



Project: „Novel digital tool and embedded learning approach for the use of augmented reality in rural tourism and related sectors“

With an estimate share of 15% in the European tourism[1], the rural tourism sector occupies an important place in the economy and is a key driver of sustainable growth of many regions from the Member States, where rural tourist activities represent a large potential source of employment and contribute to economic health, competitiveness, creativity and innovation. Staff qualifications, the ageing workforce and the inability to attract young workers and entrepreneurs[1] remain one of the crucial problems that need to be addressed in these industries. AUREa4RURAL will provide open-access e-learning and tools to trainees with interest in the rural tourism sector, so that they can address the implementation of innovative tools to make the rural tourism offer more attractive. AUREa4RURAL aims to create an innovative digital Augmented Reality platform for the rural tourism sector along with a training content according to the competences of the staff working in this sector businesses: managers of public Natural Parks, rural hotels and restaurants, companies providing leisure activities, culture or environment departments from rural towns and villages. From this main objective, several specific objectives are defined:

- To identify and understand competences and needs of rural tourism employees and professionals in the use of Augmented Reality as a tool for information and to promotion of the rural tourism sector.
- To create a tourism product for the interpretation of a landscape of their choice through AR tools.
- To develop an e-learning platform according to the identified needs.
- To achieve Capacity Building in the rural tourism sector: a stable and active Strategic

Partnership will be established to promote active cooperation among enterprises, professional organisations and local/Regional Bodies to support high quality VET with a strong work-based learning component.

AUREa4RURAL brings together three business association, two of which, ERTO and EUROGITÉS represent the rural tourism sector, whereas DLEARN associates entities from the digital learning field. The consortium also includes a VET School of Service and rural Economics (OTMK), and two institutions specialized in Augmented Reality: a VET provider and an ICT developer (CETEM), and a higher education entity (KIT). The countries involved in the project are Estonia, France, Spain, Germany and Italy and represent 56% of the total rural tourism infrastructure in Europe[2]. Partners complement each other and the consortium creates added value due to their international approach while developing all planned activities:

- Surveys, comparative analysis and evidence-gathering, real cases studies in order to have a real idea of the needs and competences in the use of ICT in the rural tourism sector.
- The development of an Augmented Reality tool and virtual content.
- The development of an e-learning platform and training content.

- Capacity building and networking activities.

This Strategic Partnership will analyze the use of ICT in the Rural Tourism sector (competences and qualifications needs), will develop an Augmented Reality tool, training material and an e-learning platform. The Augmented Reality tool will integrate the implementation of real cases as examples to help learners assimilate their learning. Both the Augmented Reality tool and the content will be freely available through the e-learning platform. This VET-Business partnership will promote work-based learning, aligned to the needs and opportunities offered by the sector. It will provide and assess digital and transversal skills and competences, fostering employability, social-educational and professional development. The open access training content and virtual tool will contribute to a more strategic and integrated use of ICTs. This learning approach will provide a better understanding and recognition of new skills and competences. Target groups (enterprises of rural tourism and VET staff, students and unemployed willing to focus their careers on these sectors) will have the chance of increasing their knowledge on ICT tools that will improve their competences in their working lives and furthermore, will offer more opportunities for professional development.

In terms of longer term benefits:

- AUREa4RURAL will increase the labour market relevance of VET provision and will reduce skill mismatches and shortages among the identified target groups.
- The project will empower small tourism businesses to enter the digital and mobile world, and to leverage all its possibilities through an easy-to-use IT tool.
- The project will contribute to raise awareness and increase social responsibility towards the natural environment, while still providing an effective way of enjoying it safely