

SPRING INTO RECOVERY

Resilience, Recovery and Raising Excellence in Tourism

22nd European Region of Gastronomy Platform
8th Annual IGCAT Experts Meeting

WEBINAR REPORT

Hosted by Slovenia, European Region of Gastronomy 2021

18-19 May 2021



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Introduction

On behalf of the IGCAT Board, I would like to thank IGCAT experts and stakeholders from current and candidate European Regions of Gastronomy, for sharing their insights and knowledge at the **Spring into Recovery: resilience, recovery and raising excellence in tourism** webinar hosted by the Slovenian Tourism Board, 18-19 May 2021.

Travel, tourism, hospitality and cultural sectors have been the most economically affected during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our aim therefore was to discover how we can take opportunity from the crisis to build back stronger and better. The two-part webinar was designed to hear good practise ideas and provide an opportunity to ask questions directly to the people implementing programmes for recovery across Europe.

The webinar was an unprecedented peer-to-peer exchange with 120 participants, including 50 speakers from 31 regions. Experts from hospitality and tourism that care about sustainability and have direct experience in guiding and then implementing policy at the highest level. We tried not to focus on the hard times but rather see how we could use the pandemic as an opportunity to dream of a world we would like to create. During more than four hours we exchanged ideas across different sectors to find new solutions to our current challenges.

I like to thank break-out session facilitators, rapporteurs and IGCAT's secretariat, to whom we are indebted for this insightful report that I am sure will be a great tool for our community. I would also like to thank my co-Chair for the two days, Tanja Angleitner Sagadin, Director, Vocational College for Catering and Tourism Maribor.

IGCAT has compiled this short report of webinar conversations and prepared recordings of all the main speakers so that, we can support and deepen our knowledge-sharing throughout our awarded Regions of Gastronomy. The debates clearly demonstrated that **we need a more humanistic approach, strong stakeholder involvement and collaboration, and the possibility to harness digital innovations in order to be effective in recovery.**

The webinar contributed very much to IGCAT's mission; to help local people conserve fragile cultures, habitats and food traditions because we recognize that this is necessary to ensure a more sustainable future. By working with our European Regions of Gastronomy Platform we are able to feed into the wider European policy agenda on how to support, maintain and further encourage more responsible, better-quality, unique, authentic and memorable visitor experiences and in doing so, stimulate locally based SMEs and micro-businesses.

The European Regions of Gastronomy stand apart as great examples embracing principles as we have witnessed during the two webinars, with a myriad of projects and good practises that have been presented by our colleagues.

Diane Dodd PhD
IGCAT President

Chairs



Diane Dodd, President IGCAT - Spain

Diane Dodd PhD is President of IGCAT (International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism) and founder of the World Region of Gastronomy Award. Together with the awarded European Regions of Gastronomy Platform, she has pioneered the European Young Chef Award, the Food Film Menu, the Local Food Gift Challenge and the Top Visitor Experience. She is also Regional Adviser for the global network IFACCA (International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies) as well as an advocate for the protection and preservation of culture and food diversity. She leads MA courses in Cultural Institutions and Policies and Events Management at the International University of Catalonia. She has been regularly engaged as an evaluator for the Cultural Routes programme of the Council of Europe as well as provided expert advice to European Capitals of Culture.



Tanja Angleitner Sagadin, PhD, Director, Vocational College of Hospitality and Tourism Maribor - Slovenia

Tanja has been working in hospitality for 25 years. Having lived, studied and worked in 11 countries and 2 continents, she moved into education, project and event management 20 years ago. She has been the director of the Vocational College of Hospitality and Tourism Maribor since 2019, where she also teaches English and Project management, and is mentor to students in various international hospitality competitions.

RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

Welcome and Introduction: Recovery and Resilience Action for Slovenian Tourism

Maja Pak, M.Sc., Managing Director of Slovenian Tourist Board, presented Slovenia's strategy for post-pandemic recovery in tourism, aimed at supporting the development of sustainable and safe visitor experiences. Slovenia's recovery plan is based on five main pillars: upgrade of sustainable travel standards; state financial support for the tourism industry; consumer segmentation and needs detection; digitalisation; and increased marketing to domestic and nearby tourists. This plan builds on the [Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism](#) - the national programme adopted to certify and assess the sustainability of local tourism providers - and the [Action Plan for the Development & Marketing of Gastronomy Tourism 2019-2023](#), an active legacy of the European Region of Gastronomy 2021 title that extends the monitoring of sustainability to the gastronomy sector. Following her presentation, Maja Pak officially presented the new video [Slovenian Gastronomy: You can't spell Slovenia without love](#).



Maja Pak, M.Sc., Managing Director of Slovenian Tourist Board

With over 20 years of work for the Slovenian Tourist Board, Maja Pak has not only witnessed, but also led the transformation of Slovenia from a nice country in the heart of Europe to the world's first green destination and a leader in sustainability in tourism. Her vision in this process is clear and has gained unanimous support among stakeholders in Slovene tourism: Slovenia is a green boutique destination for 5-star experiences.

European Tourism Manifesto and the #Tourism4Recovery campaign

Iulia Niculica, Funding, Procurement and Development Manager, European Travel Commission and Secretariat, European Tourism Manifesto spoke about the [#Tourism4Recovery](#) campaign launched by the European Tourism Manifesto, an alliance of more than 60 European public and private organisations across the travel and tourism value chain. Coordinated by the European Travel Commission, the European Tourism Manifesto advocates for the importance of the tourism sector at the EU level and for increased financial support for travel and tourism businesses. The #Tourism4Recovery campaign urges the EU and its member states to include tourism into regional and national recovery plans as a key sector to deliver sustainable development and support employment. Based on the European Tourism Manifesto's paper [Call for Action: Accelerate Social and Economic Recovery by Investing in Sustainable Tourism Development](#), the #Tourism4Recovery initiative provides concrete examples of investment proposals in tourism within the flagship areas identified by the NextGenerationEU recovery plan (POWER UP; RENOVATE; RECHARGE & REFUEL; CONNECT, SCALE UP; RE-SKILL & UPSKILL).



Iulia Niculica, Funding, Procurement and Development Manager, European Travel Commission and Secretariat, European Tourism Manifesto - Belgium

Iulia Niculica has been working for the European Travel Commission for more than 7 years, contributing to the promotion of Europe as a tourist destination in long-haul markets. She has experience with advocacy and marketing projects, EU funding, managing relationships with National Tourism Organisations, as well as facilitating partnerships and affiliations with external organisations. She is also holding the Secretariat of the European Tourism Manifesto, an alliance bringing together more than 60 public and private organisations from the Travel & Tourism sector. Iulia Niculica has a certification in Project Management for Sustainable Development from APMG (PM4SD). She was member of several juries.

Re-Start Tourism project of Catalonia

Patrick Torrent, Executive Director, Catalan Tourism Board, introduced the Catalonia reStart Tourism project led by the Catalan Tourism Board within the framework of the NextGenerationEU programme. With the aim to provide a roadmap to ensure a sustainable future for the Catalan tourism sector, this initiative involved a wide stakeholder consultation in 3 phases: a) Analysis of the demand and expectations of outbound markets; b) Reflection on the future of the Catalan tourism industry involving local public and private tourism actors; c) Call for action through the definition of 5 strategic projects aimed at transforming Catalonia's tourism model through innovation, digitalisation, competitiveness and sustainability. These projects include: the Tourism Innovation and Competitiveness Plan; the Catalan MICE Tourism Reactivation Plan; the neZEH Project Extension Plan (Nearly Zero Energy Hotels); the Plan for the Reconversion of Mature Coastal Tourist Destinations; and the Plan to Improve the Social and Cultural Sustainability of Tourism.



Patrick Torrent, Executive Director, Catalan Tourism Board – Spain

Patrick Torrent is the Executive Director of the Catalan Tourist Board, whose creation he has actively participated in. He stimulated the definition of two Strategic Plans of Tourism in Catalonia (2005-2010 and 2013-2016) and coordinated the two Tourism Marketing Plans of Catalonia (2013-2016 and 2018-2022). In 2015, he was designated President of NECStour. He was appointed Secretary of the Open University of Catalonia Foundation in 2010 and Patron from 2009 to 2011. From 2005 to 2009 he was the General Deputy Director of the Consortium Turisme de Catalunya and Deputy Director of the Catalan Tourist Board from 2010. He has also been Associate Teacher at different universities and speaker and organizer of several symposiums, seminars, workshops and forums focused on tourism and its marketing.

Commending the European Region of Gastronomy Platform

George Hatzimarkos, Governor, Region of South Aegean, congratulated the European Region of Gastronomy Platform for its outstanding work in promoting sustainable gastronomy and tourism. He affirmed that in the post-pandemic era people will be increasingly seeking for the most genuine experiences and food will influence the travel decision-making process more than ever. The European Regions of Gastronomy are well-prepared in this respect and therefore they will be among the most successful destinations in recovering from the Covid-19 crisis.



