



Harghita Awarded 2027

IGCAT



## EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY

Celebrating local food cultures  
to empower communities, spark  
innovation, and support  
a healthier planet

BROCHURE |

# ABOUT IGCAT

**IGCAT** (Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts & Tourism) aims to empower local communities by raising awareness of the importance of protecting and promoting distinct regional food, culture, arts and natural assets as part of sustainable and balanced tourism and development strategies.

This is essential to safeguard our planet, health, wellness and local economies.

IGCAT is a non-profit institute established in 2012, working with regional stakeholder consortia in the fields of gastronomy, culture, arts and tourism.

It counts on the expertise of a worldwide network of experts and works in partnership with specialised intergovernmental organisations.

IGCAT believes in the  
**power of cross-sectoral**  
collaboration to transform  
regions around the World

A stylized, dark grey leaf graphic is positioned in the bottom right corner of the dark background, partially overlapping the text area.

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ABOUT THE  
EUROPEAN REGION  
OF **GASTRONOMY**  
AWARD



# THE EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY AWARD

The **European Region of Gastronomy Award** is granted as a stimulus to link food, hospitality, tourism, culture, health and sustainability. Its goal is to be a driver of sustainable economic, cultural, social and environmental development.

It serves as an incentive for stakeholders to connect, share ideas, collaborate, and learn from their European partners, ultimately fostering sustainable economic, cultural, social, and environmental development.

It inspires collaboration, sustainability, and a deeper appreciation of European regional food cultures.



# THE EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY AWARDS AIMS

01

## FOOD SECURITY & WELL-BEING

Strengthen food security and community health and well-being

02

## JOBS & INNOVATION

Create employment by stimulating creativity and gastronomic innovation

03

## CULINARY EDUCATION

Nourish children and adults through culinary and cultural education

04

## SUSTAINABLE SECTORS

Drive sustainability in tourism, hospitality and agricultural sectors

05

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE & NETWORKS

Highlight and support expertise from within rural and urban communities by creating connections and sharing good practises.



# THE EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY AWARDS **IMPACT**



## INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Showcases the region's distinct cultural and culinary assets by giving global visibility and putting the international spotlight on the region.



## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Promotes sustainable tourism by enhancing the quality of local food products and strengthening linkages with the hospitality industry, offering more authentic and enriching visitor experiences.



## GASTRONOMIC PRESERVATION

Safeguards culinary traditions by celebrating and preserving local food heritage, ensuring that traditional knowledge, flavours and practices are passed to future generations.

# THE EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY AWARDS **IMPACT**



## LOCAL FOOD EMPOWERMENT

Encourages the use, promotion and innovation of local food products to strengthen the region's gastronomy and to increase its resilience.



## CATALYST FOR DEVELOPMENT

Is a catalyst for development through the regional stakeholder group which fosters public-private and cross-sectoral partnerships and collaboration and improves access to funding and investment.



## REGIONAL IDENTITY & PRIDE

Builds regional identity and pride in the local communities by celebrating their distinct culture and food assets.

# THE EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY AWARDS **IMPACT**



## INNOVATION & LEARNING

Put a focus on innovation and learning to support smart and inclusive growth and thus provide new skills and new opportunities for SMEs and micro enterprises.



## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Contributes to environmental protection and promotes sustainable food systems by protecting biodiversity, supporting bee populations, promoting regenerative agricultural practices and reducing single-use plastics.



## FOOD AWARENESS & EDUCATION

Creates awareness of wider food issues for healthy living and sustainability both through educational programmes and wider citizen engagement projects.

# PARTICIPATION BENEFITS



# PARTICIPATION BENEFITS

By engaging in this initiative, regions multiply their connections, exchange knowledge, and contribute to a stronger and more sustainable European gastronomic landscape

01

## INCREASED INTERNATIONAL VISIBILITY

showcasing the region's unique gastronomy and cultural identity

02

## INCREASED VISIBILITY ACROSS EUROPE

03

## STRONGER REGIONAL COHESION

By uniting diverse stakeholders around a common goal

04

## EU COLLABORATION

Opportunities for collaboration within the region and across Europe, enhancing sustainable food, tourism, and cultural practices

05

## IMPROVED FOOD QUALITY

A moral commitment to improving food quality and supporting local cultures and traditions



# PARTICIPATION BENEFITS

06

## EMPOWERED LOCAL BUSINESSES, COMMUNITIES & PROFESSIONS

Through training, networking, and knowledge exchange

07

## PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE & REGENERATIVE TOURISM

Encouraging responsible travel that benefits local communities, protects cultural heritage, and supports environmental sustainability

08

## FOSTERING ECONOMIC RESILIENCE & DIVERSIFICATION

Strengthening local economies by supporting small producers, artisans, and entrepreneurs in the food, culture, and tourism sectors

09

## PRESERVING EUROPEAN IDENTITY WHILE CELEBRATING REGIONAL UNIQUENESS

Reinforcing shared cultural values across Europe while showcasing the distinct gastronomic traditions and heritage of each region



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# PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE AWARD



## FOCUS AREAS

# FEEDING THE PLANET

In support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, IGCAT aims to stimulate debate about the production of sufficient and healthy food for everyone. There is enough food to feed the world if we protect the planet's biodiversity.

It is estimated that by 2050 the world's population will have exceeded 9 billion people (currently it is more than 7 billion) and considering that we currently have a critical situation in which more than 25,000 people die from hunger every day, we need urgent discussion and action related to food security, global trade, food distribution, emergency aid, food waste and food production.

In order to support food production, we need to take care of bee populations which are responsible for pollinating 70% of the plants that supply our food. Food kilometres, sustainable farming practices, importance of pollinators and food waste are just some of the areas that our awarded and candidate regions have addressed. Through sharing knowledge, supporting project ideas and giving each other access to templates and tools, we are contributing to our collective future food security.



