



SPRING INTO RECOVERY

Resilience, Recovery and Raising Excellence in Tourism

22nd European Region of Gastronomy Platform
8th Annual IGCAT Experts Meeting

PROGRAMME AND SPEAKERS

Hosted by Slovenia, European Region of Gastronomy 2021

18-19 May 2021



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Welcome and Introduction

Dear European Region of Gastronomy Stakeholders, distinguished speakers and IGCAT experts,

On behalf of the IGCAT Board and our hosts, the Slovenian Tourism Board I would like to invite you to the 8th IGCAT Annual Experts' Meeting celebrating Slovenia's awarded year as European Region of Gastronomy 2021-2022.

IGCAT experts and stakeholders from diverse food, culture, wellness, nature and other sectors will take a holistic look at the theme **Spring into Recovery: resilience, recovery and raising excellence in tourism**.

Travel, tourism, hospitality and cultural sectors have been the most economically affected during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our aim therefore is to discover how we can take opportunity from the crisis to build back stronger and better.

The two-part webinar is designed to hear as many examples as possible of good practise ideas as well as provide the opportunity to ask questions to the people implementing programmes for recovery across Europe.

We hope that with such a rich array of experts, we will build an unprecedented peer-to-peer exchange between people that care about sustainability and have direct experience. Our aim to provide a space to dream the world we would like to create; exchange ideas across different sectors to find new solutions to our current challenges; learn and deepen our knowledge-sharing possibilities as well as, support one another as leaders in our fields that are taking steps to ensure positive change.

Each day the webinar will start with main speakers and then we will dedicate 45 minutes to smaller key group discussions. Presenters in the break-out sessions will be given just 3-minutes to share their experience, observations or an interesting project related to the topic of the session. This is so we can all move quickly into a conversation and provide time for questions and answers. A rapporteur from each session will report the key findings back to the main group in a feedback session. Sessions will also be recorded and available in case you want to learn more from one of the other break-out sessions.

We welcome everyone to send papers, presentational materials and links to IGCAT about projects that contribute to the theme and a selection of these will be compiled into a post webinar resources manual for all.

IGCAT's mission is to help local people conserve fragile cultures, habitats and food traditions because we recognize that this is necessary to ensure a more sustainable future. By working with our European Regions of Gastronomy Platform we hope to feed into the wider European policy agenda of how to support, maintain and further encourage more responsible, better-quality, unique, authentic and memorable visitor experiences and in doing so, stimulate locally based SMEs and micro-businesses.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon!

Diane Dodd PhD

IGCAT President

Webinar Programme

TUESDAY 18 MAY: RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

Chair: **Dr. Diane Dodd**, IGCAT President

14.05h (CET) **Welcome and Introduction: Recovery and Resilience Action for Slovenian Tourism**
Maja Pak, M. Sc., Director of Slovenian Tourism Board

14.15h (CET) **European Tourism Manifesto**
Iulia Niculica, European Travel Commission

14.25h (CET) **Re-Start Tourism project of Catalonia**
Patrick Torrent, Catalan Tourist Board and President, Necstur
Catalonia, European Region of Gastronomy, awarded 2016

14.35h (CET) **Slovenia Green Cuisine - Green Gastronomy Tourism Policy**
Barbara Zmrzlikar, Slovenian Tourist Board
Slovenia, European Region of Gastronomy, awarded 2021

14.45h (CET) **Taste the Change - A Regeneration Opportunity**
Heidi Lazani, Communications Specialist, Greece

14.55h (CET) *Move into breakout sessions for discussion with the speakers*

Break-out session 1: Recovery and resilience in the tourism sector

A conversation with **Patrick Torrent**, Catalan Tourist Board, facilitated by **May Britt**, Trondheim-Trøndelag 2022 with **Alin Chipaila**, Sibiu 2019 (rapporteur), **Sharifa Hasanova**, Azerbaijan Tourism Board and **Dr. Maria Socratous**, Tourist Office, Cyprus.

Break-out session 2: Sustainable gastronomy and green labelling

A conversation with **Barbara Zmrzlikar**, Slovenian Tourist Board, facilitated by **Ilona Sares**, Kuopio 2020-21, **Mihaela Antofie**, Sibiu 2019 (rapporteur), **Carlos Fernandes**, Minho 2016 and **Wendy Barrie**, Scotland.

