

EDUCATING FOR OUR FUTURE
AND
ENGAGING YOUNG MINDS

9th Annual IGCAT Experts Meeting
20 October 2022 (14.00-16.00h - CET)

REPORT



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Introduction

IGCAT's mission is to help local people conserve fragile cultures, environments and food traditions as we recognize this is necessary to ensure a more sustainable future. By working with our World and European Regions of Gastronomy Platforms, we hope to support and encourage actions to ensure the empowerment and engagement of younger generations. This chapter aims to share how different regions in our Platform have approached the focus area "Educating for our Future" and in doing so, have engaged with young people. Following the IGCAT Expert meeting entitled Engaging Young Minds, held on 20th October **2022**, it also aims to share analysis of how our regions could further utilise the Platform, to cross-market, share knowledge and add value to one another. The meeting and this report have identified a number of recommendations that will be presented to the next Annual General meeting of IGCAT.

The World/European Regions of Gastronomy are committed to "educating for our future" and this is indeed a focus area in IGCAT's brochure EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES and for any aspiring regions that hope to join the Platform.

EDUCATING FOR OUR FUTURE

Ensuring good food for everyone starts with understanding the importance of local and healthy food options. Nourishing children and adults through culinary and cultural education, responsible food production and consumption, improves people's health, encourages sustainable development, and instills pride in local food cultures. It is also a vital way to ensure that good food reaches everybody. The World Regions of Gastronomy prioritize collaboration with education and knowledge sectors. These collaborations are vital for the dissemination of information on the importance of regional gastronomy for the future health and well-being of citizens.

Commitments driven by the first six years of working together as a Platform have evolved, and methods to evaluate, develop and communicate the results need constant review. Over the course of working together World Regions of Gastronomy have committed to:

- a. Increasing children's access to creative subjects, gardening and cookery both in and outside of school, thus raising awareness and pride in schools about the region's cultural and food uniqueness.
- b. Taking steps to ensure where possible that public procurement procedures prioritize healthy options (including locally sourced and natural foods).
- c. Encouraging cooperation with the agricultural and educational sectors, so that local food knowledge is shared.
- d. Ensuring children have access to at least one healthy meal per day and make efforts to regulate sugar and salt content.
- e. Improving knowledge on plastic and food waste in addition to encouraging responsible behaviour towards recycling.

IGCAT has included these commitments as a recommendation in its guidelines since 2018 and new regions applying for the Award are encouraged to show a strategy to embed these commitments in their action plans for the region. Until 2022, it was a recommendation that Regions include education and academic institutions as active stakeholders in the development of the Award so that strong initiatives involving schools could begin to emerge and to a lesser or greater extent, the various regions took this recommendation on board.

IGCAT ENGAGING YOUNG MINDS FOR OUR FUTURE

@2022

ERASMUS+ PROJECTS
FOODBIZ
ON-IT
NEMOS

IGCAT WEBINARS
Public Procurement with Jacinta Dalton

Over **300,000**
children learn the importance of regional food culture in targeted school-programmes.

PROPOSAL

ENGAGING YOUNG MINDS
ANNUAL IGCAT EXPERTS MEETING

EDUCATING FOR OUR FUTURE

The Regions of Gastronomy commit to:

- Increase children's access to creative subjects, gardening and cookery both in and outside of school, thus raising awareness and pride in schools about the region's cultural and food uniqueness.
- Make steps to ensure where possible that public procurement procedures prioritize healthy options (including locally sourced and natural foods).
- Encourage cooperation with the agricultural and educational sectors, so that local food knowledge is shared.
- Ensure children have access to at least one healthy meal per day and make efforts to regulate sugar and salt content.
- Improve knowledge about plastic and food waste as well as encourage responsible behaviour towards recycling.

In 2021, IGCAT attempted to evaluate the amount of school children that have been engaged through programmes and discovered that more than 300,000 young people had been reached in programmes designed to improve healthy eating and valorize local food. The likelihood is this figure is much greater but many regions had only counted initiatives directly managed or budgeted by the project rather than including any additional projects conducted in schools that had likely been inspired by the Award.

Indeed, the level of engagements with schools varied considerably, with a few regions falling woefully short of fully engaging young people and thus missing a vitally important opportunity to build awareness about the need to protect and promote cultural and food diversity.

Even though building strong support for local food production is an important legacy for the region and education/knowledge sector institutions are fundamental allies, opportunities to build programmes together are being missed. Therefore, on 20th October 2022, IGCAT initiated a meeting of invited stakeholders from our awarded Regions of Gastronomy and IGCAT experts, in particular those with a direct impact on young lives. Participants came from academia, public and private initiatives, and IGCAT included young people (in almost all sessions) who have been

directly impacted by policies and programmes. The webinar was divided into eight key group discussions led by IGCAT Experts. Each session also included a rapporteur who reported the key findings back to the main group in a feedback session. The Engaging Young Minds Expert Meeting was a unique opportunity to explore what we could do better, as a Platform.

This report draws upon the conclusions of the Engaging Young Minds IGCAT Experts Meeting and is intended to further share ideas and open the discussion with many regional actors working with young people on the best strategies to involve, influence and encourage young people to champion local food and food traditions. Recommendations from this report will ultimately inform the guidelines for future candidate regions and the evaluation tools used to assess the effectiveness of the Award.



Involving schools and learning institutions

In signing the protocol agreement with IGCAT, the World/European Regions of Gastronomy commit to increasing children's access to creative subjects, gardening and cookery both in and outside of school, thus raising awareness and pride in schools about the region's cultural and food uniqueness. If asked whether local food and recipes should be taught in schools, or whether healthy eating should be a subject in education, we hypothesize that the answer would be yes from parents, teachers, and students but rarely are studies undertaken in advance of the Award year to ascertain this information.

Collaborations with learning centres are vital for the dissemination of information on the importance of regional gastronomy for the future health and well-being of citizens. Many schools and learning institutions have budgets for trips and/or to invite onsite experts to present out of curricula workshops. Budgets for these activities could be contributed to the Award year and beyond if used on educating for better nutrition and raising awareness about the need to protect and promote cultural and food diversity. Moreover, if correctly administered, the results of the projects undertaken for the Award year could be properly monitored and evaluated as a contribution to the Award year. The harnessing of educational establishments and their budgets as part of the bid should therefore be a priority and moreover considered a vital tool to share knowledge on the aims, values and principles of the Award as part of a wider dissemination to parents and educators.

Galway-West of Ireland since 2018 made the focus for their bid book “**Good Food for Everyone**” – sending the message that this bid would be inclusive rather than “exclusive” as the world of gastronomy can often be perceived.

Europe is seen as in a rather privileged position with many children receiving food at school to ensure that no-one goes hungry. This varies from distributing fruit and milk in some regions to the much more advanced policy in Finland that ensures all children have access to at least one full and healthy meal per day. When the European Region of Gastronomy Platform visited **Kuopio, European Region of Gastronomy since 2020**, we had the opportunity to visit a school and witness first-hand how local food providers ensure a balanced, nutritious, and appealing food menu for children. Our hope is that through the World Regions of Gastronomy we could ensure that this becomes a matter of good practice across the globe.

Another observation is that during the first six years celebrating the Award, projects throughout the European Regions of Gastronomy have varied both in the age group targeted and projects undertaken for example:

North Brabant, European Region of Gastronomy since 2018 developed seven branches of Brabant Culinary Schools, a program for their students to visit farms and growers. The idea was to enhance and improve knowledge of future cooks and restaurant owners about the origin, traditions and heritage of fresh ingredients from their own region. In the project, culinary students learnt about plant growth, healthy soils, products and origin in a new package of lessons. In 2018, the pilot year resulted also in a four-seasons recipe book titled "From Brabant Grounds", developed by the students. It was so successful that the project became a permanent part of the curriculum. Students became acquainted with farmers and their products and learnt the stories and traditions behind them. Culinary schools taking part included Koning Willem 1 College (Lead partner), De Rooi Pannen, Summa College, ROC de Leijgraaf and Cingel College. Slow Food made the match between students and farms. In its evaluation, it was noted that a major resource are staff, because for the project team in every culinary school the staff had to invest a lot of time to build the pilot project in 2018. However, for subsequent years less hours were needed and so the programme is now permanent and sustainable. In the first pilot year, 110 students participated, and they reportedly visited 40 farmers/growers. The recipe book produced in the Dutch language only, sold 1500 copies and both students and farmers gave a positive evaluation of the experience. The practical combination of farm site visits and the application of the product knowledge afterwards in recipes and a cookbook ensured that knowledge is accessible for others. Through this project, gastronomy businesses gained more knowledge about regional sourcing and increased the percentage of regional products in their menu. The project managers claim this led to more sustainable food consumption. Through producers' stories in the book, the product origins and stories are available for readers.

