

Shaping Sustainable Futures: International Collaboration Drives Green Tourism Innovation in Georgia

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This article, written by Irena Melua and Akaki Kapanadze explores how international collaboration is advancing green tourism in Georgia

In an era where sustainability is paramount, international green tourism emerges as a vital pathway for fostering environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and economic resilience. This approach to tourism prioritizes responsible travel practices that minimize ecological footprints while maximizing positive impacts on local communities. For countries like Georgia, rich in natural beauty and cultural heritage, embracing green tourism is not just an environmental imperative but also an economic opportunity.

Recognizing this potential, partner universities have taken a proactive role in advancing sustainable tourism through the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education project titled “Designing Green Tourism Concept through Learning” (ENRICHER hubs). This initiative aims to bridge the gap between higher education institutions (HEIs) and the labor market by enhancing competencies in green tourism service development. By fostering collaboration among nine HEIs from Finland, Austria, Italy, Georgia, and Moldova, the project seeks to transform tourism education and practice in the region.

A cornerstone of the ENRICHER hubs project is the establishment of Green Tourism Hubs at partner universities, based on a comprehensive gap analysis led by Caucasus University. This study identified significant challenges in green tourism practices within Georgia and Moldova. The hubs will also incorporate results of training sessions aimed at equipping educators and industry professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge.

A concrete example of the project’s impact is evident in the new Erasmus+ “GastroTour” initiative launched at Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University (TeSaU). This three-year collaboration, involving partners from Georgia, South Africa, Spain, Portugal, and the Czech Republic, aims to deepen the connection between academia and the gastronomic (especially wine) tourism industry. Through education, innovation, and strategic partnerships, “GastroTour” seeks to enhance the eno-gastrotourism sector by developing specialized courses, workshops, and industry visits. Participants have already engaged in activities such as exploring Georgia’s gastrotourism potential at local wineries, highlighting the project’s commitment to experiential learning.

The synergy between the ENRICHER hubs and “GastroTour” projects exemplifies the transformative potential of international collaboration in promoting green tourism. By integrating academic research, practical training, and industry engagement, these initiatives are cultivating a

new generation of tourism professionals equipped to lead sustainable practices. Furthermore, they are fostering regional development by aligning educational outcomes with labor market needs, thereby contributing to economic resilience and environmental conservation.

In conclusion, the importance of international green tourism cannot be overstated, particularly in regions like Georgia where natural and cultural assets abound. Through projects like ENRICHER hubs and “GastroTour,” institutions like Caucasus University are playing a pivotal role in shaping a sustainable tourism landscape. By investing in education, fostering industry partnerships, and promoting experiential learning, these initiatives are laying the groundwork for a tourism sector that is not only economically viable but also environmentally and culturally responsible.

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