

RETOURN

Recovery Tourism
after Natural Disasters



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RETOURN - Recovery TOURism after Natural disaster

Project Number: 2021-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000025918

The **RETOURN Project** involves a heterogeneous and representative partnership of Chambers of Commerce, VET providers, Universities, and Associations, from 5 EU states (Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Hungary, and Germany), in order to respond to the lack of preparation and adequate knowledge by the figures operating in the tourism sector in relation to risk management and the recovery of damage resulting from natural disasters including earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and pandemics such as the one caused by COVID-19.

PARTNERSHIP

Coordinating Institution:

- **Università degli Studi di Macerata** (coordinating institution) - [website](#)

Partners:

- **AKMI** - [website](#)
 - **Associazione Culturale Pepe Lab** - [website](#)
 - **Ellinoitaliko Epimelitirio** - [website](#)
 - **Europe Unlimited e.V.** - [website](#)
 - **Gospodarska Zbornica Slovenije Center Za Poslovno Usposabljanje** - [website](#)
 - **Trebag Szellemi Tulajdon - És Projektmenedzser Korlatolt Felelossegu Tarsasag** - [website](#)
 - **Umbria Chamber Of Commerce** - [website](#)
 - **Univerza V Mariboru** - [website](#)
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PRESS RELEASE

RETOURN Project: Recovery Tourism after Natural disaster

Monday, 2nd May 2022

On April 7th and 8th, the first Kick-Off Meeting of the RETOURN Project (REcovery TOURism after a Natural disaster) took place in Ljubljana, hosted by the partner organization Center Za Poslovno Usposabljanje (CPU). During this two-days meeting all the project partners took decisive steps towards the achievement of Project Result 1, coordinated by the University of Macerata, and the concrete implementation of the planned strategies. During the months of May, June and July the partnership will be engaged in the organization and conduction of the Focus Groups and reporting activities. The partnership will virtually meet in September 2022, in order to take stock of the situation and set the basis to start working on Project Result 2, whose activities will be organized and supervised by the University of Maribor. It is going to represent an important moment of transition between the first Project Result and the design and planning of the second one. After that, in October 2022, the next transnational meeting will take place in Athens, Greece.

The RETOURN Project, funded by the European Union within the Erasmus Plus context in 2021, and with a duration of two years, involves a heterogeneous and representative partnership of institutions from five different European Union member States. In particular, the University of Macerata, the Umbria Chamber of Commerce, and the Pepelab cultural association are the partners coming from Italy, AKMI and the Italian-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce from Greece, the University of Maribor and the CPU training center connected to the Chamber of Commerce from Slovenia, Europe Unlimited from Germany, and the TREBAG training center from Hungary.

This project stems from the will to recover and reconstruct the damaged areas and sectors, to recreate and strengthen experienced professionals in the area, and to enhance the territorial, economic and social balance of these countries. The aim is to structure, implement, test, and disseminate the “Recovery Tourism after Natural Disaster” training program, centered on tourism disaster management and on the restoration of the tourist image after the advent of a natural disaster.

Indeed, in Ljubljana, all the representatives of the participating institutions and bodies met to continue the research and design the steps of this training course dedicated to the creation of the “Tourism Recovery Expert” figure. For this reason, Focus Groups represent the first step for the creation of the Tourism Recovery Expert Competence Framework.

In relation to this profile, Mitja Gorenak from the Faculty of Tourism at the University of Maribor, affirms: “I want to contribute my small part in it, focusing on the fact that tourism workers are way too often the unsung heroes of tourism,

yes destination, nature, food, history, all of that is important, but it is the people who help the guest get the best experience possible, thus we need to focus more on employees in tourism”.

For the whole partnership, taking part in this project represents an enormous opportunity to make a change and to commit to a common cause affecting all their countries. They have experienced in first person the damages of natural disasters and they all know the difficulties of the affected areas to recover and to bounce back to their original status.

Peter Dohmen, chairman of Europe Unlimited, recounts: “We have been asked in late 2019 by CPU to take part in this project. Just a few weeks later Covid-19 started to affect the world. Our home region, the county of Heinsberg, was actually the first region in Germany which was affected badly by the virus. We felt for the first time how natural disasters may affect the complete system we are living in including heavy economical consequences especially for the tourism sector. Just 8 months later, in July 2021, a unique flood caused by unusual heavy rain affected the county and the complete region we are living in. We have been confronted with another natural disaster within only a couple of months. These events have strengthened our desire to take action and do something about the economic consequences.

In the same way, Roberta Mattioli, from the Umbria Chamber of Commerce, explains how “The experiences that our regional territory (Umbria, Italy, *ed.*) has tackled over the years such as earthquakes, with significant economic and social repercussions in the local and entrepreneurial context, has prompted the Umbrian Chamber of Commerce to start support paths for companies in the management of post-disaster economic recovery. The recent pandemic has made the chronicity of certain traumatic episodes even more evident and therefore has given rise to the need to organize their management on a permanent basis. Participation in a project such as Retourn, which sets out precisely this goal, was not only an opportune but a necessary choice”.

Marta Giovannetti, research fellow at the University of Macerata, which is the coordinating partner in this project, strongly believes that “[...] this project arises from clear and strong needs of the European territories involved and I believe that giving a specific response to the training needs in tourism can be a strategy of great impact. In fact, tourism has long been known as a driving force of territorial development, attractiveness and sustainability. Therefore I am very proud of the colleagues who have conceived the project and I give my scientific contribution with great motivation”.

In the upcoming months, many activities will be carried out and many steps towards the achievement of the common goal will be taken. All the news and updates will be posted both on the Retourn website and on the social media accounts.

OFFICIAL PROJECT CHANNELS

Official Website:

- <https://retourn.eu/>

Social Media:



[Facebook](#)



[LinkedIn](#)



[Instagram](#)

Official Hashtags:

- **#retourn**
- **#ErasmusPlus #Erasmusplusproject**
#Eufunding #Eu #Europa #Tourism
#TourismRecovery #Recovery

Official Tags:

- **@Inapp**
- **@Erasmus+** (EUErasmusPlusProgramme)

- **@UNIMC** Dipartimento di Economia e Diritto
- **@IEKAKMI**
- **@Pepe Lab**
- **@Camera** di Commercio Italo-ellenica di Salonicco
- **@Europe Unlimited e.V.**
- **@GZS** Center za poslovno usposabljanje
- **@Tregag** Szellemi tulajdon- és Projektmenedzser Kft
- **@Camera** Commercio Umbria
- **@Fakulteta** za turizem, Univerza v Mariboru

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