



Project "Agro-tourism Business Academy – SME Support System"

Acronym: Agro Business Academy

The project Agro Business Academy is Co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Cooperation Programme Interreg VA. "Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020". The contents of this material are sole responsibility of Association Prosperity and development for Bulgaria and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union, the participating countries the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat.



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Eurointegra Association, Agripreneurship and
Prosperity and Development for Bulgaria
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Conference on Capitalization of Project Result

On October 9, 2023, the conference on capitalization of the results of the project "Agri-tourism business academy – SME support system" was successfully held in Thessaloniki! This event brought



together entrepreneurs from the cross-border region between Bulgaria and Greece, project organizers and beneficiaries, as well as representatives of the HORECA sector from both countries and representatives of the media.

The event was intended for businesses in the hospitality sector, the HORECA sector, agricultural producers, the tourism sector, winegrowers and wine producers from the cross-border region

Key Topics and Special Guests

On October 8, 2023, guests were welcomed at the Santa Beach Hotel during the "Agri-Tourism Business Academy" conference. After successful registration, all participants took part in a workshop aimed at ideas for small and medium-sized enterprises in the agro and wine sector.

Ms. Svetla Tonashka- Share the contribution to the development of vineyards and wine production in the

region of Central Bulgaria under a past project - VINESOS. Ms Tonashka presented innovative ideas, discussed



opportunities to strengthen the relationship between the agro and wine sector and shared her knowledge and experience in this field. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions and exchange ideas, and this workshop provided a valuable platform for learning and inspiration in the field of agri and the wine business.

The project "SOS for endangered traditional grape varieties" of the Association "Prosperity and Development for Bulgaria" provided an opportunity for long-term conservation of vineyards, especially those in "Natura 2000" and for improving the conservation status of local grape varieties. Joint DNA analysis and research, joint training and workshops for representatives of the target group were undertaken during the project, as well as the development of an Integrated Strategy for the Management of Local Biodiversity in relation to traditional grape varieties. The project included the development of joint recommendations to the relevant authorities, the development of experimental fields for traditional vineyards and a specialized ampelographic book. Specialized Braille brochures and guidelines on sustainable agricultural practices were also developed. A training was created to provide online and offline training to stakeholders.

On October 9, during the "Agri-Tourist Business Academy" conference, we had the honor of welcoming key guests and discussed important topics in the field of bio-tourism and agriculture. Here they are:

Mr. Anton Markov - Consul General of the Republic of Bulgaria in Thessaloniki, who opened the event by sharing the importance of the initiative and thanked the organizers of the conference and the partners for the achieved results of the project.

Mrs. Desislava Doncheva - Coordinator of the "Agri-tourism



business academy - SME support system" project, who presented us with the significance of the event, as well as its program and what all guests should expect.

Mrs. Aphroditi Lolio, representing the Managing Authority of Interreg VI-A Program "Greece - Bulgaria" 2021 -

2027. - She welcomed the participants and shared the benefits of the achieved results of the project for the sustainable development of agro and organic agriculture tourism.

Mrs. Galina Georgieva, representing the Joint Secretariat of Interreg VI-A Program "Greece - Bulgaria" 2021 - 2027. - Welcomed the participants and analyzed the upcoming program for the region and how to develop a good project proposal.

"Trends in joint strategic Bulgarian-Greek projects and their role for the economic growth of the cross-border region" by Mr. Vladimir Inkov - head of the Trade and Economy Section at Bulgarian general consulate. Mr. Inkov offered an extremely up-to-date and detailed analysis of the current conditions for the development of bilateral trade relations.

Presentation of Agro Business Academy by Mrs. Desislava Doncheva - Chairman of the "Eurointegra" Association, Mrs. Doncheva shared how the project supports small and medium-sized enterprises in the field of agro-tourism, as well as about the results and the most significant moments and discoveries in the process of the

project's development. The created professional video lessons for sommeliers, the Sommelier Handbook, the video training materials for HORECA and the agricultural sector, the training platform and project portal, the Tourist Mobile Application were presented.

"Bulgarian-Greek economic relations from a sociological perspective" by Prof. Dr. Ivo Hristov. The professor presented to us his point of view on the economic relations between Bulgaria and Greece, through the eyes of the geopolitical paradigm and the sociological point of view. You can watch the video of his speech on the YouTube channel of the Eurointegra Association at: <https://youtu.be/dTLkBtlgdtg?si=Ow-LyPNJX0addzHK>



"Sustainable wineries - trends of the age" by Ms. Maria Athanasopoulou - Founder of Travel Marketing Company Respond On Demand, Chairman of the World Tourism Association and Ambassador of the World Food Travel

Association. She won over the audience with her expertise and shared a number of methods and processes through which tourism can become a more sustainable economic sector

"Better Half" - The story of a



successful wine and tourism business in Bulgaria" by Mr. Nikolay Dalakov - An expert in the field of winemaking and tourism, who told us about the success story of his businesses - Better Half and Villa Yana.

