

SMART EUROPE ACTION PLAN

Based on the Peer Review conducted in October 2013 and the Peer Review
Final Report elaborated afterwards

Avila (Spain)

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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 SMART EUROPE Project and the Used Methodology

Introduction to the SMART Europe Project

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.

Used methodology to define the actions

From 7th until 11th 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 Sor-Trondelag, Manchester MU, and Maramures.

- The peer review week was organized attending to the following criteria:
- The 5 competences to be faced according to the project methodology
- 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. This current Action Plan is aiming to present the actions foreseen to be carried out according to the recommendations and also to feasibility in our territory, implementing good practices identified and complementary actions to be taken.

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, Word 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

The focus of the peer review was :*"How to innovate in the tourism sector and how to make it international, increasing the tourist coming and also the overnight ratio, therefore creating jobs"*.

Drawing up the basement for offering **innovate integrated packaged proposals to the market**, based on experiences rather than products, this is one of the main goals of this Action Plan, even though the Inner Tourism is well developed, 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.

The tourism in Avila is playing in a global market, where the tourism at national level, sun&beach is the main destination, so to challenge is to add value to the inner tourism to be **visualized by potential international target groups as an attractive destination**, also addressing market niches based on current international trends.

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 building up the current Action Plan with different actions in order to maintain the existing ones and boost if possible the creation of jobs in our main economical sector.

At the final stage of the SMART EUROPE project and based on this Action Plan will be set an Implementation Plan, containing a long-term strategy, as well as further explanations about how to put in practice the accurate steps lined up with the timeline, financial and indicators to be monitored.

Section 2: Actions based on the recommendations

2.1 REGIONAL STRATEGY

2.1.1. Recommendations 1,2,3,4 : Ensure that the strategy is based on consultation and participation of the fullest range of stakeholders. Make the fullest use in the strategy of all European programmes. Create linkages between tourism and employment strategies with measurable Targets. Strategy should reflect on the whole county (Avila and rural areas)

Action #1: Updating of the Tourism Strategy

Relevance of the Action: Updating of the Tourism Strategy framework

Stakeholders: Provincial Tourism Council: Avila County Council - Tourism Department, Avila Municipality- Tourism Department, Political parties representatives of Avila County, Junta Castilla y Leon Regional Government, and representatives of private associations in the tourism sector.

Expected Results: Planning of tourism activities towards a proper a new Strategy document according to regional/national framework as well as data collection, with a clear target group and clear message, from the perspective of differentiation from the traditional “sun & beach” rather the actions to be taken for the specific Inner Tourism and also considering the new scenario due to the changing socio-economical conditions and market trends. Linkage between University, Employment and tourism sector

The challenge within this strategic frame is to provide integrated packages between the capital and rural areas, for achieving synergies from the different natural, cultural and gastronomic resources, under a common brand umbrella. Include an innovative approach, for gaining competitiveness of tourism. Besides, to be in position to make an attractive destination for the international tourist.

An additional practical goal is to be able to provide an answer “*Why a tourist should come to Avila?*”, “*What Avila want to be famous for?*” as a kind of summary about what this province could offer in terms of tourism

Preconditions: Encourage a bottom-up approach for ensuring the consultation and active participation of public and private stakeholders within the sector

Line up with the National Tourism Strategy and also with the Regional Tourism strategy

Possible Barriers: Lack of involvement by private companies, sharing efforts by capital and rural areas

Good Practice Example:

<http://en.trondelag.com/>

<http://www.visitostersund.se/english/>

<http://visitsundsvall.se/en>

Tameside Business Family – Mini Europe Good Practice

Action #2: Internationalization of Avila Tourism

Relevance of the Action: currently close to 85% of the tourist are domestic, first actions to be taken for adapting Avila offer as an attractive destination for potential international market

Stakeholders: Avila County Council –Tourism Department, Private owners, Inbound tourist agencies.

Expected Results: Selection of target groups, gather further knowledge to understand fully their needs and expectations for adapting the offer and customized packages. Among others a action to be taken is the Good Practice Exchange among Avila County Council and Sør-Trøndelag and Mid-Sweden in order to get knowledge about their needs, likes, expectations, behaviours, seasons, packages, dietary requirements, added value,...etc. in this way Avila Tourism Department will get all this information for adapting the offer accordingly as a first step towards attracting an Scandinavian tourist profile.