### European Region of Gastronomy Platform members **commit to:**

- a. Develop awareness-raising events on the importance of food varieties, traditional farming methods and the importance of bees;
- b. Encourage programmes for communities to become self-sufficient in food supply and to keep food waste to a minimum;
- c. Instill pride in cultural diversity and food traditions through events and activities to celebrate regional uniqueness;
- d. Educate about the perils of pesticides on the ecosystem, especially for bee populations, and other related areas;
- e. Draw up long-term development plans that consider preventative measures to avoid the loss of local plant and animal varieties, as well as traditional food knowledge.

## FOCUS AREAS

# INNOVATION, CREATIVITY AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Creativity in the form of storytelling and visuals can generate both new products and services. The widening of food markets poses unique opportunities for sustainable local and regional food systems. By highlighting local products as well as taking advantage of growth in specialist and niche food markets, regional producers can expand their client base using digital technologies.

Harnessing opportunities to market products to tourists and visitors can increase export sales, create cognitive links between a region and its unique products as well as instill pride in local food heritage and traditions.

A region's artists, landscape, crafts, and traditional or contemporary culture are the distinctive selling points for a variety of new creative services and experiences.



European Region of Gastronomy Platform members **commit to:**

- a. Develop events for visitors and citizens that raise awareness about unique local food and cultural diversity;
- b. Protect and promote traditional food and craft production through business development hubs;
- c. Explore contemporary visitor experiences;
- d. Take steps to increase the amount of protected GI products in the region ("A Geographical Indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin" (World Intellectual Property Organization - WIPO. Geographical Indications. An introduction) (accessed 29\_05\_2017);
- e. Develop and use digital tools such as apps and online platforms that facilitate the promotion and valorization of the region's cultural and food diversity, as well as encourage responsible consumerism;
- f. Support adult learning and encourage new skills such as storytelling, creative design, sustainable packaging, cross-marketing and export of local producers' products and services.

## FOCUS AREAS

# 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 for responsible 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 can reach everybody.

The European 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.



### European Region of Gastronomy Platform members **commit to:**

- a. 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;
- b. Make steps to ensure where possible that public procurement procedures prioritize healthy options (including locally sourced and natural foods);
- c. Encourage cooperation with the agricultural and educational sectors, so that local food knowledge is shared;
- d. Ensure children have access to at least one healthy meal per day and make efforts to regulate sugar and salt content;
- e. Improve knowledge about plastic and food waste as well as encouraging responsible behaviour towards recycling, ensuring that good food can reach everybody.

## FOCUS AREAS

# BALANCED AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Regional gastronomy provides a wealth of diversity, not just in terms of different foods, but also in the many ways of eating, presenting, and serving those foods. Traditions developed over centuries form the vital 'DNA' of food cultures and represent important potential sources of innovation in the service and hospitality industries.

Raising awareness about the advantages of integrating local food, recipes and traditions into tourism offerings and collaborating with food and cultural events services in the region will contribute to greater environmental, economic and cultural sustainability.

Visitors are the best ambassadors for a region thanks to social media and can increase the client base for food export. Smart strategies give the region unprecedented visibility for a fraction of the costs of traditional promotional methods. Supporting quality gastronomy tourism initiatives have the added advantage of ensuring that tourism income can reach rural areas where it is often greatly needed.



European Region of Gastronomy Platform members **commit to:**

- a. Promote opportunities for the emergence of quality and creative food experiences devoted to surprise visitors, as well as meet sustainability and educational goals;
- b. Support new cultural and food festivals and markets with a focus on local and healthy food, and increase the variety of local foods in existing festivals and public events;
- c. Encourage chefs in restaurants and hotels to use and promote local products, innovate on traditional recipes, and share stories about the region;
- d. Consider policies that prioritize tourism objectives to meet quality rather than quantity targets and thus aim to ensure a balanced approach to tourism;
- e. Increase the sale and export of local food gifts by encouraging innovative and locally designed products such as kitchenware, ceramics, and recipe books;
- f. Encourage hoteliers and restaurateurs to move towards regenerative food suppliers.

## FOCUS AREAS

# LINKING URBAN AND RURAL

IGCAT endeavors to re-connect rural and urban environments by bringing the countryside to the city and the city to the countryside, encouraging a re-valorization of traditional and indigenous knowledge of food customs and systems. There is a growing divide between rural and urban areas, particularly in the fields of food and culture.

People in urban settings are less aware of where their food comes from and are disconnected from the food-related rituals that have sustained their communities for centuries.

We focus on initiatives that provide opportunities to bridge rural and urban environments, connect citizens and foster social cohesion.



### European Region of Gastronomy Platform members commit to:

- a. Carry out programmes to demonstrate and educate citizens on where their food comes from;
- b. Increase the amount of land dedicated to clean, natural and traditional farming;
- c. Provide opportunities for urban gardening programmes and projects;
- d. Support the development of infrastructure needed to encourage urban dwellers and visitors to explore the rural landscape and reconnect to nature in a sustainable and responsible manner;
- e. Encourage private and public initiatives to become energy independent by using their own energy management systems;
- f. Support seed bank schemes to protect endangered plant species and resuscitate resilient heirloom crops.

## FOCUS AREAS

# WELL-BEING AND HEALTHIER LIVING

IGCAT advocates for the promotion of healthier lifestyles through greater awareness and citizen engagement in natural farming, outdoor recreation, and culinary and cultural traditions. Developing experiences (farm visits, culinary masterclasses, sensory events, foraging etc.) can be enriching for both visitors and local citizens.

To achieve sustainable healthy lifestyles and food systems, attention must be paid to how food and goods are produced from seed and soil, to packaging and transportation.

Transparency and awareness of product ingredients and the nutritional value of local food need to be re-valorized and we work with local producers to advance consumer knowledge.

By using creativity to showcase wholesome and healthy regional and local food, we contribute to a more holistic approach to well-being,



### European Region of Gastronomy Platform members **commit to:**

- a. Showcase regional and local foods that are wholesome and healthy through sustainable events, customs and celebrations;
- b. Encourage well-being related practices and promote investigation into traditional cures and remedies, based on local plants and skills;
- c. Promote campaigns to eliminate single-use plastics and find local sustainable alternatives for food packaging;
- d. Build awareness about the importance of honey and ensure wild flowers are preserved for healthy bee populations;
- e. Encourage green spaces and the planting of trees to keep air clean and support a vibrant and nourishing environment.

