



Escape2

Module 4 Stimulating demand – tools to develop a pipeline of new Agri/ adventure/ food/ recreation/ hospitality/ guides entrepreneurs in your region

Focus on Rural Tourism SMEs in Europe

www.escape2project.org



Training Course

**How to Develop a Successful HQRTS
(High Quality Rural Tourism Strategy)**



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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Introduction

The main objective of this module is to show to rural tourism entrepreneurs inclusive of culture, heritage or nature-based tourism, how to stimulate the demand by implementing initiatives in their current and future SME businesses. This module demonstrates concrete practices, ideas and solutions to attract more visitors in rural areas and rural businesses.

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Learning Outcomes



- Learn how to become a **successful entrepreneur** in rural tourism by learning the key ways to stimulate the demand in your business.
- Understand why it is important **to stimulate the demand.**
- Implement creative activities **to increase the awareness** of your business.
- Learn how to successfully **collaborate in a network.**
- Implement all the good practices you have learnt during this module by **interactive exercises and case studies!**

01

Why is it important to stimulate the demand?



Rural areas attract tourists not only because of their natural and cultural heritage, but also because of adventure/sports opportunities, gastronomy, local production and many others.

Nevertheless, it is extremely important to stimulate the demand in order to attract more tourists. Agrotourism entrepreneurs and owners of businesses in rural areas should start with preparing a concept note with ideas and actionable plan for rural tourism in their region which will not only encourage tourist inflow but will also support local communities. This task can leave a long lasting contribution to strengthen the rural economy and give new opportunities to the people in the rural area.

Rural tourism provides valuable commercial and employment opportunities for communities that are confronted with the growing challenge of offering viable livelihoods for their local populations.

Rural tourism has a high potential to stimulate local economic growth and social change because of its complementarity with other economic activities, its contribution to GDP and job creation, and its capacity to promote the dispersal of demand in time (fight seasonality) and along a wider territory.

02

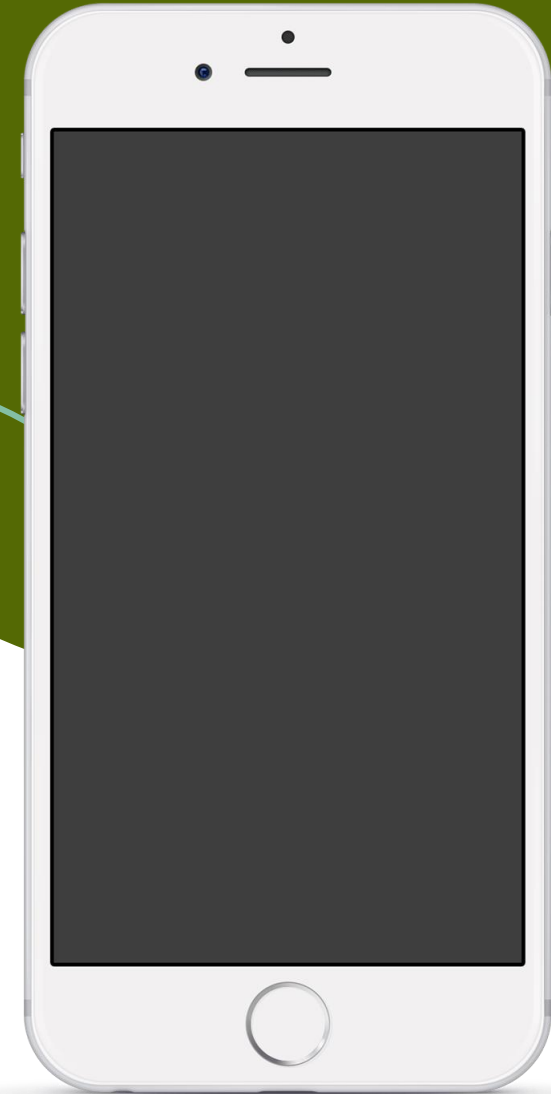
Innovative/creative tools to attract tourists in rural areas

Digital tools

Following the market analysis that we have made in 9 EU countries for ESCAPE2 Project, there is currently a large rural-urban gap in the use of digital tools by micro and small accommodation enterprises in rural areas.