Mr. Dalakov demonstrated his skills and knowledge and impressed the audience with his unparalleled dedication to the details, art and wine

Conference participants

Representatives of winegrowers and wine producers, the HORECA sector, the state administration, agricultural producers, the non-governmental sector, etc. were present.

The event was covered by a team of the national Greek television ERT and a

report was broadcast that evening. Link to the report: <https://www.ertnews.gr/ert3/interreg-ellada-voulgaria-2023-2027-prokiryksi-neon-diasynoriakon-ergon-ypsous-84-ekat-eyro/>

Promotional route

On October 10, 2023, the promotional tourist tour was held. The group visited Ktíma Oikogéneia Panagiotídis winery (<https://wineguide.wein.plus/ktima-fam-p-anagiotidis/wines>), located in Nea Kerassia and Domaine Florian (<https://www.domainflorian.com/>) in Termi and a local traditional tavern in Epanomi as well as the area of Pyrgos (Epanomi)

Tasting modules were organized and educational and informative lectures were conducted in the two wineries, and the specifics of each of the productions, characteristic of the respective producer, were presented. The agricultural region of Epanomi-Pyrgos-Nea Drosia was presented as one of the most suitable for bio and agricultural tourism, in terms of its proximity to the city of Thessaloniki. The local agricultural production and the possibilities for the development of tourist products were presented.



Project "Agri-Tourist Business Academy - SME support system"

Below, we offer you details about the "Agro-Tourism Business Academy - SME support system" project. This project plays a key role in the development of bio-tourism and agriculture in the region. The information here will familiarize you with the objectives, the achieved results and the significance of the project for the cross-border region between Bulgaria and Greece.

Partners and Funding of the Project

One of the key components of the success of the "Agri-Tourist Business Academy - SME support system" project is the cooperation between the partners. Their commitment and support are essential for the realization of the goals and objectives.

Partners:

Association "Eurointegra":
Association "Eurointegra" helped with the overall organization and coordination of the project. Their enthusiasm and expertise was a key factor in the success of the initiative.

Association "Prosperity and Development for Bulgaria": The Association "Prosperity and Development for Bulgaria" contributed with its creativity and diligence.



"Agripreneurship":

"Agripreneurship" shared their experience and knowledge in the agricultural and HORECA sector. Their collaboration has spurred innovative ideas and helped local businesses grow.

Financing: The "Agro-Tourist Business Academy" project is financed under the INTERREG V-A Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020 Program and with the financial support of the two countries. Without this significant financial contribution, it would not be possible to achieve our ambitious goals and create

New opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises in the region.

General information about the project

The "Agri-Tourist Business Academy" project aimed to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs in the agricultural and tourism sectors. By providing a modern business environment, specialized services and training, the project was able to positively impact on

entrepreneurial efforts and sustainable business development.

The Agro-Tourism Academy, which was established under the project, played a key role in providing business and administrative support to entrepreneurs in the cross-border region in the long term. The training and support models provided helped develop sustainable businesses and provided them with the necessary tools to successfully run their businesses. The project provided significant business benefits, including entering new markets, expanding production and increasing production



capacity by providing know-how and training modules. The diversification of products and services of entrepreneurs can increase their competitiveness, and the added economic value acquired through the assimilation of knowledge and new practices in wine production and wine tourism can strengthen the financial stability of the business.



The project helped to develop new business niches focused on bio and agro tourism, as well as bio-wine tourism.

The project was developed in several work packages (WP):

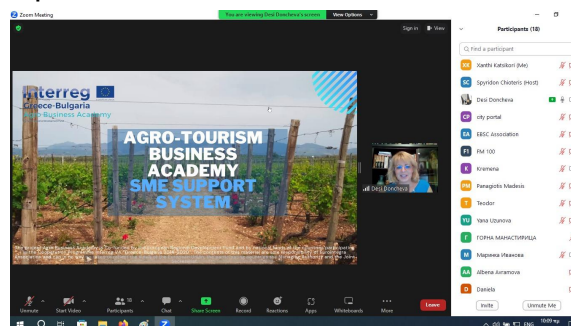
WP1: Project management and coordination Administrative project management as well as financial management was carried out within WP1. Regular reporting on project progress was conducted.

WP2: Communication and dissemination WP2 focused on

dissemination of information about the project. This included organizing digital press conferences, creating a project web portal, developing 50 articles and 20 banners, creating advertising and promotional materials, as well as conference kits.