George Hatzimarkos, Governor, Region of South Aegean - Greece

George Hatzimarkos has been Governor of the Region of South Aegean since 2014. In 2020, he became a member of the National Delegation of Greece in the European Committee of the Regions, in the Commissions of CIVEX (Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External affairs) and NAT (Commission for Natural Resources). He was also elected President in the Solid Waste Management Authority of South Aegean, as well as President of «K2», the Development Enterprise of South Aegean Region established in 2020. In 2019, he became President of the Committee of Tourism in the Association of Greek Regions of which he has also been a member of the Board of Directors since 2014. From May 2016 to May 2017 he served as President of the CPMR (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe).

Slovenia Green Cuisine - Green Gastronomy Tourism Policy

Barbara Zmrzlikar, Head of Research, Development, Innovation and EU Projects Department, Slovenian Tourist Board and IGCAT Expert, focused on Slovenia's commitment to promote green gastronomy as part of the national strategy to position the country as a Green Boutique destination for 5-star experiences. This effort is outlined in the [Action Plan for the Development & Marketing of Gastronomy Tourism 2019-2023](#) aimed at increasing the visibility and sustainability of Slovenian gastronomy, as well as supporting all the stakeholders involved through cooperation. Building on the existing SLOVENIA GREEN certification, created to assess the sustainability of Slovenian destinations and tourism providers, the new label SLOVENIA GREEN CUISINE was conceived. Developed in the framework of the European Region of Gastronomy 2021 title, the SLOVENIA GREEN CUISINE label not only certifies restaurants' compliance with international sustainability standards, but also their commitment to the Sustainable Slovenian Gastronomy pledge, to offer a gastronomy that is: authentic; efficient; nature-oriented; waste-free; impeccable; responsible to the environment; and responsible to its employees.



Barbara Zmrzlikar, Head of Research, Development, Innovation and EU Projects Department, Slovenian Tourist Board - Slovenia

As the head of the department, Barbara Zmrzlikar is responsible for strategic planning, sustainable development, research, and support for the development of innovative tourist experiences. She devoted special attention to the development of the gastronomy tourism by preparing the Action Plan for the Development and Marketing of Gastronomic Tourism in Slovenia and by being a member of IGCAT Global Experts Network.

Taste the Change - A Regeneration Opportunity

Heidi Lazani, Communications Specialist, Bespoke Communications and IGCAT Expert, highlighted how the current crisis represents a huge opportunity for all those destinations that will be able to offer meaningful experiences to visitors. Authenticity, sustainability, uniqueness and social engagement are the key elements to ensure the regeneration of destinations that, in order to succeed in the post-pandemic reality, will need to integrate their culture, gastronomy and natural environment in their tourism offer. As a case study, she presented the example of Chalki, a tiny boutique island in the Dodecanese that, by capitalising on its unique nature, crystal clear waters and authentic food, in 2020 was able to triplicate its tourism income. Uncrowded and committed to implement a sustainability and resilience model of governance, Chalki was perceived as a safe destination and managed to regenerate its local economy in spite of the global crisis.



Heidi Lazani, Communications Specialist, Bespoke Communications - Greece

Heidi Lazani is a Communication Specialist, Political Scientist & founder of Bespoke Communications firm. Former Office Director and Special Advisor to the Governor of the Region of South Aegean and Head of the Executive Committee of South Aegean, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019, Heidi has extensive expertise in communications, project management, community engagement, media relations and holds an MA in Contemporary European Studies from the University of Sussex.

RAISING EXCELLENCE IN TOURISM

Introduction and History of the Regions of Gastronomy

Tanja Angleitner Sagadin, PhD, Director, Vocational College of Hospitality and Tourism Maribor, Slovenia and Co-Chair of the Spring Into Recovery series, kicked off the second day of presentations and discussions by welcoming all participants and reminding them of principles and guidelines that drive the Regions of Gastronomy Award. Namely:

- Raising awareness about the importance of cultural and food uniqueness
- Stimulating creativity and gastronomic innovation
- Educating for better nutrition
- Improving sustainable tourism standards
- Highlighting distinctive food cultures
- Strengthening community well-being

Ms. Angleitner Sagadin went on to remark how tourists in 2021 will be looking for unique and memorable experiences, and they will have a wealth of destinations to choose from. We will see a shift from mass tourism to boutique experiences, and travellers will seek out the unknown as opposed to visiting the same sights again. Travel with a focus on well-being will be at the forefront of travelers' minds as well as authentic and tangible experiences that they can see, try, taste, and be a part of.

She then gave a short history of the European Regions of Gastronomy, beginning with stories of Catalonia and Minho and their 2016 awards. 2017 saw Aarhus-Central Denmark Region's emphasis on citizen inclusion and cross-collaboration. In 2017, Riga-Gauja celebrated their award year by highlighting the region's deep and historic connection to nature with the slogans: Food is Culture, and Wild at Palate. Noord-Brabant, award recipient in 2018, had the objectives of supporting entrepreneurship and innovation in an atmosphere of mildness and totality. "The best way to know people is to join their dining table". 2018 was also Galway-West of Ireland's award year. This region has an ambitious program focusing on intercultural diversity and education. The South Aegean and Sibiu celebrated their award years in 2019 with the former highlighting its food culture with the slogan "Taste the Seasons". Sibiu led with its ancient cultural heritage and its stable and sustainable connections between urban and rural. 2020 was the beginning of the Covid crisis and also the year in which Kupio was to welcome the world to celebrate its award offerings. The region will continue in 2021 with its slogan Life According to Nature's Rhythm. 2021 sees Slovenia and Coimbra Region share their unique experiences and gastronomic heritage and innovation.

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

Stefano Dominioni, Executive Secretary, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes - Council of Europe (EPA) and Director, European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR) provided an overview of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, noting that they currently boasts 40 routes and received €17 million in financing over the past 5 years. He added that the pandemic made the possibility of walking these routes next to impossible however some innovative approaches were taken, for example, a live-streamed St. Olaf's pilgrimage. He noted some concern that post-Covid isolation and fears of connection will impact travel along the routes in the coming months however he felt confident about the future of the cultural routes given the cultural, historical and rural characteristics of many of the itineraries. He also noted how authenticity requires consensus across borders and how one of the evaluation criteria is that there is academic consensus on the messages and information given to visitors on the routes.



Stefano Dominioni, Executive Secretary, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes - Council of Europe (EPA) and Director, European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR) - Luxembourg

Stefano Dominioni is Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA) and Director of the European Institute of Cultural Routes (Luxembourg). He is responsible for overseeing the certification by the Council of Europe of Cultural Routes in the field of European culture and heritage across its 47 member States and the regular evaluation of the current 40 certified Cultural Routes. Dr. Dominioni ensures EPA Governing Board and Statutory Committee operations, management of the European Institute of Cultural Routes and coordination with the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. He is responsible for the implementation of Joint Programmes with the European Commission, and cooperation with other International Organisations such as UNESCO, UNWTO, OECD and OEI. During his career at the Council of Europe, he has worked for the Directorate General of Education, Culture and Youth and the Directorate General of Social Cohesion. He received his Ph.D., M.Phil. and M.A. from Yale University, a M.A. from the Université d'Aix-Marseille and a B.A. from the University of Milan. He was Research Fellow at Cambridge University (England)

Food Tourism - Report on the state of gastronomic tourism in Italy in 2021

Prof. Roberta Garibaldi, President, Italian Association of Gastronomy Tourism, University Professor and IGCAT Expert noted the relevance of gastronomy in visitor's experiences in Italy has grown by over 70% in recent years. This interest spans generations. Polls have shown that a Michelin rating is less important to tourists than landscape, innovation, authenticity, and regional ingredients and dishes. Other statistics that were shared included:

- 75% of tourists want to picnic at wineries and vineyards
- 75% would prefer to stay in a B&B
- 50% want the ability to get around by bicycle
- 57% want to incorporate business meetings and events at wineries



Prof. Roberta Garibaldi, President, Italian Association of Gastronomy Tourism, University Professor and IGCAT Expert - Italy

Roberta Garibaldi is President of the Italian Association of Gastronomy Tourism, Professor of Tourism Management at the University of Bergamo and author of the "Rapporto sul Turismo Enogastronomico Italiano" (Report on Food & Wine Tourism in Italy). Furthermore, she is member of the Board of Directors of the World Food Travel Association, member of Board of Advisors of the World Gastronomy Institute, member of the Presidency Council of the Italian Society of Tourism Sciences (SISTUR), member of the Association Internationale d'Experts Scientifiques du Tourisme (AIEST), and member of the Association for Tourism and Leisure (ATLAS).