<http://www.van-brabantse-grond.nl/>

<https://www.facebook.com/vanBrabantsegrond/>

The **South Aegean, European Region of Gastronomy since 2019** reported, before beginning their journey to become an Awarded region, that neither gastronomy nor cooking subjects were part of the standard educational program of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. In fact, very few schools in Greece have cooking classes and a kitchen, except

for some private schools. The region does however host a private school the “Rodion Pedia” School, where gastronomy culture has been evolving for years and includes relevant learning topics such as animal body parts, different fish, vegetables and fruit varieties and their cost. The “Rodion Pedia” headmaster notes that: “flavours are culture”. The culture of flavours at the “Rodion Pedia” School is one part of its informal education program, which teaches children important life skills. The program has been designed by the school for the students and by extension for their families, who are reportedly carried away by their children’s enthusiasm. The benefits are various for the 30 students who meet each other every Monday in the Cooking Club and assimilate these benefits through experience. Collaboration between members, keeping things in order, cleanliness, responsibility, health and safety knowledge, creative food economy, consumer consciousness, imagination, creation, orderliness, discipline and fun are some of the things they learn in the Cooking Club. Moreover, they discover traditions from their country, customs in local gastronomy as well as local recipes and products. The most important resource needed again were willing and able teachers to share cooking skills and keen to test themselves in the action. Strategic planning, financing the infrastructure and all actions were carried out by the school. The Cooking Club has been operating for over 10 years and has offered many benefits to several hundred children and their families. Each year the Cooking Club publishes a magazine called “Cooking at School” with each issue, focusing on actions, as well as announcing renowned chefs who cooked side by side with the students, guest speakers, cooking events and visits to local producers (for example learning about the herbs of Rhodian land and their properties for recipes and health benefits). The school’s restaurant also hosts a daily menu that focuses on traditional cuisine and local products. Local recipes are recorded and published in each issue of the magazine. The school’s students have also grown an organic vegetable garden to cater for their own needs. The good practice of the “Rodion Pedia” School of Rhodes is reported to have upgraded the culture of gastronomy on various levels and prepares the students to become mature young people outside of school. The collaboration with distinguished chefs, growing vegetables in school gardens, informing about local products and their production, noting local cuisine, building knowledge of Greek tradition, preparation of local food are part of the many benefits of the Cooking Club. It also encourages the exchange of information and experiences between students from different schools. The good practice of the “Rodion Pedia” School on Rhodes has much to offer about how education approaches the subject of gastronomy and healthy eating for children. www.rpschool.gr Moreover, the project inspired and helped elementary schools to create their own gardens in which they planted seasonal vegetables and made local recipes inside their schools. As another result, the school

canteens added foods of high nutritional value to their shops, such as “melekouni”, the traditional super food bar made of sesame and honey.

The **South Aegean, European Region of Gastronomy since 2019** went on to conduct a study that showed great concern for young people's health and this led to the regional authority leading on **The Aegean Gardener's project**, that was warmly received by parents and teachers. The Aegean Gardeners programme reached 94 schools from 2017 until March of 2020 and more than 2.000 students of all educational levels. The project is considered to have triggered students and pupils to promote their local gastronomy. For example, the class students at a secondary school created, in collaboration with restaurant owners, an application for mobile phones where the restaurant visitor could read the ingredients and the local recipe of each plate. The pupils presented the application at the International Food and Beverage Exhibition Foodexpo Greece in 2018. The South Aegean Gardeners also had the opportunity to learn about local plant varieties and the importance of food diversity to protect biodiversity. There is a strong need to increase knowledge about the existence and use of different varieties of plants and animal.

Catalonia, European Region of Gastronomy since 2016 saw the Alícia Foundation develop the TAS program (You and Alícia for Health) that was an innovative and unique program to improve healthy habits of students through cooking and physical activity, in the most key moment of their lives, adolescence. Using a wide variety of teaching tools, the TAS program sought to improve quality of life for teenagers and provide them with knowledge, skills and motivation necessary to avoid future illnesses caused by unhealthy dietary habits. An online platform was developed where both teachers and students could share materials for free and aimed to reach all educational centres.



Cross-generation transmission of knowledge can be found in even more examples whereby outside school initiatives have been enacted. For example, the **South Aegean, European Region of Gastronomy since 2019** engaged the celebrity chef **Argiro Barbarigou** and took her on a tour of the islands in their **Aegean Mamas Know Best** project. The role and leadership of a Greek celebrity in this initiative was undoubtedly key to the projects wide acclaim and success with more than 1.000 mothers, grandmothers, women from cultural and agricultural cooperatives, chefs, nutritionists, producers and children involved.

Catalonia, European Region of Gastronomy since 2016 developed **Welcome to the Farm**, initially a collaboration between Agriculture and Tourism that has had remarkable results in educating young people about where their food comes from.

Menorca, European Region of Gastronomy since 2022 has also developed a campaign to build awareness about the red cow, an autochthonous breed on the island, and to encourage restaurants to use this heritage cow that had almost become extinct.

Joana Nogueira IGCAT Expert and Associate Professor at, **Minho, European Region of Gastronomy since 2016** (Portugal) noted “If we don't eat it, they won't produce it” and this is why at the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo (IPVC) since 2016 there has been a great

effort to reintroduce and use autochthonous ingredients (even resuscitating old varieties for the purpose).

These examples demonstrate that regions need to encourage cooperation between the agricultural and educational sectors so that local food knowledge is shared.

On the other hand, with rising instances of obesity amongst teenagers and young adults in Europe, several European Regions of Gastronomy decided to engage youth in coming up with healthy options for the favourite foods.

In **Aarhus-Central Denmark, European Region of Gastronomy since 2017** a healthy hotdog competition was launched, then **North Brabant, European Region of Gastronomy 2018** experimented with a healthy burger competition and **Sibiu, European Region of Gastronomy since 2019** tried to engage teenagers with a healthy pizza competition. These projects show a myriad of ways to engage with young people. The key in all of these is to insist on the use of healthy (and where possible local) food choices and secondly to insist on the educational aspect being fun and creative. Involving children and young adults in participatory events is an effective policy, as feedback from all the projects, families and teaching staff showed great engagement and the projects had gone some way to encourage young people to experiment with healthy food options at home.

Ensuring good food for everyone starts with understanding the importance of local and healthy food options. Jacinta Dalton from **Galway-West of Ireland European Region of Gastronomy since 2018** showed us how complicated but how necessary it is to lead by example and ensure public procurement procedures prioritize healthy options (including locally sourced and natural foods), especially in training institutions for the culinary arts. Ideally, all schools, hospitals and public institutions should indeed prioritize healthier and more sustainable options over other less nutritious or fresh options (even if they might be cheaper). When challenged about the costs, Ms Dalton counted that if people eat healthier food they need less quantities and so healthier food does not necessarily need to mean higher costs. An important research study is needed to prove this theory, but it is an interesting one, especially if you add the environmental need to increase the ratio of plant-based foods on the plate compared to meat and fish. A reduction in protein costs could therefore be compensated by local seasonal vegetable products.

It seems obvious that nourishing children and adults should be a priority over costs; it would mean less illnesses and therefore, from a public cost perspective, have longer term economic benefits but it isn't that simple. The role of culinary and cultural education in responsible food production and consumption to improve people's health, encourage sustainable development, and instil pride in local food cultures is often battling with business requirements to cut costs and be more "efficient".

In **Coimbra, European Region of Gastronomy since 2021**, IGCAT had the good fortune to meet Ana Paula Pais, formerly working at the Coimbra Hotel School and now coordinating 12 hospitality schools through Turisme de Portugal and President of AEHT (European Association of Tourism Schools). While working in the region she had found an ingenious way to reduce sugar and salt content by making an agreement with factories that produced sachets of salt and sugar. The agreement was to gradually reduce the quantity of sugar or salt contained in the sachets and therefore over a period slowly wean people's addiction.

The projects outlined above are all exciting, beneficial examples and clearly the World/European Region of Gastronomy Award is an excuse and encouragement for different institutions across a variety of sectors to initiate projects however their long-term continuance requires much more consideration. Many questions remain on how IGCAT can better inform policy-makers so that they make regional gastronomy a priority, not just for their economies but for their future health and well-being, ensuring good food for everyone starts with understanding the importance of local and healthy food options. Educating for responsible production and consumption as well as instilling pride in local food culture is crucial for its long-term survival. Obtaining quality education in food is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development. It is the only way to ensure that good food can reach everybody.

INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES IN WORLD REGIONS OF GASTRONOMY

Creativity in the kitchen and traditional farming/fishing or food production can be enriched by cultural stimuli and therefore can offer opportunities to young people who want to contribute to a more sustainable world. This session focussed on what more we can do to support young people who want to ensure environmental sustainability by resuscitating and giving value to native plant and animal varieties.

Young people are coming up with new ideas, not only how we prepare food but also how we collect, sell and distribute food. **Jaume Gomila, IGCAT Board member and stakeholder from Menorca, European Region of Gastronomy since 2022** asked a panel of young entrepreneurs whether cooking/farming/fishing or food production can be enriching career choices and therefore can offer opportunities to young people who want to contribute to a more sustainable world.

This conversation took place between **Chef Hussah Abdullah AlDugaither** a young talent from **Aseer, World Region of Gastronomy 2024** currently studying in Switzerland, **Carme Bosch** from s'Ullestrar, a health food shop, **Paco González** from a shellfish farm called Muscleres González, and **Sergi Riudavets** from Santo Domingo, a distributor of ecological products, the latter all young talents from **Menorca, European Region of Gastronomy since 2022**.

