



# SMART Europe IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

## Avila County Council (Spain)

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## 1. Introduction

The objective of this Implementation Plan within SMART Europe project is to provide a detailed report on the actions regarding the implementation of the results of their Peer Review and Good Practice transfers.

### 1.1 Introduction to SMART Europe project and the used methodology

SMART Europe is based on the concept that smart and targeted regional policies and interventions can be designed to boost the employment directly in the regional innovation-based sectors. With this aim, a consortium of 13 partners, representing 11 EU regions, will exchange policies and instruments for identifying and supporting the main regional economic actors that can generate job opportunities in the innovation based sectors of their economy.

SMART Europe will support decision makers to improve their strategies with the aim of incorporating the creation of employment as an additional key feature of their activities.

Concerning the methodology used, from 7<sup>th</sup> until 11<sup>th</sup> October 2013, a **Peer Review** was conducted in Avila County in the field of Innovative Tourism job creation, with the involvement of regional stakeholders, both internal and external, civil servants, private owners and practitioners from the Tourism sector, besides the experts integrating the peer review team, coordinated by Észak-Alföld, and gathered professionals with different backgrounds from Sør-Trøndelag (Norway), Manchester MU (United Kingdom), and Maramures (Romania).

The peer review week was organized attending to the following criteria:

- The 5 competences to be faced according to the project methodology: Strategy, Human Resources & Education, Innovative Environment, Partnership and Sustainability of Jobs.
- The resources in the province: Cultural, Natural and Gastronomy
- The geographical areas to be covered, plain area in North so different from the mountain range in South
- Involving public and private stakeholders
- Showing consolidated resources vs potential ones

The peer review was held through scheduled formal meetings during mornings and on-site visits during afternoons, the peer review team had the opportunity to stay in the capital but also in the province at Gredos Mountains. The peer review became itself a great opportunity for finding a common ground for different stakeholders, the atmosphere was friendly and meant a mutual learning process, the final day was devoted to the workshop for the peer team to present the first draft of recommendations.

As a result of this Peer Review held in Avila, an In-depth Assessment Report with a set of recommendations was elaborated, which was presented to the relevant stakeholders

and political representative. Explaining the main results at the corresponding Board related to the Tourism area.

Additionally, and within the SMART Europe planned activities, a **Good Practice Exchange** took place from 9<sup>th</sup> until 13<sup>th</sup> June in Sør-Trøndelag (Norway) and Jämtland (Sweden). The process started once provided the final report by the peer review team, initially by Avila County Council as importing region and Sør-Trøndelag as exporting one, and was consolidated later on at Manchester meeting, held in March 2014, with the incorporation of Mid-Sweden / Almi (Sweden) also as exporting region for creating a threefold good practice exchange.

At the preparatory phase, the Avila County Council forward a questionnaire to both regions to focus the process, in terms of Sustainable Tourism and Innovative Approach to Tourism Sector, therefore the host could manage their own proposed agendas for holding different meetings and on-site visit for getting the goal to identify good practice to be imported in Avila County Council, jointly with the recommendations gathered at the final report as a result of the peer review as was described previously.

The Good Practice Exchange, attended by the Political Representative of the related area, a representative of the private sector by the Rural Lodging representative and the Smart Europe project manager at Avila County Council, became an excellent opportunity to understand better what actions are carried out in the area to get a sustainable tourism in terms of economical, environmental and socio-cultural sustainability as well as different innovative approach that applies to tourism sector, as a result an internal document gathering briefly 20 concise conclusions is the practical, tangible and useful outcome from the Good Practice Exchange as a pool of accurate actions to be transferred into Avila County according to feasibility after the corresponding approval as local authority by the Board of Representatives on the European Affairs and Tourism department within our organization.

This current Implementation Plan is aiming to present the actions which are effectively carried out or foreseen to be within our region in the short-medium term, lined up to the recommendations and also to feasibility in our territory, implementing good practices identified and complementary actions to be taken following the final report recommendations.