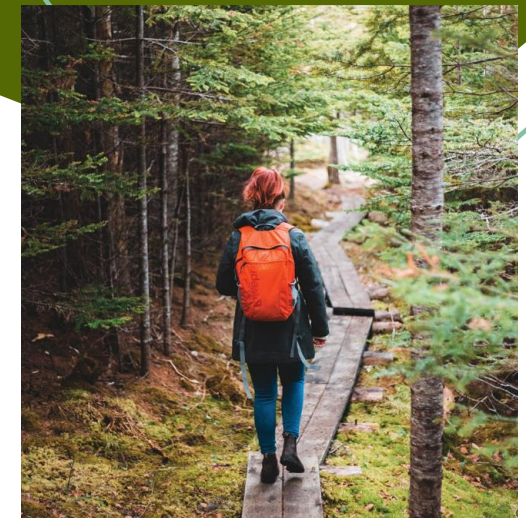
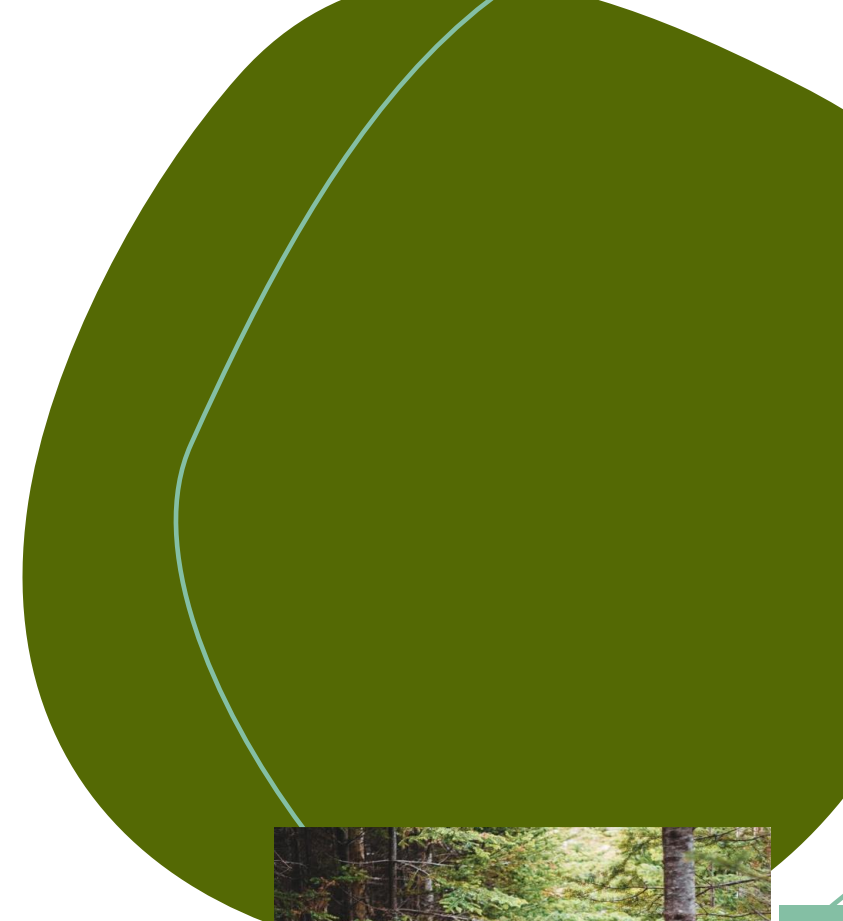
According to the collected data, the use of digital tools by rural businesses is low due to the lack of access to mobile internet, insufficient awareness of the digital tools available and insufficient digital literacy to utilize them.

However, digital tools are powerful instrument to stimulate the demand in rural tourism. SME development in rural areas could be an opportunity to create new jobs, stabilize rural populations, and implement innovation in different industries.



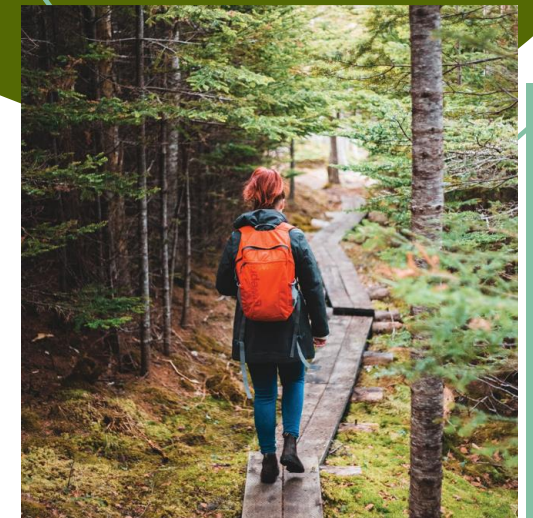
Digital tools in accommodation

Basic/essential tools	Expert tools
Website	Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
Social media profiles	Data analytics software
Reservation software	Mobile app
Online procurement/e-commerce	Interactive stands for information about the area (cultural monuments, sports & adventure activities, events in the area for the following days)



