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### EUROPEAN PRACTICES OF RURAL GREEN TOURISM: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS\*

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Abstract. The relevance of researching rural green tourism in Europe is an important field that offers tourists the opportunity to enjoy nature and the countryside, interact with locals and participate in authentic rural life. Implementing environmentally sustainable green tourism practices will help conserve natural resources and reduce the environmental impact of tourism. Encouraging the development of local entrepreneurship and crafts can contribute to preserving the authenticity and economic development of rural areas. Rural green tourism can become a forum for cultural exchange between tourists and local people, promoting mutual understanding. A balanced approach that takes into account infrastructure needs, environmental sustainability, cultural aspects and the participation of local communities is key to the successful development of rural green tourism in Europe. The purpose of the study is to consider the theoretical and practical aspects of European practices of rural green tourism in the context of challenges, to analyse the prospects and opportunities for the development of rural green tourism. The research methodology of the topic includes the systemic method, which recognises the importance of studying the rural green tourism system in Europe, considering its elements and their interaction. The structural method aims at revealing the structure of the object, identifying the key elements and the relationships between them. Results. The article presents directions for the development of rural green tourism, proving that it has significant potential for promoting the development of rural areas and stimulating the economy. This issue is of practical importance, as the growing popularity of rural green tourism creates a demand for hotel, restaurant, excursion and other entertainment services, which can lead to the creation of new jobs, regional economic development and the preservation of cultural and traditional aspects of rural communities. Increased tourism potential can encourage local governments and businesses to invest in infrastructure such as hotels, restaurants, transport and entertainment facilities, and attracting tourists to natural areas encourages more environmentally conscious behaviour and the conservation of natural resources. It was concluded that the development of rural tourism is an effective tool for attracting tourists and creating a positive image of regions. The research on rural green tourism in Europe not only contributes to the development of the tourism industry, but also has an important impact on the socio-economic development and the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the regions.

Key words: European practices, rural green tourism, benefits, challenges, positive image of regions.

JEL Classification: L83, R11, Q01, Q56, D02, O18

#### 1. Introduction

The relevance of the topic of European practices of rural green tourism is relevant because green tourism, which aims at recreation in the natural environment and communication with the local population, is becoming more and more popular in the world. With increasing interest in sustainable development and environmental awareness, green tourism is becoming

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an important industry. Research into effective practices to ensure sustainable and balanced use of natural resources can be an important aspect. The influence of digital technologies in rural green tourism, such as online booking, digital marketing and other innovations, has a significant impact on its development. Consideration of aspects related to the preservation and development of local communities may include the development of infrastructure, tourism services and support for local entrepreneurs. Cultural exchanges during the trip promote mutual understanding and exchange of cultural values between tourists and local people, which contributes to the impact of rural green on socio-cultural development preservation of traditions and identity of local communities. This concerns the development of a competitive environment in the field of rural tourism and the identification of opportunities for cooperation between different rural regions and entrepreneurs, the identification of adaptation and recovery paths after the COVID-19 crisis. Global challenges and opportunities, in particular pandemics, economic crises or political changes reflect on rural green tourism and the search for new opportunities in difficult conditions. The importance of the issue is compounded by the combination of social, environmental, economic and technological challenges that affect the development of rural green tourism in Europe. Therefore, constant study and adaptation to new industrial realities are key aspects for its successful development.