Break-out session 3: Sustaining tourism on Europe's Islands - the challenges

A conversation with **Heidi Lazani**, Greece, facilitated by **Luisa Coll**, Menorca 2022, **Davinia Galea**, Malta (rapporteur), **Jorge Bernárdez**, Tenerife, and **Niko Micklin** from Visit Åland, Åland Islands.

Break-out session 4: Involving stakeholders to attract visitors

A conversation facilitated by **Blanca Cros**, Catalonia 2016 with **Jesper Christensen**, Aarhus 2017 (rapporteur), **Dr. Dezső Kovács**, Barany Region (Hungary), **Aleš Gačnik**, Slovenia 2021 and **Henna Lehtikoinen**, Kuopio 2020-21.

15.40h (CET) Feedback session

15.50h (CET) Concluding remarks by **Tanja Angleitner Sagadin**, Director, Vocational College for Catering and Tourism Maribor

WEDNESDAY 19 MAY: RAISING EXCELLENCE IN TOURISM

- Chair: **Dr. Edith Szivas**, IGCAT Vice-President
- 14.00h (CET) **Welcome and introduction: Bringing Awareness to the Region**
Tanja Angleitner Sagadin, Director, Vocational College for Catering and Tourism Maribor
- 14.10h (CET) **The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe**
Stefano Dominioni, Council of Europe
- 14.20h (CET) **Food Tourism - Report on the state of gastronomic tourism in Italy in 2021**
Roberta Garibaldi, University of Bergamo (ITA) and East Lombardy 2017
- 14.30h (CET) **Stimulating new food innovations for attracting visitors**
Elsa Marinho, CIM Região Coimbra, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2021-22
- 14.40h (CET) **Black region, Identity building - Explore Our Food Uncover Our Hearts**
Diana Hounslow, Director of the Tourism Development and Reservation Agency of Pas-de-Calais and Ambassador of Hauts-de-France 2023
- 14.50h (CET) **Slovenia Unique Experiences**
Morana Polovič, M.Sc., Project Manager, Slovenian Tourist Board
- 14.55h (CET) *Move into breakout sessions for discussion with the speakers*
- Break-out session 5: Educating in order to promote sustainability*
A conversation with **Diana Hounslow**, Hauts-de-France 2023, facilitated by **Jacinta Dalton**, GMIT, Galway-West of Ireland 2018 with **Dr. Alessio Cavicchi**, University of Macerata, Italy (rapporteur), **Sandra Simões**, Hospitality School, Coimbra 2021-22, **Mojca Polak**, MIC Academy of Culinary Arts and Tourism, Slovenia 2021, **Joana Santos & Rafael Oliveira**, Minho 2016.
- Break-out session 6: Building excellent visitor experiences and food/wine routes*
A conversation with **Morana Polovič, M.Sc.**, Slovenian Tourist Board, facilitated by **Jaume Gomila**, Menorca 2022 with **Niina Väänttinen**, Kuopio 2020-21 (rapporteur), **Mirna Jelčić**, Herzegovina Region, **Irena Kregar Šegota**, Rijeka, **Vesna Horvat**, Maribor Tourism Board, Slovenia 2021.
- Break-out session 7: Research and discovery into visitor needs*
A conversation with **Dr. Roberta Garibaldi**, East Lombardy 2017, facilitated by **Antti Iire**, Savonia University, Kuopio 2020-21, **Louise Nørgaard Reifling**, Aarhus 2017, **Dr. Daniela Angelina Jelincic**, Croatia, **László Puczkó**, Xellem, Hungary and **Kristine Rise** Trondheim-Trøndelag 2022.
- Break-out session 8: Agrofood and innovation contributing to a region's identity*
A conversation with **Elsa Marinho**, CIM Região Coimbra 2021-22, facilitated by **Ariadna Ribas**, Catalan Tourist Board, Catalonia 2016 with **Elaine Donohue**, Galway 2018 (rapporteur), **mag. Marjan Cukrov**, Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Slovenia 2021, **Karolina Buczkowska-Gotqbek**, President of the Polish Association of Food Tourism.
- 15.40h (CET) Feedback session
- 15.50h (CET) Concluding remarks by **Dr. Diane Dodd**, IGCAT President.

Speakers and contributors



Tanja Angleitner Sagadin, PhD, Director, Vocational College of Hospitality and Tourism Maribor - Slovenia

Tanja has been working in hospitality for 25 years. Having lived, studied and worked in 11 countries and 2 continents, she moved into education, project and event management 20 years ago. She has been the director of the Vocational College of Hospitality and Tourism Maribor since 2019, where she also teaches English and Project management, and is mentor to students in various international hospitality competitions.