Digital tools in hospitality

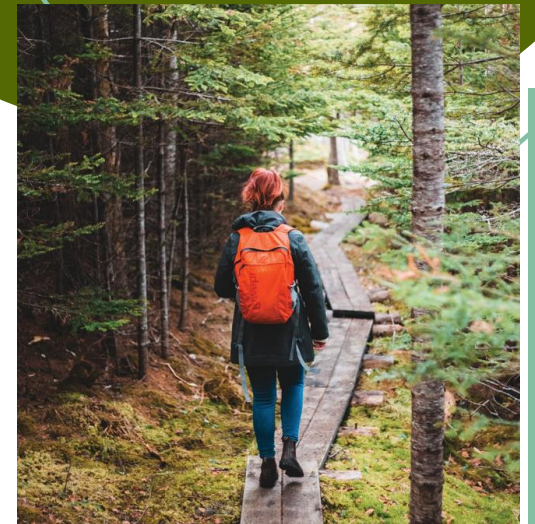
Basic/essential tools	Expert tools
Website	Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
Social media profiles	Data analytics software
Online reservation system	





Financial tools

- The EU is committed to supporting the development of rural tourism small businesses through several funds such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Cohesion fund (CF), European Social Fund (ESF), and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). However, there remains a disconnect between the number of SMEs and support for their development in urban areas compared to rural areas.
- Investments in rural areas should be not only public ones but also private.



Marketing tools

Stimulating demand in rural tourism requires using large number of tools. Indeed, marketing is one of the most powerful ones.

Here is a list of the main marketing tools for stimulating demand in agrotourism :

- Website & Social media
- Local press/radio/TV advertising
- Newsletters
- E-commerce and mobile applications
- Partnerships with other local producers/rural businesses
- Creating a calendar of events to disseminate in advance the activities of your business
- Partnerships with local schools/universities/Local Action Groups etc.
- Take part in different promotional networks in order to grow the business (Tripadvisor, Trivago, Booking etc.)

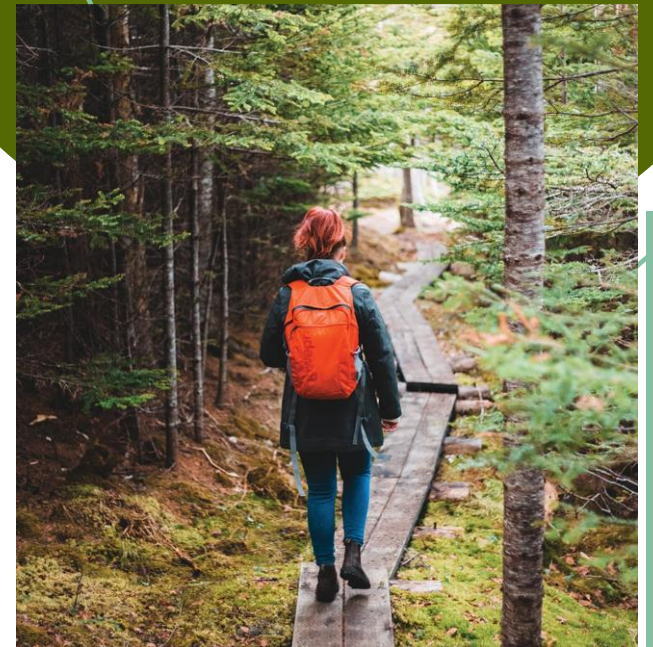


Sustainability

Tourism is an activity that contributes directly and indirectly to the development of rural areas. But this development needs to be sustainable. To do this, appropriate policies that positively influence these areas from an :