# JOINT PROJECTS



WORLD FOOD GIFT CHALLENGE



TOP FOODIE WEBSITES



FOOD FILM MENU



EUROPEAN YOUNG CHEF AWARD



JOINT PROJECT

# WORLD FOOD GIFT CHALLENGE

The World Food Gift Challenge is an international competition to award and give visibility to high quality, artisanal food and food-related crafts gifts from the European Regions of Gastronomy.

Through the World Food Gift Challenge, regions can support their local small and medium-sized producers of traditional products and highlight the stories that link those products to the region, therefore creating an added-value for their territory.

The World Food Gift Challenge allows local producers in the regions to capitalise on the ever-increasing demand from visitors for exceptional local food and food-related craft gifts, paired with their search for authenticity and uniqueness, and enhanced attention for sustainable products.

The World Food Gift Challenge includes two different categories: **food gifts** and **craft gifts** (cooking utensils or equipment) related to the regions' culinary traditions.



Participating products are selected by the regions through local Food Gift contests based on their authentic, natural qualities that mix fine ingredients or quality raw materials with the skills, passion, and care on the part of their manufacturer/s. They are not mass-produced, but developed and delivered on a small scale. Special attention is devoted to their packaging, both in terms of sustainability and ability to communicate the story of the product and the producer.

A registration fee is requested to regions to cover IGCAT's coordination, marketing, and publicity for the event.

Considering high relative costs for local crafts producers, regions are encouraged to set aside a significant budget to support SME's (particularly young entrepreneurs) with design, storytelling, innovation, market testing, packaging and production. This should be a package to encourage producers to market the food region through their products.



All documents related to the World Food Gift Challenge are [available here](#).

A training of trainers module is available for regions hoping to develop a local competition.

[WorldFoodGiftChallenge.org](https://WorldFoodGiftChallenge.org)

IGCAT encourage hosts of the World Food Gift Challenge to provide forums and exchanges for learning about design, branding, packaging, marketing, distribution etc.

JOINT PROJECT

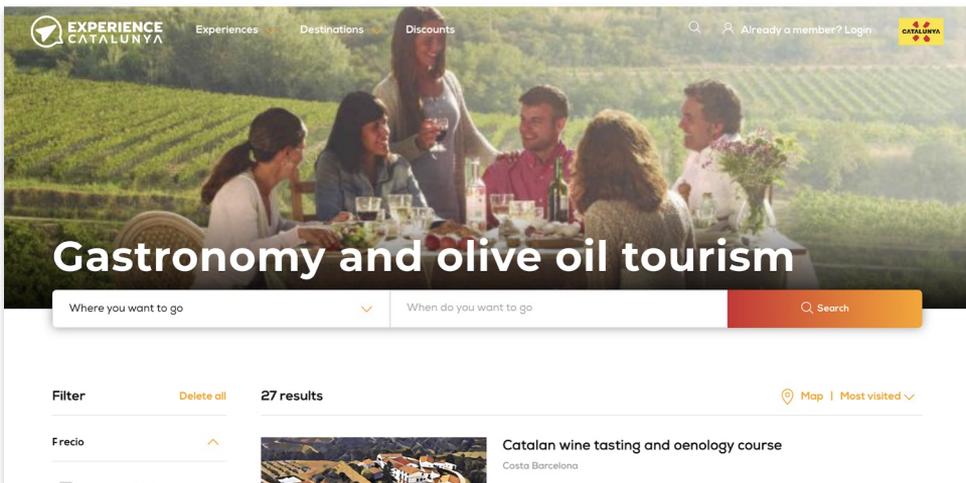
# TOP FOODIE WEBSITES



The Top Foodie Websites Award is a recognition given by IGCAT for the best website providing unique creative, cultural and gastronomical experiences for local and international visitors in the European Regions of Gastronomy.

By means of this project, IGCAT hopes to encourage creative, artistic and sensory experimentation to build new and unique food experiences, as well as strengthen the connection between the territory and actors within the territory that are working to develop sustainable tourism and visitor initiatives.

A jury formed from IGCAT Experts will select the best websites according to a set of rigorous criteria to evaluate different aspects such as sustainability, cross-sectoral cooperation, educational component, uniqueness, inclusiveness and many more.



Eligible websites may provide a variety of experiences including (but not exclusive to): Food/wine tasting; Farm/factory visit; Food/wine or related demonstration or cookery class; Participatory craft-related experience; Food/wine route; Food/wine market or fair; Museum/heritage site related to food.

Websites that encourage cross-sectorial collaboration to create exceptional experiences will be favoured along with those that include unusual or emblematic venues, a theme or story, participatory or sensory experiences and/or provide enchanting experiences.

By publishing an annual list of Top Foodie Websites from the candidate and awarded European Regions of Gastronomy, IGCAT will:

- Increase international visitors access to quality food and cultural experiences;
- Give international visibility to niche food and culture experiences;
- Reward portals and apps that support micro-businesses;
- Contribute to sustainable territorial development.



All documents related to the Top Foodie Websites are [available in this link](#).

A webinar on **Top Foodie Websites Best Practices** is also [available here](#).

[TopFoodieWebsites.org](http://TopFoodieWebsites.org)

JOINT PROJECT

# FOOD FILM MENU

The incredible diversity of food, food cultures, food traditions and food knowledge has influenced cultural, architectural and landscape heritage across the world. As more and more people move to globalized diets it is vitally important to revalue and re-promote our food as cultural heritage for future growth and development.

IGCAT has identified the important role of audio-visual tools in promoting local food products, local food recipes and traditions related to regional gastronomy.

As a result, IGCAT has developed the international Food Film Menu, a collection of short films and videos showcasing footage from awarded and candidate European Regions of Gastronomy, with the purpose to provide visual representations of the cultural and culinary heritage of the regions by local filmmakers.