## 1.2 Regional Context of Avila County

Based on the documents, descriptions provided by Avila County, and mostly after being involved during the peer review week in both formal and informal meetings on-site, the Peer Team defined the following regional characteristics in Avila County in a SWOT Analysis which were considered as the basement for drawing up the Recommendations report:

### a) Positive aspects

- Common **understanding** of the **importance of tourism**

- Large variety of **tourism potential**: cultural, natural, gastronomy, religion
  - o Existence of heritage – Celtic Culture, City Wall, **Santa Teresa 5th centenary** year, World Heritage city
  - o Variety of tourism opportunities (city-rural) – diversity
  - o Weather + many opportunities not depending on good weather
- **Accessibility**
  - o Potential to show itself as an inclusive city
  - o Closeness to Madrid (good infrastructure) + other large touristic centers
- Emerging initiatives for **cooperation** (eg. Ávila Autentica, ASENORG)
- Good business **models** & inspirational **people** (eg. Gredos)
- Developed **Branding**
- Using wide variety of **communication** tools (started to use social media, websites...)
- Existing, well developed **rural tourism**
- **University** – to support tourism, research and management
- Collaboration with **World Heritage** sites
- Strategic use of **European programmes** (new financial period, international exchanges etc.)
- Existing good **infrastructure** (roads, railways)
- Potential for **diversification** & marketing of **tourism packages**
- Further potential in **existing brands** to raise the standards of the products and tourism services + international connections (Spanish restaurants in other countries – think big)
- Upturn of the **international economy** (+ new emerging markets)

#### b) Aspects to be improved

- Need to develop a **joint strategy** between various actors (public-private)
- **Language** barriers – most information only available in Spanish; people not speaking English
- Need for **better visibility and tourist information** (free brochures, maps, signposting)
- Importance of **vocational education in tourism and hospitality** sector not well recognised (eg. receptionists, waiters should be better trained)
- Weak **coordination and cooperation** (eg. events sector)
- Insufficient **business support**
- **Shortage of data, analysis** and general market **research**
- Underutilisation of the possibilities offered by the **university** (eg. entrepreneurship in education)
- **Transportation** – too difficult to get around
- Unclear understanding of target **audience and their needs**
- Competing **similar offers nearby**
- Insufficient knowledge & forecasting about the **needed skills in tourism industry**
- Insufficient involvement of **lower decision making levels** – dominance of top-down approach
- **Migrations** (Brain-drain, Demographic problems)
- Few links between **tourism and employment strategies**

### 1.3 Vision: goals to achieve in the region by the proposed actions, main funding resources

Based on the good practices and the recommendations within the assessment report provided by the Peer Team, the Tourism department of Avila County Council is bulding up the current Implementation Plan with different actions in order to maintain the existing ones and boost if possible the creation of jobs in our main economical sector as the Tourism.

The focus will be as follows:

- Updating Strategy
- Innovative Integrated Packages
- Internationalization

The tourism in Avila is playing in a global market, where the tourist offer at national level, based on sun & beach is the main destination, so to challenge is to make decisions based on monitored data for **adding value to the inner tourism to be visualized by both domestic and international target groups as an alternative destination**, also addressing market niches based on current international trends, applying innovative approach in the packages to be offer in the market.

Those **innovate integrated packages adapted to the tourist profile, based on experiences rather than products**, this is one of the main goals of this Implementation Plan, even though the Inner Tourism is well developed, but mainly based in the domestic national market, and is affected by a seasonality in terms of high occupancy during weekends, special festivities as Easter, ....etc., but with low overnights ratio the rest of the working days or low season, so an innovative approach could bring competitiveness and therefore attract tourist out of peak seasons according to international trends.

The following actions described have been transferred in order to improve and innovate in the tourism sector.

