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# PREPARE

## Promoting Environmental Protection and Learning on Climate Change

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### National Report: North Macedonia

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## 1. Executive Summary

### 2. Introduction

The idea about sustainable and responsible tourism emerged following the environmental awareness in the 60s and 70s that rose as a result of the environmental and social turbulences which the growing phenomenon of mass tourism has caused in some tourism destinations (Ljupcho Janevski, 2017). The lack of sensitivity towards local communities, nature and culture witnessed in those years, resulted in a movement for environmentally sound tourism which promoted responsible travel, environmental norms and sustainability of the tourism industry (Ljupcho Janevski, 2017).

Aiming to support the idea of eco and rural tourism and, especially, green transition of the tourism industry through green skills capacity building, the National Report of North Macedonia, , explores the economic impact of travel and tourism in the country before and after the Covid-19; it explores the overall benefits it brings to the livelihood of local communities; the possible environmental impact, including the benefits on the environment and the local development. Furthermore, the report introduces a selected number of sustainable, eco and rural tourism practices which aim to inspire green transition of the tourism industry, as well as, creation of green jobs.

## 3. Sustainable tourism: The national context

### 3.1. Tourism in North Macedonia: Statistics

As a small and landlocked country, North Macedonia is far from a popular tourism destination. Compared to Greece and Turkey, for example, which are among the top 10 most visited destinations in the World and in Europe for 2021 and 2022 (UNWTO, 2023), the country was ranked 122<sup>nd</sup> in 2021 (World Data, 2022). However, despite the modest volume of tourism flows in the country, the tourism industry, same as in other countries, is considered to have high impact on the generation of income, employment as well as on development of many national economic sectors, and especially on the local development and the reduction of migration (Macedonia Timeless, Analytica, 2023).

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For example, in 2021, the tourism industry in the country inhabited by less than 2 million people, contributed 5.7% of the total number of people employed which means that a total of 45.2 thousand people were employed in tourism and accommodation only (UNWTO, 2021). In 2019, the contribution of travel and tourism industry to employment was 51.4 thousand persons or 29.1 thousand persons more than in 2000, growing at an average annual rate of 3.47% (KNOEMA).

Furthermore, in 2021, traveling and tourism has contributed by 3.3% to the country’s economy or a 369 billion EUR, which is 3 times less than in 2019 when contribution of tourism and travel to GDP was 7.4% (Elsana Aqifi, Arta Kadriu, 2021).

Impact of the Covid-19 on tourism, seen through numbers:

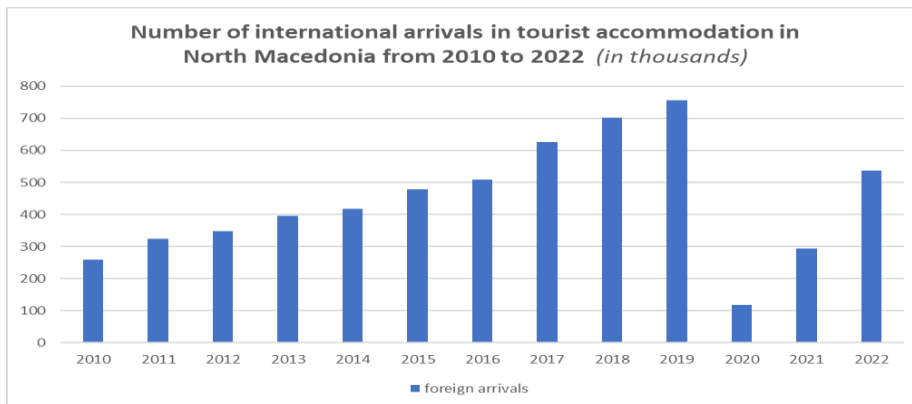


Table 1 (source: Makstat)

### 3.2. Impact on the environment

As a result of the ambitious plans and programs for tourism promotion such as: subsidies for female tourism entrepreneurs, for rural tourism, for active tourism, for low-priced flights, for organized foreign traveling groups etc., up until 2020, the travel and tourism industry were experiencing a continuous growth (see Table 1). With the restart of the tourism and traveling and the, even more

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ambitious Government's plans to boost promotion of local attractions, the number of international arrivals and overnight stays has once again risen with expectations that 2023 and, especially 2024 will be much better than 2019 when the country achieved its maximum of 2.29 million overnight stays and 755.44 thousand international arrivals (DW, 2023).

For example, one of the most attractive destinations in the country – Ohrid is visited by 200 to 300 thousand people (Volker Ahlemeyer, EBRD, 2022) each year with the expectation that this number will increase in the next few years (DW, 2023). And although the positive effects of tourism are undoubtedly important for the local development and can contribute to restoration of nature, conservation of cultural heritage, investments in (green) infrastructure and the livelihood of local residents (Biljana Petrevska, 2013), however, a large number of visitors in the small-sized cities (Ohrid for example is inhabited by 51.4 thousand people) may put stress on nature and the already jeopardized biodiversity, natural resources, the air quality etc., if essential environment protection laws and bylaws are not enforced strictly.

For example, in the past few years, numerous cases of illegal cutting and burning of reed fields were reported in the coastline area of Ohrid Lake, and in particular in the Struga-Kalishta area (BIRN, 2021). Not long after the reed fields were destroyed, new campsites have been opened in the area (BIRN, 2021). This has been the case many times before, even though cutting and burning reed is illegal in the country, due to their importance for filtering of lake water, ensuring biodiversity survival and fish and bird nesting (Ohrid SOS, 2019)<sup>1</sup>.

Due to this, as well as due to the intense urbanization and illegal construction along the protected coastline, the pollution caused by waste waters, etc., the lake was in serious danger to lose its UNESCO World Heritage status (Radio Free Europe, 2020; Nova Makedonija, 2023).

Similar issues are being reported in the National Park Shar Planina where, in the past few months approximately 800 illegal buildings have been recorded (MIA, 2023). Due to the specific soil in this area,

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<sup>1</sup> In 1989, the number of birds was roughly 79 thousand. In 2010, it dropped to 10 thousand and rose to 24.7 thousand in 2021. This has been linked to the practice of reed fields cutting and burning (Ohrid SOS, 2019)



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and the frequent rains in the Polog region, in the summer of 2023 a landslide of mud, rocks and sand has alarmed the local residents of the nearby village - Tearce (MIA, 2023).

### 3.3. Policies

By accepting the Green Agenda for the Western Balkan, in 2020 North Macedonia has committed to the “climate-neutral continent by 2050”.

This means that, with support from the European Union and in line with the European Green Deal the country will establish a new growth strategy that supports and promotes a sustainable economy over the traditional economic model (Regional Cooperation Council, 2020). This, for North Macedonia and the Balkan region also means:

- Transition towards clean energy
- Enabling circular economy
- Combating air, water and soil pollution
- Supporting sustainable agriculture and food production and,
- Exploitation of the tourism potential, by focusing on biodiversity protection and restoration of ecosystems (Regional Cooperation Council, 2020).

In regard to the Green Agenda, the country has initiated a process to further harmonize its legal framework with the European directives, especially in the field of tourism, environment protection, energy, etc. (Regional Cooperation Council, 2020). A long-term Strategy on climate action and a climate action plan have been adopted with the main objective to ensure green, low carbon and climate resilient development of the country (Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, 2021). The strategy also projected creation of 10,000 green jobs by 2035 (MEPP, 2021).