This project supports interactive and innovative ways of giving visibility to the participating regions and their food heritage by developing creative audio-visual content that can be shared across the regions and used for promotional purposes.

Every year IGCAT launches a call for videos in candidate and awarded European Regions of Gastronomy, and select the best videos to showcase on IGCAT's website and distribute to film and food festivals across the globe. These videos will also be used yearly to promote the European Regions of Gastronomy and to create additional marketing campaigns.

The international Food Film Menu gives visibility to the multiple creators involved from production to consumption focusing on locality, sustainability and authenticity, guaranteeing cross-collaboration and dialogue with the audio-visual and creative sectors.

Given all regions are concerned about aging food producers, Candidate and Awarded European Regions of Gastronomy are encouraged to submit films that focus on young farmers, fishermen and or food producers. The aim is to encourage young people to see these professions as a lifestyle choice.



All documents related to the **Food Film Menu** are [available in this guide](#).

[Food Film Menu Webpage](#).

JOINT PROJECT

# YOUNG CHEF AWARDS



The European Young Chef Award is a competition organised and promoted each year by IGCAT and the European Region of Gastronomy Platform. The final rounds take place in one of the regions holding the European Region of Gastronomy title, in collaboration with a local hospitality or culinary arts school.

It is strongly recommended that regional competitions take place in each region in order to create local discussion about the values behind the competition and to select a finalist to represent the region in the European Young Chef Award.

The competition strengthens links between regions in the Platform through young professional chefs, while encouraging the use of seasonal and local products in professional kitchens, fostering innovation in traditional recipes, and promoting storytelling about regional dishes and gastronomic traditions. The aim is to inject pride, safeguard old recipes and raise awareness about risk of losing local food knowledge.



The European Young Chef Award is a powerful tool to raise young chefs' awareness on the importance of preserving the food and cultural diversity of their regions throughout their professional career, by promoting innovations on traditional cuisine; highlighting sustainable food cultures; and supporting local food products. It also challenges future chefs to contribute to a reduction of the negative impacts of waste on the environment by assessing the young chefs' kitchen-waste management practices.

Finalists are judged by celebrity chefs and international experts from different fields.

Finalists from all the regions taking part in the competition have the opportunity to become IGCAT Regional Chef Ambassadors and to continue to support the values and principles of local food diversity.

Individual kitchens are provided for up to 15 finalists to work in, and hotel accommodation is available on-site for regional finalists and accompanying persons.

There is a registration fee to cover IGCAT's coordination, marketing, and publicity for the event. The travel costs of IGCAT representatives shall be paid for by participating regions. Where possible the hosting organisation will cover accommodation and meals.



All documents related to the **European Young Chef Award** are [available in this guide](#).

[European Young Chef Award Webpage](#).

# THE WORLD BEE DAY INITIATIVE ON 20 MAY

European Regions of Gastronomy should explore ways to promote World Bee Day.

The Association of Beekeepers' in Slovenia 2021 proposed that the United Nations (UN) adopt 20 May as a day to draw attention to the essential role bees and other pollinators play in keeping people and the planet healthy.

Saimaa 2024 have produced business cards and pencils with seeds to encourage people to plant them for bees and other pollinators. Habitat loss, damage and climate change are having a huge impact on bee populations so it is urgent that we encourage bee populations to thrive once more.

01

## INVOLVE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Ask schools or community groups to create Bee Hotels.

02

## MAINTAIN GREEN PUBLIC SPACES

Leave green public spaces to grow wild and sow wild flowers (bees love long grass and wildflowers).

03

## SHARE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Promote sustainable honey and sustainable beekeeping practices.

04

## FOSTER HONEY EDUCATION

Educate on how to know good honey from processed honey.



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**ROUTE TO BECOME  
AN EUROPEAN  
REGION OF  
GASTRONOMY**



## JOINING THE PLATFORM

# ROUTE TO THE EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY

Outlined on the right side are the process and criteria for selection for the European Region of Gastronomy Award. It includes both the requirements for joining the Platform and the questions that applicants are expected to answer in bidding for the Award. Regions considering joining the Platform and bidding for the Award should read this carefully.

Regions wishing to be awarded the European Region of Gastronomy title are expected first to join the European Regions of Gastronomy Platform.

The Platform is open to European regions that declare a moral obligation to ensure improved food quality and support for local cultures and/or traditions.

All regions joining the Platform shall demonstrate a strong stakeholder base.



### By joining, regions commit to:

- Staying in the Platform for a minimum of five years to ensure long-term impact;
- Share best practices and knowledge to strengthen collaboration across regions;
- Participate in IGCAT's Joint Projects for visibility, supporting actors within their community and forging international contacts;
- Evaluate their Award year (if awarded) to document and disseminate insights, successes, innovations and lessons learned, fostering continuous improvement, innovation, and stronger collaborations that benefit all participating regions;
- Holding regional competitions that select the winners to go to the international competition are encouraged as they enforce the messages and create transparency in actions;

## JOINING THE PLATFORM

# ROUTE TO THE EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY

To join the European Region of Gastronomy Platform, the region shall first convene a stakeholder meeting in the region with the aim of creating a Regional Stakeholder Committee incorporating public, private, third-sector and knowledge institutions as represented by the four prongs of the fork in the European Region of Gastronomy logo.

The Regional Stakeholder Committee must grow to include many more stakeholders and will ideally ensure representation from agricultural, tourism, economic, and the cultural sectors.

Once a region is a member of the European Region of Gastronomy Platform, IGCAT will advise when the region is ready to bid for the title of European Region of Gastronomy.



**This committee plays a vital role in :**

- Ensuring wide engagement in the project
- Meeting regularly in an inclusive environment to develop the region's bid
- Identifying appropriate partners for initiatives in tourism, hospitality, gastronomy, agriculture, and related sectors.

# AT THIS **EARLY STAGE** REGIONS SHOULD ASK THEMSELVES :

- What are the main objectives for the region?
- How can these be combined with the focus areas of the European Region of Gastronomy Platform?
- Is there sustainable cross-party political support?
- Is there support from local businesses, educational institutions and local communities?