## 2. Initiatives based on the Action Plan of the region and the Good Practice imports

### Action 1: CENTRE OF ANALYSIS AND INNOVATIVE TOURISM

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<b>Description of the action:</b>	Creation of the Centre of Analysis and Innovative Tourism between Avila County Council and the University of Salamanca – the Tourism School at Avila Campus, to be developed by the Great Duke of Alba Research and Studies Institution, belonging to Avila County Council, by a formal agreement for cooperation among them, having as main goal the data collection about the tourist and tourism sector for analyzing, and making strategic decisions in the long term based on knowledge about tourist profile, use of resources, expectations and needs, an additional goal is to apply innovation to the tourism sector according to trends, and private sector inputs. This action was considered before but boosted and enhanced thanks to the Smart Europe experience, and updated in terms of applied innovation to the tourism sector.
<b>Stakeholders:</b>	Avila County Council, University of Salamanca, Great Duke of Alba Research and Studies Institution
<b>Expected results:</b>	Deeper knowledge about tourist profile and gap with resources offer. Periodical data collection, analysis and decision making
<b>Preconditions:</b>	Formal agreement among involved institutions. (done)
<b>Possible barriers:</b>	Difficulties for getting info from those visitors who are not controlled by the Reception Visitor Centre or some other tourist offices
<b>Related Actions within Action Plan</b>	At Human Resources and Education chapter, Action #3: Creation of Centre for Analyze and Tourist Innovation
<b>Good practice examples:</b>	Jämtland Härjedalen Turism (Sweden) Trøndelag Reiseliv Destination (Norway)  Others:

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UNWTO Sustainable Tourism Observatory  
<http://sdt.unwto.org/content/unwto-global-observatories-sustainable-tourism-gost>  
Vemdalen survey for visitors (Sweden)

**Short description of selected Good Practice:** In both regions we had the opportunity to appreciate how important is to deal with such a valuable information by the tourist for adapting the offer according to their expectations and needs, as a basement for other actions towards tourist satisfaction and loyalty, in both cases different surveys are conducted and information about the sector is coordinated for a better promotional campaigns, actually the target groups were segmented and tackled with different approach (50+, national/international, families, German market, fishing, skiing...etc.)

**Relevance of selected Good Practice:** Basement for marketing decisions according to target group to be addressed, specific

**Transfer methodology: short description of the transfer process – steps made so far, as well as the upcoming ones:**

- In a first stage get the knowledge from the related regions thanks to the good practice exchange meetings and on-site visits.
- Secondly proposal at internal level between organizations and approval by the Board of Representatives
- Preliminary works during 2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2014, staff devoted, sources of data, first meetings.

**Financial tools and sources of implementation (international, national or local level):** Own financial resources belonging to Avila County Council

**Time scale of the process:**

- Formal Agreement approved on 7<sup>th</sup> July by the Board of Representatives.
- Meetings for setting up the needed resources and working methodology in Oct-Nov 2014

## Action 2: ENHANCEMENT AS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DESTINATION

<b>Description of the action:</b>	Participation at European Level in the ETIS (European Tourism Indicators System) by the EU DG Enterprise and Industry for becoming a Sustainable Tourist Destination at European level
<b>Stakeholders:</b>	Avila County Council – Tourism department Provincial Tourism Board
<b>Expected results:</b>	Take part on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> pilot phase launched by the EU DG Enterprise and Industry
<b>Preconditions:</b>	Applicant to participate at pilot phase (done) Application officially accepted by EU DG Enterprise and Industry - Tourism Policy E/1 Unit
<b>Possible barriers:</b>	Difficulties for getting info from the stakeholders, mostly time consuming for private sector. Furthermore, in some cases there is no availability of data
<b>Related Actions within Action Plan</b>	At Sustainability of Jobs chapter, Action #16 Sustainable Destination for Eco-friendly visitors
<b>Good practice examples:</b>	Røros Sustainable Destination, (Norway) <a href="http://en.roros.no/2013/05/13/welcome-to-a-sustainable-destination/">http://en.roros.no/2013/05/13/welcome-to-a-sustainable-destination/</a> Åre Destination, Jämtland (Sweden)
<b>Short description of selected Good Practice:</b>	The smart and sustainable growth draw up by Åre Municipality jointly with Åre Destination became a inspiring model for the rural area of Gredos Mountain range in the southern part of Avila province. The example of “Conversations on Sustainability” carried out by 50-100 municipalities, politicians and officers at Åre Mountains resort. This action will contribute to address and eco-friendly visitor profile.
<b>Relevance of selected Good</b>	The sustainability in the long run is what will guarantee this main sector within our economy, but sustainability

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**Practice:** understood by a threefold perspective: economical, environmental and socio-cultural based on a demonstrated sustainable destination management, and the first step is to monitor in what step of sustainability the destination is settled.

