EXTOR
EXperiencial TOurism for sustainable Rural development

Newsletter

Welcome to the fourth newsletter of EXTOR - Experiential tourism for sustainable rural development), a project dedicated to fostering sustainable rural development by promoting experiential tourism, enhancing environmental practices, upskilling entrepreneurs, and strengthening training and networking opportunities to meet evolving societal and economic needs.

EXTOR Final Event: Celebrating three years of collaboration and impact

On 11 June 2026, EXTOR partners gathered in Brussels at **La Ferme du Parc Maximilien** to celebrate the successful completion of the three-year project and reflect on its achievements.

The event brought together project partners and local stakeholders to discuss the future of sustainable rural development and tourism. **Kevin Grauwels, Head of Rural Development Unit of the Flemish Land Agency,** opened the discussions with insights on how tourism can support rural development through the LEADER approach and community-led initiatives.

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Participants also heard inspiring examples from across Europe, showcasing how tourism can be used as a tool for sustainable local development. Initiatives such as **Brussels By Foo**t and **HikeUp** (Belgium), **Addio Pizzo Travel** (Italy), tourism professional **Lyolya Filimonova** (Cyprus), the **Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People** (Greece), and **representatives from the local community of Casaseca de Campeán** (Spain) demonstrated how innovative, community-based approaches can create social value, strengthen local identities, and contribute to environmental sustainability.

The programme also featured an inspiring presentation by **Willem De Graeve** from **Visit Flanders on the Travel to Tomorrow initiative**. The presentation highlighted how tourism can serve as a catalyst for creating thriving destinations that benefit visitors, residents, businesses, and local communities alike, while placing sustainability and quality of life at the centre of development strategies.

The event concluded with reflections from Ignace Schops, Director of the NGO Regional Landscape Kempen and Maasland, who encouraged participants to continue building partnerships and pursuing initiatives that generate lasting positive impact beyond the lifetime of individual projects.

Participants also enjoyed a guided tour of La Ferme du Parc Maximilien, learning about the farm's history, its social role within the neighbourhood, and its contribution to urban sustainability and community engagement. As a symbolic gesture marking the end of the EXTOR journey, the partnership made a donation to the farm by "adopting" **Daly**, one of its goats.

A memorable and meaningful way to celebrate three years of collaboration, knowledge exchange, and commitment to a more sustainable future for rural tourism across Europe!

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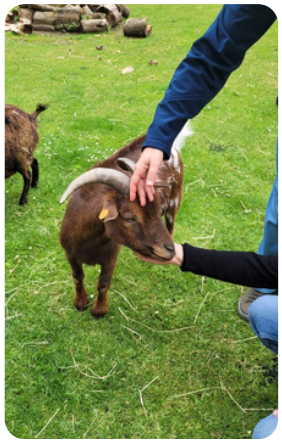
Connect, collaborate, transform rural tourism: The EXTOR Community

The **EXTOR Community** is a space designed to connect people at both local and international level who are passionate about sustainable rural development and tourism. It offers an opportunity to exchange ideas, share experiences, and engage in meaningful discussions on key topics such as rural innovation, sustainable practices, and regenerative business models. By joining the community, participants can contribute to a growing network of practitioners, educators, learners, and stakeholders working together to shape more resilient and inclusive rural futures across Europe.

We warmly invite you to register and become part of the EXTOR Community, and to actively take part in this ongoing exchange of knowledge, ideas, and inspiration.

Scan the **QR code** below to register and join us!



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Local Fairs and Multi-Actor Forums

In addition to the final event, Local Fairs and Multi-Actor Forums were organised in the partner countries, helping to strengthen connections with local communities and engage stakeholders in discussions on sustainable rural development and tourism.

Cyprus

Over 50 participants joined the recent EXTOR event in the village of **Kato Drys**, Cyprus, gathering entrepreneurs and practitioners in experiential tourism.

The morning programme combined insightful discussions on EXTOR methodology as well as with rural entrepreneurs in tourism sector, followed by a scenic guided hike in the nature and heritage of Kato Drys, followed by a relaxed networking brunch. The event created a dedicated space for exchange, collaboration, and idea-sharing among participants working at the intersection of tourism, innovation, and rural development. Overall, the gathering highlighted new approaches to rural tourism and reinforced the value of connecting local experiences with broader entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Sicily

As a local final event, the public conference "**The Voice of Places**" was held in Trappeto during the Festa della Musica 2026. The event brought together local institutions, cultural organisations, schools, and community actors to reflect on the links between culture, heritage, participation, and sustainable tourism. Through local and European experiences, participants explored how cultural identity and collective memory can contribute to community development. The conference also showcased the EXTOR project's achievements and its role in promoting experiential and community-based tourism.

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Co-Creating the Future of Experiential Rural Tourism in Cyprus

At the University of Cyprus, VET learners, community members, and representatives from the Deputy Ministry of Tourism and the Municipality of Nicosia participated in a Design Thinking workshop focused on experiential rural tourism. Through collaborative discussions and co-creation activities, participants developed innovative ideas and recommendations to support sustainable tourism development. The outcomes were compiled into a policy brief, highlighting the value of stakeholder engagement in shaping the future of rural tourism and local innovation in Cyprus.

Sicily: Experiential Tourism at the Heart of the Trappeto Multi-Actor Forums

In March 2026, three EXTOR Multi-Actor Forums were held in Trappeto, Italy, focusing on experiential tourism as a driver of sustainable rural development. The events brought together VET learners, educators, local businesses, organisations, and community members to exchange ideas and co-create solutions. Through participatory activities, participants designed community-based tourism itineraries, strengthened local networks, and explored future collaboration opportunities. The forums highlighted the importance of experiential tourism in enhancing local identity, skills development, and community engagement.

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Austria: Connecting Tourism, Sustainability and Local Communities

In Austria, die Berater organised three multi-actor forums: two on-site events and one online exchange. The forums brought together students, teachers, local businesses, tourism stakeholders and community members to explore sustainable tourism from different perspectives.

The first forum took place in Lower Austria, where students from a tourism school visited a sustainable hotel together with their teacher. During a guided tour, the hotel manager introduced the group to the hotel's sustainability measures, including initiatives related to green energy, resource efficiency and environmentally responsible tourism. The visit was followed by an interactive workshop led by a representative of the local tourism office, giving students and community members the opportunity to discuss local approaches to sustainable tourism.

The second forum was held in Burgenland, near Lake Neusiedl. With local businesses, teachers and students taking part, the event focused on rural tourism and available funding opportunities. Participants exchanged ideas on how tourism in rural regions can be developed in a sustainable and future-oriented way.

The final forum was organised online and featured input from a representative of the Österreichisches Umweltzeichen, Austria's national certification scheme for sustainability. Tourism school teachers, local businesses and community members joined the session to learn more about sustainability certification and its relevance for the tourism sector. The presentation was followed by a lively Q&A session, allowing participants to raise questions and share their own experiences.

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Strengthening rural communities through stakeholder engagement in Spain

In **Spain,** INFODEF organised a series of networking and stakeholder engagement activities, including three Multi-Actor Forums, two Social Café events and a Local Fair in Valladolid. These activities brought together VET learners, teachers, entrepreneurs, local associations and public authorities to discuss the future of experiential rural tourism, strengthen cooperation between education and business, and promote sustainable rural development. One particularly valuable outcome was the identification of a rural community facing depopulation challenges, opening new opportunities for future action inspired by EXTOR methodologies and tools.

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