Digital press conference

At the beginning of the project, the first digital press conference was successfully held, part of the "Agro-Business Academy" project. Among the participants were entrepreneurs from the Greek-Bulgarian cross-border region, the organizers of the event and beneficiaries of the Eurointegra project - Blagoevgrad, the Prosperity and Development Association for Bulgaria - Blagoevgrad, AgriEntrepreneurship - Thessaloniki, representatives of the Blagoevgrad Regional Administration and representatives of the media.



The event was intended for businesses in the HORECA sector,



farmers, the tourism sector, vine growers and wine producers from the cross-border region Bulgaria - Greece, which covers Evros, Kavala, Xanthi, Rhodope, Drama, Thessaloniki, Seres and Blagoevgrad, Smolyan, Kardjali and Haskovo.

At the end of October 2023, a final Press Conference was held. It presented the achieved results and the benefits that can influence the development of niche markets in the tourism business.

WP3: Diagnostics and strategic planning Within WP3, an agribusiness survey of existing target group businesses was developed. Educational modules and lessons have been created, as well as tourist agro routes.

Questionnaire survey. In the past year 2022 under the project "Agro - business academy" a survey was conducted among entrepreneurs in the Bulgarian part of the cross-border region Bulgaria - Greece. The collected data aims to identify the needs of the representatives of the target group businesses and the need for assistance with information and training. The survey builds a solid foundation for the next activities of the project, related to the development of a road map and the creation of training modules, part of the Business Academy for Agri-Tourism. The survey was personally sent to 80 participants, and thanks to digital

channels it reached even more businesses representing the target group. Entrepreneurs from different areas in Bulgaria described the current situation in which they find themselves. The share of representatives of the HORECA sector is the largest, nearly 42% of the participants in the survey are in the field of hotels and restaurants. The vine growers and wine producers who took part in the survey are 32%, and the agricultural producers are 25%. The business of the largest part of the respondents has been operating for more than 11 years on the Bulgarian market. This means that sustainability, experience and established professional traditions are at stake. More than 16% of the participants have developed a stable business for over 20 years. Of course, some of the respondents have been developing business for less than 10 years. The companies are relatively evenly located in Southern Bulgaria in areas such as Blagoevgrad, Haskovo, Smolyan, Kardzhali and others. Most of the respondents are between the ages of 31 and 40. 35% of the entrepreneurs who completed the survey are between 51 and 60 years old, and 16% are between 41 and 50 years old. The gender distribution is relatively equal - 45% for women and nearly 55% for men in the field. It makes a strong impression that the majority of the participants in the study have a higher education. The majority of Bulgarian businesses in

Southern Bulgaria do not have partners in the cross-border regions of the Republic of Greece, but serve Greek clients and rely on them for business expansion. The data reveal a good perspective for business development and new collaborations between entrepreneurs from the border region. Nearly 90% of respondents see a good prospect for increasing customers and business relations with Greece.



WP4: Creation of an Agro-Tourism business academy

New technologies to support business. Innovative educational resources were developed during the project. A mobile application, an Academy for Agro-Tourism Business and online trainings for the target groups were created. This module aimed to support entrepreneurs with up-to-date knowledge and skills. Mobile application: Virtual reality to help business development. This is precisely the function of the innovative

application, which connects users and businesses from the cross-border region in an accessible, interactive way. At least 10 interesting routes for agro and wine tourism have been developed. And what's even better is that through the application tourists can create their own routes. This is a completely innovative approach to developing a business system serving entrepreneurs and consumers in the region. The application expanded the marketability of regional products and services and encouraged alternative tourist visits. The web portal provides digitized materials and scientific know-how to support the business development of SMEs. The Academy continues to provide consultations and training even after the completion of the project.

The application provides support for a number of companies from the cross-border region Bulgaria - Greece, as part of the database and part of the interactive map. 9 enterprises receive non-financial support. You can view the mobile application here: <https://agrobusiness.ekapa.gr/webgis>.

4 educational modules with 3 main thematic topics each - 12 topics in total. They provide access to business finance information and agricultural knowledge and know-how, development of more competitive products and services, and cost-saving technologies.

You can use the educational modules here: <https://agrobusiness.ekapa.gr/learning>.



WP5: Sustainability measures and added value WP5 included the establishment of two experimental fields in Bulgaria and Greece. Vintners and winemakers were supported by providing planting material of local vine varieties. Professional video tutorials for sommeliers and a sommelier handbook were created.

Sommelier's Handbook

Immerse yourself in the magical world of wine and expand your wine horizons with the Sommelier's Handbook! The publication was developed in three languages and is unique in its kind. To date, no other similar resource has been released. "Agrobusiness Academy" provides the unique opportunity for more and more people to learn from professional sommeliers and experts, expanding their wine expertise completely free of charge. The

Sommelier's Handbook includes:



Basic knowledge of wine and wine regions; Techniques for

wine tasting and evaluation; Tips for pairing wines with food;

Professional recommendations from leading sommeliers; Exploring the wealth of local wines from the TGS region. Get inspired by the wine world and create incredible gourmet experiences for yourself and your guests. Wine is more than a drink - it is art, culture and enjoyment.