Also different international market niches must be considered: bird watching, astronomers, inclusive tourism for all, bike routes, ... therefore the offer can be directly marketed to them.

Furthermore, the European Affairs area jointly with the Tourism department will continue its participation in the frame of European projects within different programmes. As an example an action has been taken regarding the agrofood sector as the

participation by Avila Auténtica at the new “Tasting Europe” European web site launched in February by the European Commission in order to spread the different gastronomic routes, and local products jointly with food festivals.

Nb: see also following Action #3 about ETIS –European Tourism Indicator System, in order to line up with the European market sustainability trends.

Preconditions: Selection of target group according to trends and lined up with the profile of tourist according to the available resources.

Possible Barriers: lack of Inbound tourism agencies, foreign language skills.

Good Practice Example:

Danish Bird Watching Association www.dof.dk

Birding pals Norway: www.birdingpal.org/Norway.htm

British Bird watching Clubs: www.birdwatch.co.uk

2.1.2. Recommendations 5: Collect data is essential for planning and monitoring

Action #3 : Creation of Centre for Analyze and Tourist Innovation

Relevance of the Action: Knowledge about the tourist profile is a key factor for making decisions based on data and setting up a customized promotional action.

Stakeholders: University of Salamanca – Tourism Degree, “Grand Duke of Alba” Research and Studies Institution, Avila County Council – Tourism Department

Expected Results: Creation of a Centre for Analyze and Tourist Information in order to gather data, analyze them and make decisions accordingly as focus on target groups, expectations to be covered, national and international origin of tourist, difficulties, overnights ratio, expenses ratio, places visited, tastes, dietary requirements, means of transport up to get Avila, transport needs within the county, products purchased...etc. All this data is not only referred to current tourist, rather related to potential ones for planning future promotional actions. Another action to be taken is to encourage actors and enhance an innovative approach to the tourism sector in both terms, public and private.

Additionally it will be analyzed those data obtained from the visits at the web site, and social media in order to get a visitor profile, likes, most resources visited....etc.

Preconditions: Previous agreement among different stakeholders for practical cooperation among different organizations, including the financial level.

Possible Barriers: Limitations for conducting surveys, mostly concerning to potential markets. Another barrier is the lack of contact with those tourist coming by themselves without passing through a tourist office.

Good Practice Example:

EU Tourism Observatory

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/vto/index_en.htm

UNWTO Sustainable Tourism Observatory

<http://sdt.unwto.org/content/unwto-global-observatories-sustainable-tourism-gost>

2.2 EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

2.2.1. Recommendations 1: Focus on improving the language skills of the tourism providers

Action #4 : Improvement of foreign language skills

Relevance of the Action: A matter of fact is the lack of foreign language skills, mostly English since nowadays is the basic common language, so there is a need of communication with foreign tourist coming to Avila.

Stakeholders: Avila County Council – Tourism Department, Provincial Tourism Council through the Quality&Training Working Group, University of Salamanca – Tourism Degree

Expected Results: The improvement related to foreign language will be conducted in the following terms:

- a) Training people in language skills: specific English courses will be organized addressed to private owners, this action will be set up according to feasibility
- b) Translate into English tourist information as signposting, promotional tools as brochures, web sites, social media, menus, shopping ...etc.

Nevertheless, attending to the traditional countries the current foreign tourist are coming from, also French and German are taking into consideration. Additionally, potential markets as Scandinavian should be taken into account, even though in that case English is a common language mostly spoken by most of their population.

Preconditions: Understanding of this need according to a potential market rather than the current domestic one, nowadays around 85%

Possible Barriers: In some cases the owners are elderly people with more difficulties for learning a different language. Financing sources for the courses.