**Transfer methodology:** - Strategy updating. Integration of Sustainability principles within the working groups at the Provincial Tourism Board.

**short description of the transfer process – steps made so far, as well as the upcoming ones:** - Integration of sustainability criteria at the web site as CO2 Emission data by municipality.  
- See also Action 4. “Host Lift / Røros Host», in terms of economical sustainability

**Financial tools and sources of implementation (international, national or local level):** No cost associated to this action. Covered by Avila County Council staff and own budget.

**Time scale of the process:**

- Approval of participation in May 2014
- Mid-Term report submitted in September 2014
- Internal working groups at Provincial Tourism Board between October-November
- Final Report about questionnaire to be submitted in January 2014
- Collection of data: 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2015
- Analysis of data and presentation: Oct 2015

### **Action 3: PARTICIPATION WITHIN A EUROPEAN PROJECT ON TOURISM**

**Description of the action:** Participation as partner in SPOR TOUR 3.0 “*European Circuit of Sport and 3.0 Family friendly experiences destination*” European Project Proposal, within COSME programme 2014: Diversifying the EU Tourism Offer and Products  
Sustainable Transnational Tourism Products 2014

**Stakeholders:** Avila County Council – European Affairs Department

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<b>Expected results:</b>	Approval of European Project related to Tourism sector Proposal ID: SEP-210200265
<b>Preconditions:</b>	Suitable call for proposal related to Tourism Set up partnership (done) Submitting the project (done)
<b>Possible barriers:</b>	Rejection of the project
<b>Related Actions within Action Plan</b>	At Partnership Action #14 Participation at European Projects related to Tourism
<b>Good practice examples:</b>	Haglöfs Extreme Challenge (Jämtland, Sweden)
<b>Short description of selected Good Practice:</b>	The Haglöfs Extreme Challenge take place in the Are mountain range in Jämtland, Sweden, the organizers understood some years ago that a extreme sport competition was only attracting participants for one or two nights during the low season. Therefore they decided to use as locomotive the pure competition but offer additional tourist experiences to the family/companions, as a result the people attending this event is multiplied x3 on average, and the overnights ratio increased considerably, the competition will be open and promoted at European level and take part in an European circuit, so, the tourism offer will be internationalized in this way. Therefore the alternative tourist offer based on innovative approach to tourism became an excellent tool for bringing incomes to the area.
<b>Relevance of selected Good Practice:</b>	The selected good practice is a reference at World level in the sect or of extreme competitions such as triathlon, high raids ...etc.
<b>Transfer methodology: short description of the transfer process – steps made so far, as well as the</b>	-Lessons learnt through the organizers thanks to the good practice exchange on site visit that took place in June 2014 - July, August and September 2014, Cooperation

**upcoming ones:** with leader of the proposal Észak-Alföld (Hungary) for drawing up jointly the proposal, set of partnership-

**Financial tools and sources of implementation (international, national or local level):** EASME- EXECUTIVE AGENCY FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES  
COSME & HORIZON 2020 – Call for Proposals – COS WP2014-3-15.03

**Time scale of the process:** -Effective submission on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014  
-February-March 2015: approval in case  
-April 2015 onwards, development of the project during 18 months

#### **Action 4: INTEGRATED PACKAGES AND INNOVATIVE APPROACH**

**Description of the action:** Mapping and coordination of Integrated packages to the market combining different resources existing in the Avila County from an innovative approach and high quality hosting

**Stakeholders:** Avila County Council – Tourism Department  
Provincial Tourism Board  
PCTA Gredos-Iruelas  
Tourism Associations working in the county  
Local Business

**Expected results:** Creation of Integrated packages to offer to the tourism market or individuals, combining natural, cultural and gastronomy resources. And staff able to offer this offer based on its own knowledge as local ambassadors. The innovative approach will be given by specific recognition such as disable tourism, dark sky for astronomy observation destination, mycology reserve,...etc.