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Apart from that, North Macedonia has adopted strategies and action plans in which sustainable tourism has been introduced<sup>2</sup>, as well as promotional campaigns and actions for stimulating and promoting sustainable tourism practices in the country, e.g., “Travel like local”, “The taste of Macedonia”, etc.

On the other hand, reports from the World Bank, European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have noted a series of weaknesses which hinder the development of tourism in the country.

OECD has noted a “weak governance of the tourism sector at national level” and a low level of policy coherence. For example, in 2018, North Macedonia has adopted a National Strategy for the Transport Sector (NSTS) for the period 2018-2030. And although the strategy has been developed as a result of a multi-stakeholder consultations, the NSTS has not been aligned with the tourism policy, which, as noted by OECD, shows not only a lack of holistic policy making, but it’s impacting the attractiveness and the competitiveness of the tourism of North Macedonia in the Balkan region (OECD, 2021). The same “Competitiveness in South East Europe” Report (OECD, 2021), also highlights the lack of coordination and cooperation among relevant institutions on national, regional and local level; low level of cooperation with the private sector; limited resources, including limited capacity for tourism policy implementation which too, obstruct the tourism development and show lack of real commitment to creating an enabling environment for maximum results (OECD, 2021). e

### 3.4. Sustainable tourism practices

#### 3.4.1. National context

In a study conducted in 2016, little less than a year after the country signed the Paris agreement and submitted its first Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (August 2015) focused on climate change mitigation and on policies and measures leading to GHG emissions, it was indicated that although

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<sup>2</sup> E.g., Strategy for Eco Tourism development in the municipality of Berovo (2005), Strategy for rural tourism development in the municipality of Pehchevo (2018-2023), Sub-strategy for development of sports tourism (2015-2018), Sub-strategy for traditions and events in North Macedonia (2014).



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hotel managers are aware of the importance of the energy consumption and environmental protection, implementation of sustainable practices in terms of saving energy and introducing “environmentally compatible and sustainable alternatives” was not a priority for them (Petrevska, Cingoski & Serafimova, 2016).

According to the study, the five-star hotels were the most willing to use energy efficient appliances to reduce energy consumption, while a large number of hotels lacked measures to reduce the conventional energy use and replace it with renewable energy sources (Petrevska, Cingoski & Serafimova, 2016) The same study also, emphasizes the need for strategies for sustainable development, to increase the use of renewable energy resources and to achieve sustainable tourism development focused not only on number of arrivals and overnight stays, but on promoting eco-friendly accommodation facilities and shifting their professional ethics as whole (Petrevska, Cingoski & Serafimova, 2016).

Since then, much has changed in terms of environmental awareness and, probably, willingness of the hospitality industry to adopt new and sustainable practices. Now when accommodation preferences of contemporary tourists have shifted even more towards eco-friendly hotels and establishments, green products and green services, (Biljana Petrevska, 2016) hotel managers and the entire tourism industry are challenged to compete with each other by adopting new and innovative adjustments towards greener and more sustainable practices in order to meet the environmental needs and expectations of their potential customers. And this is especially important for North Macedonia, as a country where the promotion of alternative, rural and eco-tourism has become an increasingly important objective.

In that regard, some of the practices which hotel accommodations in North Macedonia should adopt are for example (Ivanov, Ivanova and Iankova, 2014)<sup>3</sup>:

- Waste separation
- Waste composting
- Solar panels
- Policy for energy saving by the employees
- Policy for energy saving by the tourists

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<sup>3</sup> Example taken from Bulgaria's case: <https://nexttourismgeneration.eu/>





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- Energy-saving electric bulbs
- Movement detectors for controlling lights in common areas
- Movement detectors for controlling lights in rooms
- Use of energy-saving appliances (class A or higher)
- Water cleaning (before being used by the tourists)
- Water cleaning (after being used by the tourists)
- Solar panels for warm water
- Policy for water saving by the employees
- Policy for water saving by the tourists
- Water tap aerators
- Water tap photocells for water consumption control
- Thermal-insulation of the building
- Hydro-insulation of the building
- Clean towels upon request only
- Own or local production of food products (e.g. milk, yogurt, meat)
- Use of bio/eco food products
- Use of recycled paper for administrative purposes
- Natural bath cosmetics
- Cleaning with biodegradable substances

Furthermore, to support the transition and ensure eco-friendly tourism as whole, institutions jointly with organizations and hospitality representatives should continuously work to:

- increase the level of awareness among hotel personnel regarding the benefits that eco-hotels and eco-friendly tourism bring through continuous training;
- introduce subsidies aimed at “fulfilling preconditions for running a high energy efficient hotel”, “water cleaning and saving” “use of bioproducts”;
- introduce standards and specifications which will lead to application of environmental protection practices and energy efficient concepts in hotels, etc. (NTG Alliance, 2019)



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### 3.4.2. Diverse examples of sustainable tourism practices

Although there is much to be done to support sustainable tourism, in the past decade, there have been various initiatives that aimed to improve the general situation in the tourism sector and bring social, economic and environmental benefits to the country and to the local communities and businesses.

For example, (1) with the support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), a Nature Conservative Project (Program) has been launched in the Bregalnica region. The initiative led by a local private company Pharmachem<sup>4</sup> and with the technical support from Helvetas<sup>5</sup> aimed to ensure official **creation of the Protected Areas** of Osogovo Mountains and Maleshevo, as well as **sustainable livelihoods** of the people living in and around these areas, **protection of biodiversity** and promotion and dissemination of **eco or agri-tourism** in the region.

Under this same program, a series of small scale local and regional projects have been sub-granted, many of which focused on promotion of local and regional eco-tourism. The same program, has also co-funded the 2019 multiple award-winning documentary film, Honeyland, dedicated to the last female beekeeper in Europe – Hatidze, living in a remote mountain village in Macedonia.

Another initiative, supported by the EU is the (2) cross-border project between Albania and Macedonia which helped in construction of a new building of the Red Cross training center in Ohrid, so that a proper training conditions for **young locals willing to become mountain rescuers** and to help the cross-border region around Lake Ohrid to become **safe destination for adventure tourism** (EU, 2023).

Furthermore, aiming towards (3) **sustainable tourism and hotel management**, a reconstruction of an old hotel - Inex Gorica, located at the shore of Lake Ohrid - a World Heritage Site (Nina Tsintsadze, 2022) was initiated. With the support of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the EU, the half a century old achieved to replace all of its external windows and doors, to build insulation of

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<sup>4</sup> A leading trade and environmental consulting company in North Macedonia, established in 1990.

<sup>5</sup> An independent development organization aimed to support poor and disadvantaged communities across the globe.



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outer walls, to rebuild the roof, including to install new heating and cooling system with heat pumps to **cut energy costs**.

Also, the **National Park Galichica (Galichica, 2021)** has been actively engaged in tourism promotion by offering a variety of outdoor activities, camping, picnic, birds monitoring, caves exploring, mountain biking, paragliding and etc. Recently, the national park has also been implementing a citizen science initiative in which nature lovers, locals and travelers have been invited to monitor and gather data about specific species in the park and contribute to protection of species and promotion of science and nature.

Furthermore, the Government has been dedicated to the promotion of eco and alternative forms of tourism, e.g., **“50 villages – 50 tourism stories” project**, that in the next 5 years will focus on growth of number of accommodations in rural areas.

In general, in the past few years the number of small and sustainable tourist businesses which promote outdoor, adventurous, rural or agritourism activities has flourished. All these initiatives have been funded through self-funding, national subsidies (for business starting, for promotion of rural tourism and etc.), or other domestic and foreign grants. In general, all these initiatives promote local traditional specialties, use local food, offer cycling and adventurous experiences, outdoor activities etc. to local and foreign travelers, including to digital nomads.