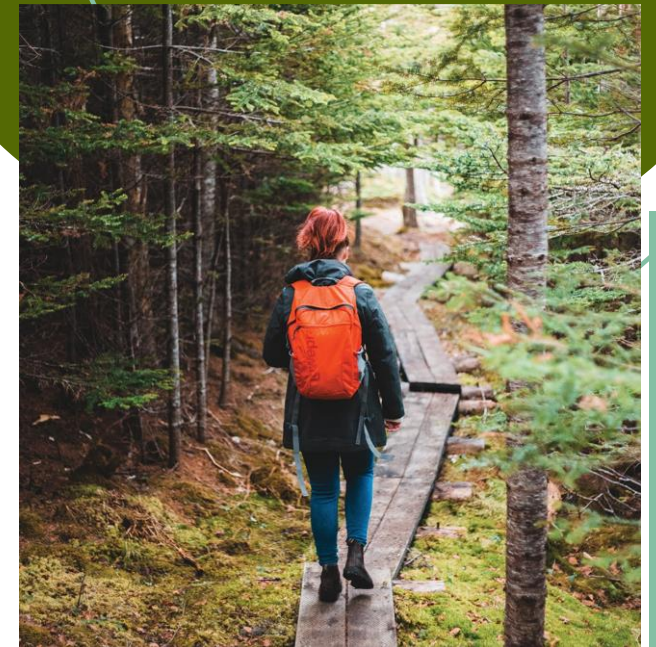
- economic,
- social,
- cultural

point of view must be implemented.



Questions to consider

- The economic area : *Is your business attracting investors in your region?*
- The social area : *Is your business employing people from the rural area?*
- The cultural area : *How does your business support the local cultural heritage?*



Staff training tools

Entrepreneurs from rural areas are often experiencing difficulties in finding labour hand, as most of the young people are leaving the countryside in order to find more stable job in the big cities.

Business owners in rural areas should try to offer full time job positions, instead of seasonal workplaces. Providing initial training, language courses and opportunities for professional growth is key factor for employee's loyalty.

A powerful tool to stimulate the demand and to make tourists feel more comfortable in your area is to provide an excellent service. This includes well trained staff, speaking at least one foreign language, with increased awareness about the potential of the area.



Infrastructure & accessibility

Stimulating demand would be easier if several rules are followed. For example :

- ✓ Availability of parking areas
- ✓ Road signs and sufficient local transports options
- ✓ Providing access for people with disabilities
- ✓ Providing services for people with disabilities (audio guides, ramp access, etc.)
- ✓ Opening and closing hours of cultural sites/farms/agrotourism sites extended during summer, to maintain the site open during weekends
- ✓ Availability of free Wi-Fi
- ✓ Presence on Google Maps



Let's summarize!

Main tools to stimulate demand in rural tourism :

- Improve management skills and implement software/systems for better organization of the stay of the guests;
- Assure the accessibility for people with special needs and disabilities;
- Invest in customer relations and marketing of the business;
- Create “packages” with different physical activities, workshops for traditional food or cultural visits;
- Serve local food from local farmers and create a promotional network between guests and local producers;



Let's summarize!

Main tools to stimulate demand in rural tourism :

- Provide an authentic emotional experience to the guests, by organizing folklore programs or other entertaining activities;
- Provide parking areas near the site;
- In many rural areas there is a problem with the coverage of the mobile operators and respectively with the Internet providers. Nowadays, in order to attract tourists, we must provide the conditions for the use of smart devices, communication technologies, etc. Without this, no tourist would come for more than a few hours;
- Related European or National projects for potential subsidies in order to improve the sites and the region.



03

Activities/dynamics to stimulate creativity in entrepreneurs



What is creativity?

- ✓ Thinking out of the box
- ✓ Finding alternative solutions to problems
- ✓ Creativity is "the ability to see new relationships, to produce extraordinary ideas and to deviate from traditional patterns of thinking", (Raymond Corsini, the Encyclopedia of Psychology)
- ✓ A process of developing and expressing new ideas that could be useful
- ✓ Creativity is our ability to create
- ✓ Creativity is inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks

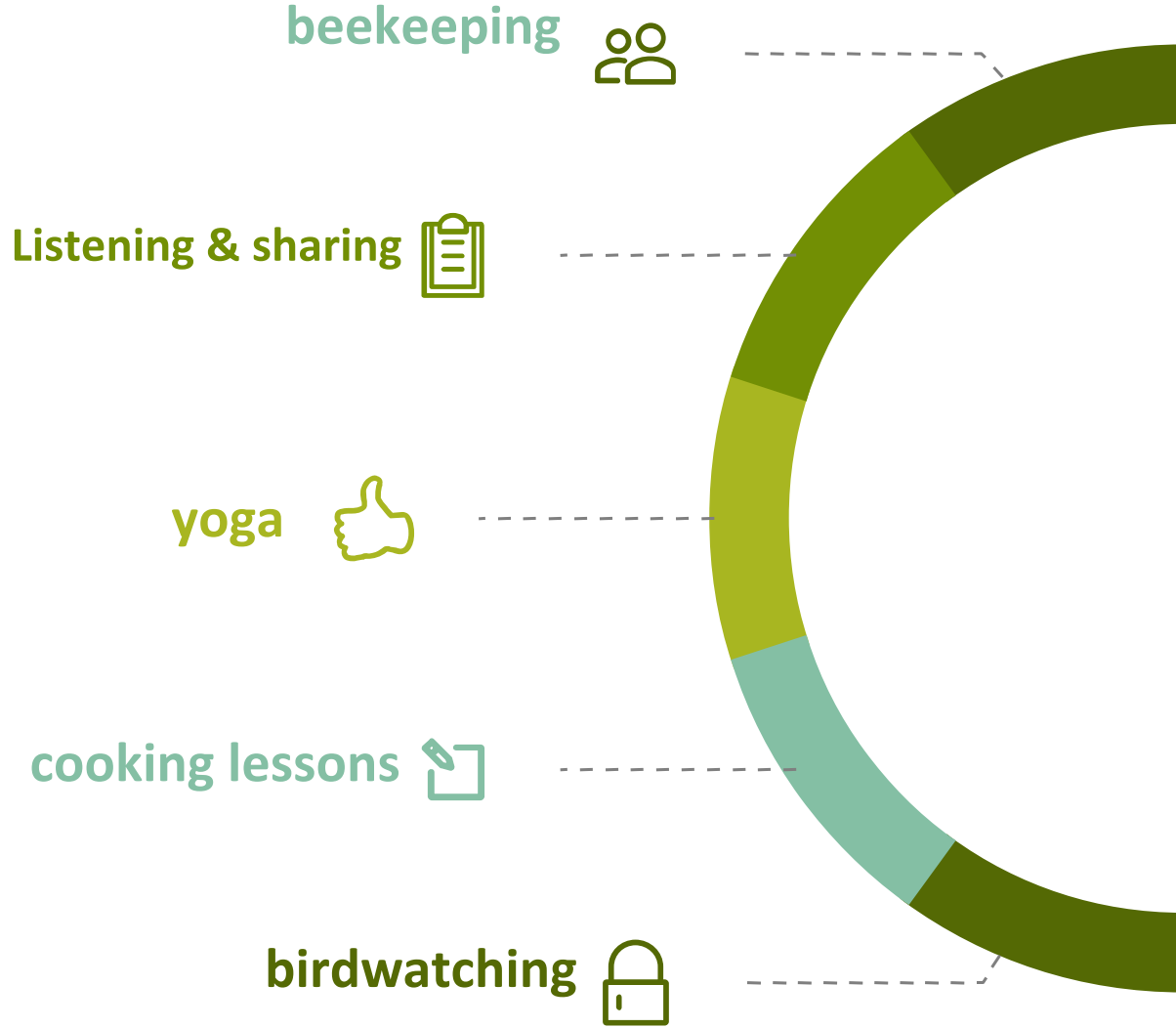
Creative dynamics for entrepreneurs in rural areas

Activity 1 “Listen and share”

Type of creativity : Narratological creativity

In this activity, each 2 people form a group. One is a listener and the other one is the speaker. For 5 minutes, the speaker tell a story (it can be not a real story but invented) with a lot of details like precise dates, hours, a lot of names and numbers. The listener only listens without taking notes. After the 5 minutes, the listener should repeat the story that the speaker told him, trying to miss the less information possible.

Afterwards they exchange roles, the listener becomes the speaker so that both of us see either they are better at listening or speaking. This activity trains our brain to remember details and shows how the same story could be transformed by the point of view another person.