Black region, Identity building - Explore Our Food Uncover Our Hearts

Diana Hounslow, Director of the Tourism Development and Reservation Agency of Pas-de-Calais and Ambassador of Hauts-de-France, European Region of Gastronomy candidate 2023

Hauts-de-France cuisine boasts many different types of shellfish, herring, mussels. There are 5 different department in the region, including Nord pas de Calais, Som, Es, Was, ****, Pas-de Calais. Coal mining was the main economic driver. In 2012, area was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status for its unique mining architecture and landscapes. ALL: A marketing and tourism strategy that was developed alongside local districts. It is based on shared human values and the architectural and natural heritage of the region. Experiment and inspire are essential to the activities. 110 projects so far and work with designers, trend seeker, and experts using a design-approach in order to reverse the cliches to give a refreshed identity to the historically industrial region. For the branding, red was chosen to represent brick, blue for the miner's protective clothing, and the black of the coal are used to produce trend books. Black anchors the scheme, from clothing to sweets, and innovative foods created to echo the textures and colours of coal. Miner's lamps have inspired reproductions that are sold in shops throughout the region; brass bands and football clubs that played a key role in the heritage of the area are still a vital part of the local culture. Inspiring fast food includes fish and chip food trucks, rethinking the traditional chips, and upgrading the places in which beer is consumed. Upernoir is a new event launching in 2021 and focusing on innovative and regionally-focused menus. Over 100 partners were involved in the creation of the project. Finally, Hauts-de-France is working with the Campus de Metiers et des Qualifications d'Excellence to create a culinary course for students and apprentices.



Diana Hounslow, Director of Pas-de-Calais Tourism and Ambassador of Hauts-de-France, European Region of Gastronomy candidate 2023

Diana Hounslow has lived in New Zealand, Ireland, Algeria and England before finally settling in France in 1985. After hostessing for Hoverspeed, teaching English to local businesses and selling Titanium Dioxide, she started marketing her region as a destination to the UK in 1987. She built up a relationship with local businesses and notably restaurateurs. Her passion and knowledge of fine food grew with the help of chefs, journalists and food critics. Food is resolutely at the top of the list of tourism experiences that travellers most look forward to. Like most regions of France, Hauts-de-France has plenty of seasonal local produce on offer, the tourist board's aim is to cultivate creative use of it at home, in restaurants and sometimes in surprising places... From chip van to Michelin starred restaurants Pas-de-Calais Tourism are developing local culinary experiences for every palate and every purse.

Slovenia Unique Experiences

Morana Polovič, Project Manager, Slovenian Tourist Board

Morana Polovič shared her region's encouragement for green boutique experiences. With these unique and small-scale offerings, an emphasis is placed on quality, authenticity, and innovation, and to qualify, providers must meet 10 criteria:

- Easily bookable
- Locally-based
- Authentic and regional
- Unique
- Experimental
- Sustainable
- Boutique
- Premium quality, including the service
- Added value
- Deseasonal with a focus on shoulder season activities
- Digital



Morana Polovič, Project Manager at Slovenian Tourist Board - Slovenia

Morana Polovič's career has been built in the tourism industry. She is a tourism professional with more than 25 years of experience. Gastronomy is her passion since childhood, as her first steps in the hospitality sector started at her family restaurant. Currently she is working at the Slovenian Tourism Board as a Project Manager, working on gastronomy projects, Slovenia Unique Experiences project and organizing events and on-line webinars.

Video recordings from the webinar are available to stakeholders in the World Regions of Gastronomy.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

1 - Recovery and resilience in the tourism sector

Sharifa Hasanova, Head of Product Development, Azerbaijan Tourism Board introduced the participants to the Sahman (Sanitation and Hygiene Methods and Norm) Project, an initiative focused on ensuring effective compliance with sanitary rules and increasing competitiveness in the tourism industry. 538 regional entities have already joined and 218 people have completed the offered training.

Alin Chipăilă, President, Sibiu County Tourism Board and Romanian Alliance for Tourism spoke about how tourism should be part of the national resilience and recovery plans, but that, unfortunately, this is not the case for many countries including Romania. The Romanian Alliance for Tourism assembled last year as a lobbying effort to encourage the government to include the tourism sector as part of the recovery scheme. Tourism was one of the most impacted and affected industries within the country and we must not forget the economic reach. The Alliance was able to successfully include a small piece of the pie in the draft of Romania's recovery plan. He invited other speakers and participants to share their strategies for effectively lobbying governments.

Dr. Maria Socratous, Tourist Officer, Deputy Ministry of Tourism, Cyprus stated her region's commitment to boosting domestic tourism through initiatives aimed at the lowering of hotel prices for local visitors and the allowance of a 35% subsidy from the Ministry of Tourism. She also described how there has been a reinvention of gastronomy with a national strategy to boost awareness of local products, the creation of wine routes and the Cyprus Brunch.

Patrick Torrent, Executive Director, Catalan Tourism Board emphasized a need for technology and innovation when it comes to tourism offerings and communication. Follow the 5 S's:

- Smart Destinations
- Socio-Cultural Balance
- Skills and Talent
- Safety and Resilience
- Statistics

May Britt Hansen, Coordinator, Trondheim-Trøndelag, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2022 spoke about the national tourism strategy and the need for high-value, low-footprint in touristic offerings.

Jacinta Dalton, Galway-West of Ireland, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2018 mentioned that Ireland was prepared to give tax incentives to boost local tourism but then the country went into lockdown again.

Patrick Torrent introduced the regional LAB, which looks at the ways in which mixed reality can be utilized to change and digitize touristic offerings. They also projected that tourism numbers in the region will be closer to 2019 than 2020.

Antti Iire, Manager, Research and Development, Savonia University of Applied Sciences and IGCAT Expert remarked how business travel has remained steady throughout the pandemic and that this summer, the region expects many domestic travelers.

When the subject of vaccinations arose, most participants noted the need for clear guidance and consistent regulations. Poland has a 3-tier quarantine system to address the disparities in vaccination and testing rates. Unlike the majority of Europe, 70% of Cyprus's citizens are vaccinated.



Sharifa Hasanova, Head of Product Development, Azerbaijan Tourism Board - Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan Tourism Board is a national tourism organization of Azerbaijan for promoting as tourism destination. Our destination brand invites potential travellers to 'take another look' at Azerbaijan's rich culture, ancient heritage, amazing nature and warm hospitality. As a Product Development Head, Sharifa is in charge for establishment of tourism products development, to regulate and increase tourism experiences and activities, to create good conditions for infrastructure, facilities and services in place for tourism products, to ensure and increase of quality standards of tourism products, to establish tourism destination's competitiveness and sustainability. Prior to this, Sharifa was leading Sales and Marketing teams in various hospitality groups in Azerbaijan.



Alin Chipăilă, President, Sibiu County Tourism Board and Romanian Alliance for Tourism - Romania

Alin Chipăilă is President of the Sibiu County Tourism Board since 2006, Vice-President of the Romanian Federation of Tourism Promotion Associations and, since 2021, President of the Romanian Alliance for Tourism. He was part of the team that coordinated the programme of Sibiu, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019. At a national level he was involved in drafting public policies for supporting the recovery of the Hospitality Industry since April 2020. In the framework of the Alliance for Tourism, he participated in the drafting of the SOS Romanian Tourism Manifesto, that comprises 60 measures for the for the short-, medium- and long-term recovery of the tourism industry. He is also involved in the drafting of the current national legislation proposal regarding the operationalization of the DMOs in Romania.





Dr. Maria Socratous, Tourist Officer, Deputy Ministry of Tourism - Cyprus

Dr Maria Socratous is Tourist Officer at the Strategy, Research & Product Development Department of the Deputy Ministry of Tourism of Cyprus. She holds a PhD in Management with a specification in gender discrimination in the workplace. She has been Director of Business Studies at The Cyprus Institute of Marketing, Visiting Lecturer at the Cyprus University of Technology, as well as Lecturer at the Cyprus Institute of Marketing on Strategic Management. She was elected as Young BPW Europe Representative for the period 2014-2017. Dr Maria Socratous is an activist and works towards the promotion of women's rights all over the world and towards gender equality both in the society and the workplace.



May Britt Hansen, Coordinator, Trondheim-Trøndelag, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2022

May Britt Hansen is Coordinator of Trondheim-Trøndelag, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2022. She has worked in tourism and hospitality since 1995 with a focus on marketing, sales and development. In the region of Trondheim-Trøndelag she has worked for different hotels chains as sales director, for a tourism destination company for the region as a manager, as well as for Visit Trondheim. May has a bachelor in tourism and her passion is to make customer happy and pursue sustainability of businesses in different tourism industries.



Antti Iire, Manager, Research and Development, Savonia University of Applied Sciences and IGCAT Expert - Finland

Antti Iire is Manager of Research and Development of the Cross-sectoral Research, Development and Innovation Unit at Savonia University. He takes care of stakeholder cooperation and public-private partnerships and generates and facilitates a big variety of development projects together with the university, companies and working life organizations of the Kuopio Region. His professional expertise areas cover SME business development, entrepreneurial education and startup acceleration together with designing business models with modern tools for different purposes, also internationally.