Furthermore, apart from the existing EU funding instruments for environment and climate action, including promotion of sustainable tourism such as the IPA cross-border programme, the INTERREG Adrion and etc., in July 2023, the European Union has initiated negotiations with Macedonia, along with Turkiye, Albania and 4 other countries for the EU’s LIFE programme. Thus, the country will have another opportunity to develop innovative environmental and climate techniques, approaches and learn from good practices that contribute to climate-neutral, circular economy and that protect and restore nature.



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## 4. Green skills and professions

### 4.1. Overview of the green skills in the tourism industry

When it comes to green skills in the hospitality industry, it is necessary to recognize the fact that hospitality businesses do not require specialized green skills but rather green attitude, general knowledge and understanding of environment protection, knowledge of the dangers and risks that irresponsible behavior and practices of the hospitality industry may cause to nature, knowledge and understanding of national and EU regulations, strategies and measures related to sustainable tourism practices, knowledge on trends and innovation in the field focused on reduction of negative effects on nature etc. (NTG Alliance, 2019).

On the other hand, all sustainable tourism practices such as installation of solar panels and devices for efficient energy and water consumption, waste management and in general, efficient use of resources, require specialized technical knowledge and skilled people, who too should be aware of the main ecological challenges, who should be able to recognize the potential risks, as well as to propose appropriate eco-friendly solutions for mitigation of those problems (NTG Alliance, 2019).

Some of these useful “green skills” for the hospitality industry, as identified by the NTG Alliance for the case of Bulgaria, which also can be applied in North Macedonia are:

- Ability to identify and propose solutions for efficient energy and water consumption
- Ability to identify and propose solutions for eco-friendly waste management, sewage, recycling and composting
- Knowledge and understanding of local biodiversity and conservation of biodiversity
- Understanding and advocating for sustainable transport (e.g., public and soft transport)
- Promotion of environmentally friendly activities and products
- Knowledge of climate change (NTG Alliance, 2019).

### 4.2. Green skills and professions in the national context



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In its two-year Report on Climate Change published in 2018, the Ministry of Environment has projected that by 2035 a min 6.2 thousand green jobs will be created, chiefly in the construction sector (more than 4 thousand new jobs), in the industries related to building materials, and in the field of renewable energy (around 540 new jobs, mainly in the photovoltaic sector/rooftop systems) (Radio MOF, 2022). Around 5.1 thousand direct jobs and 4.2 thousand indirect job or about 720 green jobs will also be created as a result of the transition to LED lighting, and almost as many new jobs are expected in heat generation from renewable energy sources such as solar thermal systems, biomass and heat pumps etc. (Duić, Markovska, Zdraveva, Dedinec, 2015).

Yet, as noted in the “Multi-dimensional review of the Western Balkans” (OECD, 2022), North Macedonia is lacking a skilled workforce equipped with “in demand” skills and competences, in order to stimulate future investments and improvements in renewables and energy efficiency (OECD, 2022).

Similar constraints are also noted in the North Macedonia’s tourism sector. The tourism industry too is lacking skilled workforce for higher value-added activities<sup>6</sup>, as well as with necessary capacity to innovate and adopt new technology (OECD, 2022). Green skills related to renewable energies (e.g., installation, operation and maintenance of renewable energy generation plants), green transport, energy efficiency of buildings, including tourism are lacking in North Macedonia (OECD, 2022).

Also, green jobs are not listed in the National Classification of Occupations (State Statistical Office, 2015), although the creation of green jobs is featured in national strategies and action plans, including the National Employment Strategy (OECD, 2022; Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2015). Therefore, the country needs to identify the green skills that are lacking, and in joint efforts of all relevant stakeholders – the Ministry of Education, chambers of commerce, the academic community and others – to create green curricula (OECD, 2022).

Examples of green and smart jobs and professions that can be further discussed are:

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<sup>6</sup> High-quality service, high-quality food and beverages, high-value local experiences. E.g., surprising your guests, offering personal tours, organizing welcome events, giving tips for local restaurants and attractions, etc.



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Industry	Sub-area	Typical jobs (examples)	Green skills (examples)
Construction	(1) Smart and sustainable buildings and construction (2) Sustainable materials	architects, carpenters, insulators, construction managers, construction workers, laborers, weatherization, or concrete labor &c.	valuing sustainability, green retrofitting of buildings, innovation, self-learning.
Agriculture	(1) Smart and sustainable food production (2) Food processing with high added value	agronomist, farmer / farm manager, greenhouse manager, restaurant manager, agricultural and food scientist, agricultural and food technician, sales manager &c.	sustainable farming practices, organic agriculture, permaculture, agroforestry, efficient resource management.
Tourism	(1) Sustainable tourism and catering	sustainable tour guide, sustainable tourism educator, environmental architect, sustainable tourism developer and planner, sustainable hotel manager, sustainable tourism operator etc.	ability to maximize the efficiency of energy and water consumption, ability to manage waste, sewage, recycling and composting, ability to promote conservation of biodiversity, to promote sustainable forms of transport, environmentally friendly activities and products, leadership skills – to drive green transition.
Transportation	(1) soft transportation <sup>7</sup> (2) hard transportation <sup>8</sup>	auto machinist, auto sales, bicycle repair, bio fuels producer, biofuels technician, carbon consultant, electric vehicle electrician, electric vehicle sales, electric motor mechanic, hybrid auto mechanics, hybrid auto engineer etc.	nature-centric design, automotive maintenance and repair for electric and hybrid vehicles, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Soft transportation or soft mobility is the transport of goods and people using non-motorized means such as: walking, cycling, skateboarding, running, roller skating. It is also referred to as active or human-powered mobility which in some contexts, can also refer to all environmentally-friendly transportation modes such as e-scooters, e-bikes, and electric cars (PlanH).

<sup>8</sup> Hart transportation or motorised transport is the transportation of goods and people using motorized transport devices such as: cars, busses, vans, trucks, motorcycles, scooters, and other similar types of transportation.



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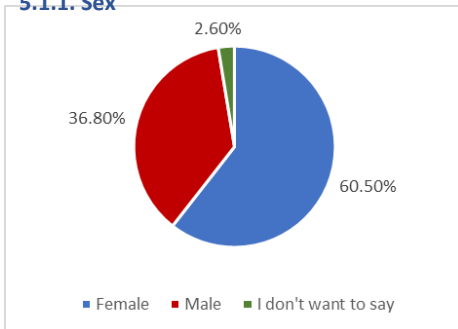
(Source: EHS jobs; Balkan Green Energy News; Hidden Lemur, Economic Chamber of North Macedonia, Analytics Insight, GreenComp, NTG Alliance)

## 5. Field research findings

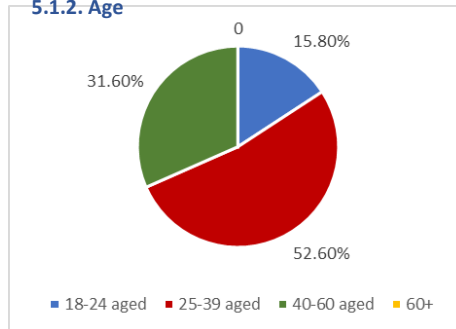
### 5.1. Demographics

A total of 38 people have participated in an online survey conducted in June 2023. The majority of the respondents were females (60.5%), same as, the majority of the respondents were aged 25-39 (52.6%), have a high level of education (52.6%) and have identified themselves as young adults (34.2%) or employees in a municipality (28.9%).