It was first noted that creativity in the kitchen, food production, farming or fishing are not necessarily considered as traditional academic skills and therefore they offer opportunities to many people who can bring their culinary heritage and food production skills to the fore.

When asked about challenges in building a career in promoting local food, the four young entrepreneurs, from a bakery providing eco-certified products, a shellfish mussel farmer, a dairy farmer and retailer producing milk and cheese and a young chef living and working abroad, talked about difficulties in bureaucracy, environmental pollution, food waste, low prestige of the farming/fishing profession and the overriding power of intermediaries in the supply chain (and therefore the need to sell direct to be competitive).

When asked about the benefits, there was overriding consensus that working in a natural environment is amazing, and they also receive satisfaction from being able to contribute to more sustainability and cultural diversity. They highlighted a need to valorize local products, and indigenous plants, animals, or fish.

Dr. Edith Szivas, Vice- President of IGCAT noted in her report from the session the importance of education and training for young people. There was a strong consensus amongst the speakers that better internships are needed and stronger support for micro-enterprises especially start-ups from young people.

In conclusion, the session confirmed the need for IGCAT to work with educational institutions at all levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. IGCAT needs to better evaluate how Candidate and Awarded Regions of Gastronomy are operating with educational institutions at all levels – for example, they could be asked to confirm the implementation of school programmes that ensure children receive nutritious food on a daily/weekly basis (breakfast, fruit, milk) and/or, evaluate how many school children participated in cooking courses or gardening activities or farm visits throughout the Award year;
2. Candidate and Awarded Regions of Gastronomy need to be encouraged to submit films that focus on young farmers, fisherman/food producers and encourage young people to see these professions as a life-style choice (see the Food Film Menu);
3. It should be mandatory (instead of simply recommended) that the Stakeholder Committee for a Region of Gastronomy include partnerships at all levels of education (primary, secondary, hospitality and adult education centres);
4. There should be more support for start-ups including training and marketing or distribution support;
5. There should be more opportunities for internships in farms, fishing or food production industries.

BUILDING PRIDE IN FOOD HERITAGE

IGCAT supports calls by intergovernmental bodies (1) for gastronomy and food to be re-integrated into education curriculums (2) and indeed, when the European Parliament recognised the importance of food education in a REPORT ON THE EUROPEAN GASTRONOMIC HERITAGE: Cultural and educational aspects (2013/2181(INI)) we were optimistic. Unfortunately almost a decade on, not much has changed inside formal education structures.

In contrast global food manufacturers have spent billions on marketing and lobbying and infiltrating local markets. Global brands are recognized by school children from a young age and yet many don't know the names of fish caught and eaten in their local ports. In some cases, young people are so disconnected from nature that they fear it and maybe they should because very few nowadays are able to discern a safe mushroom or berry from poisonous ones. People's general knowledge about their local plant varieties and the uses of these in recipes is at an all-time low. Worse still, we have moved away from reliance on our own lands and eco-systems and thus the effect on the planet is palpable. Our bodies, genetically hard-wired for centuries to be sustained on certain products are now eating an abundance of other products laced with chemicals and additives. Our health and our eco-systems need more than ever that we encourage healthy and local food diets.

José Luís Marques, IGCAT Expert from Coimbra, European Region of Gastronomy since 2021 introduced the session noting that as our children and teenagers grow they are provided with many temptations and relentless big-budget marketing campaigns from multinational enterprises. He introduced **Prof. Vincenzo Russo, Professor of Consumer Psychology and Neuromarketing at IULM University in Milan** and invited him to share research on how consumer psychology can be used to build children's knowledge and pride in their food heritage but he warned that this has to be a cross-sectorial effort. Prof. Russo noted the importance of not-for-profit, education and public services working together to influence children's behaviour. **Davinia Galea, IGCAT Expert Malta** reported that this is in keeping with IGCAT's philosophy of encouraging wide stakeholder groups to work together. Ms Galea felt sure that if we teach

¹ Food and Agricultural Organization <http://www.fao.org/school-food/areas-work/based-food-nutrition-education> and <http://www.fao.org/3/a-c0064e.pdf>

² European Parliament Resolution 2013, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2014-0127+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

techniques and tools, we can ensure our young embrace healthy and local eating habits. Prof. Russo explained that neuromarketing experts know how colours, sound and multisensory approaches can really influence and change perceptions about how food/drink taste. For example, colours influence our appreciation and behaviour towards food: a pink mousse on a white plate is perceived as being sweeter than if it is served on black plate. He explained how our taste expectations can also change with sound, for example low frequency sound makes food seem more bitter. Even the shape of food is important, and the example was given of consumers rejecting a rounded-edge chocolate bar.

Building pride and local food knowledge is part of this because as children and teenagers grow they are provided with many other temptations and big-budget marketing campaigns from multinational food enterprises.

The debate moved on to how to “nudge” children’s behaviour by using emotional connections and experiences – colour, sound and play are all vital factors in getting children to eat leafy greens.

In conclusion, it was noted by IGCAT that we need to know much more about neuroscience if we hope to counter-balance the multimillion marketing campaigns of global companies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Candidate and Awarded Regions of Gastronomy need to understand more about how neuroscience works, need cross-sectorial working to ensure that children can learn good habits and to learn more about emotional and experiential nudging of consumers into good habits (stories). IGCAT should prepare more sessions on this topic.



INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY COMPETENCES IN EDUCATION

If we want more sustainable food production, is there sufficient training in place? In this regard, IGCAT joined the NEMOS project, together with five European university partners to understand more about the current sustainability needs within the agri-food sector and what competences students should develop to respond to these needs once they access the labour market. Based on the outcomes of focus groups, interviews and surveys conducted with both teachers and students from food-related degrees, as well as stakeholders in the food sector, the NEMOS partners developed a Food Sustainability Profile (FSP) for students. This profile identifies the main competences and skills that students should acquire to respond to current most pressing sustainability challenges. As the first result of the NEMOS consortium, the FSP will contribute to the project's aim of developing a new educational model for the acquisition of sustainability competences through service-learning.

Dr. Alessio Cavicchi, University of Pisa, Italy, partner of the NEMOS project and IGCAT Expert asked how will food discipline graduates address challenges such as climate change, food waste and meet environmental sustainability targets? In a global context marked by the Agenda 2030, sustainability is going to be one of the values governing society and a key competency for graduate students in the upcoming decades. Food discipline graduates will need to address challenges such as climate change, food waste and food losses, as well as providing support to food producers seeking to meet global economic, social, and environmental sustainability targets.

The NEMOS project focuses on service-learning as a means to increase sustainability competences in students alongside the community to which the university belongs. Students from the universities of the NEMOS consortium explained how service-learning experiences helped them reflect marketable sustainability-related skills. A discussion took place on how these skills can be better integrated into students' curricula and the importance of engaging stakeholders in this process through community-building. Co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, the NEMOS project is led by the Public University of Navarra and includes the following consortium partners: Technological University Dublin (Ireland); Technological University Graz (Austria); Rhône-Alpes Higher Institute of Agriculture (France); University of Pisa (Italy); and IGCAT.

Julie Dunne from TU Dublin noted that a key message from the NEMOS student voice is that sustainability is social, economic and environmental, and the food system will not become sustainable unless all elements of sustainable development are taken into account. Students discussed sustainability under various topics. These included:

Michael O'Neill, TU Dublin discussed nutritional aspects and the need for food reformulation for healthy diets. Addressing obesity and making lives more sustainable by tackling the related public health implications, such as coronary disease and diabetes is crucial. He referred to the EAT Lancet report for feeding the world's population within planetary boundaries and suggested that food science degrees should include modules such as Food Ingredients and Food Product Development. Technical skills and working with local community growers for local, healthy ingredients is crucial as is better working relationships with the Food Safety Authority.

Sara Ging from TU Dublin also discussed Product Food Development and Ingredients for sustainability. However, she pointed out that future product developers need sustainability skills, and an awareness of the sustainability commitments of suppliers and sellers along the food chain. From growers to food producers everyone has responsibility. Sustainable ingredients could be integrated into Food Product Development, with relevant industry focussed case studies.

Camilla Viglierchio, from the University of Pisa, discussed Social Sustainability and the lack of focus on environmental. She claimed data on many aspects including gender equality in the workplace and equity in wages are still missing. Like her colleagues she noted the importance of having an internship in a company with strong sustainability principles. She noted Banfi wine where she carried out an internship, had had a transparent sustainability plan and expressed that evidence-based commitments for sustainability are important.

Daniel Alpizar Rojas, PhD student Pisa University brought up the issue of fair trade for example with his home country Costa Rica. Sustainable food systems are not just about waste reduction, but social sustainability. Food systems are linked to people's livelihoods and should not be only profit focussed. Small farmers must be involved in decision-making he claimed. He referred to Grassroots – a social enterprise that develops relationships between farmers, community, and students as a tool for sustainability.

Marco Bertilotti, Agrarian Studies, a student in Agrarian Studies at the University of Pisa (Italy), noted the importance of cross EU University collaboration. He explained his experience with the Circle U – European University Alliance summer school in Germany where Farm2Fork strategy discussions took place, and then students had an opportunity to work on a farm when the concepts are implemented. As a Training Farm for demonstrating sustainability, he found it extremely useful.