	Reinforce of the concepts of Family-Friendly, Experience and Discover as an innovative approach to a traditional sector, in which what matter is the experience rather than the product themselves ( <i>Tasting experience instead of selling wine</i> )
<b>Preconditions:</b>	Public-private cooperation model
<b>Possible barriers:</b>	Active cooperation among local stakeholders
<b>Related Actions within Action Plan</b>	At Sustainability of Jobs Action #15 Creation of Integrated Packages At Innovative Environment Action #9 Inclusion of the Innovative Approach to the tourism sector At Human Resources and Education Action #7 Specific training courses
<b>Good practice examples:</b>	Certification Programme “knowledge to be a good host” (Host Lift) Good Practice. Røros, (Norway) <a href="http://en.roros.no/2013/05/13/certification-program-knowledge-to-be-a-good-host/">http://en.roros.no/2013/05/13/certification-program-knowledge-to-be-a-good-host/</a>
Short description of selected Good Practice:	Educating hosts ensures that guest get a quality experience during their stay. Taking pride in and disseminating local culture and history Destination Røros developed its own certification. All employees in tourism, commerce and government undergo a course on local culture and history, so that guests get a quality experience during their stay and so the local community and employees take pride in their own history by: - Knowledge of each other creating sellers of responsible experience. - The Copper card – experiencing each other - The horseshoe, as a symbol of completed certification program.
<b>Relevance of</b>	Excellent example running and working with effective

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**selected Good** results.

**Practice:**

**Transfer methodology:** -Presentation at the National Rural Tourism  
**short description of the** Congress to be held on 11 and 12 November  
**transfer process – steps** 2014 “Host & Ambassador”  
**made so far, as well as the** -First Award at county level to the most  
**upcoming ones:** accessible Hotel Rural, given in 2014  
-Settlement of mycology routes, with  
corresponding signposting  
-Settlement of several places for astronomy  
observation within the territory which obtained  
the Dark Sky Certification around Gredos  
Regional Park  
-New routes “A vueltas con Gredos”  
-Events coordination: Festival Piorno en Flor

**Financial tools and sources of** Own resources  
**implementation (international,**  
**national or local level):**

**Time scale of the process:** Courses to be organized in 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2015

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#### **Action 5: ADDED VALUE TO LOCAL PRODUCTS**

**Description of the** According to the current trends in the tourism market  
**action:** based on surveys conducted by different international  
observatories, the authenticity of local products is  
highly valued by the visitors, willing to pay a higher  
price for the local items in the global market. Moreover  
when the workshops are open it is demonstrated the  
sales increase.

**Stakeholders:** Avila County Council –Tourism dept  
Avila Auténtica (agrofood local products quality brand)  
<http://www.avilaaautentica.es>

<b>Expected results:</b>	<p>Involvement of more local producers at the agrofood sector within the Quality brand “Avila Auténtica”, belonging to Avila County Council and gathering different agrofood producers according to quality standards, common brand and promotional campaigns.</p> <p>Bring the culture of open workshops to our province, for allowing the tourist to watch by themselves how the product is produced.</p> <p>Placement of Avila Auténtica within Tasting Europe web site</p>
<b>Preconditions:</b>	Participation of local producers
<b>Possible barriers:</b>	<p>Multiple common brands: “Tierra de Sabor”, bio-product..etc</p> <p>Difficulties at facilities in terms of security for opening workshops.</p>
<b>Related Actions within Action Plan</b>	<p>At Partnership</p> <p>Action #11 Common message and branding</p> <p>At Innovative Approach</p> <p>Action #9 Inclusion of the Innovative approach into the tourism sector.</p>
<b>Good practice examples:</b>	<p>Rørosmat, Røros, (Norway)</p> <p><a href="http://www.rorosmat.no">http://www.rorosmat.no</a></p> <p>Storjöhytan AB, Östersund (Sweden) open workshop</p> <p><a href="http://storsjohyttan.com/">http://storsjohyttan.com/</a></p>
<b>Short description of selected Good Practice:</b>	<p>Rorosmat: common brand for agrofood products for guarantee quality standard and common commercialization national or international</p> <p>Storjöhytan “Open handcraft glasses workshop”, the producers allow visitors to discover their know how “in situ” for better understanding the difficulties for producing such as unique pieces against the industrial</p>

	production
<b>Relevance of selected Good Practice:</b>	Rorosmat shares a lot similarities to Avila Autentica, so a mutual learning process take place
<b>Transfer methodology: short description of the transfer process – steps made so far, as well as the upcoming ones:</b>	Avila Auténtica started in March 2014 to contact to Tasting Europe for displaying its local products at European level <a href="http://www.tastingeurope.com/">http://www.tastingeurope.com/</a>
<b>Financial tools and sources of implementation (international, national or local level):</b>	Own resources
<b>Time scale of the process:</b>	n/a