#### 5.1.1. Sex



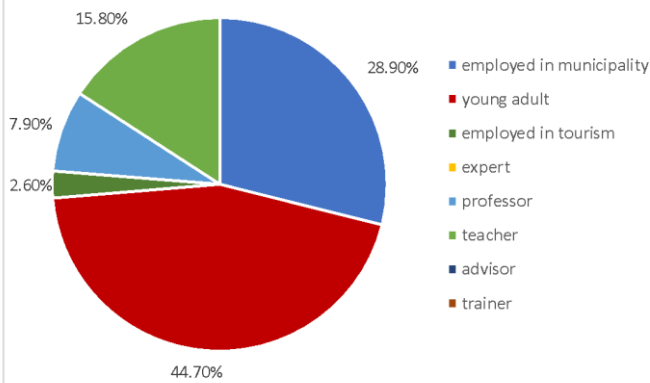
#### 5.1.2. Age



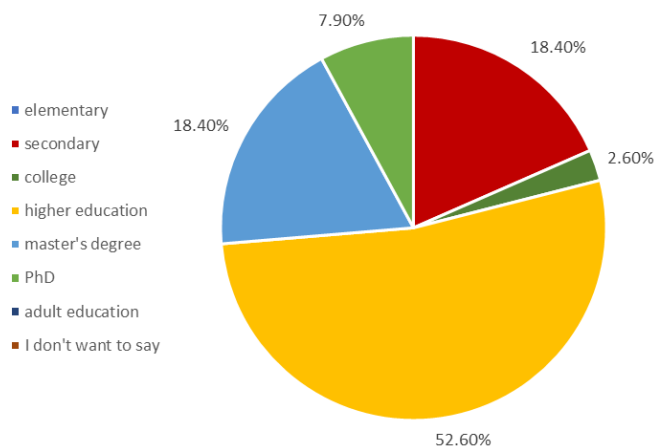


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### 5.1.3. Category



### 5.1.4. Level of education







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### 5.2. Familiarity with sustainable practices and related terms

Respondents were mostly familiar with the term “sustainable tourism”, meaning, 76.3% of them have said that they are familiar with the term. In addition to that, 52.6% of the respondents have said that “sustainable practices” are part of their everyday life and part of them have even given clear examples of these practices such as: creating less waste, recycling and reusing, using LED lights, isolation for energy efficiency, energy and water saving, using public transport or cycling, using second hand materials, etc. On the other hand, 18.4% of the respondents have said that “sustainable practices” are not part of their everyday life, while 10.5% have said that they are either not familiar with the term or are not sure whether they understand what “sustainable practices” means or whether they are following any of the sustainable practices in their everyday living.

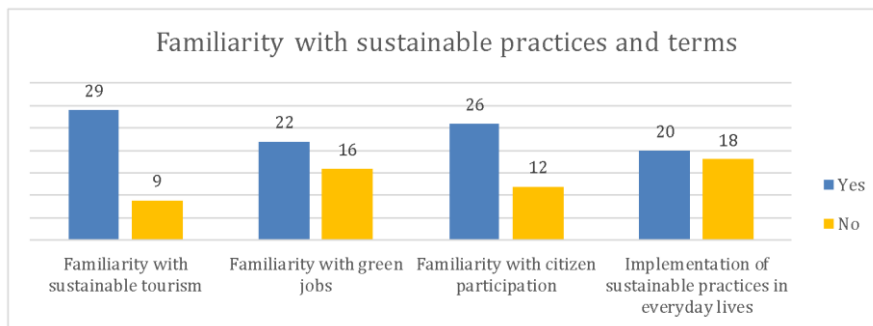


Figure 5

### 5.3. Familiarity with E.U and national policies and initiatives

Only 31.5% of the respondents have said that they are familiar with the EU policies and initiatives related to sustainable tourism and an even smaller number of them have named few general policies and initiatives such as the Green Deal, the European Strategy for sustainable tourism, initiatives related to cycling, promotion of eco and rural tourism, including the support for sustainable tourism promotion, development and education through the Erasmus+ program, the IPA cross-border etc.

On the other hand, the majority of the respondents or 68% were not familiar with any of the EU policies and initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism and have said that they do not know of any policy and initiative or are not certain if some of the initiatives and policies they have heard of, e.g., Agenda 2030



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cover sustainable tourism too. Furthermore, the majority or more than 76% were also not aware of any national or local policies and initiatives for sustainable tourism, while only 9 respondents have said yes, but most of them have not named any specific national or local sustainable tourism policies and initiatives.

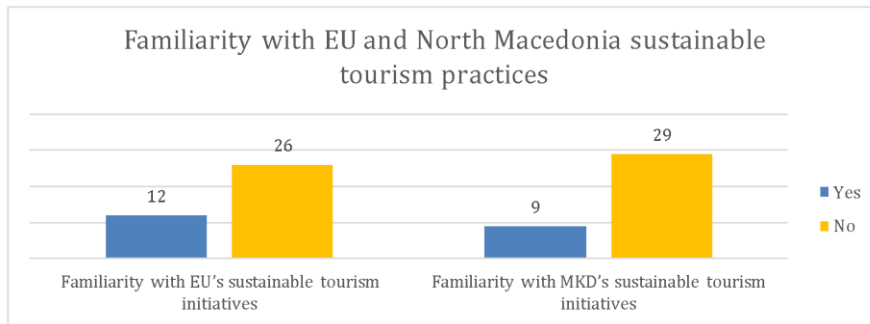


Figure 6

Apart from that, 60.5% of the respondents have said that they are not familiar with any local sustainable tourism businesses, and 68.4% have said that the public institutions are not taking necessary measures to protect the environment and promote sustainability.

Some of the sustainable tourism practices named by the participants are: buy local products, promotion of soft transport, sustainable management of natural resources, green hotels, zero waste &c.

Some of the suggestions for sustainable tourism, on the other hand were: investment in eco-friendly accommodations, promotion of cycling tours, mountain biking, walks, picnics, green transportation to all tourist locations &c.

#### 5.4. Green skills & professions

Asked which skills and competences should an employee in the tourism and travel should have to promote sustainable tourism, respondents have said that he/she should be eco conscious, knowledgeable in the field of sustainable tourism, to understand the basics of environment protection and how tourism can contribute, to be innovative, to follow new trends and proactive in introducing novelties at his job.



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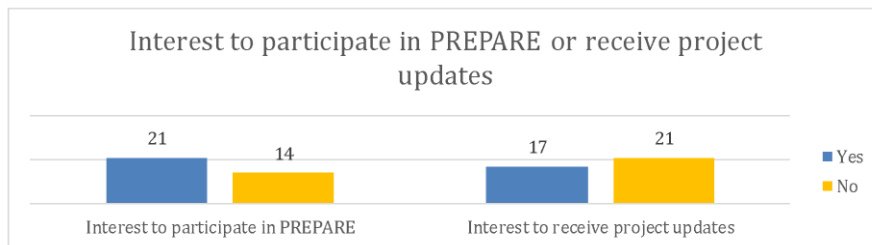
On the other hand, the majority of the respondents have named many soft and transversal skills such as communication, service-oriented etc.

Furthermore, the majority of the respondents or 68.4% have reported that they have not received sustainability related training, 89.5% have agreed that the employees in the tourism industry should have training on environment protection and sustainability and 63.2% of the respondents have said that they are willing to attend such training. Also, respondents were split on the subject of their interest to work in the green sector as 41.2% said that they are not interested and the remaining 57.9% said that they are interested in taking a green job.