### 2. Analysis of Recent Researches and Publications

In the article the focus is on original developments published within the project (DIRUT) 620720-EPP-1-2020-1-UA-EPPJMO-MODULE with the support of Erasmus+: Jean Monnet Actions, implemented at Zaporizhzhia National University (2020-2023); presented in the monograph "Implementation of the European Experience of Sustainable Rural Tourism and Creative Industries Complementary Development" (Cherep, Venherska, Bezkorovaina, et al., 2023). Rural tourism models involving synergy with creative industries are popular in the countries of the European Union. The complementary approach to sustainable creative tourism development is most common in Portugal, Spain, France and Italy. Creative tourism is a catalyst for the creation of new balanced models that combine not only cultural, rural, gastronomic, and ecological tourism, but also technological innovations of Industry 4.0 and green circular economy innovations. Ukraine has significant potential in rural, creative and cultural tourism. The synergetic analysis of rural tourism and creative industries actualises the search for ways to implement European experience of complementary sustainable development of rural tourism and creative industries in Ukraine, taking into account the digital and green economic trends. The authors of the monograph have summarised and systematised theoretical and practical achievements in the synergetic field of rural tourism and creative industries. The article by O. Karyy, U. Balyk, N. Kara, (2021) shows that European practices of rural green tourism play a significant role in the Ukrainian economy and are closely related to other industries. In the conditions of a deep crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgent need to find effective ways to revive the tourism industry. One of these methods is the European practice research of rural green tourism and the use of territorial branding as a tourist marketing tool, which is presented in the article (Karyy, Balyk, Kara, 2021). The concept of the latest version of the tourist brand is to present Ukraine as an open, modern country where the most interesting things are happening right now (Ukraine NOW). At the same time, the focus is on the changes in the green economy as a system through the prism of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, which create new requirements for the development of rural green tourism and form the ecological basis for the economic competitiveness of rural green tourism, as described in the article by V. Chala, Y. Orlovska (Chala, Orlovska, 2021).

It is important to emphasise that the concept of green rural tourism does not replace the concept of sustainable development, but develops it and is a means of its practical implementation. Green development, as the authors I. Tomashuk, V. Baldynyuk, L. Boltovska note, can be ensured only if environmental and economic policies are integrated in such a way that social progress, economic growth and improvement of the quality of life of the population take place against the background of reduction of threats to the natural environment (Tomashuk, Baldynyuk, Boltovska, 2023). The transition to green rural tourism and a green economy requires the application of a wide range of measures, including economic instruments (taxes, subsidies, emissions trading schemes), government regulatory measures (setting standards) and non-economic measures (voluntary initiatives, information provision). Research and analysis of legislation and regulations related to rural green tourism in different European countries, examining which regulations and policies can promote or limit the development of this sector. The general trend is that rural green tourism remains a relevant and dynamic issue that requires a comprehensive approach and continuous study. The paper written by

R. Oleksenko, Y. Bortnykov, S. Bilohur, N. Rybalchenko, N. Makovetska (Oleksenko, Bortnykov, Bilohur, Rybalchenko, Makovetska, 2021) presents an analysis of the organisational transformation and effectiveness and legal state policy Ukrainian mechanism in the field of tourism and hospitality, which, from authors' point of view, is important to activate rural green tourism. Thus, the analysis of the literature on the problems of rural green tourism and the study of European practices showed that the effective development of tourism management strategy, including the control of tourist flow and consideration of ecological aspects, is important for the preservation of nature and atmosphere of rural regions.

### 3. Methodology

At the same time, the research includes an analysis of the European practices of rural green tourism, which requires knowledge of both individual disciplines and those developed at their intersection (historical-philosophical, social-psychological, information-technological, etc.), which implies the need to turn to an interdisciplinary approach. The study

envisages the use of a systemic approach, which will make it possible to clarify the theoretical and practical dimensions of European rural green tourism practices in the context of the challenges, the analysis of perspectives and opportunities for rural tourism development, and the specificities of their impact development. individual regional into account the fundamental complexity of the challenges and opportunities of rural green tourism development, its multi-level connections with the environment, it is necessary to resort to the descriptive method. The work involves the use of scientific research methods: a comparative method, which allows the identification of effective methods for monitoring and evaluating rural tourism development in order to identify problems and opportunities and adapt strategies; the abstractlogical method and the scientific generalisation method in the formulation of conclusions and recommendations for the development of European practices of rural green tourism in the context of challenges, perspective analysis and opportunities for rural green tourism development.