## JOINING THE PLATFORM

# ROUTE TO THE EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY

1

### STEP 1

#### FORM A REGIONAL STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE & DEFINE SHARED OBJECTIVES

Define the region and convene a diverse group of public, private, third-sector, and knowledge institutions to guide the process and ensure broad regional support aligned with the values of the European Region of Gastronomy Platform.

2

### STEP 2

#### SUBMIT OFFICIAL APPLICATION LETTER & SIGNED PROTOCOL AGREEMENT

All members of the Regional Stakeholder Committee must sign and send a letter of interest to IGCAT with a signed Protocol Agreement, demonstrating commitment to at least five years of collaboration, shared learning, and project participation.

3

### STEP 3

#### APPOINT AN EXECUTIVE BOARD & MANAGEMENT TEAM

Designate representatives from each sector and hire a full-time Executive Manager and Assistant(s) to coordinate the bid and programme. IGCAT invites two representatives from each region to attend Platform meetings, webinars and take part in the Annual General Meeting.

## JOINING THE PLATFORM

# ROUTE TO THE EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY

4

### STEP 4

#### SUBMIT THE AWARD BID BOOK

Work together to design a meaningful bid with a chosen theme, backed by signed Letters of Commitment and alignment with IGCAT guidelines. The bid book is an audit of all the wonderful projects, food and committed institutions as well as a road map for your long-term goals that protect and promote your food and cultural diversity.

5

### STEP 5

#### GAIN APPROVAL FROM IGCAT'S MEMBERS & ORGANISE JURY VISIT

Received a jury visit for them to assess the regions readiness to the host the title year. Receive the recommendations from the jury and submit a final response in the case that IGCAT requests additional information or evidence of commitment to the process.

6

### STEP 6

#### MAKE PLANS FOR AN AWARD CEREMONY

Organise a large-scale inclusive event to celebrate the Award with local stakeholders and invite IGCAT to present the Award to the highest level representative. The event should include the opportunity to explore further areas of collaboration across the region.



THE EXECUTIVE BOARD  
NEEDS TO **LEAD BY EXAMPLE**  
AND THEREFORE SHOULD  
IMPLEMENT THE IGCAT FOOD  
COMMITMENT, IGCAT FOOD  
PROCUREMENT AND IGCAT  
SUSTAINABLE EVENTS  
GUIDELINES WITHIN THEIR  
OWN INSTITUTIONS

# FULL PROCESS BREAKDOWN

The first objective of the Regional Stakeholder Committee is to:

DEFINE the region (see [FAQs](#));

DEFINE AND FORMALLY AGREE which institutions will represent the region

AGREE to the terms of the **Protocol Agreement** with IGCAT. Ideally, four representatives are required to sign the Protocol Agreement: at least one public, one private, one third sector, and a knowledge institution. These same institutions form the **Executive Board** of stakeholders on behalf of the Regional Stakeholder Committee and take legal/financial responsibility in relation to IGCAT and the European Region of Gastronomy Platform

CONFIRM the appointment of a **full-time Executive Manager and Assistant(s)** to coordinate stakeholder meetings and develop activities as agreed by the Regional Stakeholder Committee

COLLECTIVELY AGREE to bid for the title in a specific year and the theme or title for the year (this needs to be recorded in official minutes) (optional)

- All members of the Regional Stakeholder Committee must sign a Letter of Commitment to the principles of the Platform and endorse the region's bid for the title.

- Prospective regions should send a letter to IGCAT stating their interest and expectations in joining the Platform and attach a signed Protocol Agreement

- IGCAT will invite two representatives from the applicant region's Executive Board to either attend the next Platform meeting as observers or meet online with IGCAT experts. During this meeting, the representatives will present their case for joining the Platform to the members. IGCAT will seek support from the Platform before signing the Protocol Agreement with a new candidate region.

- The Regional Stakeholder Committee should meet regularly and eventually should develop the Bid for the Award together in an inclusive environment.

IGCAT ADVOCATES  
A **CROSS-SECTORAL  
APPROACH**, AS SOLUTIONS  
TO THE REGIONS'  
CHALLENGES CAN BEST  
BE FOUND WHEN  
DIFFERENT SECTORS  
COLLABORATE



# FULL PROCESS BREAKDOWN

- All members of the **Regional Stakeholder Committee** need to sign a **Letter of Commitment** to the principles of the Platform and endorse the region's bid for the title;

- Developing the programme and cross-marketing initiatives between regions needs time to mature. Therefore, an **Executive Board** needs to be established, and a full-time Executive Manager and Assistant(s) appointed as soon as possible to start working in a coordinated manner to create a worthy programme for the Award;

- The **Regional Stakeholder Committee** should meet regularly and eventually should develop the Bid for the Award together in an inclusive environment.

- IGCAT invites two representatives from each region to attend Platform meetings, webinars and take part in the **Annual General Meeting**

- The region's representatives have a duty to share information, resources and tools with their **Regional Stakeholder Committee**;



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# COSTS, PROCEDURES & BENEFITS OF THE MEMBERSHIP



## PLATFORM MEMBERSHIP

# COSTS, PROCEDURES & BENEFITS

Please consult IGCAT to find out how much the joining fee will be for your region. The joining fee may be paid in up to two instalments however, it must be paid in full at the time of submitting a bid book.

Membership fees **do not cover travel and accommodation costs** to and from meetings. These variable costs need to be covered by member regions.

Deadlines and correct procedures for registration must always be respected. IGCAT waives responsibility for any losses incurred due to incorrect registration. Please refer to the technical guidelines.



### The joining fee and yearly membership fee benefits includes:

- a. A candidate logo, including the entitlement to use the European Region of Gastronomy logo with the heading CANDIDATE, the region's name and the Award year that the region proposes to hold the title;
- a. Webinars for the region's team and main stakeholders to share good practices and ideas for a successful bidding process. The webinars include building governance of the Award, citizen engagement and the 6 focus areas;
- a. Invitation to join Platform meetings to learn from the other regions that have already gone through the transformation;
- b. Possibility to take part in joint high-visibility international projects such as Food Film Menu, World Food Gift Challenge, and Top Foodie Websites (subject to availability and might incur additional registration costs);
- c. Access to toolkits, templates and best practice examples from other European Regions of Gastronomy;
- d. Online support from IGCAT secretariat;
- a. Visibility on IGCAT's websites and social media tools.