Niccolò Casini, University of Siena graduate discussed Sustainable and Ethical Food Business and the need for Innovation brokerage for sustainability. He noted that working with a social enterprise across the food system was important and that traineeships of significant duration are needed to put learning into practice.

Brian Jordan, TU Dublin Students Union president and food science graduate discussed the direct impact of climate change on the food sector. Reduction of methane emissions from beef

production through changing diets. He suggested that sustainability could be incorporated into an optional module for example food product development.

All students agreed that internships, practical work experience, visits and real-life examples are essential to learning. They all concurred that there is no point just embedding sustainability in the curriculum if we don't practice sustainability in all our organisations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

7. IGCAT should share results of the NEMOS project with relevant universities throughout the network.
8. Sustainability should be more firmly embedded in education and internships should be in exemplary working environments so that students can see sustainability in action. IGCAT should therefore ask more explicitly that all stakeholder institutions (particularly in the public and educational sector) implement IGCAT's Food Commitment and Sustainable Events rules in their organisations – leading by example.
9. Sustainability should be recognised as social, economic, environmental, and economic. Students are particularly interested in issues related to fair trade, fair work conditions, ethical food systems etc. and therefore this should be integrated whenever possible in IGCAT's work.

IMPROVING INNOVATION, VISIBILITY AND AVAILABILITY OF LOCAL FOOD GIFTS

The **World Food Gift Challenge** was conceived to give international visibility to high quality, artisanal food and food-related crafted gifts from the European and World Regions of Gastronomy and encourage innovation, using local food and food culture as the inspiration. It is desperately important to contemporise traditional crafts to keep them alive. Striking the balance between traditional and contemporary design is a delicate one and innovation is often led by young people but are we doing enough to give them visibility and opportunities for sale? This important discussion took place ahead of the next World Food Gift Challenge that will be hosted on Kos Island in the South Aegean, European Region of Gastronomy since 2019.

The conversation focussed on challenges and opportunities when improving innovation, visibility and availability of Local Food Gift products and included several young talented voices from two awarded regions.

Vasia Papailia, South Aegean, European Region of Gastronomy since 2019 and organiser of IGCAT's 2023 World Food Gift Challenge who chaired the session, asked how we can ensure that traditional crafts techniques are protected while encouraging contemporary design, arguing that this balance is a one-way street, the only way to keep tradition and local products alive. She introduced two young entrepreneurs from the South Aegean: **Krystallenia Drosou**, owner and CEO of **Pandrosia**, a start-up located on Kos Island that grows organic aloe vera, conducts research and development and creates a range of natural skin care products and organic foods, and **Dimitris Voudouris**, a young family member of **MYLOTOPI**, a rebuilt space that offers a unique experience to take guests back in time and into the daily life of islanders from the past century.

"The success of both these entrepreneurs are testaments to the success of the South Aegean Region that has been committed to engaging young people and maintaining traditions before, during and after its nomination as European Region of Gastronomy 2019."

Vasia Papailia

Krystallenia Drosou presented her company and described how her father started to cultivate Aloe Vera 2012 and how the company is now producing juices and cosmetics from 120 acres of ecological Aloe Vera crops. The biggest challenge as an entrepreneur is the large palette of different new tasks and the understanding of complex content, a whole new territory for her: from ecological farming issues to product development, branding and packaging, marketing and finance. Krystallenia noted that there are a lot of things to work on and to be successful you must succeed in each one of them. She admitted feeling loneliness, for example when facing lack of funding. She noted that the company is working internationally with hotels and spas but again, this has not been easy, the building of a hotel network has been a very slow process.

Vasia Papailia noted that "for small producers the work of gaining trust when entering a marketplace is a challenging task and the possibility to use the European Region of Gastronomy logo to give added-value to the products would be one way."

It became apparent through the conversation that the role of the Chamber of Commerce in helping local producers get to market needs further exploration. IGCAT currently recommends that Chambers of Commerce are key stakeholders but do not set evaluation goals for these organisations or similar institutions that they could have a very pivotal role in helping start-ups.

Dimitrios Voudouris then shared how his family rebuilt a multi-site space called the Gastronomy Village Mylotopi. The project was launched in 2018 after renovation of an old historic site at the village. He added that the kitchen uses local products and that they have built a network of local producers for this purpose with some products on display however, a site-specific shop has not been created yet. He explained that both locals and foreigners visit Mylotopi and they are very keen on local food, confirming the need to ensure better visibility of local products in hotels and shops.

Vasia Papailia then moved the conversation towards the connection between designers and producers and introduced **Aino Suonio, a design student at Savonia University of Applied Sciences at Kuopio, Finland European Region of Gastronomy since 2020-2021**, who shared her latest exhibition that showcased the surprising nature of life, change and beauty. Aino, a design student studying at the Savonia University of Applied Sciences noted that the school is developing design and content for Kuopio Design Week. She sees this as an opportunity to join forces; bringing together designers, restaurant talents and food producers at the Design Week.

Aino Suonia noted that Kuopio Design Week is an opportunity to find new contacts for local entrepreneurs and is a spot where food, people and designers can meet. The Kuopio Design Week model raised interest and Vasia Papailia noted that it could be transferable to other regions and countries, including those that are insular or remote.

Innovative design is crucial stated **Dr. Jutamas Wisangsing, IGCAT Expert from Thailand** who applauded IGCAT's work to provide tools and criteria for regions to launch their own **Local Food Gift Challenge**. She noted that this competition within the context of a design week could offer the answer to many questions related to Food Gifts.

"When designed with care, food gifts link to, carry a memory and tell the story about a place."

Dr. Jutamas Wisangsing

Paula do Fatima Frade from Coimbra, European Region of Gastronomy since 2021-22 agreed on the need to have meetings with young food producers, chefs and designers. They all struggle with similar issues. These meetings could take place first locally and later also internationally, online or face-to-face. In summing up, designers' weeks, platforms for peer networking and meetings are all ways to bring together producers and designers.

Kuopio, European Region of Gastronomy since 2020 was in fact the first region to create a European Region of Gastronomy office in the centre of the city that could become a hub for producers that hoped to develop the design, branding and distribution of their products. Opened in 2019.

In conclusion to the workshop, Vasia Papilla invited everyone to join **2023 World Food Gift Challenge** which will be organised by IGCAT and hosted by the South Aegean, European Region of Gastronomy since 2019. Vasia noted the desire to include workshops and opportunities for learning to awarded regions' coordinators and producers during the meeting thus helping young crafts people/designers and drive forward the sustainability agenda as well as supporting circular economies.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

10. The joint projects of the World and European Regions of Gastronomy commit to continue to engage young people in the World Food Gift Challenge, the European Young Chef Award and the Food Film Menu. IGCAT should continue to encourage regions to host Local Food Gift Challenge and continue to offer training of trainers to do so.
11. Region of Gastronomy should create better support mechanisms for micro-enterprises especially run by young people, including training, shared marketing campaigns, events, design weeks, festivals etc. For example, IGCAT could recommend the setting up of a European Region of Gastronomy office (using as a model that of Kuopio 2020) created for citizens, private organisations and other entities to visit and learn more about the values and principles, and how they can collaborate for the Award year and beyond.
12. IGCAT should recommend that an appointed stakeholder build a hotel shop network for the placement of local and particularly European Region of Gastronomy approved products.
13. Tradition and Innovation should be embedded as a concept and regional/international creativity hubs or design weeks created so that food producers can meet designers, packaging companies, and storytellers. IGCAT could encourage hosts of the World Food Gift Challenge to provide forums and exchanges for learning about design, branding, packaging, marketing, distribution etc.
14. IGCAT should make it mandatory for the stakeholder group to include a Chamber of Commerce or equivalent organisation that could mentor, and support approved European Region of Gastronomy products by providing the logo when they meet IGCAT sustainability criteria.



BUILDING CRITERIA FOR FOOD SUSTAINABILITY

IGCAT's European Young Chef Award is driving the agenda on food sustainability through its high-profile international young chef competition but is it doing enough? **Ida Valsø, Trondheim-Trøndelag European Region of Gastronomy since 2022** and host region for the 2022 competition explored a conversation with **Wendy Barrie**, Founder & Director of award-winning **Scottish Food Guide** that has also developed strict criteria to push the sustainability agenda further.

The **European Young Chef Award** gathers finalists of regional contests from around Europe to present and exchange knowledge about traditional dishes and local food products from their regions and propose an innovative reinterpretation of the traditional recipe, judged by star chefs and international experts. The Award aims to promote innovations on traditional cuisine, highlight sustainable food cultures and create future chef ambassadors for sustainability. Within this Award IGCAT has included several criteria to ensure that our young chefs become champions for sustainability (including reduction of food waste, limiting use of single-use plastics, focussing on plant/animal varieties as well as questioning plant/protein proportionality on the plate. Could IGCAT include further criteria for example, the sourcing of food from young and sustainable producers (thereby shining a light on local traditional food production and raising the profile of young food producers) and/or sourcing grass-fed meat, free-range and wild fish? Should IGCAT have a responsibility towards animal welfare and what about animals or fish fed on soya protein imported from the States? Should IGCAT be asking our young chefs to be even more discerning in their choice of food producer?