Good Practice Example:

Two good practices have been identified in Hungary for increasing the knowledge of a foreign language by those to improve the language skills of the host population in Hajdúszoboszló, in Eastern Hungary, welcoming a significant number of international tourists mainly from Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Romania and in the latter years from Russia and the Ukraine. The local hotels, pensions, restaurants, retailers and other service-providers realized a primary aim is to increase the standard of their services improving the language skills of the host population thus the competitiveness of tourism in their area. Therefore, during the low seasons the association organized language courses

"Your knowledge is your future": www.tudasodajovod.hu

"Hajdúszoboszló Hosts' Association": www.hajduszoboszlo.hu

Intensive English courses programme:

www.grupovaughan.com/cursos-ingles/vaughan-town-pueblo-angloparlante

2.2.2 Recommendation 3. Developing international mindsets & educational collaborative partnerships

Action #5 : Collaboration between University of Salamanca – Tourism Degree and other International initiatives

Relevance of the Action: Professors & students spending professional time working and studying across national borders can provide an intensive international learning experience for those open minded individuals and organisations in the tourism sector. The mindset should be open to the international market, therefore to the international needs and diverse cultural aspects.

Stakeholders: University of Salamanca – Tourism Degree, Provincial Tourism Council through the Quality&Training Working Group for matching the needs between the training phase and the real needs.

Expected Results: Collaborative partnership and agreements between University of Salamanca and some other Universities and institutions at international level, in terms of people coming here for teaching/learning and also people from here teaching/learning abroad in order to wide the scope of students as an international Tourism Degree.

Preconditions: Predisposition by the University of Salamanca – Tourism Degree to establish this formal agreement, but mostly by the other institutions to accept it.

Possible Barriers: Different educative programmes, subjects among different International Universities, therefore potential mismatching.

Good Practice Example:

Manchester Metropolitan University

2.2.3 Recommendation 2. Promote lifelong learning

Action #6 : Lifelong Learning training: Cultural awareness training

Relevance of the Action: Over time, re-view, re-education or learning new skills could put Avila tourism related employees at a great improvement of their careers. So, proactively encouraging these training/educational opportunities will contribute to the tourism sector competitiveness. Specifically a relevant focus should be on training “front-line employees”, since these are customer facing, and whose personal attitude to the guests significantly influence the tourist experience.

Stakeholders: Proactive private owners at hospitality sector, Avila County Council – Tourism Department, Provincial Tourism Council through the Quality & Training Working Group, University of Salamanca – Tourism Degree

Expected Results:

A cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity might be taken into consideration at cross-cutting level when tackling the international market. When facing a growing number of tourists from very different countries, so very different cultural backgrounds, learning English or any other language for talking to the tourists is simply not enough for an effective communication. It is important to be aware by the sector employees about the cultural differences, the different expectations concerning communication as well as a wide range of expectations like accommodation, meals, timing, dietary requirements, religious aspects..., etc. That is the reason why specific and customized training sessions may help to raise awareness about cultural differences and also technical knowledge in order to satisfy tourists' needs, for adapting to their requirements according to feasibility, for increasing in the end the quality of the service provided, consequently the loyalty of customers therefore maintenance or creation of jobs.

An International experience in physical presence being in these foreign localities and the possibilities of having one-to-one meetings with various foreign stakeholders will prepare in advance the awareness for later training increasing awareness. The Good Practice Exchange foreseen with Sør-Trøndelag (Norway) and Mid-Sweden (Sweden) within

SMART EUROPE project will contribute to this purpose, for a better knowledge of the Scandinavian tourist profile.

Within the working groups of the Provincial Tourism Council, specific courses for enhancing the quality of the service will be conducted addressed towards entrepreneurs for achieving a Business & Community life-long learning, covering topics such as Tourism customer service training (including entrepreneurs educating “front-line employees”) among others for a tourism learning approach contributing to the SME’s development.

Preconditions: Understanding cultural diversity, take advantage of the coming opportunities related training sessions to include the topic of Cultural Awareness Training or attendance to specific fairs. Approval of the courses by the decision makers at the Provincial Tourism Council

Possible Barriers: Need to focus the scope to a certain target market for dealing detailed the features, rather than dealing in general. On the other hand the lecturer must be chosen carefully for providing a professional approach. Moreover, maybe the lack of the proper framework for introducing the topic.