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# PLATFORM CODE OF CONDUCT



## CODE OF CONDUCT

# OVERVIEW

At IGCAT we require that all of our employees and members conduct themselves according to the highest standards of ethics, integrity, and behaviour when dealing with each other, with the secretariat, the Board, other IGCAT experts and stakeholders.

This Code establishes the standards of behaviour that must be met by all working within our organisation. Where these standards are not met, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. In cases where the breach involves serious misconduct, this may result in a personal veto from the IGCAT's Platform meetings, online meetings, correspondence lists and removed as a listed expert on IGCAT's website. In cases where a breach of the policy involves a breach of any law, then the relevant government authorities or the police may be notified.

IGCAT Board may unilaterally introduce, vary, remove or replace this policy at any time.



## CODE OF CONDUCT

# STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

1. To be faithful and diligent, and actively pursue IGCAT's best interests at all times;
2. To be respectful and fair in dealings with IGCAT Board, secretariat, IGCAT experts, representatives of Awarded and Candidate European Regions of Gastronomy as well as all stakeholders and the general public, and to treat all of them with courtesy;
3. To comply with all IGCAT workplace policies, procedures, rules, regulations and contracts (including deadlines and requests for information);
4. To comply with all laws;
5. To respect time, attention and skill of IGCAT staff during normal working hours and only at other times as reasonably necessary for the employee to perform their duties;

6. To refrain from any discriminatory, bullying or harassing behaviour toward IGCAT Board, secretariat, IGCAT experts, representatives of Awarded and Candidate European Regions of Gastronomy as well as all stakeholders and the general public;
7. To not make any statements to the media about IGCAT's business, unless expressly authorised to do so by IGCAT (requests for media statements should be referred to IGCAT Board);
8. To not make any statements about IGCAT or any of IGCAT's staff, board or experts on social media, or any other public platform, that may harm the organisation's reputation;
9. To not post photos on social media or on websites, except for re-posting of official photos authorized by IGCAT or without the permission of those depicted in the photo.



## CODE OF CONDUCT

# STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

10. To not disclose any potential, perceived or actual conflict of interest (whether direct or indirect) that may give rise to a conflict outside of the IGCAT Board, authorized secretariat and authorized representatives of the region(s) concerned;
11. To not engage in conduct, whether during or after work hours, that in the opinion of the IGCAT causes damage or potential damage to the organisation's property or reputation;
12. To not use, or come to work or meetings while affected by use of prohibited drugs or excessive alcohol;
13. To not discriminate on the basis of personal characteristics including (but not limited to) sex, race, nationality, disability, pregnancy, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
14. To ensure and maintain punctuality;

15. To respect agreements and meeting programmes established with IGCAT. In the case of unforeseen circumstances forcing a change to a meeting programme, a suitable (equivalent) alternative should be sought and agreed with IGCAT Board;
16. To respect dress codes for meetings – to always dress in an appropriate manner and to ensure that appearance is smart and formal unless otherwise directed;
17. If given access to internet during field visits, to use it only for appropriate content and on no account to access and/or download sexually explicit material or other offensive material;
18. To not email IGCAT Board, secretariat, IGCAT experts, representatives of Awarded and Candidate Regions of Gastronomy, stakeholders and/or the general public sexually explicit or suggestive material, or other offensive, threatening or harassing material;



## CODE OF CONDUCT

# STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

19. To comply with all reasonable and lawful instructions given by or on behalf of the IGCAT;
20. To work in a safe and compliant manner, and to observe all workplace health and safety rules and responsibilities;
21. To maintain both during engagement and after termination of engagement with IGCAT, the confidentiality of any confidential information, records or other materials acquired during the course of your engagement;
19. At all times, to behave in a way that upholds the IGCAT's core values and the integrity and good reputation of the IGCAT;
19. To report any conduct of other participants which is in breach of any of the above, or potentially in breach of any of the above, without delay.



## CODE OF CONDUCT

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

IGCAT is committed to promoting equal opportunities in employment and to providing a working environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, and victimization. This policy applies to all aspects of employment, including recruitment, training, promotion, pay, work conditions, and termination of employment.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all job applicants and employees are treated fairly and with respect, and that employment decisions are based on merit and ability.

IGCAT is committed to promoting equal opportunities in employment and creating a working environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and victimization.

By implementing this equal opportunities policy, IGCAT aims to ensure that all employees are treated fairly and with respect, and that employment decisions are based on merit and ability.



### Policy Statement:

- IGCAT is committed to equal opportunities and will not discriminate on the grounds of race, color, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion or belief, political belief or membership, or trade union membership.
- IGCAT will take positive steps to ensure that individuals are treated equally and not disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.
- IGCAT will monitor its employment practices to ensure that it complies with its equal opportunities policy and to identify and remove any barriers to equal opportunities.
- IGCAT will ensure that all employees are aware of the equal opportunities policy and are expected to comply with it in their daily working lives.
- IGCAT will ensure that any allegations of discrimination, harassment or victimization are taken seriously and will be dealt with promptly and fairly in accordance with the company's grievance procedure.
- IGCAT will regularly review its equal opportunities policy to ensure that it remains relevant and up-to-date.

# IGCAT WILL IMPLEMENT THIS POLICY BY :

01

## EQUALITY IN RECRUITING NEW TALENT

Ensuring that job advertisements and recruitment procedures don't contain any discriminatory language.

02

## POLICY AWARENESS

Ensuring that all employees are made aware of the equal opportunities policy.

03

## MONITOR & ACTION

Monitoring the implementation of the equal opportunities policy and taking action to address any issues that arise.

04

## EMPLOYEE EDUCATION

Providing training to employees on equal opportunities.