By introducing more criteria would we be going too far or are we in fact preparing our young chefs for the future market given that all indications show younger generations are increasingly making choices based on fair trade, organic and waste control. Will these become the deciding factors for successful businesses in the future? With the millennial generation now reportedly spending more than the boomer generation (2018, Ruiz) this is a factor that certainly needs to be taken into consideration.

The Young Chef Award is about creating conscientious leaders because they will in the future be the people employing staff, deciding on the food you eat and promoting (or not) your region, your region's food and your region's food identity. The Young Chef Award therefore is a huge

opportunity for young chefs to become ambassadors for their regions and for a sustainable food future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15. Improve recommendations in IGCAT's food commitment to include a position on farmed meat and awareness about unhealthy processed plant-based foods.
16. In the European Young Chef Competition consider the sustainability journey of the young chef. Not just an evaluation of one dish but of the young chefs' approach to sustainability in general. Have they been sustainable only for the competition?
17. The young chef should be asked to highlight products from the region, telling the story of a young producer from their region and/or whether the products they are using are organic, grass-fed, or wild fish and justify when they are not.



EMPOWERING YOUNG MINDS = NEW IDEAS

Diana Hounslow, IGCAT Expert, Hauts-de-France, European Region of Gastronomy 2023 led a conversation to explore the importance of competitions, events and festivals to inspire sustainable thinking and in particular efforts to tap into and support great ideas from young people. For example, Hauts-de-France, European Region of Gastronomy 2023, launched Euralimentaire in 2016 with support from the European Metropolis of Lille and the MIN of Lomme. The Euralimentaire Excellence site aims to boost the creation of businesses and jobs in the field of fresh produce. Euralimentaire currently works with 30 start-ups representing more than 100 jobs. This site of excellence is located on the National Interest Market (MIN/ZAMIN) of Lomme (Lille), the largest wholesale market (fruits, vegetables, flowers) in France after Rungis. The Euralimentaire team offers personalised and adapted support to established innovative Foodtech project leaders or those wishing to establish themselves in the Hauts-de-France region, whether they are still at the idea stage, in the pre-marketing phase or already on the market, in the following areas: food service, food science, coaching, media. The overall aim is to promote: businesses development, better food for all, with respect to the environment (clean label, seasonal products, organic...) and a re-territorialised production. euralimentaire.com

Thanks to this institution, many ideas and initiatives from young people have been supported such as **PourDemain** which is a brand that helps producers convert their agricultural production from conventional to organic, by supporting and fairly compensating them during the difficult period of conversion. **PourDemain in Hauts-de-France, European Region of Gastronomy 2023**, is also a tool that allows any citizen the opportunity to contribute to a future with more sustainable and healthy agriculture. **Lisa Planells** from Pour Demain explained that farmers hoping to go bio can have long-term transition issues taking on average 3 years to make the transition.

Johanne Bien founder of the Cabbage and Cows festival in **Aarhus-Central Denmark Region, European Region of Gastronomy since 2017** explained that everyone needs to eat more 'green' for many different reasons and that dairy products can improve the taste and diversity of green meals. The festival therefore creates a space for stimulating discussion on green eating and for sharing recipes. The **Cabbage and Cow Festival**, from **Aarhus-Central Denmark Region, European Region of Gastronomy since 2017** was introduced this year (2022) into the Aarhus Food Festival. The intention with Cabbage & Cow was to train citizens and food professionals to cook green

food with dairy products and create a conversation about how the cow/dairy products support the cabbage/vegetables in the green dishes of the future.

George Josephides from the island of Kos, South Aegean European Region of Gastronomy since 2019 demonstrated the initiative **Kos Locally Grown** (www.koslocallygrown.gr) and explained how this campaign grew from a need of the students of the 2nd Lyceum of Kos, in the framework of the ERASMUS+ program, *European Students for Sustainability, 2021-2023*. They looked for the reasons why it is vital to consume local products and explored ways of action which led to the organization of an awareness raising campaign. After contacting the Agricultural Association of Kos, they presented the idea of a campaign with two main axes: the creation of a logo to accompany the packaging of local products so that they are visible to consumers, and the creation of a website, that will inform consumers about the benefits of supporting local products and list products of Kos. The initial design of the website and the logo belongs to the students at the 2nd Senior High School of Kos who participate in the ERASMUS+ program, while the management and development of the website are under the Agricultural Association of Kos, which wholeheartedly supported the project. This presentation demonstrated that having a local brand is a big challenge in terms of marketing locally and getting shops or restaurants to promote it. It was noted that above all marketing support is needed for small family business especially those that focus on sustainability goals.

All the participants agreed that resources need to be made available for supporting the best ideas. Competitions, festivals and social media campaigns are all good ways for citizens to discover interesting products and talented entrepreneurs for the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

18. Candidate Regions of Gastronomy should be asked to demonstrate in the bidding phase how they will raise awareness on the need to make a green transition such as dedicated festival and or Pour Demail concepts.
19. Candidate Regions of Gastronomy should be asked to demonstrate investment in training activities or mentoring schemes to share knowledge both locally and internationally.
20. To involve young people, social media and new technology is a must and therefore social media campaigns could be supported that highlight good practises amongst local producers and their work. Guidelines on how to produce a successful social media campaign could be compiled and shared by IGCAT.

ENCOURAGING YOUNGER GENERATIONS TO SAFEGUARD BEES

The importance of bees and other pollinators for our food chain is now well known nevertheless our buzzy friends are still in danger. The Association of Beekeepers in Slovenia, European Region of Gastronomy since 2021, played a pivotal role in getting the United Nations designation World Bee Day. This session explored what projects and programmes have been put into place by private, public and third sector initiatives across the World Regions of Gastronomy to safeguard and improve public perceptions of bees with a particular focus on projects that appeal to the younger generations.

Dr. Peter Kozmus, Professional leader of Breeding Programme for the Carniolan honeybee in Slovenia 2021 and vice-president of APIMONDIA, amply demonstrated the great efforts being made by the Slovenian Beekeepers Association to engage children. Beekeepers clubs have increased three-fold in recent years thanks to their efforts. The honey breakfast is an exemplary project to ensure that all children in Slovenia can enjoy a nutritional honey breakfast at school. This initiative has taken place every 3rd Friday in November since 2008 and is considered an important tool to build awareness amongst children about the importance of pollinators but also the health benefits associated with honey. He referred to No Bees, No Life, authored by over 60 experts from across the globe. Asked what we can do, Dr. Kozmus noted the need to reduce the use of pesticides, to plant honey plants, trees, to sow meadows with more flowers, to encourage more consumption of local and natural honey and support beekeepers' work.

Dr. Mohammed Hamoud, Executive Manager for Aseer, World Region of Gastronomy 2024 then introduced **Hana Alalmi** Aseer who shared her story of becoming one of the first female beekeepers. She talked about the importance of digital marketing and beautiful packaging for her company that now has a turnover of 14 million dollars. She told IGCAT about an initiative to create bee boxes for people's homes and started visiting schools to encourage people to help. Through her application she distributes seeds for bee-friendly plants and trees.

Ana Paula Sançana from Coimbra, European Region of Gastronomy since 2021-22 talked from the point of view of concern for decreasing number of bees in Europe. They have conducted genetic research to strengthen the Iberic bees. She explained that because of serious forest

fires that inflicted Portugal in the summer months, the bees didn't have food so it was important to find solutions. On another side, the Cooperative visits schools to explain about the importance of bees for food security. School children are very sensitive about this issue, and they also teach the teachers and parents.

The rapporteur for this session, **Barbara Zmrzlikar, from Slovenia, European Region of Gastronomy since 2021** observed that the conversation had looked at the subject from a national level and local level, as well engaging young people through schools. Nevertheless, she noted that the goals and aims are the same across regions: to help beekeepers, engage young people and educate/build awareness on the health and environmental benefits of honey.

Peter Kozmus, noted that their association organises with FAO organise an event each year to raise awareness. In 2023, the event will look at the adverse effect of pesticides on bee populations. If regions could share their problems, we could use World Bee Day to share the information. **Dr. Diane Dodd** asked if we could encourage young people to do the research and create a social media campaign – she also congratulated Ana Paula Sançana for the film she had made for the Food Film Menu that raises the profile of research in beekeeping. Dr. Mohammed Hamoud agreed that audio-visual material is extremely important for transmitting messages. **Jaai Hui**, felt also that work needed to be done to educate the educators

RECOMMENDATIONS:

21. IGCAT should consider a campaign or action together with the Slovenian Beekeepers Society that could give more visibility and importance to World Bee Day.
22. Regions of Gastronomy should be encouraged to distribute seeds for wildflowers and encourage their planting in public spaces as part of a campaign to create more opportunities for bees.
23. Secondary schools could be asked to compete to create the best social media campaigns to celebrate World Bee Day;



FOOD AND CREATIVITY FOR THE FUTURE

Building a better future depends on the education of consumers. For consumers to buy and act sustainably there needs to be exciting, unique products and services on offer but there also must be incentives to help young people set up restaurants, cafes, shops, hotels, and visitor experiences because very quickly global companies are already trying to capitalise on local culture and environmentally friendly branding. Unfortunately, creative subjects have been stripped from the curriculum in many schools across the globe, leaving us with generations of young people that don't know how to grow food, cook, story tell, design or manage unique events.