Table 1
Rural green tourism challenges and prospects

Development direction	Rural green tourism challenges	Prospects for the development of rural green tourism			
Natural resource conservation	The popularity of rural green tourism can lead to	Investments in tourism infrastructure can improve the			
	an increase in the tourist load on natural resources,	quality of services and make rural green tourism more			
Infrastructure development	which can lead to their depletion and destruction.	attractive.			
Preserving authenticity		Cooperation between different rural areas and the			
1 16361 villg authenticity	The growing demand for rural green tourism can	creation of networking initiatives can ensure the			
Collaboration and networking	lead to commercialisation and loss of authenticity	exchange of experiences, the implementation of			
initiatives	of local communities.	best practices and a common marketing approach to			
		attracting tourists.			
Infrastructure and services	Some rural areas may face a lack of infrastructure	Agritourism, including participation in agriculture, can			
	and insufficient tourism services.	be a key element of rural green tourism, promoting			
Agritourism development		interaction between tourists and agriculture.			
Interaction with the local	Integrating tourists into rural communities can be	Developing effective tourism management strategies,			
population	challenging, as it can affect the traditional way of	including controlling the flow of tourists and taking			
	life and significantly change the way of life of local	into account environmental aspects, is essential for			
Effective tourism management	residents.	preserving the nature and atmosphere of rural areas.			
Nature and environmental	Increased tourist traffic can have an impact on	Rural green tourism can be an effective tool			
protection	natural resources and the ecosystem. Careless use	for stimulating the local economy, providing			
	of natural resources can lead to environmental	opportunities for entrepreneurship and developing			
Local economic development	problems.	rural industries.			
Reduction of authenticity	With a large number of tourists, there may be a				
	risk of losing the authenticity of the local way of	Tourists can contribute to the preservation and			
Preservation and restoration	life and culture through commercial exploitation.	restoration of traditions, local customs and art.			
of cultural property	<u> </u>				
Socio-cultural challenges	The growth of tourism can create socio-cultural	Rural green tourism can be an opportunity for tourists			
	conflicts between locals and tourists, as well as	to learn about rural traditions, crafts and farming			
Educational opportunities	lead to resource allocation.	methods.			
Infrastructure challenges		If managed properly, rural tourism can contribute to			
	An unexpected increase in the flow of tourists can	sustainable development by providing income and			
Sustainability and	lead to insufficient infrastructure to serve them.	support to local communities.			
development		support to rotal communities.			

Source: compiled by the authors

#### 4. Results and Discussions

## **4.1. Rural Green Tourism Challenges and Prospects**

The challenges of rural green tourism are related to a number of factors that can affect the sustainable development and environmental objectives of this type of tourism. Increased tourist traffic can lead to inappropriate use of natural resources, which can affect the ecosystem and biodiversity. Preservation of authenticity, commercialisation of rural tourism may lead to loss of authenticity and change the traditional way of life of local communities.

Large numbers of tourists can lead to socio-cultural conflicts between local residents and visitors. An unexpected increase in tourists can cause problems with infrastructure such as roads, hotels, restaurants and other services. Some of the revenues from tourism may be inequitably distributed, excluding some local communities from the benefits. Local communities and tourism businesses may face challenges in implementing a sustainable approach and lack of education on environmental and sociocultural issues. Lack of effective local governance and planning can hinder rural tourism development and lead to negative impacts. To overcome these challenges, it is important to develop sustainable approaches to rural green tourism that take into account the needs of local communities, preserve resources and promote development. Active participation of local residents and partnerships between government, community and business can contribute to the sustainable development of rural green tourism.

Rural green tourism, or agro-ecotourism, has become an increasingly popular type of tourism as tourists seek closer contact with nature, authentic experiences and recreation in small rural communities. To address the challenges and unlock the potential of rural green tourism, it is important to implement sustainable approaches, involve local people in planning

processes and create an enabling environment for the development of this type of tourism.