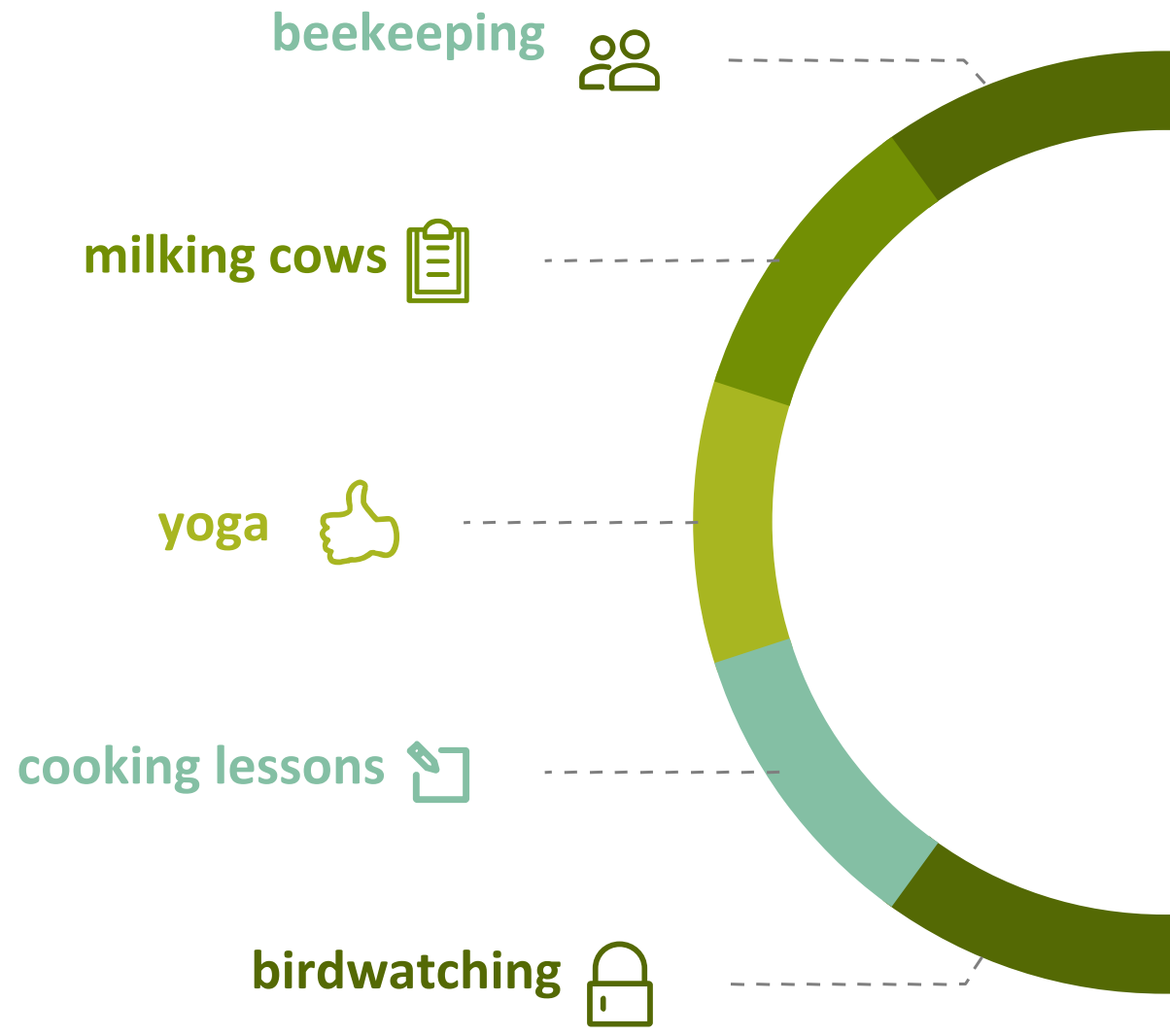


Creative dynamics for entrepreneurs in rural areas

Activity 2 “Be my guest”

Type of creativity : Analogical creativity

An outsider (a person NOT involved in agriculture, working in completely other field) comes into the farm and tries to promote new, creative ideas into the existing agricultural system. The bigger the diversity of the outsiders involved the better. Different ages, genders, skills, competences or education would give a variety of visions and ideas. The point of view of an exterior person is more accurate as his opinion is objective. The recommendations he could provide would be useful for solving current problems. Also, he could give his point of view as a consumer, for example what he likes most in a product?, why he buys this product?, where else he would like to find it? etc.