Good Practice Example:

European Commission - Enterprise and Industry: New Tourism Quality Principles.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=7309&lang=en&tpa_id=0&displayType=news&nl_id=1036&nl_id=1036

Experience from the World Heritage Visitor Center in Regensburg:

Learning and Having Fun: Visitor Centers Imparting Knowledge Using a New Format

2.2.4 (bis) Recommendation 2. Promote lifelong learning

Action #7 : Specific training courses

Relevance of the Action: according to market niches, some specific training must be provided to the sector for better skills on specific topics

Stakeholders: Entrepreneurs, official guides dealing with astronomy topic

Expected Results: Training session on First approach to Astronomy in order to line up the needed training for tourism sector employees with the expected tourist coming for observing stars thanks to Start-Light certification obtained within the Dark Sky project lead by Avila County Council at the Gredos Mountains range.

Additionally European projects within the framework of Erasmus+ will be submitted in order to create links with other students / teachers in the field of Tourism Degree for capacity building on different skills through e-learning platforms

Preconditions: Availability by local guides to receive this training session at a World Class Observatory

Possible Barriers: Financial barriers due to budget shortage

Good Practice Example:

IAC -Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias- , (Astrophysics Institute at Canary Islands)

The Science Communication and Education Unit is responsible for the IAC's cultural education programme on astronomy

<http://www.iac.es>

2.2.5 Recommendation 4: Employer engagement in university curricular development and delivery. Recommendation 5: Managerial orientation of degree. Recommendation 6: Professional event industry employment sector and Event Management degree

Action #8 : Closer relationship between Tourism sector needs and University Tourism Degree educative programme

Relevance of the Action: To fill the gap between education and tourism industry, the involvement of the entrepreneurs into the practical educative lessons is the key for building up the bridge between theory and reality.

Stakeholders: Tourism Entrepreneurs, University of Salamanca – Tourism Degree

Expected Results:

Set up a formal cooperation framework for organizing practical classes addressing daily needs at the tourism sector: engaging the employers a some of the following options such a guest lecturing on specialist subject; master-class speaker; workshop facilitator; assessor on business projects; placement/internship provider, case study writer; host of practical facilities....etc.

On the other hand a deeper Managerial orientation of the Tourism Degree management degrees will propose, including the Events Management topic for an improvement on the events coordination and added value for the tourist.

Preconditions: Possibility for adapting the educative programmes

Possible Barriers: Feasibility for including such a recommendations within the formal educative programmes, financial barriers for engagement of entrepreneurs.

Good Practice Example:

University of Debrecen (Hungary) and the IT Service Hungary company: The two organisations have various common activities in order to ensure that graduates are having the necessary skills required by the industry (in this special case on the field of IT)

<http://www.it-services.hu/career/university-collaborations/?lang=en>

2.3 INNOVATIVE ENVIRONMENT

2.3.1. Recommendation 1: Collaboration. Recommendation 2: Foster cluster development. Recommendation 5: Open innovation. Recommendation 6: Incremental innovation. Recommendation 7: Financing possibilities from EU

Action #9 : Inclusion of the Innovative approach into the tourism sector

* NB: see Action #3 : Creation of Centre for Analyze and Tourist Innovation

Relevance of the Action: Introduction of the concept of Innovation within the roundtable meetings and working groups, this concept should be a cross-cutting issue referring to most of the actions to be taken. Not only related to pure innovation, rather from an innovative approach.

Stakeholders: Avila County Council – Tourism and European Affairs department, Provincial Tourism Council. (Centre for Analyze and Tourist Innovation: University of Salamanca – Tourism Degree, “Grand Duke of Alba” Research and Studies Institution)

Expected Results: First approach to innovative approach to the Tourism sector, setting up goal in the long term and first steps in the short term for applying innovation to the way the resources are promoted, promotional activities, recognition of the promotional actions and efforts by entrepreneurs through prize awards. Involvement within national or international clusters, attendance to focused fairs.

Tangible example of “Incremental innovation” as the small improvement to an existing product that helps to maintain or improve its competitiveness over time, the added value beyond the simple addition of resources, offering to the market Experiences rather than products like the “Wine tasting Experience”, what can be easily replicated in other companies like showing how to elaborate traditional sweets,....etc.

Finally different proposals will be submitted to the Horizon 2020 European programme, for increasing the innovative environment of the regional SME's.