### **4.2.** Competitiveness of European Practices of Rural Green Tourism

The competitiveness of European rural green tourism practices can be considered in relation to a specific market or a specific group of consumers, which is formed on the basis of relevant features of the strategic selection of market segments. The competitiveness of European practices of rural green tourism is a relative characteristic that expresses the difference between the development of a green estate compared to the development of a competing estate from the point of view of satisfying the needs of tourists with its services, taking into account their efficiency and quality. The competitiveness of European rural green tourism practices is characterised by their ability and dynamism to adapt to the competitive conditions of the market.

Scientific research has shown that European practices of rural green tourism give preference to environmental factors, hospitality of residents, quality of food, and safety of recreation, as shown in Figure 1.

Thus, the competitiveness of European rural green tourism practices is determined by a number of factors that have proven to be attractive to environmentally conscious tourists who wish to be in closer contact with nature and local traditions. Tourists prefer places where natural beauty is preserved and where tourism development takes place with a minimum impact the environment. An ecologically clean environment and the opportunity to get closer to nature attract tourists. An important factor in the success of rural tourism is a warm and personal welcome from the hosts. The opportunity to communicate with local people and learn about their traditions and customs makes an impression on tourists. Traditional local cuisine and products can be attractive to tourists. Many travellers are looking for an authentic experience, including the

# Factors that determine the quality of European practices of rural green tourism of its rural estates

Hospitality of residents
Food quality
Security of stay
Housing quality
Ease of travel planning and
booking

Historical and cultural monuments
Entertainment and cultural events
Quality of service in public catering establishments
Availability and completeness of tourist information

Environmental situation

Figure 1. Factors determining the quality of European practices of rural green tourism of rural estates

Source: compiled by the authors

Table 2

Overall emotional feeling from the visit

Overall emotional feeling from the visit	Completely satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Satisfied and dissatisfied in equal measure	Mostly dissatisfied	Not satisfied at all	Hard to say
Hospitality of residents	64	25	6	1	1	3
Food quality	60	28	8	1	1	2
Security of stay	58	28	8	2	1	3
Housing quality	55	25	8	1	1	10
Ease of travel planning and booking	55	24	7	1	1	12
Historical and cultural monuments	55	21	6	1	1	16
Entertainment and cultural events	54	24	7	2	1	12
Quality of service in public catering establishments	50	30	9	2	1	8
Availability and completeness of tourist information	49	28	10	3	1	9
Environmental situation	44	28	16	6	4	2

Source: compiled by the authors

culinary specialities of the region. Tourists choose holiday destinations where their safety is guaranteed. Safety includes both physical security and ensuring the health and well-being of tourists. These factors combine to create a unique tourism product that meets the diverse needs and expectations of travellers seeking an authentic and ecologically balanced holiday.

European practices of rural green tourism are characterised by the fact that the general emotional feeling of a visit to a rural place can often be very positive and rich. Tourists usually associate such emotions with rural tourism as: enjoyment of nature, ecological feeling, cultural exchange, harmony and peace, positive emotions from hospitality. Nature has a great influence on the emotional state of tourists: walks in forests, valleys, villages, as well as the opportunity to observe rural landscapes can cause great admiration and satisfaction. Tourists who choose rural tourism often feel the satisfaction of realising their contribution to nature conservation and supporting local ecosystems. Familiarity with local traditions, culture and communication with local people can generate curiosity, respect and pleasure. The absence of noise and the tranquillity of the rural environment can contribute to a sense of harmony and relaxation. This is particularly important for those seeking a break from the stress and routine of the city. The hospitality of the local people and the friendly interaction with the hosts can evoke feelings of warmth and gratitude. Of course, every tourist has their own unique experience, but the general trend is that rural tourism provides an emotionally rich and positive experience.

The results of the survey show that the combination of all the above factors is important in the European practice of rural green tourism.

An important component of the competitiveness of tourism enterprises is the development of various types of tourism that are less vulnerable to military conflicts.

For example, ecotourism, rural green tourism and cultural exchanges can be promising areas for attracting tourists. The authors also believe that the most effective measures to restore tourism in the context of military conflict can be formulated at the level of state institutions, companies and NGOs in cooperation with international and national authorities.

