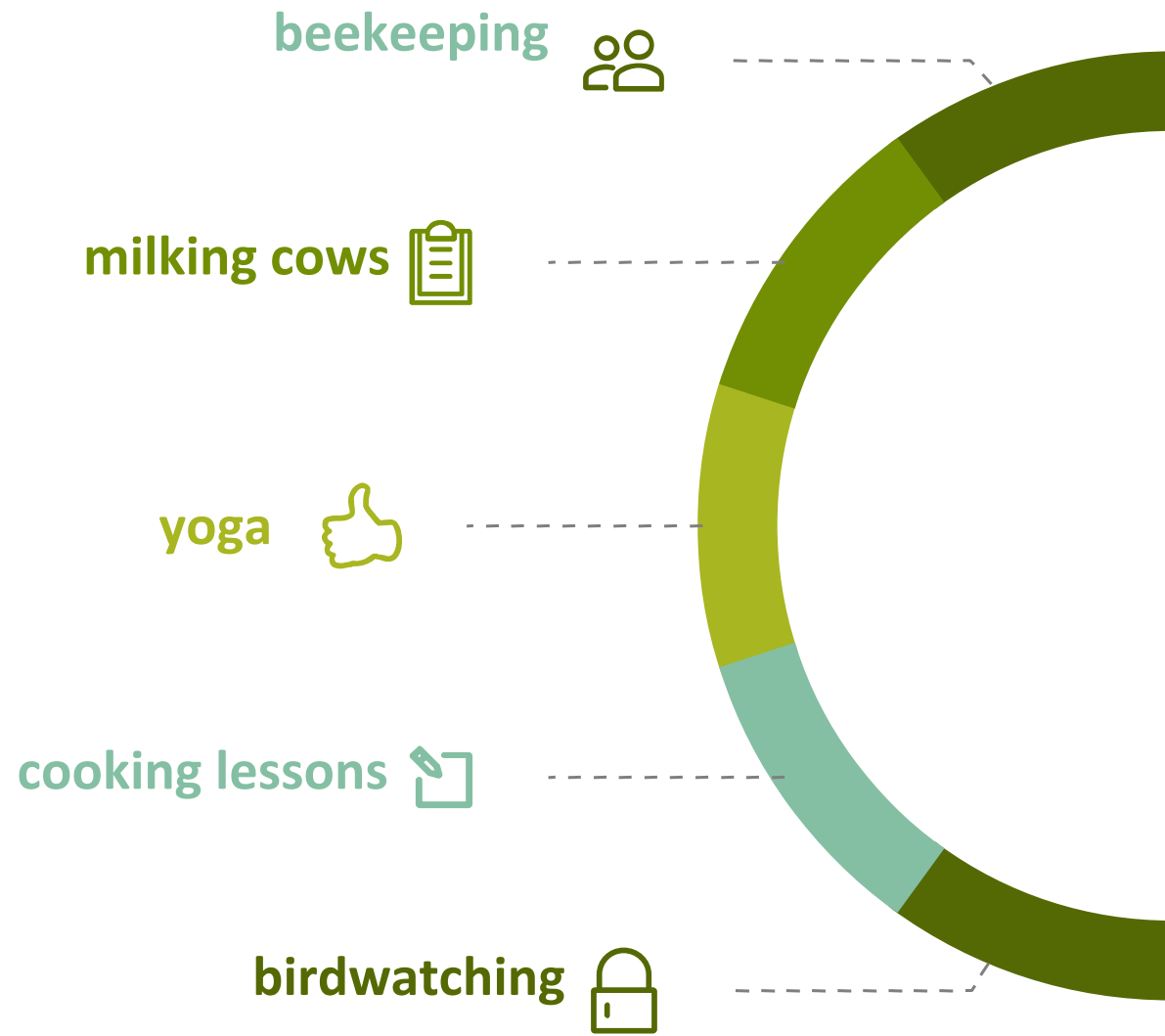
Forms/ types of rural tourism

1. agrotourism
2. ecotourism
3. green tourism
4. adventure tourism
5. sports tourism
6. health tourism
7. cultural tourism
8. events tourism
9. scientific tourism
10. village tourism
11. rural community-based tourism, etc.



indicative activities/ products related to rural tourism

- making cheese/sausages/ olive oil/jams
- harvesting
- trekking, cycling, horse riding
- parkour, rafting, acrobatic routes
- paragliding, hiking, climbing, boating, surf,
- study of local languages and cultures
- guided visits to agri-food companies, gourmand tourism, visits to cellars and tastings,
- oil tastings,
- environmental education, outdoor workshops on ecosystems,
- observation of flora and fauna



03

Pros & Cons in the development of Rural Tourism



advantages of rural tourism

- job retention
- job creation
- new business opportunities
- opportunities for youth
- community diversification
- landscape conservation
- current service activities such as transportation systems and medicinal cares are supported
- creation of opportunities for cultural exchange
- increasing women's functions in societies



cont.