2 - Sustainable gastronomy and green labelling

Ilona Sares, International Executive Director, ProAgria Pohjois-Savo and IGCAT Board Member chaired the session.

Barbara Zmrzlikar, Head of Research, Development, Innovation and EU Projects Department, Slovenian Tourist Board explained the success in awarding restaurants with Michelin's stars and went on to describe the need for restaurants to focus on sustainability in their activities rather than pursuing Michelin stars. These restaurants understood that was why they became committed to the European Region of Gastronomy programme in the first place. This change of paradigm was well presented by Barbara. Carlos Fernandes from Minho asked about the level of enthusiasm for sustainable gastronomy as well as the impact of innovative labeling. Barbara responded that in the case of Slovenia, the enthusiasm is high and gave the example of the *Green Cousine Label* which was launched in January 2020. In its initial four months, it had a huge impact on the network of restaurants. In terms of innovation, Slovenia is looking at a variety of sectors and is well represented all over.

Wendy Barrie, Director – Scottish Food Guide & Scottish Cheese Trail – Scotland presented strong stories of sustainable gastronomy, emphasizing the example of the projects *Adopt a Tree*, an initiative where locals have the opportunity to organize their own orchards, and *Saving Seeds* as well as *Potatoes*, both of which promote the cultivation of local varieties. Wendy emphasized the relevance of communication in creating the momentum for coupling producers and restaurants. These stories were appreciated by Ilona Sares as well as by Carlos Fernandes. The main question of Ilona was: Why do you do this? The answer was that it is because of the love of the people of Scotland.

Prof. Carlos Fernandes, Associate Professor in Tourism Studies, Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo shared ideas related to sustainable gastronomy that have been applied in the Minho Region. The entire chain in food production is evaluated based on skills, competencies, materials, knowledge and creativity. Prof. Fernandes admitted the difficulties they are facing as green labelling is under discussion due to traditional orientation of the people. Kristine Rise asked about the *Green Fork* concept and Carlos responded that the customers seemed to not be interested in this concept as the review of one project concluded. It appears that traditional gastronomy is very strong due to raw materials produced in traditional ways and the attachment of the locals to their way of life.

Mihaela Antofie ihaela Antofie, Associate Professor, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019 – Romania was also asked about sustainable gastronomy in Sibiu, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019. She mentioned that due to the excellent networking between all stakeholders involved in *HoReCa* after 2010, and mainly after 2015, it was possible to support customers and consumers throughout the region during the lockdown. This was an effect of the communication at another higher level, that wasn't previously possible.



Ilona Sares, International Executive Director, ProAgria Pohjois-Savo and IGCAT Board Member - Finland

Ilona Sares is International Executive Director, at ProAgria, providing advisory and development services to members and customers by adding value, quality, competitiveness and productivity to their operations. She started her career as a visual artist and she graduated from Sibelius Academy with a degree of Arts Management 2006. Later in her career, within ProAgria company she was promoted from International Project Coordinator to International Executive Director at ProAgria Pohjois-Savo; she works with rural area SMEs entrepreneurs to find new ways to develop creative tourism that she sees as a way for food, travel and creative industry sectors to find new power and business for living.



Wendy Barrie, Director – Scottish Food Guide & Scottish Cheese Trail – Scotland

Scottish Thistle Award Regional Ambassador, Wendy Barrie is a highly respected campaigner for local produce, popular cookery show presenter and food writer. Founder & Director of award-winning Scottish Food Guide and Scottish Cheese Trail, Wendy is Leader in Scotland for Slow Food Ark of Taste & Member of Slow Food Cooks Alliance. Wendy runs sustainable food experiences at her Fife food studio and enjoys the rural backwaters of Småland on their small organic craft. She has been listed among the Top 100 Women in Tourism in 2020.



Carlos Fernandes, Associate Professor in Tourism Studies, Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo - Portugal

Carlos Fernandes, Ph.D., is Associate Professor in Tourism Studies at the Polytechnic of Viana do Castelo, Portugal. He obtained his undergraduate degree at Syracuse University (USA), Master's at Rutgers University (USA) and Ph.D. at Bournemouth University (UK). His interests include tourism innovation, tourism as a development strategy, gastronomy, religious tourism and diaspora tourism. Lecturer in the Bachelor's in Tourism (UNWTO Tedqual certified) and the Master's in Innovative Tourism Development. Grand Master of the Confraternity of the Gastronomes of Minho, in Northern Portugal, Coordinator of the ATLAS Gastronomy and Tourism Research Group, and responsible for the bid of Minho, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2016 to IGCAT. A member of the editorial board of various tourism related scientific journals, including the Journal of Gastronomy and Tourism. Researcher at the Centre for Transdisciplinary Development Studies (CETRAD) at the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro and the Centre for Research, Development and Innovation in Tourism (CiTUR), Portugal.



Mihaela Antofie, Associate Professor, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019 – Romania

Mihaela Antofie is the Head of the Research Centre for Agricultural Sciences and Environmental Protection of Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania and was nominated by the University to support the process of writing the Sibiu's bid for the European Region of Gastronomy 2019 title. She is a biologist with an experience of over 18 years in environmental policy development (i.e. biotechnology, protected areas and biodiversity) as well as in cross cutting issues such as climate change and desertification. She teaches genetics and biodiversity conservation for bachelor, master and PhD degrees. Mihaela is the author of over 30 books or chapters and more than 90 papers published in peer reviewed journals and, in the last years, she coordinated or was involved in several projects. She is an active member of IUCN CEC, CGIAR and EEB.

3 - Sustaining tourism on Europe's Islands – the challenges

Louisa Coll, Coordinator, Menorca, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2022 emphasized conservation and preservation are ingrained in the people of Menorca by noting that the island has been thought of as the less successful, less popular Balearic Island. But the truth is that Menorca has always put the environment before mass tourism and it is a choice that is now paying off. Sustainability is the way forward. Menorcans feel they are ready to emerge from the crisis as they have been on a path of conservation and preservation (and sustainability) for 30 years. This is good timing and it is a time of opportunity to offer the safe and sustainable destination they have always been. Ms. Coll explained that Menorca has been able to capitalise on this situation and grow as a sustainable destination. Declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1993, the last 30 years has seen Menorca encourage increasingly sustainable tourism models by supporting the preservation of its local natural environment, cultural heritage, and gastronomy. The title of European region of Gastronomy awarded 2022 represents a further step for the island towards strengthening its position as a sustainable and safe destination.

Jorge Bernárdez, IGCAT Expert from Tenerife noted that given the regions connection to three continents and yet it's isolated, this has proved to be advantageous, for example the [avoiding the infestation of] phylloxera and now low levels of Covid-19. Digital transformation, the diversification of the tourist offer, a healthy environment and a more experiential tourism are the principles that are guiding the Canary Islands on their path to gain competitiveness as a sustainable destination. Mr. Bernárdez gave the example of the municipality of La Laguna, member of UNESCO's World Heritage Cities Programme since 1999. Through cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder dialogue, the city is building a strategy to position itself as a quality, safe destination offering tourist experiences based on its heritage, gastronomy, history and culture, as well as aiming at excellent training of the tourism and gastronomy workforce.



David Apap Agius, Mayor of Gharb on Gozo island introduced himself and stated that he would like his region to join the platform and apply for the Award. He explained that the main challenges for Gozo are accessibility and the seasonality of tourism. The island relies on ferries from Malta to deliver tourists to its coasts. To better the access, strategies are being developed to facilitate travel to the island, including the use of faster ferries and the possible construction of a tunnel connecting Gozo to Malta. The island is also working toward reducing the seasonality of tourism through two main channels: a) marketing its rural areas and incentivizing rural tourism; b) encouraging a diversified offer including sports tourism and gastronomy tourism. He added that the national airline has also diversified its routes and is making new connections and attracting new markets to the island.

Davinia Galea, IGCAT Expert from Malta spoke about how the challenge with islands is the lack of accessibility, (To arrive to the Maltese Islands, you must take a flight, unless you come by catamaran from Sicily. With COVID this meant that visitors needed to feel comfortable and safe flying rather than catching trains and travelling by car.) but also stressed how insularity can represent an opportunity to encourage quality tourism over quantity tourism. Malta is trying to promote itself as a safe destination and is using its island status to do this. Ms. Galea highlighted that post-COVID recovery will offer Malta the chance to attract more responsible tourists.

Heidi Lazani, IGCAT Expert from Greece and former coordinator of South Aegean, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019, emphasized that European islands now have the chance to turn the COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity for change. But this will only be possible if they are able to capitalize on their uniqueness to offer authentic experiences to visitors. Following on the example of Halki island in Greece, she reported how insularity has actually been a strength for the island as it is not overcrowded and seen as a safer destination compared to others and how lower accessibility has actually become an integral part of the whole tourist experience. Ms. Lazani concluded that many are moving away from mass tourism and moving towards sustainability, quality, experiential tourism. Wanting isolation and privacy, showing off diversity and authenticity.