The organisation of a trip abroad by travel service providers can vary depending on the gender and age of the tourists. Travel agencies and services can take into account various aspects to ensure a comfortable and safe trip for their customers. In some countries, there may be safety features for women or men. Tour operators may recommend certain safety precautions or areas to avoid. Some tour operators may offer special programmes for women to visit women's communities, workshops or other places of interest. For families with children, tour operators can offer special programmes that take into account the needs and interests of children of different ages. For teenagers, tours may include active recreation, extreme sports, or trips based on interests common to that age group. For older people, trips can be designed with less physical activity but with an emphasis on cultural excursions and comfort. For students, economic options, opportunities to learn a foreign language or participate in volunteer programmes can be organised. Tour operators can tailor their services to the different needs and preferences of customers based on gender and age to provide the optimal travel experience for each group. Next, it was investigated which types of recreation were preferred during the last trip to Ukraine in 2021, depending on the location (%).

According to the analysis, travellers who travel abroad often incur expenses that include accommodation, food and transport. These are the main items of expenditure when travelling. Women pay slightly more to travel companies. Men spend more on accommodation, cigarettes and alcoholic

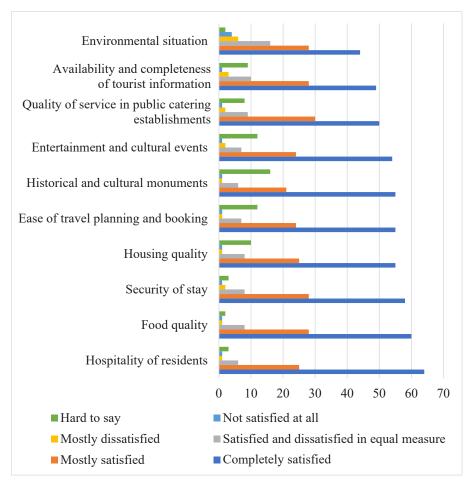


Figure 2. The overall emotional feeling about tourism

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of a domestic and outbound touristic research by Ukrainians

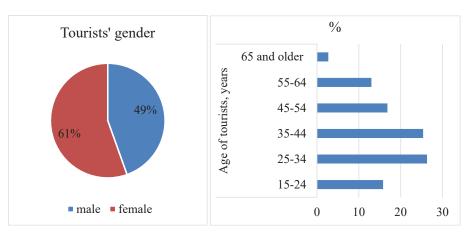


Figure 3. Organisation of foreign trips by service providers depending on gender and age of respondents (%)

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of a domestic and outbound touristic research by the Ukrainians

beverages. However, there are no gender differences for most expenditure items. Middle-aged and older people pay slightly more for travel services. Young people and women spend slightly more on food services (cafes, bars, restaurants, etc.) and accommodation services. In general, tourist

expenditure is almost identical across age groups. There are certain differences in the structure of tourist spending of different regions of Ukraine, but their spending priorities remain unchanged. Residents of large cities (regional centres) pay slightly more to providers of tourist services (regional

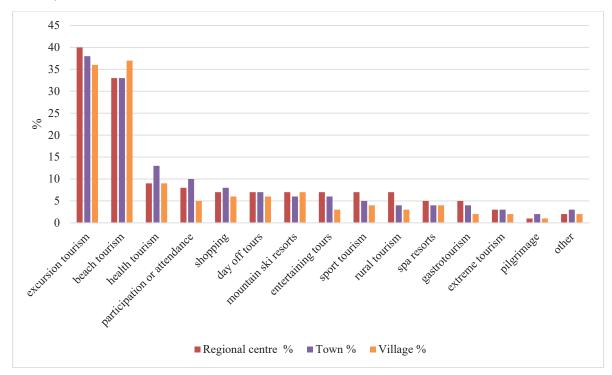


Figure 4. What types of recreation were preferred during the last trip to Ukraine in 2021 – depending on the type of place of residence of respondents (%)