Creativity is at the heart of everything with the creative economy becoming more important than ever before. In many countries however our education systems have been hardwired to produce workers for factories: repeat and don't think, be uniform and conform, and don't be creative or stand out! All the while robots are now being invented to take the jobs that younger generations have and still are being educated for.

The IGCAT online meeting workshop session 8 was an exciting reminder of what can be achieved when we bring food and performing arts together in more creative ways. The session was co-hosted by **Anu-Anette Varho, Project Specialist**, and **Eevamari Lahtinen, Communications Specialist, Salmaa, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2024**

Aarhus-Central Denmark Region, European Region of Gastronomy since 2017 pioneered for its Award year the **Catastrophic Meal** project which aimed to educate consumers by giving them a glimpse into the future. **Jakob Vinkler** is Founder of the Gastronomic Tourist Office, that works on the dissemination of gastrotourism and hosting, as well as of the Institute of Meals that focuses on how the space around the meal influences the experience and meaning of the meal. He is also Project manager of the Frontierseeking Culture Kitchen which currently houses three projects developed in connection with Aarhus 2017 - Capital of Culture: the Borderless Kitchen, working with communal dining and food as a social tool; the Fish-a-deli Circus, a traveling circus that interprets and communicates the food of the area and the diversity of the fish on offer. In this session he was interviewed about his key role in developing the Catastrophic Meal: Dystopia and Utopia on a plate thinking of what the future meal will look like in 50 years.

Across many regions there are many examples of “grow-your-own” initiatives to ensure young people have the skills to be self-sufficient in the future. Open-door farms and urban allotments are popular but what about the role of the arts? Creative initiatives can help people imagine their food future for example the Catastrophic Meal project in Aarhus-Central Denmark, European Region of Gastronomy 2017 and Creative Chefs can put a spotlight on immediate sources of food and/or food waste.

Jyrki Tsutsunen, Culture Chef, passionate forager, and ambassador for Saimaa, awarded European Region of Gastronomy 2024 talked about his techniques to make people curious about what they can forage. Jyrki Tsutsunen is a wild chef who creates new taste experiences with raw materials collected from the forest without prejudice. He is also known for multisensory events where food is combined with experiences produced with artists and musicians. Jyrki wants to challenge us to think about what food is and lead us to the edge of the new and experimental instead of the familiar and safe. Jyrki has worked as a chef in several top restaurants in Helsinki, at the St. Petersburg consulate, and organized international food events in, for example, Madrid, Frankfurt, Berlin and Plovdiv. However, he often returns to the landscapes of his childhood, the nature of Saimaa and the lake.

Food is life and wild food is a passion!

Jyrki Tsutsunen,

RECOMMENDATIONS:

24. Candidate regions should budget for and include a flagship event that works with artists to raise public awareness about food diversity. A second workshop with Jakob Vinkler would be useful to explore further partnerships, challenges, budgets etc.
25. IGCAT should compile examples from the Regions of Gastronomy whereby art has been combined creatively with food (events, experiences, routes)?
26. Regions should include as stakeholders film schools, theatres and other creative centres to come up with proposals for their regions.

27. Regions should seek out and promote chefs who encourage people to learn about what they can eat from their immediate environment (encourage the concept of foraging).
28. Regions of Gastronomy should commit to find a hosting festival to showcase the Category winners of the International Food Film Menu with a tasting in the region.



CONCLUSIONS

Awarded European Regions of Gastronomy are confident that through schools and out-of-schools programmes they can re-instil values concerning growing food and healthy eating, that aim long-term towards more self-sufficiency in food production. This links with environmental sustainability, which is another key factor in our efforts. It is not just about cooking but embraces food production and encouraging events, restaurants, and hotels to be more responsible.

Unique food culture is a selling-point but many young people see it as something boring and mundane. It is not unique to them so there is a lot of work to do to make it interesting and therefore create opportunities.

Engaging the next generation so that they embrace local food is an essential step to reclaiming food sovereignty.

Diane Dodd PhD

The outcome of IGCAT's Annual meeting is a list of recommendations that will represent additional commitments from the Regions of Gastronomy, therefore these will now be assessed by IGCAT secretariat and IGCAT's Advisory Board to see which should inform changes in the EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES Brochure and IGCAT GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL JOURNEY:

1. IGCAT needs to better evaluate how Candidate and Awarded Regions of Gastronomy are operating with educational institutions at all levels – for example, they could be asked to confirm the implementation of school programmes that ensure children receive nutritious food on a daily/weekly basis (breakfast, fruit, milk) and/or, evaluate how many school children participated in cooking courses or gardening activities or farm visits throughout the Award year.
2. Candidate and Awarded Regions of Gastronomy need to be encouraged to submit films that focus on young farmers, fisherman/food producers and encourage young people to see these professions as a life-style choice (see the Food Film Menu).

3. It should be mandatory (instead of simply recommended) that the Stakeholder Committee for a Region of Gastronomy include partnerships with all levels of education (primary, secondary, hospitality and adult education centres).
4. There should be more support for start-ups including training and marketing or distribution support. When assessing the Award, IGCAT's jury could look at monies destined for this type of activity.
5. There should be more opportunities for internships in farms, fishing or food production industries.
6. Candidate and Awarded Regions of Gastronomy need to understand more about how neuroscience works. Cross-sectorial work is needed to ensure that children can learn good dietary habits. We need to learn more about emotional and experiential nudging of consumers into good habits (stories). IGCAT should prepare more sessions on this topic.
7. IGCAT should share results of the NEMOS project with relevant universities throughout the network.
8. Sustainability should be more firmly embedded in education and internships should be in exemplary working environments so that students can see sustainability in action. IGCAT should therefore ask more explicitly that all stakeholder institutions (particularly in the public and educational sector) implement IGCAT's Food Commitment and Sustainable Events rules in their organisations – leading by example.
9. Sustainability should be recognised as social, economic, environmental, and economic. Students are particularly interested in issues related to fair trade, fair work conditions, ethical food systems etc. and therefore this should be integrated whenever possible in IGCAT's work.
10. The joint projects of the World and European Regions of Gastronomy commit to continue to engage young people in the World Food Gift Challenge, the European Young Chef Award and the Food Film Menu. IGCAT should continue to encourage regions to host Local Food Gift Challenge and continue to offer training of trainers to do so.
11. Region of Gastronomy should create better support mechanisms for micro-enterprises especially run by young people, including training, shared marketing campaigns, events, design weeks, festivals etc. For example, IGCAT could recommend the setting up of a European Region of Gastronomy office (using as a model that of Kuopio 2020), created for citizens, private

organisations and other entities to visit and learn more about the values and principles and how they can collaborate for the Award year and beyond.

12. IGCAT should recommend that an appointed stakeholder build a hotel shop network for the placement of local and in particular European Region of Gastronomy approved products.
13. Tradition and Innovation should be embedded as a concept and regional/international creativity hub or design weeks created so that food producers can meet designers, packaging companies, and storytellers. IGCAT could encourage hosts of the World Food Gift Challenge to provide forums and exchanges for learning about design, branding, packaging, marketing, distribution etc.
14. IGCAT should make it mandatory for the stakeholder group to include a Chamber of Commerce or equivalent organisation that could mentor, and support approved European Region of Gastronomy products by providing the logo when they meet IGCAT sustainability criteria.
15. Improve recommendations in IGCAT's food commitment to include a position on farmed meat and awareness about unhealthy processed plant-based foods.
16. In the European Young Chef Competition consider the sustainability journey of the young chef. Not just an evaluation of one dish but of the young chefs' approach to sustainability in general. Have they been sustainable only for the competition?
17. The young chef should be asked to highlight products from the region (and tell the story of a young producer from their region) and whether the products they are using are organic, grass-fed, or wild fish and justify when they are not.
18. Candidate Regions of Gastronomy should be asked to demonstrate in the bidding phase how they will raise awareness on the need to make a green transition such as dedicated festival and or Pour Demail concepts.
19. Candidate Regions of Gastronomy should be asked to demonstrate investment in training activities or mentoring schemes to share knowledge both locally and internationally.
20. To involve young people, social media and new technology is a must and therefore social media campaigns could be supported that highlight good practises amongst local producers and their work. Guidelines on how to produce a successful social media campaign could be compiled and shared by IGCAT.

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27. Regions should seek out and promote chefs that encourage people to learn about what they can eat from their immediate environment (encourage the concept of foraging).
28. Regions of Gastronomy should commit to find a hosting festival to showcase the Category winners of the International Food Film Menu with a tasting in the region.