05

## OPEN COMMUNICATION

Encouraging employees to raise any concerns or issues they have with regard to equal opportunities.

06

## REGULAR CHECK UPS

Regularly reviewing the equal opportunities policy to ensure that it remains effective.



IGCAT

# FUND FOR LOCAL ARTS AND GASTRONOMY



# ABOUT THE FUND FOR LOCAL ARTS & GASTRONOMY (FLAG)

IGCAT Experts, partner institutions, sponsors and donors are invited to contribute to IGCAT's FLAG Fund for lesser-economically favoured regions and experts.

The intention of the fund is to support mobility and organisational costs for qualifying experts. Young chefs, producers, filmmakers and foodie website hosts from qualifying regions to participate in and attend joint project events, Platform meetings.

All donors will be listed and donors may request a certificate.

The fund is currently managed and directed by IGCAT Executive Board but will longer-term become a Foundation with a board of trustees, so that donors will be able to take benefit of tax deductions.



IGCAT

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**What is meant by the title 'Gastronomy' - does this mean only high-end cuisine?**

'Gastronomy' here is used to refer to a holistic approach, which includes agriculture and food culture relating to place, hospitality, eating, food production, food ways, food traditions and how one feels about one's food culture. The term does not denote exclusivity or high-end cuisine.

**What is meant by 'Region' - who can apply?**

A 'Region' can be a province, county, country, and/or other territory defined by the partner presenting the bid. It is important that the territory chosen has the support of at least three municipalities and their surrounding rural areas, and that it is able to gain support from multiple academic, third sector, public and private partners.

**Is the Award a competition?**

No, it is not a competition. The European Region of Gastronomy title is awarded to regions that have joined the European Region of Gastronomy Platform and adhere to the philosophy developed by IGCAT (International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism) that ensures cross-sector working in order to support regional development.

Unlike other awards, only regions that join the Platform can be awarded the title, and joining the Platform requires a series of policy-actions to be in place such as a [Regional Stakeholder Committee](#) made up of public, private, third sector and knowledge institutions. By joining the knowledge-exchange Platform, the aim is to further cross-border collaborations, develop shared initiatives to improve food awareness and provide both external and internal regional visibility.

Once in the Platform, the regions work toward having the conditions required to hold the title. Depending on where the region is in the process, this can take several years of hard work.

**What are the starting and end dates if we bid for the European Region of Gastronomy title - is it a full year of activities starting in January?**

Since the European Region of Gastronomy is a bottom-up initiative, the regions will decide the starting time of the events of their European Region of Gastronomy year according to their schedule.

However, they will host at least three flagship events to involve fully its citizens throughout the awarded year.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **How many regions can apply at any given time?**

The European Region of Gastronomy Award raises interest across many regions around the world and as such IGCAT and IGCAT Experts maintain conversations with many nominated and candidate regions while they grow a stakeholder group and develop their bid. Each year the title can be given to up to 2 regions (unless exceptional circumstances), provided that they are ready to hold it, meet IGCAT's criteria and comply with all the requirements of the Award. Since our philosophy is to nurture regions, the Secretariat will only put forward a candidate region for assessment by an independent jury once they have a good chance of a successful outcome.

In general, there is a requirement of a 3-year gap between regions from the same country, unless exceptional circumstances warrant otherwise.

## **What happens if more regions apply for the Award?**

IGCAT will advise the regions as to when they are ready to apply for the Award and only then a panel of independent experts will travel to the region not only to assess their candidacy but to provide recommendations and ideas. IGCAT Secretariat will only recommend a region to submit an application if they feel the region is ready to take on the challenge.

## **When does a region become a candidate for the Award?**

Building a stakeholder group takes time and we fully recommend getting involved in the Platform as a nominated / candidate region as soon as possible in the process. Nominations can be made by an IGCAT Expert at any time and from this point we can invite you to up to two meetings or events as an observer region and this is intended to help strengthen your bid. Nevertheless, ideally, aspiring European Regions of Gastronomy should officially join the Platform as soon as possible to receive full benefits of IGCAT secretariat support as a candidate region. Only candidate members of the Platform can be put forward for the title.

## **What is the title that will be awarded?**

The awarded title will be '[EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY - [REGION NAME] - AWARDED [YEAR]'. The title can be used as a long-term legacy of the event (awarded since) as long as the region continues as an active member of the Platform.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **Can IGCAT Experts nominate and be part of the jury?**

No, an IGCAT expert cannot have both roles. Any IGCAT expert can nominate, support a region in joining the Platform as a candidate, and/or provide consultancy support to regions in developing their bid. This is all undertaken either voluntarily or in private contracts between the region and the expert. Only independent experts can take part in the jury visit, and they must be able to sign a 'no conflict of interest' clause. Independent experts taking part in the jury visit are offered a fee from IGCAT for their report – some experts prefer to waive this fee either because they are already salaried or because they prefer the money to support lesser-economically developed regions in which case the monies are accumulated in the FLAG fund.

## **What happens if a region fails to pay the annual membership fee?**

To remain an active member of the Platform annual reports, annual membership fee, participation in joint projects and an Executive Manager to coordinate with IGCAT is required. If a region does not pay the membership fee within the first six months of each year, IGCAT will notify the region that they will no longer be able to participate fully in Platform events:

- a) Participation in Platform meetings will be restricted to fully-paid members;
- b) participation in joint projects will also be sanctioned accordingly if membership payments are not received by the registration deadline;

If a region is not active and/or skip payment for a full year, the region must then re-apply with all the bidding costs that this would imply.

In the interest of maintaining activities in the region and supporting knowledge-sharing across the Platform, IGCAT may allow one or more approved IGCAT experts from the region to attend meetings and individual institutions to join paying the relevant membership fee. However, only experts and representatives from fully paid regions have the right to vote. IGCAT will continue to work with approved IGCAT experts and/or paying stakeholder institutions in order to support the legacy and possible re-entry of the region in the future.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **What happens after a region has held the title of European Region of Gastronomy?**

The awarded region is required to complete its minimum 5-year commitment to the European Region of Gastronomy Platform. However, many regions chose to stay in the Platform and continue to develop the Award's legacy. By choosing to remain in the Platform beyond the year of their title, the region retains the right to continue to use the title.