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of a domestic and outbound touristic research for Ukrainians

centres). Residents of villages rarely buy local products or alcoholic beverages. Most foreign tourists spend most of their money on travel services, which they pay to travel service providers. They pay travel service providers. On average, this amount is almost 27,000 UAH. This is the most expensive item. In order of priority: accommodation services (on average about 9,000 UAH), purchase of material values and necessities (8.5 thousand UAH), food (8.5 thousand UAH), petrol (8.5 thousand UAH), fuel (over 6.5 thousand UAH). Other expenditure includes sports and health services, acquisition of cultural goods and jewellery, catering services (restaurants, cafes, bars, buffets, canteens), sports, cultural, health and leisure events, entertainment (concerts, festivals, matches, etc.).

On average, men paid slightly more to travel service providers, and they also paid more for fuel, sports and spa services, cultural and jewellery products and public catering services. There are also differences between age groups. Younger tourists spend relatively more on food, sport and health, cultural, health, relaxation, leisure and recreation, while older tourists spend more on health services, medical services and food, cultural values and purchase of jewellery. There are also differences in the average amount spent when travelling abroad: older tourists spend more on leisure and entertainment, while younger tourists spend more on cultural values and jewellery. Certain deviations can also be observed in the average

spending of tourists living in different settlements and regions of Ukraine. However, the main spending priorities of the groups compared remain unchanged.

In order to increase the competitiveness of rural green tourism, it is important for enterprises to implement effective marketing measures aimed at attracting and retaining customers. The following marketing measures are suggested to increase the competitiveness of rural green tourism: 1) creation of a unique identity (development of a recognisable brand that reflects the company's values and characteristics); 2) cooperation with travel agencies and tour operators (entering into partnership agreements, including on travel packages that include visits to local attractions); 3) introduction of promotions and discounts (organisation of temporary promotions and discounts to attract attention and stimulate demand); 4) Internet marketing and the use of social networks (attraction of an online audience through online advertising and an active presence in social networks); 5) organisation of thematic events and excursions (special events and excursions that attract the attention of different tourist categories); 6) improving customer satisfaction and receiving feedback (ensuring quality service and receiving feedback and recommendations from customers). These marketing activities help tourism operators in Zaporizhzhia Oblast become more competitive and attract more customers to rural green tourism (Report on the results of the survey).

#### 5. Conclusions

Rural green tourism in Europe is an important branch that combines agricultural activity and tourism. European practices of rural green tourism are defined in the European context, which include: eco-agri-tourism, cultural, agritourism, recreation, gastronomic, farms become a reception place for tourists, offering them the opportunity to participate in agricultural work, experience rural life and taste local products Eco-agri-tourism, which focuses on ecologically clean agriculture that adheres to the principles of sustainable development and produces organic products. Active recreation offers a variety of entertainment and sports activities such as hiking, cycling, horse riding and other outdoor activities in a rural environment. Gastronomic tourism is aimed at taste journeys where tourists have the opportunity to taste traditional dishes and agricultural products. European countries are actively developing rural green tourism, contributing to sustainable development and supporting local communities. However, there are challenges such as the need for effective tourism management, nature conservation and a balanced entertainment infrastructure. Prospects include the development of new forms of rural tourism and the use of digital technologies to attract tourists and improve service quality. European rural green tourism practices aim at preserving nature and ensuring environmentally responsible tourism. Technological innovations concern the use of technology to enhance the tourist experience, virtual tours, mobile applications for navigation and information facilitating the interaction of tourists with local resources. Local people can participate in the development and implementation of tourism programmes that contribute to sustainable development. All these practices interact and contribute to the sustainable development of rural green tourism in Europe, taking into account the current challenges and maximising its prospects for local communities and tourists themselves. The development of unique tourist offers, taking into account the specificities of each region, can attract different groups of tourists and create an excellent experience. The use of the latest technologies and innovations in rural green tourism can contribute to the development of the industry and improve the quality of services.

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