Most of the participants were not able to name green jobs. The very few who have given examples have mentioned: environmental projects manager, eco consultant, waste managers, people working in the renewable energy sector, trainers and educators for sustainability, sustainable agriculture, green architecture.

### 5.5. Interest in participation

55.3% or 21 of the respondents have expressed interest to participate in PREPARE’s activities, while 3 have expressed interest, but have said that their engagement would depend on their free time and/or PREPARE activities. On the other hand, 44.7% of the survey participants have agreed to receive additional information about the project.





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## 5.6. Conclusions

Survey respondents have shown a low level of knowledge and familiarity in sustainable tourism practices, policies and initiatives. As some of the respondents have mentioned in the survey, this may be chiefly a result of an evident lack of media coverage about such practices, lack of inclusive dissemination of such information to the general public in the country through various media.

On the other hand, respondents' opinion that employees in the tourism industry should get green skills training, gives more optimism that through PREPARE and other similar initiatives, the general public, meaning young adults, employees in the industry and employees in the local self-government units will better understand these terms and will contribute in further development of such practices and initiatives.

## 6. Feedback on national co-creation workshop

### 6.1. Description of the co-creation workshop

On October 4, 2023, as part of WP2 - 2.2. activity, project partners in North Macedonia – Eco Logic and municipality of Kochani have organized a hybrid (online and offline) Co-Creation Workshop titled: The tourism sector – sustainability, green skills, jobs and youth.

The workshop was organized in the municipality of Kochani and was attended by 22 people or 11 males and 11 females. The majority of participants or 16 have joined the workshop in person, while the remaining 6 participants have joined the discussion online via Zoom.

12 out of 22 participants were municipal employees from different departments in Kochani and Radovish (municipalities in the East region), 7 were young adults and 3 were educators (professors). Among those 22 participants, there were young adults, as well as educators with experience in the NGO sector, in tourism promotion, environmental activism, including collaboration with the local administration. The role of each participant invited to the workshop was not only to investigate their knowledge or lack of knowledge in the topics, but to ensure that a more in dept discussion is facilitated, and a mutual info-/knowledge-sharing is facilitated based on their previous experience in projects. The workshop was opened by the Mayor of Kochani, Mr. Ljupcho Papazov who welcomed everyone and briefly presented Kochani's role in the PREPARE project. Mr. Papazov also spoke about Kochani's aspirations towards development of the local tourism industry. After Mr. Papazov's speech, the workshop continued with a brief presentation of the project, and especially the national research. Interesting data/cases presented in the report have been presented

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during the discussion, also, with purpose to inspire greater participants' engagement and knowledge-sharing.

The discussion was divided in three separate topics and set of questions:

- (1) sustainable tourism,
- (2) green skills - training and education and,
- (3) youth and work opportunities.

## 6.2. Findings

Most participants were not acquainted enough with the concept of sustainable tourism and saw/discussed about sustainable tourism chiefly from financially sustainable perspective. On the other hand, all participants, including the young adults were familiar with the challenges related to the local tourism industry and the environment, and were very opened and interested to share their own views and experiences on the subject.

Participants were familiar with the concept of eco-tourism, rural, active, alternative tourism and were able to identify such practices in their region/municipality and/or beyond.

Participants considered that young people are more interested in the tourism industry as travelers, and are less interested in the tourism sectors in the country as their future profession.

Participants (young adults and educators, chiefly) also shared many constrains which limit young adults to start businesses in the tourism industry or for green tourism businesses to thrive in the East region (and in the country). E.g., poor infrastructure, lack of accommodation capacities, water deficiency, etc.

Municipal employees on the other hand, shared other type of constrains which limit the development of the tourism sector such as, lack of trained professionals, lack of training opportunities, lack of tourism departments within the municipalities, lack of information on the number of tourists in the municipality, lack of consistency in the projects implemented by the next elected administration, lack of financial resources, etc.

Furthermore, the majority weren't that acquainted with the green professions available in the country while few of the young adults familiar with the topic mentioned that the country is lacking clear green competency-based framework, as well as green skills programs.

All participants considered that the topic about green skills and jobs needs to be promoted more intensely, and that institutions, businesses, NGOs, schools and etc. should contribute in creation and promotion of these profession among youth, and especially promotion of the benefits of these professions/jobs/careers. Furthermore, participants considered that what the country needs the most is



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greening of the jobs – all jobs in the country by offering basic training in green / sustainability topics, necessary for each position.

Participants were in general familiar with some of European and national/local policies related to environment and tourism such as the Green Agenda, Agenda 2030, etc., since their familiarity with the policies and programs were chiefly due to their previous and ongoing experience in the NGO sector, in businesses related to the topics of discussion, and/or the ongoing and aggressive media campaigns.

Training programs for mapping of paths across the Malesh-Pijanec region, training for mountain guides, for e-waste and in general re-cycling, for rural/traditional tourism etc. were mentioned as available opportunities offered to youth.

Participants also mentioned the low level of participation of youth in local activities related to environment and/or tourism. They also highlighted the need for campaigns and action that will popularize all local activities among youth by engaging firstly educational institutions and educators, secondly, the local job centres, NGOs, the youth councils and businesses. Participants also highlighted the need for greater collaboration between municipalities and NGOs/businesses and youth.

### 6.3. Conclusion & Key Challenges

- Municipal employees need training opportunities on sustainable tourism
- Municipalities and NGOs, including businesses need greater funding to ensure sustainability of their initiatives
  - Information about sustainable tourism, green jobs, etc. must be available and disseminated to everyone and especially to the local young adults
  - Creative and innovative ways to mobilize, engage and educate youth must be ensured
  - Greater collaboration between all key parties (municipalities, NGOs, businesses, educators) must be ensured.

## 7. Case studies

Aiming to further examine creative and inspiring ways in which environmental protection and tourism can contribute to youth employment and sustainable local development, the project partners in North

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Macedonia, jointly with youth participants at the co-creative workshop in Kochani, some of which owners of tourism-related business and local environmental NGOs, including 2 experts in business and social inclusion identified few positive examples of environmentally sustainable tourism practices in the country. For the identification of these case studies, the partners also carried out desk research.

The following case studies were selected as good examples, that can inspire youth employment in the tourism industry, locally:

<b>Name of Case Study:</b>	Slow Food Macedonia
<b>Country:</b>	North Macedonia
<b>Short Description:</b> (300 words min)	<p>Slow Food Macedonia is a national network of local organizations, initiated in 2006 by the EU ambassador Donato Kiarini, and further developed by local food enthusiasts. The network which is part of the global Slow Food network consisted of more than 100.000 organizations, was established with objective to build a gastronomic culture in North Macedonia, as well as to promote sustainable food production based on preservation of food biodiversity and local culinary tradition.</p> <p>Although the network is dedicated to promotion of local food and culinary tradition, through the various workshops, tastings, fairs, festivals and markets organized across the country, the network also promotes alternative tourism for food enthusiasts who wish to explore and experience artisanal food, and to meet with local farmers, bakers, cheese-, winemakers, chefs, etc.</p> <p>In 2021, the network also published its first edition of “Slow Food taverns” in which 17 locals have been promoted as the best taverns which offer tasty traditional food, cooked with local products from local farmers and producers.</p> <p>Furthermore, the network has a practice of awarding taverns, restaurants, food artisan shops, etc. with a red snail mark (the Slow Food logo), as a confirmation for the good, clean and fair food.</p>