#### Action 6: INTERNATIONALIZATION OF TARGET GROUP

<b>Description of the action:</b>	Lined up with the National and Regional Strategy, Avila County Council is committed to the Internationalization of its Tourism offer. Foreign Language capacity building.
<b>Stakeholders:</b>	Avila County Council – Tourism department Provincial Tourism Board PCTA Gredos-Iruelas
<b>Expected results:</b>	Capacity Building in Foreign language and promotional material in foreign language. Increase ratio of foreigner visitors to Avila county. Better knowledge about to tourist profile at the selected target group
<b>Preconditions:</b>	Improvement of language skills by the staff within the sector, mainly English. Raising Awareness about different cultural backgrounds (religious, vegetarians, timetables,...etc.) Agreement with other European Universities for

	<p>bringing overseas students</p> <p>Organization on-site visit to target countries, fam-fairs...etc.</p>
<b>Possible barriers:</b>	<p>Capacity for foreign language skills, considering some elderly owners at rural areas.</p> <p>Statement of clear target group</p>
<b>Related Actions within Action Plan</b>	<p>At Strategy, At Human Resources and Education</p> <p>Action #2 Internationalization of Avila Tourism</p> <p>Action #4 Improvement of Foreign Language skills</p> <p>Action #7 Specific Training Courses</p> <p>Action #5 Cooperation between University of Salamanca –Tourism Degree and other International initiatives</p>
<b>Good practice examples:</b>	<p>Exporting Handbook” by Jämtland Härjedalen Turism, (Sweden)</p> <p>Trøndelag Reiseliv (Norway) as reference for dealing with different brochures for international or domestic market.</p>
<b>Short description of selected Good Practice:</b>	<p>Handbook edited by Jämtland Härjedalen Turism for local entrepreneurs for exporting the tourism offer and services</p> <p>Approach to different markets by Trøndelag Reiseliv (Norway) as the fishing market, pilgrim route to Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim.</p>
<b>Relevance of selected Good Practice:</b>	<p>Guidance for stepping forward in the exporting issues according to target groups.</p>
<b>Transfer methodology: short description of the transfer process – steps made so far, as well as the upcoming ones:</b>	<p>- Organization of training courses addressed to staff working at the tourism sector, including references as the “Exporting Handbook” by Jämtland Härjedalen Turism, (Sweden)</p> <p>- First steps for getting formal agreement between University of Salamanca – Tourism School and University of Debrecen (Hungary)</p>

	-Market niches promoted: Disable friendly routes, Bird watching, Dark Sky Destination among others.
<b>Financial tools and sources of implementation (international, national or local level):</b>	Own resources Tourism Department, National Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism (PCTA Gredos-Iruelas)
<b>Time scale of the process:</b>	Translation web site, and hardcopies of promotional material Decision making the Provincial Tourism Board for training courses. Attendance to International Tourism Fairs.

### 3. Conclusions

The current Implementation Plan has as main goal to describe the actions that are / will be taken in the short term based on the recommendations provided by the peer review team, what could be summarized in the following three:

- Updating Strategy
- Innovative Integrated Packages
- Internationalization

And also considering the experience gained at the Good Practice Exchange process what took place in June 2014 in Sør-Trøndelag (Norway) and Jämtland (Sweden), thanks to those meetings and deeper understanding some effective actions are transferred into the territory once approved by the Board of Representatives at Avila County Council.

In the end the goal is to offer an alternative tourist destination, based on authenticity, on experiences, addressed to both domestic and international families who want to keep closer to nature, culture and enjoy a tasty gastronomy, in a safe and clean place worthy to be discovered by themselves, an inner tourism with so many things to experience. Therefore, to innovate towards a sustainable tourism for increasing the jobs and keeping the quality of life among our citizens in a fair balance between what the tourist needs and the destination may offer.