In conclusion, the panel of speakers agreed that although accessibility and isolation might represent the biggest challenges for islands, they also protect the local culture and environment to remain intact and unique, as well as to build sustainable destinations that are perceived as safer by the visitor. The main opportunity for islands in the post-COVID recovery seems to lie in their remoteness that particularly attracts more responsible tourists in search for less-crowded destinations that offer a good quality of life and great gastronomy.



Luisa Coll Hellyer, Coordinator, Menorca, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2022 - Spain

Luisa Coll Hellyer is coordinator for Menorca, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2022. She has a university degree in Translation and Interpretation (Spanish, English and Russian) from the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)*, and a Masters in Protocol from the *Universitat de Barcelona (UB)*. Her last university semester was spent at the prestigious Pushkin Institute in Moscow where she increased her knowledge of the Russian language and culture. Luisa lived and worked in Brussels for 5 years. The first year as an intern to the *Centre Balears Europa*, and then as event manager in the European Wind Energy Association (EWEA) organising large events. On her return to Menorca she worked for ARTIEM Hotels for 6 years. Luisa has the honour of being appointed British Honorary Consul for Menorca.



Davinia Galea, Managing Director, ARC Research & Consultancy and IGCAT Expert - Malta

Davinia Galea has worked in the cultural and creative sectors for more than thirty years in various roles including musician, cultural event producer, policy maker, managing director and consultant. Davinia is the founder and Managing Director of ARC Research & Consultancy aimed at servicing creation, practice, and production within the cultural and creative sectors. Throughout her career, she has been Executive Director of the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts (2007-2013), has chaired and co-authored Malta's Cultural Policy (2011) and has been responsible for the setting up of the Malta Arts Fund (2009). She has been a member of the interministerial commission that successfully applied for Valletta, ECoC 2018 and a founding member of the Fanac Fund (2019). Davinia has also worked as short-term consultant to the World Bank Group and is a visiting lecturer at the School of Performing Arts at the University of Malta. *(Photo credit: Lindsey Bahia)*



Jorge Bernárdez, Project manager, Nartex Barcelona and lecturer at EU Buisness School - Spain

Jorge Bernárdez is a specialist in strategic and operational management, financing and fundraising. He has more than twenty years of experience in management, direction, consulting and training of organisations, mainly in the cultural, tourism and leisure fields, in Barcelona (Ticketmaster, Ikonos Cultural, Poble Espanyol, Orquestra Simfònica del Vallès), Paris (MN Picasso-Paris, Parc Zoologique), and the Canary Islands (Mémorial Agadir 1960). He has been President of the Association of Professionals of Cultural Management of Catalonia (APGCC) (2002-2007) and the State Federation of Associations of Cultural Managers (2004-2006), as well as lecturer and guest speaker in different official Master's Degree in Arts and Cultural Management. Bachelor's degree in Economics (UAB), Master's degree in Cultural Management (UB) and MBA (UPF). Studies abroad: Music administration (City University, London) and Arts Marketing (École des HEC-Montreal).



David Apap Agius, Mayor, Gharb Local Council, Gozo - Malta

After many years working in the electronics industry, David Apap moved to the hospitality industry and has been working for the past few years as a public officer at the Malta Tourism Authority. He is extremely proud of his Gharb roots and is passionate about the needs of his community, who are a family to him. Like many Gozitans, he has worked as a volunteer throughout his life in his community and has also contributed to amateur performing arts groups in theatre and choir contexts. He is involved in several community NGOs, some of which he founded and is also chairman of. These include Gharb's Affimerali Art Association and the Musical Band Association. The first time he entered the political arena was in March 1997, where he successfully contested to serve the Gharb Local Council. On July 15, 1997, he was elected mayor. Apap continued to successfully contest the Council Election till today, always holding the position of Mayor for the last 24 years.

4 - Involving stakeholders to attract visitors

Aleš Gačnik, Slovenia, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2021, spoke about the essential words of gastronomy tourism: local and participation. Thus, focus is on involving the locals. He explained how the Slovenia team brought stakeholders from agriculture and tourism together for the first time to develop activities around a sustainable agenda.

Dr. Dezső Kovács, Barany Region (Hungary), explained the importance of focusing touristic experiences outside the capital, which is a challenge in Hungary at the moment. There are many interesting places for tourists to see and explore throughout the country, but 70 % of the resources go to campaigns within the capital.

Henna Lehikoinen, Kuopio, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2020-21, spoke about how the SATOA – Cultural Food Festival (SATOA means Harvest) has adjusted due to the pandemic. Food Walks became the most popular activity in 2020.

Blanca Cros, Catalonia, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2016, talked about the legacy activity from 2016 – Welcome to the Farm. The aim is to increase the amount of visitors to local farms and to improve the sales of local food. 80 % of the visitors buy products for €25 on average. In the beginning it was an event taking place over one weekend, and in recent years, many farms have started inviting visitors all year around. Through the project, Farmers have gained confidence in opening their farms towards visitors.

Jesper Borg Christensen, Aarhus-Central Denmark Region, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2017, celebrated the Food Festival in Aarhus as an innovation driver. Every company who wants to have a stall at the food festival must present a new product every year which helps drive innovation, especially in the small and medium-sized food companies. Jesper also talked about how Food Festival is a large facilitated



meeting point between food producers, researchers, international purchasers, chefs, and businesses. Last year's Food Festival was cancelled due to corona. This summer, it will be organized as a food week and take place at unconventional places around the city of Aarhus.

Iulia Niculica, European Travel Commission said the European Region of Gastronomy engagement clearly strengthens the involved destinations and their capacity to be resilient in the face of the pandemic crisis.



Dr. Aleš Gačnik, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Tourism Studies – Turstica (Department of Cultural Tourism) | Head of the Centre of Gastronomy and Wine Culture of University of Primorska | IGCAT Expert - Slovenia

Dr. Aleš Gačnik is Assistant Professor of social sciences and humanities in tourism and lecturer in the field of cultural heritage, cultural and gastronomy tourism. As a researcher, he focuses his work in the fields of cultural heritage, art and tourism, heritage and cultural tourism, museology, wine and culinary culture, agriculture, regional development, wine and gastronomy tourism. He has been the (co)organizer of several national and international conferences, (co)editor of several scientific and professional monographs and journals and has received several national and international awards. His bibliography comprises more than 720 publications. He is a member of The EnoTourism Academy, of the expert council of The Slovenia Restaurant Award and of two expert groups at the Ministry of Agriculture: Council for development of agriculture and Slovenia - European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2021.



Dr. Dezső Kovács, Honorary Professor, rural researcher and entrepreneur - Hungary

Dr. Kovács's work as rural researcher and entrepreneur mainly focuses on rural development and tourism development in the countryside. He has done research on rural tourism, wine tourism and wine roads, rural heritage and world heritage, experience economy, honey and beekeeping, ecotourism and eco-gastronomy, equal opportunities, rural women and issues of active ageing. He has also managed and was involved in several research and development projects in Hungary and abroad. Currently a retired university lecturer, he has taught at the Economic and Social Sciences Faculty of Szent István University (Gödöllő, Hungary), the Economics Faculty of West Hungary University (Sopron) and the Kodolányi University in Székesfehérvár. Between 2007-2011, he worked at the Regional Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Pécs). Dr. Kovács has published more than 120 studies and articles, as well as five books on the themes of rural tourism, world heritage, rural development, wine tourism and beekeeping.





Henna Lehtikainen, RDI-Specialist, Project Manager, Savonia University of Applied Sciences - Finland

Henna Lehtikainen is coordinator of Kuopio, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2020 and project manager at Savonia University of Applied Sciences. Henna is Master of Health Science (Nutrition) and expert in the fields of nutrition, special diets and education. She works to strengthen co-operation between local food operators and SMEs and enhance the development of the sector, with the long-term goal to build continuity in the development of responsible food tourism in the Kuopio area. Previously, she worked for over 10 years at the Finnish Coeliac Society as authorized nutritionist and project manager.



Blanca Cros, Catalan Tourism Board and IGCAT Board Member - Spain

Blanca Cros is the Head of European Programmes & International Relations at the Catalan Tourist Board (CTB) where she is responsible for the development of a broad range of European projects, as well as engaging in various European tourism networks. Her wide experience includes working as coordinator for cultural tourism, gastronomy, and sustainable tourism at CTB. Blanca believes in the exchange of good practises and the potential of joining forces and sharing synergies among different countries, regions and tourist destinations. She strongly supported and pushed forward the candidacy of Catalonia as European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2016. Additionally, Blanca was awarded "Necstour Ambassador for 2017".



Jesper Christensen, Special Advisor, Business Region Aarhus - Denmark

Jesper is a founding member of the European Region of Gastronomy network and has for many years played a key role in the internationalisation of the Danish food cluster with the involvement of Aarhus/Central Denmark Region in several international networks. He has since 2006 been project leader for several business-development initiatives and international projects related to food business, tourism and gastronomy. Currently, he works for Business Region Aarhus as special advisor and he has also worked as advisor for City of Aarhus. For the European Commission, Jesper has several times been international expert on international collaboration for countries considering to join the EU.