Mihaela Antofie, Associate Professor, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019 - Romania

Mihaela Antofie is the Head of the Research Centre for Agricultural Sciences and Environmental Protection of Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania and was nominated by the University to support the process of writing the Sibiu's bid for the European Region of Gastronomy 2019 title. She is a biologist with an experience of over 18 years in environmental policy development (i.e. biotechnology, protected areas and biodiversity) as well as in cross cutting issues such as climate change and desertification. She teaches genetics and biodiversity conservation for bachelor, master and PhD degrees. Mihaela is the author of over 30 books or chapters and more than 90 papers published in peer reviewed journals and, in the last years, she coordinated or was involved in several projects. She is an active member of IUCN CEC, CGIAR and EEB.



Wendy Barrie, Director - Scottish Food Guide & Scottish Cheese Trail - Scotland

Scottish Thistle Award Regional Ambassador, Wendy Barrie is a highly respected campaigner for local produce, popular cookery show presenter and food writer. Founder & Director of award-winning Scottish Food Guide and Scottish Cheese Trail, Wendy is Leader in Scotland for Slow Food Ark of Taste & Member of Slow Food Cooks Alliance. Wendy runs sustainable food experiences at her Fife food studio and enjoys the rural backwaters of Småland on their small organic croft. She has been listed among the Top 100 Women in Tourism in 2020.



Jorge Bernárdez, Project manager, Nartex Barcelona and lecturer at EU Buisness School - Spain

Jorge Bernárdez is a specialist in strategic and operational management, financing and fundraising. He has more than twenty years of experience in management, direction, consulting and training of organisations, mainly in the cultural, tourism and leisure fields, in Barcelona (Ticketmaster, Ikonos Cultural, Poble Espanyol, Orquestra Simfònica del Vallès), Paris (MN Picasso-Paris, Parc Zoologique), and the Canary Islands (Mémorial Agadir 1960). He has been President of the Association of Professionals of Cultural Management of Catalonia (APGCC) (2002-2007) and the State Federation of Associations of Cultural Managers (2004-2006), as well as lecturer and guest speaker in different official Master's Degree in Arts and Cultural Management. Bachelor's degree in Economics (UAB), Master's degree in Cultural Management (UB) and MBA (UPF). Studies abroad: Music administration (City University, London) and Arts Marketing (École des HEC-Montreal).



May Britt Hansen, Coordinator, Trondheim-Trøndelag, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2022

May Britt Hansen is Coordinator of Trondheim-Trøndelag, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2022. She has worked in tourism and hospitality since 1995 with a focus on marketing, sales and development. In the region of Trondheim-Trøndelag she has worked for different hotels chains as sales director, for a tourism destination company for the region as a manager, as well as for Visit Trondheim. May has a bachelor in tourism and her passion is to make customer happy and pursue sustainability of businesses in different tourism industries.



Karolina Buczkowska-Gołqbek, PhD, President, Polish Association of Food Tourism - Poland

Karolina Buczkowska-Gołqbek, PhD, Asst. Prof. is President of the Polish Association of Food Tourism and a researcher specialising in anthropology of food in tourism, childhood studies (especially the context of children, food and travel) and cultural tourism (cultural tourists). Also, the topic of souvenirs is in her interests. She is an author of five books and over 80 articles concerning cultural and culinary tourism. She is a university teacher at one of Polish universities in Poznań, where she is also the tutor of Cultural Tourism and Food Tourism course. Prof. Buczkowska-Gołqbek is a member of ATLAS Gastronomy and Tourism Research Group. She is also the deputy editor-in-chief of „Cultural Tourism” („Turystyka Kulturowa”) Polish Scientific Journal. She loves travelling (especially with her 7-year old son) to discover places through their culture and food.



Dr. Alessio Cavicchi, Full Professor, Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, University of Macerata | IGCAT Expert - Italy

Alessio Cavicchi is Full Professor at the Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism at University of Macerata (Italy). His main fields of interest and research are consumer food choice, economics of food quality and safety, sustainable tourism and innovation in the agro-food sector. He has experience as an invited expert for several programmes and DGs of the European Commission in the food sector (DG Research, DG Regio-Urbact, Joint Research Center, European Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation, DG Education and Culture) and he has served as invited expert for the United Nations; moreover, he has been consultant for the evaluation of measures applied under the EU Common Agricultural Policy. His works have been published in several international books and journals and he has served as consultant for several agri-food firms in Europe.