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<p><b>Trends and Potential Benefits from this Case Study</b></p>	<p>Slow Food is one of the most vocal advocates for sustainable and responsible food production in the country. Through the various food events for promotion of authentic artisanal food products, the network encourages sustainability and competitiveness of local farmers and in general, sustainability and competitiveness of small local food and agribusinesses. The network also promotes availability and affordability of tasty, healthy, nutritious and safe food for all people, as well as it builds awareness about local artisanal food and authentic agricultural practices with low ecological footprint.</p> <p>This need to make local food more available, affordable, even popular, has been transposed in several EU policies and strategies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>The EU Missions “Caring for Soil is Caring for Life”</b>, whose goal is to “ensure that 75% of soils are healthy by 2030 and are able to provide essential ecosystem services”, such as provision of food and other biomass, supporting biodiversity, etc. (Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, 2020);</li> <li>(2) <b>The EU Food 2030 Policy Framework</b>, launched after the 2015 Milan World Expo with main objective: to ensure that “nutritious food and water is available, accessible and affordable for all, that climate smart food systems adaptive to climate change” is built (VU Athena Institute, fit4food2030).</li> <li>(3) <b>The EU Farm the Fork, the EU blueprint for transformation towards a sustainable food system</b> using a One Health approach that integrates human, animal, plant and environmental health (European Commission, 2023).</li> <li>(4) <b>The Urban Agenda for the EU partnership on food and cities of equality, etc.</b></li> </ol>
<p><b>How this Case Study could be used/transferred</b></p>	<p>The food tourism promoted by Slow Food as well as by other networks, organizations even farmers, is especially important for the rural communities, and in general for the local development of the destinations, as the concept allows for these communities build businesses and to generate income even employment opportunities, for themselves and for others, e.g., for tourism guides, chefs, etc. The particular case can be used as a positive example and an inspiration for building gastronomic regions (trails) for recreational or entertainment purposes, which integrates farm visits, visits to food markets, food fairs and other food related events, as part of an integrated tourism offer.</p>





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<b>Website link:</b>	<a href="http://www.slowfood.com">www.slowfood.com</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/slowfood.mk/">www.facebook.com/slowfood.mk/</a>
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<b>Name of Case Study:</b>	Nature Conservation Programme in North Macedonia (NCP)
<b>Country:</b>	North Macedonia
<b>Short Description:</b> (300 words min)	<p>NCP is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), implemented in North Macedonia since 2012 and coordinated by the Swiss association Helvetas and the local partner - Farmahem Skopje.</p> <p>The programme is a holistic approach to nature conservation and sustainable development, designed to assist the Republic of North Macedonia in the conservation of its biodiversity and natural ecosystems, as well as in meeting the NATURA 2000 requirements - one of the conditions for EU accession.</p> <p>In the 10-years of the NCP, the program offered integrated approach to nature conservation and promotion through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expertise and capacity building for key stakeholders (municipalities, businesses, NGOs) in the area of nature conservation and sustainable and integrated management of natural resources;</li> <li>• Promotion of new agricultural practices;</li> <li>• Support for development of sustainable tourism with accent on eco-tourism, rural tourism and in general active tourism in the Bregalnica region endorses local nature, local eco-friendly products and services and local tradition;</li> <li>• Support for sustainable local businesses in the Bregalnica region;</li> <li>• Promotion of local products;</li> <li>• Public awareness rising related to nature conservation, and</li> <li>• Funding for small local actions.</li> </ul> <p>The program supported 36 projects in the region, 14 of which were implemented by the municipalities in the Bregalnica region and 22 were implemented by local and national NGOs.</p>



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	<p>With support from the programme, local NGOs and municipalities have managed to set up educational trails aimed to promote the local biodiversity among children, youth, the general population and especially tourists in the region. Such cases were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The educational trail along the Bregalnica river, set-up in the city of Dechevo;</li> <li>• The Petko’s trail set up in the forests of the municipality of Pehchevo which also offers opportunities for outdoor classroom for children on the subject of environment and environment protection;</li> <li>• The Woodpecker’s trail in the beech forest at the locality of Ponikva in the municipalities of Probishtip and Kochani, etc.</li> </ul> <p>The program also achieved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) To establish two protected areas in the Bregalnica Region – the Maleshevo and Osogovo mountains,</li> <li>(2) To establish an educational center for conservation of nature in the village of Negrevo, municipality of Pehchevo (<i>the Educational Center offers indoor and outdoor classroom for children and youth, including a eco camping and picnics for children and parents</i>),</li> <li>(3) To create a unique eco-awareness campaign through its social media (more than 63.000 followers), including various events organized to promote nature, local products and tradition,</li> <li>(4) To encourage integrated eco/rural tourism offer, etc.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Trends and Potential Benefits from this Case Study</b></p>	<p>The European Agenda for Tourism 2030 which is based on the European Commission’s transition pathways for tourism covers five priority areas for transformation of the tourism ecosystems, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 onwards): (1) green transition, (2) digital transition, (3) resilience and inclusion, (4) skills and support, and (5) an enabling policy framework and governance.</p> <p>Each priority defines several actions, such as: reducing environmental footprint, diversifying tourism services across seasons and locations, and supporting accessibility of tourism. Furthermore, the Commission encouraged a co-creation process with various stakeholders, as an inclusive and collaborative process to help the transformation of the tourism industry. The NCP, in this regard, offers not only a holistic approach to nature conservation and tourism but to local development. By focusing on diverse types of actions the programme tackles some of these key challenges of the cities and villages by engaging all relevant stakeholders, building key strategies and programs, offering support to municipalities and businesses, including skills enhancement. The case is a good example of an integrated planning which connects various public and private actors (local, regional and national) and supports the green</p>



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	transition of the local tourism industry, as well as it creates an enabling environment and strong governance, encourages involvement of the local community, etc.
<b>How this Case Study could be used/ transferred</b>	The case study can be used in other regions across the country and has the potential to become a national strategy for tourism planning and management.
<b>Website link:</b>	<a href="http://www.bregalnica-ncp.mk/?lang=en">http://www.bregalnica-ncp.mk/?lang=en</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/SoGrizaDoBeriket">https://www.facebook.com/SoGrizaDoBeriket</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9Y26es0_6I">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9Y26es0_6I</a>

<b>Name of Case Study:</b>	Kayak.mk
<b>Country:</b>	North Macedonia
<b>Short Description:</b> (300 words min)	Kayak.mk is an online platform established to promote alternative local tourism in remote, less popular and known areas, among others, in the country. The platform was initiated by a team of young enthusiasts whose main objective was to offer divers and unique experiences and destinations to local and international travelers, while at the same time supporting small local tourism businesses in the promotion of their authentic tourism offer.
<b>Trends and Potential Benefits from this Case Study</b>	/
<b>How this Case Study could be used/ transferred</b>	/

**Açıklamalı [5]:** Are trends and transferability missing ?

**Açıklamalı [6]:** It's because we should have present 2 case studies, and plus others as links (based on your report). But because this additional 2 are somewhat interesting to be explained (because of the challenges faced in North Macedonia, discussed at the webinar/workshop), and not only to provide a links, that is why we've presented these two with a brief description. I don't think that it's a too big of an issue if they stay as they are? Because for the transnational report, you will probably present only brief information from every PO.

