

EUquus - Equestrian tourism routes in Europe

Nowadays, there is an increasing demand for nature tourism in Europe, and equestrian tourism products are a specific segment in this huge trend. Equestrian tourism retains the interest of the largest number of horse riders and attracts the general public through its sustainable values.

However, there are some problems that hindered the boosting of the potential of such tourism: basically, supply of equestrian tourism products is scattered and low structured, with high differences among countries. In addition, business people are associated or working together in a small territory level, hence leading to lack of promotion, commercialisation and recognition at European level, as well as the isolation of initiatives of labelling and establishment of quality standards.

Main objectives

Within this scenario, the objectives of the project *EUquus - Equestrian tourism routes in Europe* are twofold:

- To develop tools for supporting the stakeholders in the creation of quality equestrian tourism routes and products. *EUquus* will involve small and micro enterprises and local and regional authorities in the development and promotion of the equestrian tourism routes, in order to increase the high quality tourism in Europe, by drafting a *Decalogue of best practices in equestrian tourism*, an *EUquus Label* and businesses dynamisation. The added value of such routes should be the emphasis given to the other elements of the destinations as gastronomy, cultural values, enotourism, beaches, nautical activities, etc. besides the own values of the equestrian product itself.
- To set up a platform for improving the commercialisation of equestrian tourism products around Europe, with the aim of increasing the number of tourists motivated by equestrian tourism and attracting new ones. This will lead to the creation of a tourist flow motivated by equestrian tourism among European countries. This platform will take the form of a Web portal, allowing the networking between small and micro enterprises of the sector and tour operators, and will help promoting equestrian routes through commercial activities and social media activities.

Description of activities

The project will be organised in five work packages (WP). During the implementation of each work package a list of activities that will help to achieve the expected outcomes will be carried out.

1. Development of tools for supporting the creation of equestrian tourism routes and products. The creation of equestrian tourism products must take into account several aspects both related to the small and micro sized enterprises of the sector (like the kind of horse or the guide capacity) and to public administrations (public uses of the paths, access to tourist resources, road maintenance, etc.). Therefore, the relationship between the public and private sectors is essential to assure the viability and quality of the product. This WP will include a diagnosis and analysis of the equestrian tourism product in Europe, a *Decalogue of best practices in equestrian tourism* and a specific *EUquus Label*.

2. Business development. Development and training plan for the small and micro sized enterprises working in the equestrian and tourism sector is crucial to implement the equestrian tourism products and achieve higher competitiveness, as well as to raise the quality of the services offered. This WP will carry out a development and training plan for small and micro sized enterprises to promote the creation of products, and business networking meetings.

3. EUquus Web portal. The EUquus web portal will be a commercial tool for the promotion of equestrian professionals, travel agencies and territories. It has to be a reference website in the equestrian tourism field in Europe, a meeting point for equestrian customers (the tourists) where they will find in a structured way all the quality equestrian tourism routes offered in Europe.

4. Communication and commercialisation strategy. The communication and commercialisation strategy will have the aim of assuring the sustainability of the project after the end of the project period. This WP comprises the communication plan and commercialisation arrangements.

5. Management, coordination and evaluation. The objective of this work package will be to ensure the good functioning during the lifetime of the project, to prepare the necessary reports and administrative information, to achieve the project goals, activities and outcomes and to allow the information exchange during the implementation of the project.

The expected impacts could be grouped around such aspects as: better knowledge of the equestrian tourism sector, creation of new quality equestrian tourism routes and products, verification of the existing equestrian routes, greater collaboration of small and medium sized enterprises of the equestrian and tourism sectors and stronger relationship of public and private stakeholders.

Duration of the project: 1 May 2013 – 31 October 2014

Coordinator:

Diputació de Barcelona – Barcelona Province Council (Spain)

Partners:

The project will be developed by a consortium of nine public and private partners from seven countries, representing the different stakeholders involved in this thematic tourism sector all over Europe:

- Diputació de Barcelona (Spain)
- Fundació Destí Menorca (Spain)
- Provincia di Salerno (Italy)
- Chambre Départementale d'Agriculture de la Dordogne (France)
- Hushållningsällskapet Östergötland (Sweden)
- Far & Ride LTD (United Kingdom)
- Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (Croatia)
- Only Raid SL (Spain)
- Przedsiębiorstwo Rolniczo - Hodowlane GALOPOL (Poland)

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