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/home.html>

Preconditions: General Understanding of the “Experience” concept trend. Previous feasibility for creation the Centre for Analyze and Tourist Innovation. Open mindset to innovative approach.

Possible Barriers: Risk of some kind of rejection by a traditional sector

Good Practice Example:

UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism / Ulysses Awards for Innovation

<http://know.unwto.org/content/unwto-ulysses-awards-innovation>

Paradigm of “Open innovation” (Henry Chesbrough)

<http://openinnovation.berkeley.edu/>

2.3.2. Recommendation 3: Entrepreneurship. Recommendation 4: Learning from best and new practices

Action #10 : Utilization of innovative tools at the tourism sector

Relevance of the Action: Need to incorporate the tourism sector to the new communication tools, such mobile app's, social media, QR codes, audio-guides, augmented realityetc., learning from other experiences but promoting local entrepreneurship

Stakeholders: Avila County Council – Tourism Department

Expected Results: New mobile phones applications for tourist, providing information about the cultural and natural resources.

Availability of visual material at Youtube, Facebook, Flickr, Blog, Twitter,...etc.

Courses for training entrepreneurs on this field

Disposal of QR codes at different locations for driving to Tourism Avila web site

Preconditions: Check list of the available resources and organization criteria.

Possible Barriers: technical barriers such a weak mobile coverage in some locations

Good Practice Example:

Good practices portfolio from an Interreg IV- C European Project e-CREATE

<http://www.e-create-project.eu/>

Digital Tourist Think Tank

<http://thinkdigital.travel/>

Augmented reality

<http://thinkdigital.travel/best-practice/>

THETRIS EU project: www.thetris.eu

Mobile application for discovering churches in rural areas (Thetris project)

<http://pocketguideapp.com/en/thetris>

2.4 PARTNERSHIP

2.4.1. Finding 1: Multitude of brands bringing together stakeholders from different areas of the local tourism industry

Action #11 : Common message and branding

Relevance of the Action: sometimes it can be confusing and counterproductive to have too many brands. Too many logos intended to identify mainly the same tourism resources makes the key messages unclear. Having a brand means giving a personality that identifies the product.

Stakeholders: Avila County Council – Tourism department. Other organizations within the sector.

Expected Results: Common Branding in the long term, by now it will be a topic to bear in mind at different meetings and working groups in order to prepare a common ground to promote Avila Tourism sending a clear message to the target market based on a common image for a better identification of the product, marketing, packages, networking,...etc. *(See example below of the good practice of Örebro Region in Sweden)*

The idea behind this reasoning is like a “Rubik cube”, all the pieces are important and have their interrelation, is not easy to get the solution but is possible, and everybody identifies it.

Preconditions: Previous agreement between all the agents involved

Possible Barriers: slow process for lining up different interest by stakeholders belonging to different organizations.

Good Practice Example:

Örebro, Sweden: “The heart of Sweden”

<http://www.regionorebro.se/theheartofsweden/theheartofsweden.4.496b458b12917490fda80001289.html>

2.4.2. Recommendation 1: Support a functional tourism network with its supply components to secure the existing and potential tourists. Recommendation 4 (Chapter: Sustainability of Jobs). Real business cooperations to be established in order to maximise the utilisation of resources.

Action #12 : Cooperation between local level business

Relevance of the Action: The focus of the county and local authorities on turning Avila into a destination that offers you cultural, gastronomic, outdoor activities is correct but need to be visualized by the proper stakeholders like a piece of the puzzle. Different cooperation projects are highly recommended.

Stakeholders: Private owners related to tourism sector, Confae, Chamber of Commerce

Expected Results: Foster cooperation among local business for getting synergies of their products or services, public institutions should continue to encourage such initiatives. In order to ensure the win-win cooperation actions as well that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainability in the long-run.