Alin Chipăilă, President, Sibiu County Tourism Board and Romanian Alliance for Tourism - Romania

Alin Chipăilă is President of the Sibiu County Tourism Board since 2006, Vice-President of the Romanian Federation of Tourism Promotion Associations and, since 2021, President of the Romanian Alliance for Tourism. He was part of the team that coordinated the programme of Sibiu, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019. At a national level he was involved in drafting public policies for supporting the recovery of the Hospitality Industry since April 2020. In the framework of the Alliance for Tourism, he participated in the drafting of the SOS Romanian Tourism Manifesto, that comprises 60 measures for the for the short-, medium- and long-term recovery of the tourism industry. He is also involved in the drafting of the current national legislation proposal regarding the operationalization of the DMOs in Romania.



Jesper Christensen, Special Advisor, Business Region Aarhus - Denmark

Jesper is a founding member of the European Region of Gastronomy network and has for many years played a key role in the internationalisation of the Danish food cluster with the involvement of Aarhus/Central Denmark Region in several international networks. He has since 2006 been project leader for several business-development initiatives and international projects related to food business, tourism and gastronomy. Currently, he works for Business Region Aarhus as special advisor and he has also worked as advisor for City of Aarhus. For the European Commission, Jesper has several times been international expert on international collaboration for countries considering to join the EU.



Luisa Coll Hellyer, Coordinator, Menorca, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2022 - Spain

Luisa Coll Hellyer is coordinator for Menorca, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2022. She has a university degree in Translation and Interpretation (Spanish, English and Russian) from the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)*, and a Masters in Protocol from the *Universitat de Barcelona (UB)*. Her last university semester was spent at the prestigious Pushkin Institute in Moscow where she increased her knowledge of the Russian language and culture. Luisa lived and worked in Brussels for 5 years. The first year as an intern to the *Centre Balears Europa*, and then as event manager in the European Wind Energy Association (EWEA) organising large events. On her return to Menorca she worked for ARTIEM Hotels for 6 years. Luisa has the honour of being appointed British Honorary Consul for Menorca.



Blanca Cros, Catalan Tourism Board and IGCAT Board Member - Spain

Blanca Cros is the Head of European Programmes & International Relations at the Catalan Tourist Board (CTB) where she is responsible for the development of a broad range of European projects, as well as engaging in various European tourism networks. Her wide experience includes working as coordinator for cultural tourism, gastronomy, and sustainable tourism at CTB. Blanca believes in the exchange of good practises and the potential of joining forces and sharing synergies among different countries, regions and tourist destinations. She strongly supported and pushed forward the candidacy of Catalonia as European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2016. Additionally, Blanca was awarded "Necstour Ambassador for 2017".



Marjan Cukrov, MSc, Project Leader, Slovenia, European Region of Gastronomy 2021 at the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food - Slovenia

As the project leader of Slovenia, European Region of Gastronomy 2021 at the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Marjan Cukrov is responsible to represent the interest of the Slovene agriculture sector in rapidly developing Slovene gastronomy by connecting and encouraging cooperation between agriculture sector and HORECA sector. He is also a member of the award commission for the most innovative agriculture product/service by AGROBIZNIS/FINANCE magazine.



Jacinta Dalton, GMIT, Galway-West of Ireland, European Region of Gastronomy 2018 - Ireland

Jacinta Dalton has had direct operational experience at senior management level in the food and hospitality industry over the past 20 years and has developed and delivered a number of training programmes for Fáilte Ireland - Ireland's National Tourism Development Authority. In 2011 Jacinta was co-founder of The Foodie Forum (www.thefoodieforum.net) - an interactive, collaborative, educational networking platform for food producers, chefs, restaurateurs interested in the support and promotion of local food. Jacinta is currently the Head of Department Culinary Arts & Service Industries at Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) GMIT - Fáilte Ireland Food Champion, Region of Gastronomy Steering Group, and board member and a member of IGCAT and Fáilte Ireland.