5 - Educating to Promote Sustainability

Alessio Cavicchi, University of Macerata introduced the subject matter and how vital education is for sustainable development, tourism, and gastronomy.

Jacinta Dalton, Galway-West of Ireland, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2018 emphasized how educating for sustainability is crucially important at the HEIs level. Vocational training is also addressed through the program. Ms. Dalton also spoke about the way in which we teach the future is crucial. She noted that while Galway is regulated by the EU, local relationships are vital. Galway utilizes a UNWTO initiative called TEDQUAL, a self assessment targeting the sustainability of the program. Only 12 schools in EUROPE received this certification.

Diana Hanslow, Hautes-de-France, European Region of Gastronomy candidate 2023 explained how her region is enormous with each of the districts experiencing different backgrounds and issues. Hautes-de-France began a relationship with the Council that finances canteens in schools to have a specific programme. Hautes-de-France a large farming region, thus there is a good availability of products available for local consumption.

Joana Santos, Minho., European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2016 described the projects that Minho is focusing on:

- Traditional recipes
- Endogenous products of Minho
- Gastronomic Charter of Minho (Love Minho)
- Qualification of Restaurants in Minho (a project to enhance of gastronomy of Minho)

Storytelling is the key to how Minho will communicate its offerings. Restaurants in the region and outside the region will receive guidelines to have a standard communication. They stated that innovation and creativity are important, but locals feel the need to respect the recipes and the traditional products and thus want to use different terms.

Mojca Polak, MIC Academy of Culinary Arts and Tourism, Slovenia, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2021 invited everyone to visit Slovenia once the pandemic subsides and spoke about learning for a sustainable future in Slovenia. She reminded everyone how sustainability was a key factor in education during the former Yugoslavia days. Each school had, and still does, its own vegetable garden. Newspapers were recycled and the monies collected went to school field trips. Students collect bottles and caps and monies are donated to children who need medical care. School kitchens create menus with local ingredients which adapts children's palates to local gastronomy and at least 10% of all ingredients in school lunches must be organic. Competitions for primary students have been established to encourage cooking and innovation at a young age. Education for older students includes sustainability at the curriculum. Food Waste, an initiative which begins in June, aims to improve urban students understanding of purchasing and raising their voices for the local food movement. Another question being addressed is how to retain interest in vocational education for the future. What do career opportunities look like for young generations?

Mihaela Antofie, Associate Professor, Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019 explained how the region has implemented a module pilot project in 5 schools in Sibiu that bridges the sciences with gastronomy. Children learn how to measure volumes and weigh ingredients as well as other important skills. Positivity was fostered and the outcomes have been wonderful to see. Many stakeholders have been involved in the initiative and there are over 100 pages of curriculum. Next steps include adding material on sustainability and waste management.

Sandra Simões, Hospitality School, Coimbra Region, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2021-22 introduced the concept of Green Schools in her region. In these schools, students can learn about the tradition of gastronomy within the region. As part of a partnership with a local newspaper, one student has the opportunity to write an article on the topic of gastronomy or sustainability. The school also promotes the so-called soft schools, encouraging students to become better citizens. In January, a new initiative was started for professionals featuring five focus courses:

- Sustainable business management
- Sustainable resource management
- Innovation
- Circular Economy Applied to Food Resources
- Social Responsibility Management

Regional restaurants may apply for a Gastronomy and Wine Selection certification. 83 restaurants have already gone through the program and 50 more are beginning. Factors that are analyzed during the adjudication process include the use of local products, service quality, sustainability, and more. The jury then gives recommendations to better the restaurant's offerings and awards those with the best scores the official certification and title.



Dr. Alessio Cavicchi, Full Professor, Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, University of Macerata | IGCAT Expert - Italy

Alessio Cavicchi is Full Professor at the Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism at University of Macerata (Italy). His main fields of interest and research are consumer food choice, economics of food quality and safety, sustainable tourism and innovation in the agro-food sector. He has experience as an invited expert for several programmes and DGs of the European Commission in the food sector (DG Research, DG Regio-Urbact, Joint Research Center, European Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation, DG Education and Culture) and he has served as invited expert for the United Nations; moreover, he has been consultant for the evaluation of measures applied under the EU Common Agricultural Policy. His works have been published in several international books and journals and he has served as consultant for several agri-food firms in Europe.



Jacinta Dalton, GMIT, Galway-West of Ireland, European Region of Gastronomy 2018 - Ireland

Jacinta Dalton has had direct operational experience at senior management level in the food and hospitality industry over the past 20 years and has developed and delivered a number of training programmes for Fáilte Ireland – Ireland's National Tourism Development Authority. In 2011 Jacinta was co-founder of The Foodie Forum (www.thefoodieforum.net) – an interactive, collaborative, educational networking platform for food producers, chefs, restaurateurs interested in the support and promotion of local food. Jacinta is currently the Head of Department Culinary Arts & Service Industries at Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) GMIT - Fáilte Ireland Food Champion, Region of Gastronomy Steering Group, and board member and a member of IGCAT and Fáilte Ireland.



Mojca Polak, Lecturer, Vocational College of Hospitality and Tourism Maribor - Slovenia

Mojca Polak is a lecturer of several culinary subjects at Vocational College of Hospitality and Tourism Maribor. She is the (co)author of many culinary articles and books, including A Strategy for the Development of Slovenian Gastronomy. As a member of committees, she participates in many national and international competitions. Her professional focus is promotion of Slovene cuisine and its contemporary modification. She is collaborating in certification process for many local products that are certified in accordance with strict standards, and by respecting traditional values, sustainability, local materials and ingredients.



Sandra Simões, Coordinator, Coimbra Region, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2021-22

Sandra Simões has a master's in Management – from Aveiro University; a degree in Organizational Communication and a bachelor's in communication – both from Coimbra Higher School of Education. She also has a Mini MBA in Hospitality and Tourism Management - from ISCTE: Lisbon University Institute. Her professional experience in Coimbra School of Hospitality and Tourism allowed Sandra to develop a set of competences in several different areas like leadership, internal and external communication strategies, social media management, executive training management and certification skills. Sandra is now the School Innovation Advisor and manages (since 2012) the Executive Training Department of tourism professionals. More recently, (since 2018) she is also Coimbra Region: European Region of Gastronomy 2021-22 programme coordinator.



Joana Santos, Associate Professor - Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo (IPVC) - Portugal

Joana Santos is an Associate Professor of Biological Sciences at the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo (IPVC), Portugal. She has carried out several research and consulting activities such as planning, coordination and development of research and consulting activities for local authorities, consortium and businesses. She has been involved in the Qualification & Valorisation of "Minho Gastronomy" Project, which aims to value the potential of developing a base of activities associated with the agri-food sector and gastronomy, namely, through qualification, innovation and training in key areas of the main territorial resources.

6 - Building excellent visitor experiences and food/wine routes

Jaume Gomila, Menorca, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2022 introduced the session on new trends in creative tourism make it necessary to rethink top visitor experiences that combine four main elements to give added value: safety & security (prescriptive from now on); gastronomy (healthy, ecological, local); hospitality & excellence (tailored tourist products); local natural and cultural heritage, culture, arts and creativity. He noted that wine means European and Mediterranean gastronomy, landscape and territory, culture and education, tradition and innovation, identity, authenticity and uniqueness. Experiences related to wine have the potential to inglobate the four elements above and thus be excellent experiences. "Wine is a territorial message that travels and cause people to travel". The wine world is very appropriate to nurture excellent experiences, which are the seeds for creative tourism, and creative tourism is part of the crisis resolution through positive and strong values.

Vesna Horvat, Maribor Tourism Board, Slovenia European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2021 shared a case study of City of the World's oldest Wine & Oldest wine Museum. The city of Maribor (ECOC 2012) in Slovenia has the oldest vine in the world (over 450 years old). A varied tourist experience has been built around it: and old wine house is now a museum with a wine shop where tasting experiences are offered (with the top wines from the region). The museum also offers virtual experiences to have a journey through time and experience the story of the oldest vine in the world. The wine cellar itself is cavernous at over 15,000 sq m.

Kregar Šegota, Chief Executive Officer, Rijeka 2020, European Capital of Culture spoke about how Rijeka was Capital of Culture 2020. There were 600 events, 250 partners, and they managed to implement the program during covid strectictions. Legacy: museum exhibitions, Shio Galeb floating museum, permanent contemporary art sculptures etc. festivals, community programs - active citizens in an active city. For the ECOC 2020, Rijeka has invested over 60M€ in infrastructure and other resources. Great investment has been made in arts, culture, and creativity. Although the year couldn't be celebrated properly due to Covid, the ECOC has left other important legacies:

ARTS: contemporary art sculpture route along the coast as a cultural tourism route with art installations throughout the route

CULTURE AND FESTIVALS: new festivals have been created including gastronomy

PEOPLE: several platforms have been created to involve citizens. Community programmes to develop projects in the arts, culture and gastronomy

The ECOC was useful to place Rijeka on the European map as a cultural city, a new framework to create future experiences in cultural tourism.