Preconditions: Understanding of the interrelationships among all of them, are needed as an example: a petrol stations has to do with the rural lodging or local refurbish companies

Possible Barriers: Lack of disposal to cooperate effectively

Good Practice Example:

On the territory there is an example of Spa owned by one hotel entrepreneur, but located outside to be offered by other hotel owners as additional added value to their offer. <http://aguasdegredos.com/>

2.4.3. Recommendation 1: Support a functional tourism network with its supply components to secure the existing and potential tourists. Recommendation 2: Work with intermediaries: set up partnerships with tour operators/travel agencies

Action #13 : Hosting Fam Trips and Tour-operators destination journeys

Relevance of the Action: In the tourism chain, we can find direct providers, support services and developmental organisations. The support services level that provides basic

services and goods but also specialised services (for example, tour organisers, travel and trade publications, and hotel management firms) need to be further developed and oriented towards the upcoming strategy in tourism.

Stakeholders: Avila County Council – Tourism department, travel and trade publications, Tour operators.

Expected Results: Organization of different events as host for receiving practitioners from tourism sector related to the support service step what are basically named “Fam trips” within the sector, mainly bloggers, specialized magazines, guide-books,...etc. Besides, organization of Tour-operators journeys for receiving foreign tour operators to make them discover what Avila has to offer for their commercialization through their agencies.

Preconditions: Financial budget and consolidated contacts

Possible Barriers: Disposal of the stakeholders, budget shortage.

Good Practice Example:

International Hiking Fam Trip to Northern Norway

http://www.visitnorway.com/upload/Sweden/Int%20%20hiking%20fam%20trip%20to%20Northern%20Norway_June%20%202014.pdf

2.4.4. Recommendation 4: Do not underestimate the potential of partnerships set up during internationally funded projects

Action #14 : Participation in European Projects related to Tourism

Relevance of the Action: The Provincial Tourism Council should attract funds and seek out these strategic projects for the benefit of local stakeholders, not only in terms of co-financing, rather in terms of European networking. it is not necessary to wait for a Tourism programme – most funds can be adapted to assist the tourism sector and the skills of people who work within it and other local stakeholders.

Stakeholders: Avila County Council – European Affairs department

Expected Results: Looking for potential partners for joining proposals related to Tourism in the framework of the coming European programmes calls, such a Interreg, Erasmus +, and others.

Involvement within European initiatives like Tasting Europe for gastronomic products like Avila Auténtica, EDEN, Calypso....among others.

Networking with potential tourism partners all around Europe. Participation in Fairs, Seminars, European projects Congress,. and networking sessions.

Preconditions: Open calls suitable to submit a proposal related to Tourism.

Possible Barriers: Availability of calls related to tourism directly.

Good Practice Example:

EU PROJECTS

Tasting Europe: Gastronomic experiences around Europe

<http://www.tastingeurope.com/>

Dante Project: Digital Agenda for New Tourism Approach in European Rural and Mountain Areas <http://danteproject.eu/>

THETRIS project: Thematic Transnational church route development with the involvement of local society www.thetris.eu

2.5 SUSTAINABILITY OF JOBS

2.5.1. Recommendation 1: Continuous data collection and analysis is needed – know where your assets are, and what do businesses need, what students want

See the following action above in this document:

Chapter 1: REGIONAL STRATEGY, Action #3: Creation of Centre for Analyze and Tourist Innovation

Chapter 2: EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES, Action #8: Closer relationship between Tourism sector needs and University Tourism Degree educative programme

2.5.2 Recommendation 3: Extend tourism for all year – develop new packages.

Action #15 : Creation of Integrated Packages

Relevance of the Action: The Avila province counts with so many and good tourist resources and attractions, but those must be combined effectively for providing and added value to the market, joining both the capital and rural areas for achieving an effective overnights ratio rise, and also for eliminating the seasonality existing currently

with a big difference between weekends, special festivities and high season and the rest of the year.

Stakeholders: Avila County Council – Tourism department, Entrepreneurs, Provincial Tourism Council working group on Integrated Packages. Private sector

Expected Results:

Joined efforts for offering together capital + province tourism resources, combining Culture+Nature and gastronomy in both of them.