- enhancement and revitalization of community pride
- preservation of rural culture and heritage
- increase in arts and crafts sale
- environmental improvements
- economic growth
- maintenance and flourishing historic places such as rural houses, gardens and promenades
- environment improvement by performing the activities such as waste disposal, drawing up traffic regulations and reforming buildings



disadvantages of rural tourism

- potential damage of the natural or anthropogenic environment
- harmful interventions on the landscape and natural resources
- urbanization affecting the ecological balance
- speculative pressures exerted on arable land
- air pollution due to road congestion
- excessive consumption of the local water reserves
- increases the expenses of public services e.g. waste disposal, medicinal services and providing police costs.
- causes developing costs e.g. creating tourism attraction, facilities and generally, basic reformations.



(or, better, risks)

- raises the price of land, goods and services, particularly ownership of the country houses in rural areas
- loss of identity and cultural traditions of the local community,
- loss of traditional occupations,
- limiting career opportunities due to economic domination of tourism,
- poor professional motivation (in many cases staff consists of young working only season in that location),
- competition between residents and tourists regarding the purchase or rental of a building
- potentially, increases crimes and other antisocial behaviors
- decreases local services, e.g. replacing restaurants for local small shops



Things to consider/ criteria:

- **Natural resources:** they represent all the geographical characteristics available to a particular community, determined by the climate, aquatic, flora and fauna and natural heritage of the location
- **Culture:** it represents a set of values, beliefs, behaviors and symbols, such as traditions, customs, historical monuments, art, which can be used as a tourist product
- **Social factors:** it refers to the human resources available in the local community, in relation to their age, education, employment, etc.
- **Economic factors:** it refers to the economic resources of the local community, and concern the existing economic infrastructure, and the existence of domestic products that can be attractive to potential tourists.



Questions to consider:

- is there effective economic, political, and community-based infrastructure to support tourism development in the area?
- what are the local/ national/ European policies and programmes related to the development of rural tourism?
- what is the natural and/or cultural heritage of the area?
- what is the current situation regarding hospitality and accommodation?
- which type of rural tourism would be ideal for the area and why?
- do partnerships, networking and collaboration exist in the area between businesses and between people?
- how is the area in terms of accessibility and inclusivity?
- what is the tourist potential in the area?



- what is there in the area for the potential tourist to see? to do? to buy?
- are there any other areas with similar characteristics that have developed rural tourism initiatives successfully? What made these initiatives successful? Can they be replicated in your area?
- what would be the target audience of the area?
- what would be their motivation? (e.g. relaxation, sport, culture, adventure, retreat, novelty, health, education?)
- what is unique about the region?

Additional Resources

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8btr0HxFD4&ab_channel=WorldTourismOrganization%28UNWTO%29

Activity:

You recently found the following video from the World Tourism Organization:

The organization holds a “Rural Tourism Startup Competition”. It looks for ideas in four key areas:

1. People: Leaving no one behind
2. Planet: Building back better
3. Prosperity: Opportunities for growth
4. Propulsion of rural technology

Which key area would you choose to focus for your region? why? what is the idea?

Additional Resources & Reading

- 01 [“Supporting the Development of Transnational Thematic Tourism Strategy for Rural Regions in Europe” pp 5-32](#)
- 02 [Rural Tourism – An Overview](#)
- 03 [Archive: Statistics on rural areas in EU](#)
- 04 [EU rural areas in numbers](#)
- 05 [Advantages and Harms Caused by Development Rural Tourism\(case study of rural semnan province\)](#)
- 06 [UNWTO RECOMMENDATIONS ON TOURISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT](#)
- 07 [Sustainable Rural Tourism: Lessons for Rural Development](#)
- 08 [Rural Tourism Action Plan](#)



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**Module Complete
Well Done!**

Next is Module 2
*Different Models of
Rural Tourism*



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