Mirna Jelčić, Director of Herzegovina Region, USAID shared Herzegovina's priorities: to develop, create & define an authentic destination through the Herzegovina wine route. Bosnia Herzegovina as a traditionally wine country with high-quality wine. She said the idea is to create a new, exciting destination around wine and this is being made possible through USAID's investments in the region of Herzegovina. To implement this, the region needs to start from scratch. They are in the first step of identifying and creating a network of all stakeholders in Herzegovina that can be directly involved in the project. As a next step, they will be networking among different sectors. Herzegovina is a crossroad of culture, heritage, and nature, and a holistic approach is needed to create a new, welcoming and warm destination. Herzegovina wants to be part of the Iter Vitis community (European Cultural Route). As a further step, they will need to create a tailor-made marketing plan and develop the route's infrastructure to create itineraries with the aim of making the destination sustainable, strong, and recognisable.

Francisco de Calheiros, Count, Honorary Consul of Slovenia in Porto spoke about the Solar Houses of Portugal Network which has 120 houses involved. Solar houses are strictly linked to the wine tradition and are also used to organise wine presentations. One of the main challenges is the sustainability of these houses as are they are not easy to maintain and require a lot of maintenance on the part of their owners as bearers of the knowledge about the house and its history. These houses attract a very special type of tourism and are full of history. Houses and manors around Europe are part of an international network called Europe of Traditions. Through this network, the houses try to promote each other and develop itineraries for visitors.

Niina Väänttinen, Kuopio, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2020-21 contributed a short cross-section on the development of food tourism products, visitor experiences, and food & drink routes during European Region of Gastronomy 2020-21. Kuopio has been developing food tourism products within a context of excellent visitor experiences and food & drink routes during European Region of Gastronomy 2020-21. They are currently celebrating the European Region of Gastronomy status with the theme Living According to Nature's Rhythm – and now the table is set. They are piloting new services and service models and also testing food tourism services – to improve their offerings. Companies receive know-how and concrete support for branding, service development, marketing, sales, and productization as part of the responsible gastronomic brand in North Savo. In order to increase attractiveness and prolong the stay of the visitors in the region, they have built 60 Tasty Travels with their SME's throughout the project period. The aim is to keep those services available afterward as well. Visitor experiences, tours, and routes are leaning on Hungry for Finland themes, including fresh, casual, and creative food tourism products. These routes, tours, and experiences are targeted for travel agencies and customers who are interested in the tranquility of nature, recharging of batteries, urban experiences, and attractions, and seeking to get to know the local way of life. Kuopio wants visitors to explore their region through different food routes,



flavors and experience arctic tastes in their glass & plate. These experiences include guided food tours that combine sightseeing and dining in different locations and restaurants; heritage & traditional days and festivals in villages; tours and tastings in award-winning savonian breweries, distilleries, and wineries which can be combined into excursion programs, travel packages, and cruises. Holistic gastronomy & nature experiences take visitors to the Lakeland paradise with cruises, saunas, and wellness services. Because visitors do not necessarily know the regional borders in countries, we are also developing routes and tours crossing regional borders with Eastern-Finland colleagues to serve a wider range of unique gems of local and regional cuisines to visitors.

During the discussion that ensued, Irena Kregar Šegota suggested incentivising the creation of associations of SMEs and entrepreneurs with the aim of starting a conversation with the cultural sector and raising money to fund new projects. This would help create bridges between different sectors.

Mirna Jelčić, Director of Herzegovina Region, USAID noted the power of wine to generate experiences. She added that wine is a basis to create experiences and is a growing sector. We need to encourage changes in how wine is proposed to visitors. Wine is the centre around which we can generate culture and experiences. Besides being an excellent drink, wine also represents the way of living of local people, their cultural background, experiences, history, culture, etc.



Jaume Gomila, IGCAT Executive Board Member - Spain

Jaume Gomila is both a restaurant owner on the island of Menorca and expert in the fields of education and culture. In his former role as Director General for Culture for the Balearic Islands, he was responsible for supporting the Mediterranean Diet declaration as Intangible World Heritage by UNESCO. He is now also Chairman of the Adult Schools of Menorca and has been instrumental in Menorca's successful bid for the European Region of Gastronomy 2022 title.



Francisco de Calheiros, Count, Honorary Consul of Slovenia in Porto - Portugal Francisco de Calheiros is the head of the ancient Calheiros Family and is responsible for the preservation of their historical House - the Manor Paço de Calheiros. Over the past thirty years, he has devoted himself to an exhaustive work of rehabilitating the old property with the aim of protecting the Family's patrimonial and intangible heritage, by recovering and adjusting the Manor to Tourism and reinstating the most traditional agricultural productions associated with it. He promoted the creation and became Director of the International Festival of Gardens of Ponte de Lima -inspired by the International Festival of Gardens of Chaumont-sur-Loire -, is President of the Golf Club of Ponte de Lima, of the ADRIL-Association for Integrated Rural Development of Vale do Lima (responsible for the LEADER program), of TURIHAB - Housing Tourism - and, also, of the Association of Friends of the Portuguese Way of Saint Jacques de Compostela.



Vesna Horvat, Consultant, Maribor Tourism Board – Slovenia

Vesna Horvat is a regional coordination consultant with more than 15 years of experience in the field of tourism. For the last 10 years, she has been working at the Maribor Tourist Board. Along, she has gained a deep insight in the ecosystem of one of the best restaurants in Slovenia. As one of the initial team members of the Maribor's biggest attraction, the Old Vine House, she has developed broad knowledge in oenology and performance of wine tastings. Recently, she participated in the establishment of a new destination brand Maribor. Currently, she is establishing a new brand for quality and local products in the field of gastronomy Our Finest (Naše najboljše) and developing a new gastronomy unique experience in Maribor.



Irena Kregar Šegota, Chief Executive Officer, Rijeka 2020, European Capital of Culture – Croatia

Irena Kregar Šegota is a cultural manager specialising in international cooperation and fundraising, who has been working on the ECoC project since its very beginning. Her previous professional experiences include the position of senior advisor for international cooperation in culture at the Rijeka City Hall, work for the Rijeka City Puppet Theatre (marketing, PR, International Puppet Festival), work for the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She was president of the Alliance Française in Rijeka (2003–2018) and the vice-president of the European cultural network Les Rencontres – LIKE (2015–2018).

(Photo credit Dalibora Bijelić)



Mirna Jelčić, Director of Herzegovina Region, USAID - Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mirna Jelčić is Herzegovina Region Director in USAID Developing Sustainable Tourism in BiH project and former director to Herzegovina Regional Economic Development Agency. She studied in Croatia, worked in Bosnia but returned home to Herzegovina to focus on tourism and sustainable development in this region, strongly believing in growing opportunities in wine and food tourism of Herzegovina. With experience in the public, private and non-governmental sector, Mirna has grappled with the obstacles and challenges to sustainable destination development. As part of a team of expert professionals, she is currently setting the stage to deliver the Herzegovina Wine Route to the global market.



Niina Vanttinen, Communication Expert, ProAgria Pohjois-Savo - Finland

Niina Vanttinen is Communication Expert at the Rural Women's Advisory Organisation (ProAgria Eastern Finland) where she works on several projects including: EuReGa; Kuopio, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2020-21; and other gastronomy and development projects related mostly with SMEs entrepreneurs located in rural areas. Her work is mainly focused on public relations, communication, marketing, education, visual solutions and branding. Her passion is to help companies and organizations succeed, grow profitable businesses and find new ways to operate. Her earlier experience includes working on several advertising agencies as Art Director and visual designer, newspaper journalist and entrepreneur.

7 - Research and discovery into visitor needs

Antti Lire, Savonia University, Kuopio, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2020-21 spoke about the digital sales roadmap, a vision for 2025 which has already brought 85% of regional companies on board, and aims to work toward better sharing of information on marketing and sales data. It is a way to update the marketing and sales strategies of the region.

Prof. Roberta Garibaldi, President, Italian Association of Gastronomy Tourism, University Professor and IGCAT Expert - East Lombardy, European Region of Gastronomy 2017 emphasized the need for quantitative data on tourists. One way to do this is the exchange of info from experts. Share information regarding the sector. Trends she noted: Taste of Value - unique and local experiences. The tourists are choosing sustainable experiences. Tourism can happen online and with the right infrastructure, digital tastings are possible. Most often, this can be facilitated after a visitor has been to the region. This opens up questions about how to be social online.