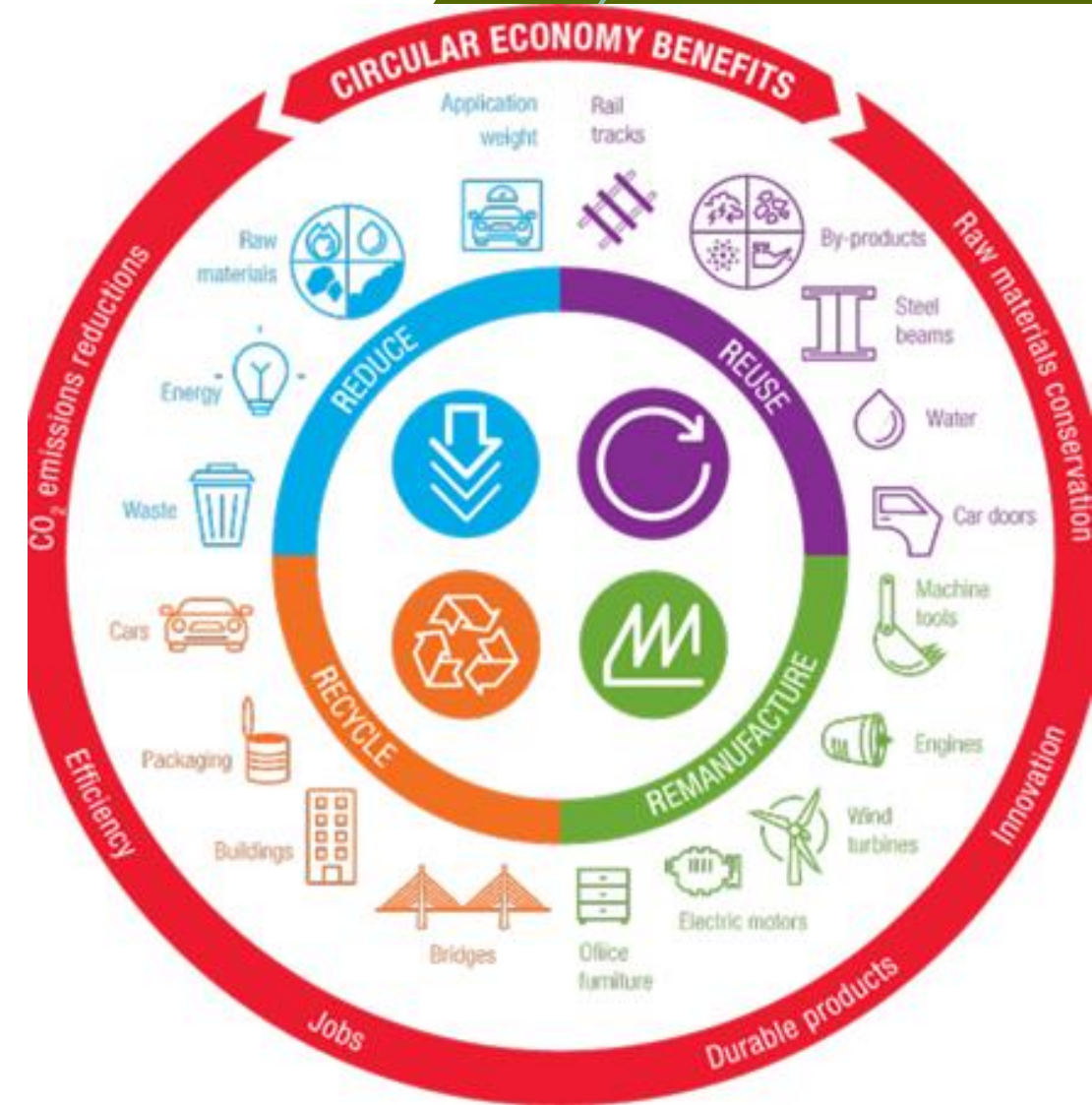


04

**Stimulating demand by
working in network and
circular economy**

Circular economy

- **Definition:** The circular economy is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. In this way, the life cycle of products is extended. In practice, it implies reducing waste to a minimum. The CE holds big potentials for tourism businesses in reaching higher sustainability and profitability, not least related to the provision of accommodation, food and spa services and the related material flows of energy, foodstuffs, water etc.