The first professional video tutorials for sommeliers <https://agrobusiness.ekapa.gr/sommelier>

Dubbed in three languages.

Wine is an art that takes us on journeys through the world of flavors and aromas. And now, thanks to Agro Business Academy and professional video lessons for sommeliers, you have the opportunity to immerse yourself in the

magic of red wines and learn the best techniques and practices. And best of all, these lessons are free for the HORECA sector. Professional video tutorials offer you valuable knowledge and practical advice on understanding, evaluating and pairing red wines. You will learn about the different varieties of white, red and rosé wines and their characteristics, recognize aromas and flavors, and learn how to pair them with food for an optimal taste experience. In addition, in the lessons you will meet typical wines and wine grape varieties that are characteristic of the regions of southern Bulgaria and northern Greece. Southern Bulgaria is proud of its wines from varieties such as Mavrud, Melnik and Rubin, which offer rich aromas of fruit, spices and herbs. Northern Greece, for its part, offers fine red wines from varieties such as Xinomavro, Agiorgitiko and Limnionas, which are distinguished by complex aromas and rich taste. The video lessons for sommeliers of the Agro Business Academy are created by top experts in the field and present the best practices and trends in the world of wine. Each video is well structured and provides training that provides you with valuable knowledge and skills. By learning these lessons, you'll become an expert in selecting, serving, and pairing red wines, helping you turn your guests into loyal wine fans.



Results of the project

Quality results of the project

The project "Agro-Tourist Business Academy" is distinguished by a number of significant achievements that helped to activate the economic activity in the cross-border region between Bulgaria and Greece. Here are some of the most important achievements:

Production expansion: Thanks to the project, entrepreneurs in the agricultural and tourism sectors have expanded their production activities. New and innovative methods and knowledge were implemented, which increased the capacity and diversified the products and services offered by these enterprises.

Increasing competitiveness: The specialized training and modern practices provided by the project made the Entrepreneurs more competitive both nationally and internationally. This

aspect is key to attracting new customers and improving service quality.

Business Academy for Agritourism:

The introduction of a digital business academy with educational modules including video lessons and training contributes to the development of entrepreneurs' skills and to the improvement of the conditions for entrepreneurship. This innovative educational infrastructure is a key tool for preparing future industry leaders and creates a lasting impact in the development of local communities.

Creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs:

The project created new opportunities for entrepreneurs in the fields of agriculture and tourism. The establishment of the Agri-Tourism Business Academy provided specialized educational resources and helped expand their knowledge and skills.

Future prospects:

In the future, the project aims to continue to develop and support the agricultural and tourism sectors. Through innovative approaches and continuation



of training, entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to expand their activities, diversify their products and services and target new markets.

Sustainable growth: The project was aimed at the sustainable growth of the economy in the region. The resources and training provided contributed to the development of enterprises capable of withstanding the competitive environment and providing added value to the local economy.

Quantitative results of the project

Creation of 2 test fields. Cultivation and distribution of seedlings to winegrowers. This is a pilot model for the region to support local producers

Conducting 2 studies and analyses.

Development and digitization of 4



These achievements highlight the importance of the "Agri-Tourist Business Academy" project and how it contributes to the development of the agricultural and tourism sectors in this region.

training modules with 3 sub-thematic titles each – 12 in total.

Conducting 2 press conferences and 1 professional conference.

Development of 2 e-leaflets, 300 project sets, 500 souvenirs, 40 press releases and articles, 20 web banners.

Development of a business academy for agritourism. The Academy will strive to achieve an institutional image, through its services and competence, among local entrepreneurs and start-ups.

Application Development - Live Mapping of existing target businesses, development of 10 routes for bio-agro-wine tourism in the cross-border area; enabling users to create their own routes – a completely innovative approach to developing a business system serving entrepreneurs and users in the region in terms of a new technological solution. The app will be available for free and will be used via smart devices and computers. This will allow users to use routes made by the project or create their own.

Development of a web portal and IT equipment as a digital environment for providing support to SMEs.

Creation of 4 digital educational modules and lessons. In addition, in order to provide business benefits, the modules will cover: a) Diversification of



entrepreneurs' products and services, b) Development of a new business niche - bio - agro - wine tourism, c) Financial management and financing opportunities, d) Entry of new markets, expanding production, increasing production capacity. Module titles may change during implementation, but the core approach to delivering knowledge will remain. Delivering specialist sommelier training - development of 6 video tutorials



Thank you for your attention!

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