Dr. Daniela Angelina Jelincic, Senior Research Adviser, Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) Croatia spoke about Covid-19 and post-pandemic cultural tourism. The willingness to travel exists, though health-related issues have become more important. She noted that tourism trends has been affected by corona in the following ways:

- Changes in the market
 - Staycation - the domestic markets are getting bigger, typical tourist activities are being adapted for local and national guests
- Changes in the products
 - Remote tourism - Tourism can happen online - for example, digital tastings.
- Changes in the consumption
 - Two sides
 - Avoiding the masses
 - Well being - reconnection, recharging
 - People are more open to other ways to be tourists.

László Puczkó, of Health Tourism Worldwide, Hungary focused on sustainability and tourism as well as the reality of the immediate future of tourism. Covid-19 has affected the markets and the limbo can be used to open for new ways to offer touristic experiences and new ways of being a tourist. He noted that the market is under pressure. We can use the covid-19 as an opportunity to innovate, but we must remember that the business owners are desperate to get their business started again. Sustainability is a nice idea but is not necessarily what companies will prioritize when they feel threatened in their survival. Long-term sustainability is the goal, just be realistic in how quickly big ideas can be implemented. Also consider if it is worth it to make gastronomic activities online or is it possible to innovate in other ways.



Louise Nørgaard Reifling, Project Manager, Aarhus-Central Denmark Region, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2017 - Denmark

Louise Nørgaard Reifling is project manager of Aarhus-Central Denmark Region, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2017. She is seated in the branch organisation The Food Organisation of Denmark, where she works for the gastronomic development among the whole food chain in the Central Denmark Region.



Dr. Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, Senior Research Adviser, Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) - Croatia

Daniela Angelina Jelinčić holds a Ph.D. in Ethnology from the University of Zagreb and her specific interests are in cultural tourism, cultural heritage management, cultural/creative industries, cultural policy, creativity, experience economy and social innovations. She is a senior research adviser/full professor at the Institute for International Relations (IRMO), Croatia and, as an adjunct professor, she teaches at the University of Zagreb, Zagreb School of Business, Edward Bernays University College in Zagreb and occasionally at the UNESCO Chair for Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development, Institute for Advanced Studies (iASK), Hungary. She served as the Council of Europe expert for cultural tourism and is the author of several scientific books and a number of scientific articles and book chapters, national/international studies as well as of several national/local strategic documents.



Dr. László Puczkó, CEO and Co-founder, Health Tourism Worldwide - Hungary

László Puczkó has been working in the field of travel and health for 25+ years. László is an experience engineer, strategist, mentor and trainer, and wellbeing intelligence expert. He has gained experiences in private as well as in public sector environments both in medical and wellness tourism. László is one of the very few people in the world who has been active in every aspect and domain of health tourism, i.e. medical and wellness tourism alike. He is an economist and art & design manager, and holds master degrees, a PhD, and is a Certified Management Consultant. László has been lecturing and running tailor-made trainings and masterclasses in over 40 countries all around the world. He has been actively involved both in industry as well as academic arenas and authored numerous industry reports, specialist books and publications. He was the project lead on the path making report for UNWTO & ETC titled Exploring Health Tourism, as well as a pioneering study for Global Spa Summit titled Wellness Tourism and Medical Tourism: Where do spas fit? László is a hot spring and wellness enthusiast and holds a Diploma in Forest Bathing!

8 - Agrofood and innovation contributing to a region's identity

This session looked at collaboration with agro-food and innovation as a defining contributor to a region's identity.

Marjan Cukrov from the **Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia** spoke about the strong linkage between excellent food and excellent gifts. IGCAT's European Food Gift Challenge was cited as a good example of initiatives to showcase the importance of supporting local small- and medium-sized producers of traditional products so that they are able to highlight the stories that link those products to the region, therefore helping in the brand-identity of the territory. Given the ever-increasing demand from visitors for exceptional local food and food-related craft gifts, paired with their search for authenticity and uniqueness, and enhanced attention for sustainable products, the Ministry is placing high emphasis on quality food and quality food gifts.

Karolina Buczkowska-Gołębek, President of the Polish Association of Food Tourism noted that from a tourism perspective identity is not just product or place but it is people, therefore allowing people to tell their stories is very important. She also highlighted the major role we have to educate children in traditional food and culture and build projects that stimulate pride and ownership of food traditions. This theme reemerged in the discussion and all agreed that children are key to preserve and protect food traditions. The work of Alicia Foundation in catalonia was mentioned as well as the Welcome to the Farm project - both aimed to grow an appreciation by children around the importance of food and diet.

Lucia Dubačova and **Peter Kohout** from **Trencin, candidate European Capital of Culture 2026** noted the importance of the connections between culture, food and the architecture of the city or territory. They demonstrated how the city of trencin is aiming to become a green conscious city with an ambitious architectural plan that will transform the city into an edible, breathing city that is contemporary and appealing to young people - thereby attracting new small businesses and attractive food outlets and food terraces. Landscape or city scape is a defining consideration when choosing where to eat.

Ariadna Ribas, Representative Coordinator, Catalonia, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2016, both facilitated the session and gave an interesting presentation on how Catalonia has been encouraging new quality food products as well as food related offerings through competitions with general and specific criteria. She recognised that there are many food experiences from gastronomy hotels to wine tourism to museums or festivals and the aim is that all improve their standards and become ambassadors for the region. She noted the complexities of working with many private companies, especially smaller ones that may not have the capacity to be able to attend meetings and therefore it requires that the public administration adapt to their needs. At a higher strategic level Catalonia has formulated by working with many stakeholders the Gastronomy Plan as a legacy of their kick-off year as European Region of Gastronomy in 2016 and commitment to this plan is still strong because it included many voices and it was an opportunity for the public administration to listen to what the sector needs.

Kristine Rise from **Trondheim-Trøndelag Food Festival** noted that the most successful strategy for working with private organisations is to give them what they want - rather than asking them to join your agenda.

If they are interested they will attend so this requires time to listen to their needs. For example chefs will attend short workshops on topics that are useful to them but not for a strategic plan of the city but through the workshops you can ask key questions that help to identify what the city needs because you are hearing it from the people that count.



Marjan Cukrov, MSc, Project Leader, Slovenia, European Region of Gastronomy 2021 at the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food - Slovenia

As the project leader of Slovenia, European Region of Gastronomy 2021 at the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Marjan Cukrov is responsible to represent the interest of the Slovene agriculture sector in rapidly developing Slovene gastronomy by connecting and encouraging cooperation between agriculture sector and HORECA sector. He is also a member of the award commission for the most innovative agriculture product/service by AGROBIZNIS/FINANCE magazine.



Karolina Buczkowska-Gołębek, PhD, President, Polish Association of Food Tourism - Poland

Karolina Buczkowska-Gołębek, PhD, Asst. Prof. is President of the Polish Association of Food Tourism and a researcher specialising in anthropology of food in tourism, childhood studies (especially the context of children, food and travel) and cultural tourism (cultural tourists). Also, the topic of souvenirs is in her interests. She is an author of five books and over 80 articles concerning cultural and culinary tourism. She is a university teacher at one of Polish universities in Poznań, where she is also the tutor of Cultural Tourism and Food Tourism course. Prof. Buczkowska-Gołębek is a member of ATLAS Gastronomy and Tourism Research Group. She is also the deputy editor-in-chief of „Cultural Tourism” („Turystyka Kulturowa”) Polish Scientific Journal. She loves travelling (especially with her 7-year old son) to discover places through their culture and food.



Lucia Dubačová, Project Manager, Trenčín - European Capital of Culture 2026 - Slovakia

Lucia Dubačová is an international cultural manager and curator focusing on design innovation, digital arts and culture. Currently she leads the candidacy of the City of Trenčín for the European Capital of Culture 2026. In 2016 Lucia founded Sensorium Festival gathering an international community of experts in Bratislava to inspire, learn and celebrate within the realms of digital creativity in contemporary society. She received her M.A. degree in Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship at Goldsmiths University in London. Formerly she has been setting up Inolab, the R&D department at the Slovak Design Center.





Peter Kohout, Architect, City of Trenčín, European Capital of Culture 2026 - Slovakia

Peter Kohout is an architect working for the City of Trenčín in the department of chief architect in the field of spatial planning and city development. He collaborates with the Chamber of Architects of Slovakia on entering and defining architectural competitions for architectural studios. He also deals with a large-scale project of architectural and cultural transformation of the city, on which the city of Trenčín has been working responsibly for almost 10 years. The project tackles issues such as how to make the city greener, more ecological, sustainable and attractive for tourists, as well as for the people who live in it. Great emphasis is placed on the reclamation (revitalization) of public space, its design, sustainability and the quality of services that the city offers to visitors.



Ariadna Ribas, Wine & Food Tourism Brand Manager, Catalan Tourist Board - Spain

Ariadna Ribas Merino is an expert in Tourism Marketing and specialised in Wine & Food and Cultural Tourism. As a representative coordinator of Catalonia, European Region of Gastronomy 2016 she was responsible for the development of the project's action plan and results evaluation. With an international experience, she lived and worked in Germany in the travel industry.