IGCAT's main goal is to empower local communities, especially the younger generation. This depends to a great extent on younger generations valuing their past, their uniqueness and to think sustainably, creatively, and innovatively. IGCAT commits to work with the Regions of Gastronomy to act, as far as possible, on these recommendations, as we know they will help IGCAT and the World/European Regions of Gastronomy in their mission. For this, we thank all speakers, moderators, and rapporteurs for giving generously time and ideas and ultimately contributing to our collective aim of making the world a better place.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS REPORT



Diane Dodd, President IGCAT - Spain

Diane Dodd PhD is President/founder of IGCAT (International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism) and co-founder of the World Region of Gastronomy Award. Together with the awarded World Regions of Gastronomy, she has pioneered the European Young Chef Award, the Food Film Menu, the World Food Gift Challenge, and the Top Websites for Foodie Travellers competitions. She is also Regional Adviser for the global network IFACCA (International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies) and Executive Board member of the Culinary Arts Commission of the Ministry of Culture of Saudi Arabia. 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 consultant for European Capitals of Culture.



Dr. María J. Cantalejo, Associated Professor, Public University of Navarra and Coordinator, NEMOS project - Spain

María-J. Cantalejo is an Associate Professor at the Department of Agronomy, Biotechnology & Food at the Public University of Navarra (UPNA). Her research field is the development of new food products with a special focus on sustainability. She has been Head of the PhD Programme Technology and Quality in the Food Industries with Distinction of Quality at the UPNA, as well as Head of the Masters of Research in Technology and Quality in the Food Industries. She has extended experience in new pedagogical teaching methodologies that emphasize meaningful learning. Since 2014 she lectures in Food innovation and Tools for food safety and quality assurance in the BSc Degree in Innovation on Food Processes and Products. She also teaches in the Master's degree in Technology and Sustainability in Food Industries (TESFI) at UPNA. She leads the Erasmus+ co-funded project NEMOS - A new educational model for acquisition of sustainability competences through service learning.



Jaume Gomila, Chairman, Adult Schools of Menorca and 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.



Dr. Edith Szivas, International Tourism Strategy and Vice-President IGCAT - Spain

Dr. Szivas is currently Vice-President of IGCAT. She is an internationally recognized tourism development expert specialising in tourism strategies and development plans, tourism investment, tourism SME development, gastronomy and cultural tourism and strategic human capital development. She has managed and worked on projects worldwide on behalf of UNWTO, UNDP, EU, USAID and various national and regional governments and corporate clients. She has extensive experience from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. She is a regular keynote speaker at tourism conferences and a research contributor. She holds a BSc degree in Import and Export from Budapest, Hungary, an MSc in Tourism Planning and Development and a PhD in Tourism Development from University of Surrey, United Kingdom.



Hussah Abdullah AlDugaither, Chef – Saudi Arabia

Chef Hussah Abdullah AlDugaither is currently enrolled in Switzerland to study culinary arts as part of the Saudi Ministry of Culture/ cultural scholarship programme. She started her journey in Los Angeles, California, where she attended two culinary arts institutes (the Community College for a restaurant management course and the Culinary Institute). Her participation in these programs led to an internship opportunity with Ritz Carlton-Jeddah where she was then hired as a member of the pastry staff with a total of two years of experience. In addition to classes, she participated in a few events, which contributed to her being selected to participate in the scholarship programme at one of the top ten hospitality institutes in the world. Providing her with the opportunity to begin work in December 2022 at Grand Hotel des Bains Kempinski-Saint Moritz.



Carme Bosch, s'Ullestrar, Menorca - Spain

Carme has been working at S'Ullestrar farm shop (<https://es-es.facebook.com/sullestrar/>) in Citadel that offers cheese with Designation of Origin certification, peanuts, eggs, honey and seasonal fruits and vegetables from the farm that Carme runs together with her parents and siblings, and that retains many traits of the farms from the older times.



Paco González, Muscleres González, Menorca - Spain

Muscleres González is a mussel farm (<http://www.muscleresgonzalez.com/>) This family-owned business was founded by Antonio González, who started seafood fishing 70 years ago. In time, the company was passed to his son and current owner, Francisco Javier González, who has a mussel farm within the Port of Mahon.



Sergi Riudavets Santo Domingo, Menorca - Spain

Santo Domingo (<https://www.facebook.com/EcologicSantoDomingo/about>) is a distributor of ecological products. In 2014 Sergio and his parents started this project with the recuperation of a family farm to focussing on 100% organic vegetable production and seasonal fruit and vegetables, using local varieties. Wishing to bring an added value to society, at the same time taking care of the territory by being energetically self-reliant, irrigating with their own water from their wells with drip irrigation to consume the minimum amount of water, using a green filter for wastewater.



Prof. Vincenzo Russo PhD, Associate Professor of Consumer Psychology and Neuromarketing, IULM University in Milan – Italy

Prof. Vincenzo Russo Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Consumer Psychology and Neuromarketing at IULM University in Milan, as well as Founder and Director of the Centre of Research for Neuromarketing, Behaviour and Brain Lab – IULM University. From 2012, he has been Director of the Master in Food and Wine Communication, Director of the Master in Food Design and Innovation and, from 2016, Director of the Master in Sport Communication and Sport Marketing. He is the author of several papers and books on Neuromarketing, Social Communication, and the management change in the Not for Profit Organizations and has widely published in recognised international journals. His current research focus is consumer neuroscience, food marketing and neuromarketing, including the neural processes underlying consumer decision making, behavioural economic and social influence.



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. 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.



Renata Vincek, Head of Projects Management - Kvarner Region Tourist Board - Croatia

Renata Vincek has worked in the tourism, event management and cultural sectors for more than three decades in various roles, including project manager, advisor, cultural producer and Head of HR. Currently, she holds the position of Head of Projects Management at the Kvarner Region Tourist Board where she is working on the development of gastronomy in one of the most developed tourist destinations in Croatia. She has been actively involved in the implementation of regional brand labels in gastronomy and the wine scene. Furthermore, Renata is a level 1 certified sommelier.



Dr. Alessio Cavicchi, Full Professor, Department of Agriculture, Food and Environment, University of Pisa I IGCAT Expert - Italy

Alessio Cavicchi is a Full Professor of Agribusiness, Rural Development and Branding at the Department of Agriculture, Food and Environment of the University of Pisa (Italy). His main fields of interest and research are Rural development and Branding strategies; Marketing of local food and sustainability of food systems; Innovation in agriculture and rural areas; University-Business Collaboration and Quadruple Helix of Innovation; Sustainable Tourism. 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.



Dr. Julie Dunne, Head, School of Food Science and Environmental Health, Technological University Dublin - Ireland

Julie Dunne completed her PhD in University College Dublin in 2002. She joined the School of Food Science and Environmental Health in 2003 as a lecturer in Chemistry with a focus on food and medicinal chemistry. In 2007 she led the development of the Higher Certificate in Pharmacy Technician Studies and was Programme Chair until she was appointed Assistant Head of School in 2017. Julie has broad scholarship and research interests in Higher Education which span: Work-integrated learning at the University-Industry interface including embedding graduate attributes, critical reflection, and peer-learning in the curriculum; Sustainability, with a focus on Gender Equality in Higher Education and embedding sustainability in the curriculum; and the undergraduate research experience. Julie is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry and a member of the Institute of Food Science and Technology of Ireland.



Vasia Papailia, Coordinator, South Aegean, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019 - Greece

Vasia Papailia is the Coordinator of South Aegean, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019 and Special Communications Advisor to the Governor of South Aegean, Greece. Her main fields at the Region are political communication, media and public relations and project management of key projects. She holds a degree in Communication and Media Studies from the University of Athens and an MSc in Media Management from the University of Stirling. Since 2020, she is the project leader and coordinator of the Committee formed by the Local Government and the tourism stakeholders of South Aegean Region to safeguard and promote the destination's reputation, during "the worst year in Tourism history", according to UNWTO.



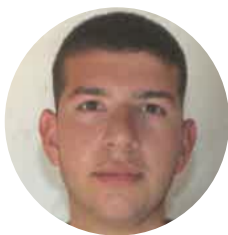
Ilona Sares, International Executive Director, ProAgria Pohjois-Savo and IGCAT Board Member - Finland

Ilona Sares was 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.



Dr. Krystallenia Drosou, Managing Director/Co-Founder, Pandrosia - Greece

Dr. Krystallenia Drosou is owner and CEO of Pandrosia, a company located on Kos island that grows organic aloe vera and does research and development to create a range of natural skin care products and organic foods. Pandrosia is part of Elevate Greece. Dr. Krystallenia Drosou is also owner and CEO of DSQ (Drosos-Sustainable-Quality) that focuses on sustainability and quality control studies. She is a Member of the Management Board KOAN AE. Her research interests include: Design of Experiment, Computer Experiments, Combinatorial Designs, Optimal Designs, Statistical Quality Control, Generalized Linear Models, Data Analysis, Variable Selection Methods, Evolutionary Algorithms and Metaheuristics, Data Mining. She is author and co-author of several publications.



Dimitrios Voudouris, Mylotopy - Greece

Dimitrios Voudouris is a student of International Hospitality and Tourism Management AMC Metropolitan College. He has professional experience as waiter, barman and bartender at Mylotopy traditional settlement in Kefalos, Kos island. The traditional settlement of MYLOTOPI is located in Kefalos, Kos and includes different visiting areas: a traditional rural house from the 19th century with a traditional stone oven; one of the oldest fully functional windmills in the Dodecanese, surrounded by a traditional stone-built threshing floor; a 15-metre tunnel built during the Italian domination of the Dodecanese and that is now used as wine cellar; a restaurant and café-bar with a panoramic view.