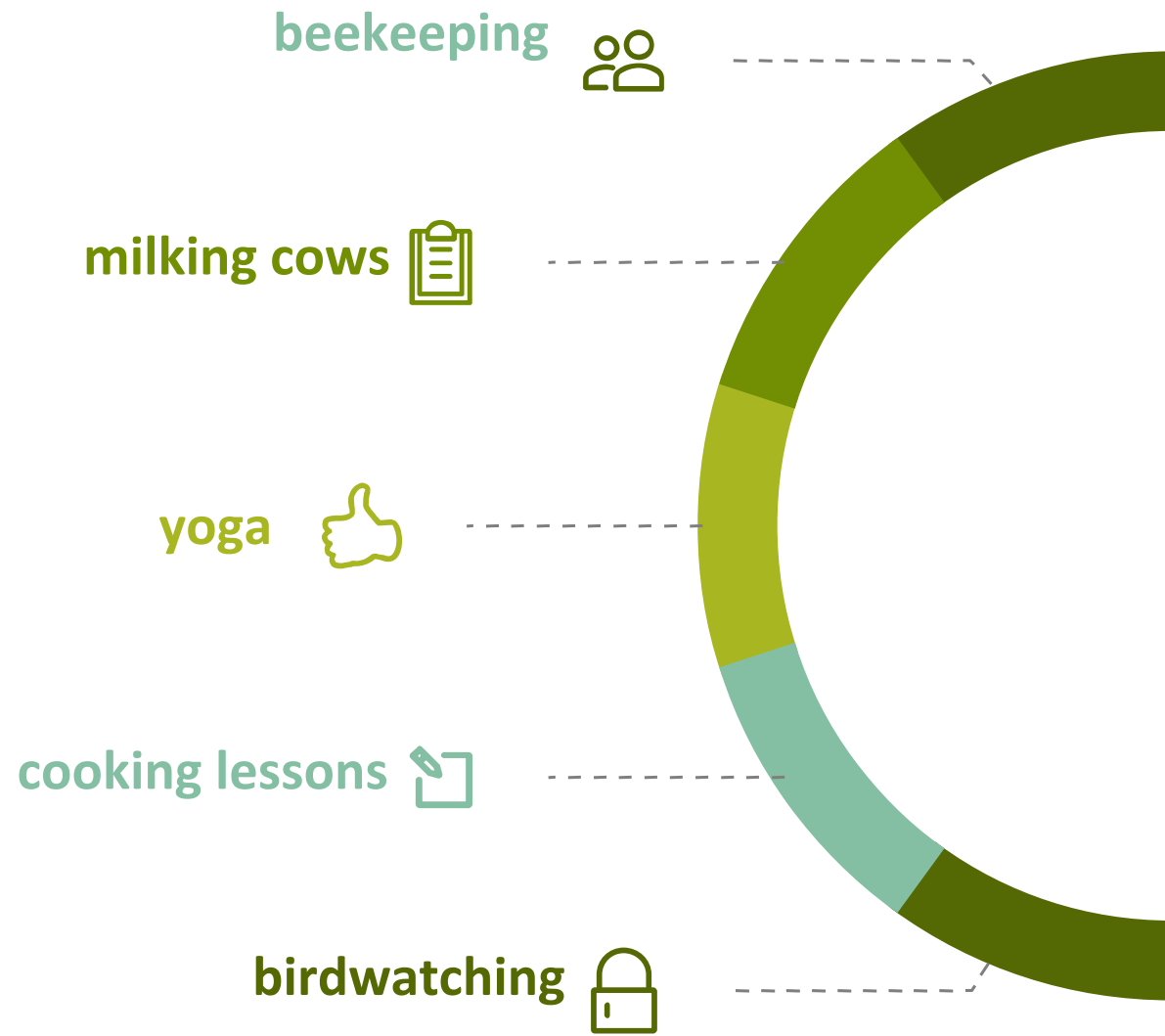


Creative sustainable activity for rural entrepreneurs

Activity 3 "ReUse me"

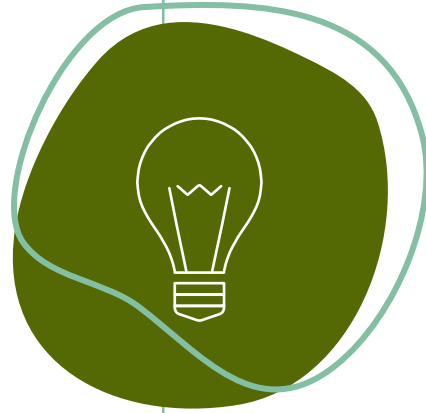
Type of creativity : Bisociative creativity

Every production has a lot of leftovers and waste. This activity involves all the workers. The entire staff has to list the waste of the company : it could be papers, grape skin, meat, seeds, flowers, etc. After listing all the waste that the company has, employees can split in small groups. The aim of the exercise is to find a way for a circular economy and provide environment friendly solutions to the problems. Doing this will enlarge the creativity in the team but will also make the company eco-friendlier and more sustainable.



Activity:

You are owner of a vineyard in a small village in rural area. What will be your strategy to stimulate demand?



Brainstorm and list at least 5 good practices/tools that you would implement in your vineyard to attract more tourists.



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Module Complete Well Done!

Next is Module 5 - Accessing resources - training in innovative access to public finance, crowdfunding potential and attracting corporate sponsors



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