**Açıklamalı [7]:** It's fine I just wasn't sure. If you have something to add there it would be also ok. Only 2 case studies are "mandatory". So the others are just if we find something interesting

**Açıklamalı [8]:** Are trends and transferability missing ?

**Açıklamalı [9]:** It's because we should have present 2 case studies, and plus others as links (based on your report). But because this additional 2 are somewhat interesting to be explained (because of the challenges faced in North Macedonia, discussed at the webinar/workshop), and not only to provide a links, that is why we've presented these two with a brief description. I don't think that it's a too big of an issue if they stay as they are? Because for the transnational report, you will probably present only brief information from every PO.

**Açıklamalı [10]:** It's fine I just wasn't sure. If you have something to add there it would be also ok. Only 2 case studies are "mandatory". So the others are

**Açıklamalı [11]:** Are trends and transferability missing ?

**Açıklamalı [12]:** It's because we should have present 2 case studies, and plus others as links (based on your report). But because this additional 2 are somewhat

**Açıklamalı [13]:** It's fine I just wasn't sure. If you have something to add there it would be also ok. Only 2 case studies are "mandatory". So the others are

**Açıklamalı [14]:** Are trends and transferability missing ?

**Açıklamalı [15]:** It's because we should have present 2 case studies, and plus others as links (based on your report). But because this additional 2 are somewhat

**Açıklamalı [16]:** It's fine I just wasn't sure. If you have something to add there it would be also ok. Only 2 case studies are "mandatory". So the others are

**Açıklamalı [17]:** Are trends and transferability missing ?



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<b>Website link:</b>	<a href="https://kajak.mk/">https://kajak.mk/</a>
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<b>Name of Case Study:</b>	Local and Regional Competitiveness Project (LRCP)
<b>Country:</b>	North Macedonia
<b>Short Description:</b> (300 words min)	<p>LRCP is a four-year investment operation financed with a grant from the European Union (IPA II), administered by the World Bank and implemented by the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs (Government of the Republic of North Macedonia).</p> <p>Starting from 2016 and until 2019 the project worked to enhance Government and public entities capacity to foster tourism growth, to facilitate destination management, as well as to increase the contribution of tourism industry to the local economic development. The project offered technical assistance and capacity building to institutions and businesses, including funding for infrastructure and non-infrastructure activities that aimed to (1) improve the tourism practice in the targeted destinations, (2) increase the attractiveness of the selected number of destinations across the country (10), and to (3) increase the number of tourism-related jobs created at the beneficiary destinations.</p> <p>During the 4-year period, the project contributed for the creation of new opportunities for local, alternative and adventures tourism in various urban and rural areas in the country, as it supported 57 initiatives among which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiatives for reconstruction of cultural and historical monuments, including environmental conservation;</li> <li>• digitization of touristic destinations, including investments in smart solutions such as smart solar benches, smart garbage containers, smart electric bikes for renting (e.g., SMART lake Mladost);</li> <li>• investments in hiking and biking paths;</li> <li>• investments in picnic areas;</li> <li>• building platforms for bird watching and other creative and innovative contents for attracting eco tourists/nature lovers;</li> <li>• building of eco camps (e.g., the youth Camp Scout Struga), etc.</li> </ul>

**Açıklamalı [18]:** It's because we should have present 2 case studies, and plus others as links (based on your report). But because this additional 2 are somewhat interesting to be explained (because of the challenges faced in North Macedonia, discussed at the webinar/workshop), and not only to provide a links, that is why we've presented these two with a brief description. I don't think that it's a too big of an issue if they stay as they are? Because for the transnational report, you will probably present only brief information from every PO.

**Açıklamalı [19]:** It's fine I just wasn't sure. If you have something to add there it would be also ok. Only 2 case studies are "mandatory". So the others are just if we find something interesting

**Açıklamalı [20]:** Are trends and transferability missing ?

**Açıklamalı [21]:** It's because we should have present 2 case studies, and plus others as links (based on your report). But because this additional 2 are somewhat interesting to be explained (because of the challenges faced in North Macedonia, discussed at the webinar/workshop), and not only to provide a links, that is why we've presented these two with a brief description. I don't think that it's a too big of an issue if they stay as they are? Because for the transnational report, you will probably present only brief information from every PO.

**Açıklamalı [22]:** It's fine I just wasn't sure. If you have something to add there it would be also ok. Only 2 case studies are "mandatory". So the others are just if we find something interesting



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	Furthermore, the project offered capacity building to municipalities and businesses in areas such as tourism development, private-public dialogue with key stakeholders, etc. which aimed to ensure enabling environment for future promotion of local tourism and tourism development.
<b>Trends and Potential Benefits from this Case Study</b>	/
<b>How this Case Study could be used/ transferred</b>	/
<b>Website link:</b>	<a href="https://lrmp.mk/en/">https://lrmp.mk/en/</a>

Other inspiring case studies:

<b>Name of Case Study:</b>	<b>Website Link:</b>
Zero Gravity	<a href="http://zerogravity.mk/">http://zerogravity.mk/</a>
Spirit of Prespa	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/spiritofprespa">https://www.facebook.com/spiritofprespa</a>
Bike&Hike Adventures	<a href="https://www.bikehike.com/macedonia/macedonia-bike-hike-kayak-Balkan-explorer">https://www.bikehike.com/macedonia/macedonia-bike-hike-kayak-Balkan-explorer</a>
Hut-ing (Kolibarenje)	<a href="https://inovativnost.mk/">https://inovativnost.mk/</a>
Via Dinarica	<a href="https://www.via-dinarica.org/">https://www.via-dinarica.org/</a> ; <a href="https://viadinarica.com/en/">https://viadinarica.com/en/</a>

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Pirustija Nedanoski

[https://www.facebook.com/friends/suggestions/?profile\\_id=100049309913679](https://www.facebook.com/friends/suggestions/?profile_id=100049309913679)

## 8. Policy recommendations

Following the co-creative workshop and the discussion, the desk and field research conducted earlier, as well as the process of identification of the inspiring tourism practices, the North Macedonia's partners, have developed the following policy recommendations to support sustainable tourism in the country:

### That the Government and the relevant institutions and agencies:

- (1) Establish a benchmarking policy on the sustainability performance of destinations by using official labels, based on the indicators;
- (2) Ensure transparency on the degree to which each destination meets the guiding principles, including incentives for destinations that meet and continuously strive to meet the principles;
- (3) Provide businesses and authorities with tools to organise benchmarking on the sustainability performance of destinations.
- (4) Harmonize national and local approaches to sustainable tourism, based on commonly agreed principles.
- (5) Strengthen the initiatives for regional, national and cross-border/transnational cooperation for sustainable tourism.
- (6) Create an enabling environment for destination management and integrated sustainable tourism offer on local, regional and cross-border/transnational level.
- (7) Promote inclusive, multi-stakeholder approaches to sustainable tourism on national, regional and local level.
- (8) Offer national awareness-rising campaign on the social, economic and environmental impact of tourism, and the benefits of the green transition of businesses and destinations.
- (9) Offer approaches to link sustainable tourism, education and development of youth, as part of national and local policies and strategies and to support the development of training and

**Açıklamalı [23]:** Since there are basically 2 policy recommendations required that are related to the case studies I think it might be better to somehow group the following recommendations and briefly explain a link to the case studies



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employment in sustainable tourism via specific models of employment that maximize opportunities of sustainable tourism, especially in remote, rural, less known and popular destinations.

(10) Establish policies and measures to support new sustainable tourism enterprises in specific territories that capitalize on tradition, local products, and the unique culture and heritage, and which have potential to contribute to the local, rural development.