After 5 years, once awarded European Regions of gastronomy are allowed to reapply as World Region of Gastronomy.

## **Required Events and Budget Considerations**

Each region is expected to:

- Host an Award Ceremony, an Opening Event, and a legacy event.
- Develop at least one flagship project to engage citizens and raise awareness about the importance of protecting and promoting food and cultural diversity. These may adapt existing events but should involve multiple sectors and stakeholders.

Additionally, regions should allocate a budget to:

- Attend Platform meetings in other regions across the globe from entry into the Platform and for a minimum five year period.
- Participate in joint projects, such as:
  - Food Film Menu (free to participate).
  - World Food Gift Challenge (refer to IGCAT for registration fee).
  - Top Foodie websites (free to participate).

Beyond registration costs (where applicable), regions must also consider expenses for local projects (e.g., candidate/finalist selection), international travel, and accommodations.

## **Award Ceremony**

Regions must organize an Award Ceremony, providing an opportunity for a public celebration to mark this achievement.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Who owns the Brand and how to use it?

IGCAT owns the internationally registered brand European Region of Gastronomy.

Fully paid members are granted the rights to use the logo along with their name and candidate or award year.

This is formalized through a contractual agreement, as the primary goal is to maximize visibility—locally, nationally, and internationally.

We encourage event organizers, food producers, restaurants, and hotels to use the logo as a tool to promote sustainable practices through a commitment to responsible business operations.

## Can IGCAT Board members or the President attend our international event as a speaker?

IGCAT Board members and the President are only available to attend official IGCAT events in partner regions. These include:

- The 4 joint projects (e.g. Food Film Menu);
- Jury visits
- Platform meetings

## What if our event is not an official IGCAT activity?

For non-official events, IGCAT must invoice a speaker fee, which supports the Flag Fund. This fund helps regions with fewer economic resources to participate in IGCAT initiatives.

## Is there any flexibility for member regions of the Platform?

Yes. When possible, IGCAT can:

- Offer a virtual address from a representative;
- Try to find an IGCAT Expert who may attend for the cost of travel only.

## Why is there a fee or limitation on speaker participation?

This policy helps:

- Ensure fairness and prevent perceptions of regional bias
- Protect Board members' time and well-being by reducing travel stress
- Fund the participation of under-resourced regions

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Intellectual Property

IGCAT retains full ownership of the logo and variations of (registered as a trademark according to international law) as well as copyright of all content including database contacts, icons, project concept, the use of the IGCAT, European (and World) Region of Gastronomy, Young Chef Award, Top Websites for Foodie Travelers, Food Film Menu, Food Gift Challenge and other projects' names, logos, registered trademarks and domain names and permits.

Regional stakeholders will use them exclusively in relation to work conducted under the terms of the protocol agreement, these guidelines and while they are fully-paid and active members of the Platform.



# GLOSSARY

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## **Executive Board (of stakeholders)**

Institutions selected from the Regional Stakeholder Committee, who sign the Protocol Agreement with IGCAT (on behalf of the Regional Stakeholder Committee) and take on financial and administrative responsibility of the bid.

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## **Regional Stakeholder Committee**

As a starting point, European regions should form a Regional Stakeholder Committee to endorse the bid including at least one institution from each of the four sectors (public, private, third sector, education) that will help lead in the process of bidding. This group is formed by umbrella entities (e.g. associations of hotels, restaurants, small businesses, festivals, chambers of commerce, etc.) i.e. not individual businesses.

It is not a requirement that they all sign the Protocol Agreement with IGCAT, but they sign separate partnership agreements with IGCAT to be added as annexes to the Protocol Agreement. The Protocol Agreement only needs to be signed by the Executive Board.

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## **Regional Stakeholders**

Individual entities that have signed up to the region's Food Commitment and been approved by the Executive Board. This includes restaurants, producers, hotels, cultural groups, tourist experiences, etc.

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## **Protocol Agreement**

Agreement signed between IGCAT and the Executive Board for the region to become a member of the European Region of Gastronomy Platform.

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## **Partnership Agreement**

Annex to the Protocol Agreement signed between IGCAT and the members of the Regional Stakeholder Committee (additional to the Executive Board).

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## **Annual Membership Fee**

Fee that regions pay every year to be part of the European Region of Gastronomy Platform.

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# GLOSSARY

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**One-off Joining Fee**

Fee that regions pay only once to become a member of the World Region of Gastronomy Platform.

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**Bidding Fee**

Fee that regions pay only once to present their bid for the World Region of Gastronomy Award.

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**Gastronomy Plan / Strategy Plan**

Long-term strategy to develop regional gastronomy and to ensure a legacy of the World Region of Gastronomy title (identification of challenges and goals).

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**Food Commitment**

Written commitment that regional stakeholders (individual businesses such as restaurants, hotels, food producers, etc.) sign with the region in support of the principles of the World Region of Gastronomy.

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**Regenerative Agriculture**

IGCAT champions regenerative agriculture as key to sustainable food systems, helping mitigate climate change, boost biodiversity, and strengthen rural economies while supporting public health.

IGCAT views it as a holistic farming approach that restores and enhances ecosystems through practices like reduced tillage, crop rotation, cover cropping, and responsible grazing. These methods improve soil health, water systems, and long-term agricultural resilience for current and future generations.

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**Regenerative Tourism**

Aligned with IGCAT's values, regenerative tourism centers on local gastronomy, arts, and traditions, ensuring tourism empowers rather than depletes communities. It promotes responsible visitor behavior, investment in local food systems, and sustainable practices that restore biodiversity and social well-being. Regenerative tourism is transformative – it not only avoids harm but actively revitalizes destinations, making them healthier, more vibrant, and more resilient.

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EUROPEAN REGION OF **GASTRONOMY**

- AWARDED BY -

**I G C A T**

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF  
GASTRONOMY, CULTURE, ARTS AND TOURISM