The integrated packages must be designed up and commercialized according to marketing trends, and having goals as increasing overnights ratio thanks to the extension of the tourist stay and to eliminate the seasonality, looking for a “tourism all year round”

Look for operators that promote types of tourism that are not affected by seasonality: identified niche markets as bird watching, astronomers / dark skies, mycology, transhumance, sport and adventure, non-family tourism, disable people, business tourism. Focusing on niche markets, the effects of seasonality could be better handled. (See following action related to eco-visitor profile)

To commercialize Avila province as destination for hosting Sport Events, mostly in low season periods, this kind of tourist are more environmental tourism concerned (see following Action #16)

Event for practitioners in the sector on “Integrated Packages” to be hosted in Avila

Preconditions: cooperation related to tourism between capital and county administrations, and predisposition by other agents belonging to different sectors.

Possible Barriers: in some cases different tourist profile from the cultural or religious tourist from those looking for nature, outdoor activities....

Good Practice Example:

THETRIS project: Thematic Transnational Church Route development with the involvement of local society, in rural regions cultural heritage has important value in regional development, increase the competitiveness by the capitalization of cultural heritage, to develop long term strategies for the preservation and sustainable exploitation of churches in its natural habitat, and positive effects on all the community, as more tourists come to the rural areas, which boosts economic development, create jobs, increase living standards, and local residents will stay in their area. www.thetris.eu

2.5.3. Recommendation 3 (Chapter Partnership): Develop an “eco-friendly” local transportation system for tourists

Action #16 : Sustainable destination for Eco-friendly visitors

Relevance of the Action: An eco-friendly visitor profile is gaining importance according to market data, this target group is looking for a different offer from the sun&beach, and

Stakeholders: Avila County Council – Tourism department, outdoor activities companies,

Expected Results:

Signposting the routes for biking, hiking, riding as GR 180 around Gredos Mountains range without potential damage risk of the natural resources, controlled mushrooms harvest, preserving landscapes.

First approach to the European Tourism ETIS and Sustainable measures to be displayed at the Tourism Avila web site and promotional material, looking for those potential tourist related to Green Facilities reducing the CO2 footprint for contributing to a low carbon economy (use of renewable energy sources, efficient equipment, recharging stations for electric vehicles.

Discussions about sustainable means of transport within the province, adapted to tourist needs apart from regular lines.

Preconditions: the routes must be set up and identified accordingly in advance

Possible Barriers: Potential conflict of interest between lands owners and some routes.

Good Practice Example:

Sustainable Destination and Awards obtained: Røros, Sør-Trøndelag, tourism web site

<http://en.roros.no/>

<http://en.trondelag.com>

Recommendation 5. Use EU programmes (eg. Horizon2020 – innovation programmes for SMEs, Erasmus+)

See the following action above in this same document:

Chapter 4: PARTNERHSIP, Action #14 : Participation in European Projects related to Tourism

Section 3: Conclusions

In the Report, the peer team suggested to the decision makers of the Province of Avila the following summary in order to help them with developing new initiatives and policies that will lead to the creation of new jobs and a better exploitation of possibilities offered by the tourism potential of the area, based on the previous consultation of industry, employers, representatives of University and public administration through a bottom up approach:

1. **Strategy and coordination**
2. **Cooperation Avila city and rural areas: integrated packages**
3. **Internationalisation**

To achieve these general goals the actions to be taken are listed below:

STRATEGY

Action #1: Updating of the Tourism Strategy

Action #2: Internationalization of Avila Tourism

HUMAN RESOURCES AND EDUCATION

Action #3 : Creation of Centre for Analyze and Tourist Innovation

Action #4 : Improvement of foreign language skills

Action #5: Collaboration between University of Salamanca – Tourism Degree and other International initiatives

Action #6 : Lifelong Learning training: Cultural awareness training

Action #7 : Specific training courses

Action #8 : Closer relationship between Tourism sector needs and University Tourism Degree educative programme

INNOVATIVE ENVIRONMENT

Action #9 : Inclusion of the Innovative approach into the tourism sector

Action #10 : Utilization of innovative tools at the tourism sector

PARTNERSHIP

Action #11 : Common message and branding

Action #12 : Cooperation between local level business

Action #13 : Hosting Fam Trips and Tour-operators destination journeys

Action #14 : Participation in European Projects related to Tourism

SUSTAINABILITY OF JOBS

Action #15 : Creation of Integrated Packages

Action #16 : Sustainable destination for Eco-friendly visitors