Aino Suonio, Kuopio, European Region of Gastronomy 2020-2021 - Finland

Aino Suonio is a design student at Savonia University of Applied Sciences. She has moved back to Kuopio, her childhood hometown, admires bees and enjoys ice swimming. Her latest exhibition is about dark portals leading to new landscapes, the surprising nature of life, change, beauty and the smallness of man as part of a larger whole."



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

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.



Ida Valsø, Communication Specialist, Trondheim-Trøndelag, European Region of Gastronomy 2024 - Norway

An advisor in the industry section in Trøndelag County Council and manager for the campaign Grow Together as well as communication specialist for European Region of Gastronomy Trondheim - Trøndelag 2022.



Jacinta Dalton, Atlantic Technological University Galway, 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 several 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 Atlantic Technological University Galway, a Fáilte Ireland Food Champion, on the Region of Gastronomy Steering Group, and an expert member of IGCAT and Fáilte Ireland.



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, cook, presenter, food writer & educator. Founder & Director of award-winning Scottish Food Guide, Scottish Cheese Trail & Scottish Farm Shops, Wendy is Leader in Scotland for Slow Food Ark of Taste & Cooks Alliance, co-founder of Scottish Bread Championship & co-author of "Meadows: The Swedish Farmer & The Scottish Cook" on biodiversity and regenerative food production. She played a key role in East Ayrshire Council's pioneering school lunch programme and is Chair of the Edinburgh Bakers (Baxters) Trust, supporting artisan bakers and heritage grains. Wendy runs sustainable food experiences at her Fife food studio and enjoys the rural backwaters of Småland on their small organic croft. She has been listed among the Top 100 Women in Tourism in 2020.



Andreas Dermatis, Chef - Greece

Andreas Dermatis is the young chef who represented South Aegean, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019 at the European Young Chef Award 2021 and won 2nd prize. Born in 1996 on Rhodes Island, Andreas has grown his passion for cooking since his early years, with his grandmother teaching him the traditional cuisine from the South Aegean and his mother preparing cakes for special occasions. After studying at culinary school, Andreas upgraded his skills by travelling across Europe, attending several gastronomy seminars and volunteering at many food events, thus gaining a remarkable experience in the hospitality industry, despite his young age. A tireless young chef, he is always looking for new experiences, techniques and ingredients, but with a constant eye on the traditional cooking style he learnt from his mother and grandmother.



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

Diana Hounslow started marketing the Pas-de-Calais 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.



Omar Valdez, Executive Director, UNWTO Academy - Andorra

Omar Valdez, Argentinean, holds a Bachelor degree in Public Relations and an Executive Master in Tourism Management at IE Business School, Madrid, Spain. In 2004, he joined the UNWTO-Themis Foundation as a Senior Consultant. The new UNWTO Academy, former UNWTO-Themis Foundation is responsible for implementing the work programme on Education and Training of the World Tourism Organization, with the objective of supporting Member States in the formulation and implementation of educational policies, plans and instruments which effectively contribute to an improvement in the quality, competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism sector through excellence in education and training. Since 2010, Omar is the Executive Director of the UNWTO Academy.



Lisa Planells, Head of Sales at Late Co-founder at PourDemain - France

After 5 years in FMCG working in various marketing and commercial roles at the global biggest brewing company, she decided to take a turn in her career to join a project in line with her values and creating impact in the agricultural world. She has been creating and leading the sales and commercial teams at PourDemain for almost 2 years and participates in shaping PourDemain's strategy which holds a unique position in the French (and soon European) food industry.



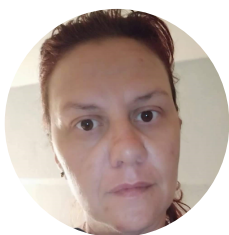
Johanne Birn, Project Manager, Cabbage and Cow - Denmark

Johanne has 15 years of experience from the food sector with a focus on circular food systems and sustainability including tasks within communication, project management, coordination and planning, events and activities, as well as establishing networks and collaboration across the value chain and disciplines. Johanne Birn has a solid network reaching from knowledge institutions over education, NGOs and companies from the entire value chain.



George Josephides, co-founder of Kos Locally Grown - Greece

George is Cypriot, born and living in Greece, on Kos Island since 2003. He studied computer engineering at the Technological Institute of Piraeus. He worked for ELIAMEP (Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy), Ericsson Telecommunications and TITAN Cement Industry. Since 2002 works in secondary education as an IT teacher, in high schools, lyceums, and vocational lyceums. In the period 20021-2022 was a member of the teachers of the pedagogical team of the 2nd Lyceum of Kos and participated in three Erasmus+ programs. In the context of the Program *European Students for Sustainability 2021-2023*, created Kos Locally Grown with Yota Terzi and a small team of students.



Panagiota Terzi, co-founder of Kos Locally Grown - Greece

Panagiota Terzi was born and raised in Katerini, Macedonia. She is a teacher of English Language in secondary schools in Kos since 2017. She studied English Language and Literature in Kapodistrian University of Athens, and then had a master's degree in Didactics of English Language from Hellenic Open University. She worked in private language schools from 2004-2007. From 2006 she has been working in primary and secondary education, in general and vocational schools. In the period 2021-2022 she was a member of the teachers of the pedagogical team of the 2nd Lyceum of Kos and participated in three Erasmus+ programs. In the context of the Program *European Students for Sustainability 2021-2023*, created Kos Locally Grown with George Josephides and a small team of students



Dr. Peter Kozmus, Professional leader, Breeding Programme for the Carniolan honeybee in Slovenia 2021 and Vice-president, APIMONDIA - Slovenia

A beekeeper since 1994, Dr. Peter Kozmus is involved in many projects in the field of beekeeping in Slovenia. Since 2011, he has been the professional head of the breeding programme for the Carniolan honey bee and is now in his second mandate as President of the Council for Beekeeping at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. He has been the coordinator of the initiative to declare 20 May World Bee Day at the Slovenian Beekeepers Association. He is Vice-president of the APIMONDIA International Beekeeping Organization, where since 2002 he has been active in promoting the transfer of knowledge between scientists and beekeepers, as well as involving young people in beekeeping. Dr. Peter Kozmus has an extensive experience as a researcher at the National Institute of Biology, the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, and the Beekeeping Association of Slovenia and is the author and co-author of several scientific papers, articles and books about bees and beekeeping.



Dr. Mohammed Hamoud, Lecturer, Faculty of Tourism and Archaeology, King Saud University and Executive Manager, Aseer World Region of Gastronomy 2024 - Saudi Arabia

Dr. Mohammed Hamoud has been a lecturer at the Faculty of Tourism and Archaeology at King Saud University (KSU) since 2011. He has an extensive experience in historic preservation practices in the USA and worked on several projects in the historical urban landscape in Barcelona. Based on this experience, Mohammed combined the American and European schools with regard to concepts, theories, and implementation of cultural heritage. Mohammed has a first master's degree in Historic Preservation from Eastern Michigan University (USA) and a second master's degree in Landscape Intervention and Heritage Management (UAB University, Barcelona). In 2022, he earned his Ph.D. focussing on cultural heritage management and the engagement of local communities. He is now Executive Manager of Aseer, World Region of Gastronomy 2024.



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.



Anu-Anette Varho, Project Specialist Saimaa, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2024 - Finland

Editor of Saimaa's successful bid to become European Region of Gastronomy 2024. She is an experienced and versatile designer. Skilled in User-centered Design, Event Management, Creative Problem Solving, Design Thinking, and Project Coordination. Graduated from Lahti University of Applied Sciences.



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".



Jakob Vinkler, Chef and Project Manager, The Catastrophic Meal - Denmark

Jakob Vinkler is Founder of the Gastronomic Tourist Office, that works on the dissemination of gastrotourism and hosting, as well as of the Institute of Meals that focusses on how the space around the meal influences the experience and meaning of the meal. He is also Project manager of the Frontier-seeking Culture Kitchen which currently houses three projects developed in connection with Aarhus 2017 - Capital of Culture: the Borderless Kitchen, working with communal dining and food as a social tool; the Fish-a-deli Circus, a traveling circus that interprets and communicates the food of the area and the diversity of the fish on offer; and the Catastrophic Meal: Dystopia and Utopia on a plate thinking of what will the future meal look like in 50 years. Jakob Vinkler was Coordinator for the development team within Gastronomy - OFF Track 2017 at the Aarhus Foundation 2017.



Jyrki Tsutsunen, Cultural Chef and official Ambassador of Saimaa, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2024 - Finland

Jyrki Tsutsunen is a wild chef who creates new taste experiences with raw materials collected from the forest without prejudice. He is also known for multisensory events where food is combined with experiences produced with artists and musicians. Jyrki wants to challenge us to think about what food is and lead us to the edge of the new and experimental instead of the familiar and safe. Jyrki has worked as a chef in several top restaurants in Helsinki, at the St. Petersburg consulate, and organized international food events in, for example, Madrid, Frankfurt, Berlin and Plovdiv. However, he often returns to the landscapes of his childhood, the nature of Saimaa and the lake. Food is life and wild food is a passion!