**That local and regional authorities and bodies:**

- (1) Are committed and actively engaged in the policy development process on national, including EU level.
- (2) Commit to multi-stakeholder collaboration with local and regional actors on the subject.
- (3) Stimulate the creation of networks and cooperation initiatives between businesses and communities that will focus on creation of better and unique tourism offer.
- (4) Increase its support to tourism development projects which take into account the sustainability criteria and have the potential to contribute to the local and rural development, including to creation on new green jobs and youth employment.

**That all actors:**

- (1) Promote the advantages of alternative and active tourism, of outdoor and cultural activities, especially among youth.
- (2) Seek ways to further develop synergies between the agricultural and tourism industry, between the national parks and mountain areas and the tourism industry for the purpose of building better and unique rural and mountain experiences for local and international travelers.
- (3) Invest in digitization of destinations and use of creative and innovative solutions.
- (4) Invest in transport infrastructure and sustainable mobility.
- (5) Foster skills development, knowledge and experience sharing in the tourism industry by investing in diverse learning tools and opportunities, that enhance green skills, creativity and innovation skills.



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List of valuable and inspiring quotes from the individuals engaged in the identification of the case studies and the policy recommendations:

- A large proportion of the jobs in the tourism industry are based on skills that are quickly acquired. Hence, the tourism offers an opportunity for young people with fewer job prospects to requalify or reskill easily (Biljana Dukoska, poverty and social exclusion activist).
- The creation of new green jobs in the tourism industry can bring greater community empowerment and connectedness between the existing businesses into a unique tourism offer (Biljana Dukoska).
- I think green development is misused as a phrase but not practiced properly. I also notice that partial interventions are made, but no care is taken to ensure that the processes are well-rounded in order to give a good final product. Therefore, the recommendation is to work strategically, inclusively and in detail. Better slow than bad (Biljana Dukoska).
- Tourism and green skills training can become more attractive to young people if we explain the potential of this sector, if we offer them attractive educational programs dedicated to sustainable tourism at the Universities, if we connect them with other universities and businesses and we support an experiential learning, knowledge exchange with youth from across the world, including financial support for establishing of such businesses. Agrotourism, food tourism, craft revival, promotion of local organic products, sport tourism are some of the areas that may seem attractive to young people (PhD Elizabeta Tosheva, a professor, CEEPUS program Coordinator and Head of the Center for Professional Training and Career Development at the Faculty of Law).

## 9. SWOT analysis

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The following SWOT analysis for environmental protection, sustainable tourism and green professions in North Macedonia has been conducted based on the findings presented in this Report.

<p><b>SWOT ANALYSIS ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND GREEN JOBS IN NORTH MACEDONIA</b></p>	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>(1) North Macedonia has a potential for alternative and active tourism development.</p> <p>(2) The country has numerous cultural and natural attractions.</p> <p>(3) The country is not a well-known and highly attractive tourism destination, hence has a potential to attract travelers who wish to explore unique and offbeat destinations in smaller groups.</p> <p>(4) North Macedonia as a candidate-member of the EU has access to funding programmes that can contribute in further development of sustainable tourism practices, including in capacity building, etc.</p> <p>(5) Availability of other funding programmes that offer similar opportunities to strengthen destinations management capacities and improve their offer.</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>(1) North Macedonia is a landlocked country which lacks infrastructure, human and financial resources to build an attractive and highly-profitable tourism offer from which, current and future tourism businesses and local communities will benefit.</p> <p>(2) Poor collaboration and communication between institutions on different levels regional level and between institutions and tourism businesses, even between institutions, businesses and NGOs.</p> <p>(3) Either lack of government and/or local policies or lack of political will and financial/human resources for policy implementation.</p> <p>(4) Low engagement of youth in local initiatives, activism, learning experiences, volunteerism, etc.</p> <p>(5) Lack of officially recognized and defined green competences, skills and jobs.</p>
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		<p>(6) Uncontrolled urbanization, environment degradation and pollution.</p> <p>(7) Low level of awareness of policies, actions and initiatives related to green economic growth.</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>(1) Building of authentic and integrated offers for ecotourism, rural tourism, food and events tourism and in general alternative and active tourism, which after the COVID-19 are becoming a global trend, and such initiatives have already been initiated in some of the municipalities in the country.</p> <p>(2) Digitization of tourism destinations and integration of smart solutions to environmental challenges and promotion of destination promotion which has been initiated in some destinations.</p> <p>(3) Synergy between diverse projects and programs to maximize results and ensure sustainability.</p> <p>(4) Transformation of the existing employment, reskilling and upskilling programs to stimulate more green and sustainable jobs and sustainable and profitable businesses in the destinations.</p>	<p><b>Opportunity-Strength (OS) Strategies</b></p> <p>(1) Focus on promotion (transfer) of good practices and encouraging adoption of similar strategies and approaches.</p> <p>(2) Focus on development of programs and approaches for digitization and smart solutions to environmental challenges and tourism promotion.</p> <p>(3) Build platforms and approaches for continuous and committed collaboration between all stakeholders.</p> <p>(4) Improve current approaches and programs for employment and reskilling/upskilling to stimulate green jobs in the tourism industry and green skills training and education, especially among youth and business representatives.</p>	<p><b>Opportunity-Weakness (OW) Strategies</b></p> <p>(1) Build better branding and marketing campaign for promotion of destinations locally and internationally.</p> <p>(2) Stimulate collaboration between all relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>(3) Attract and retain professionals and offer continuous professional development through training, study visits, etc.</p> <p>(4) Improve capacities for fundraising and project management.</p> <p>(5) Impose laws equally.</p> <p>(6) Establish and promote a list of green jobs/competences.</p> <p>(7) Work on awareness-rising.</p>
<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>(1) Lack of resources.</p> <p>(2) Political and economic instability.</p> <p>(3) Youth and general population migration.</p>	<p><b>Threat-Strength (TS) Strategies</b></p> <p>(1) Ensuring proper use of EU funds and investment in sustainable projects.</p>	<p><b>Threat-Weakness (TW) Strategies</b></p> <p>(1) Branding and marketing strategies</p>



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(4) Depopulation.</li> <li>(5) Environment and infrastructure degradation due to climate change, natural disasters, lack of continuous investment in maintenance, human action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(2) Building more agile and resilient public administration and services.</li> <li>(3) Creating better living conditions for youth and families.</li> <li>(4) Build more resilient communities and destinations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(2) Integrating collaborative methodologies for co-designed and co-creation.</li> <li>(3) Build awareness among local communities and travelers.</li> <li>(4) Promote green jobs and businesses.</li> </ul>
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## 10. Conclusion

There is much to be done for North Macedonia to capitalize on its tourism and especially sustainable tourism practice. The country, still needs to build its integrated offer, as well as to strengthen the capacities of local destinations (municipalities, businesses, NGOs, local communities) for sustainable management, even to raise awareness and commitment of stakeholders to collaborate.

There is also much to be done in the local, even national policy field related to environment protection, but also related to sustainable tourism, green economy and green training and education. In this regard, the country should commit to ensure proper implementation even on the already adopted policies and measures, as well as to fight corruption, nepotism, etc.

North Macedonia should reach a wide consensus on green transition in the tourism industry and ensuring proper training and education opportunities to all.

The country has very few such opportunities which are available to limited number of people, and lacks not only specific green jobs and greater engagement of youth in the green industry, but it lacks greening of the existing jobs also.

Government and local authorities should invest more in each of these areas, and should be open to collaboration with local and national NGOs and businesses in this regard.

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