Diane Dodd, President IGCAT - Spain

Diane Dodd PhD is President of IGCAT (International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism) and founder of the World Region of Gastronomy Award. Together with the awarded European Regions of Gastronomy Platform, she has pioneered the European Young Chef Award, the Food Film Menu, the Local Food Gift Challenge and the Top Visitor Experience. She is also Regional Adviser for the global network IFACCA (International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies) as well as an advocate for the protection and preservation of culture and food diversity. She leads MA courses in Cultural Institutions and Policies and Events Management at the International University of Catalonia. She has been regularly engaged as an evaluator for the Cultural Routes programme of the Council of Europe as well as provided expert advice to European Capitals of Culture.



Stefano Dominioni, Executive Secretary, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes - Council of Europe (EPA) and Director, European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR) - Luxembourg

Stefano Dominioni is Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA) and Director of the European Institute of Cultural Routes (Luxembourg). He is responsible for overseeing the certification by the Council of Europe of Cultural Routes in the field of European culture and heritage across its 47 member States and the regular evaluation of the current 40 certified Cultural Routes. Dr. Dominioni ensures EPA Governing Board and Statutory Committee operations, management of the European Institute of Cultural Routes and coordination with the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. He is responsible for the implementation of Joint Programmes with the European Commission, and cooperation with other International Organisations such as UNESCO, UNWTO, OECD and OEI. During his career at the Council of Europe, he has worked for the Directorate General of Education, Culture and Youth and the Directorate General of Social Cohesion. He received his Ph.D., M.Phil. and M.A. from Yale University, a M.A. from the Université d'Aix-Marseille and a B.A. from the University of Milan. He was Research Fellow at Cambridge University (England).



Elaine Donohue, General Manager, BIA Innovator Campus, Galway-West of Ireland, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2018 - Ireland

Elaine Donohue is General Manager at the BIA Innovator Campus since 2019. She oversees and manages the initial development of the not for profit company, delivery of its capital project, and the company's operation once opened in 2022. Elaine holds a First Class Honours in International Marketing Practice, Prince II Project Management and a Diploma in Strategic Growth for the Food Industry from Smurfit Business School in Dublin. Initially she gained robust knowledge of the retail industry and its workings following her years with Lidl Ireland. She then gained an extensive international perspective from working for Bord Bia in their London office. She worked commercially as a National Account Manager for Greene Farm Foods and Brady Family Ham, managing both domestic and export channels of business. Prior to her appointment, Elaine proudly led the Galway, West of Ireland, European Region of Gastronomy Designation. It was awarded Best Economic Development Project in Ireland at the Chambers Ireland, Excellence in Local Government Awards 2018 and nominated as one of the Top Five Large Projects along the Wild Atlantic Way at the Irish Tourism Industry Awards 2019.



Carlos Fernandes, Associate Professor in Tourism Studies, Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo - Portugal

Carlos Fernandes, Ph.D., is Associate Professor in Tourism Studies at the Polytechnic of Viana do Castelo, Portugal. He obtained his undergraduate degree at Syracuse University (USA), Master's at Rutgers University (USA) and Ph.D. at Bournemouth University (UK). His interests include tourism innovation, tourism as a development strategy, gastronomy, religious tourism and diaspora tourism. Lecturer in the Bachelor's in Tourism (UNWTO Tedqual certified) and the Master's in Innovative Tourism Development. Grand Master of the Confraternity of the Gastronomes of Minho, in Northern Portugal, Coordinator of the ATLAS Gastronomy and Tourism Research Group, and responsible for the bid of Minho, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2016 to IGCAT. A member of the editorial board of various tourism related scientific journals, including the Journal of Gastronomy and Tourism. Researcher at the Centre for Transdisciplinary Development Studies (CETRAD) at the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro and the Centre for Research, Development and Innovation in Tourism (CiTUR), Portugal.



Dr. Aleš Gačnik, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Tourism Studies - Turistica (Department of Cultural Tourism) | Head of the Centre of Gastronomy and Wine Culture of University of Primorska | IGCAT Expert - Slovenia

Dr. Aleš Gačnik is Assistant Professor of social sciences and humanities in tourism and lecturer in the field of cultural heritage, cultural and gastronomy tourism. As a researcher, he focuses his work in the fields of cultural heritage, art and tourism, heritage and cultural tourism, museology, wine and culinary culture, agriculture, regional development, wine and gastronomy tourism. He has been the (co)organizer of several national and international conferences, (co)editor of several scientific and professional monographs and journals and has received several national and international awards. His bibliography comprises more than 720 publications. He is a member of The EnoTourism Academy, of the expert council of The Slovenia Restaurant Award and of two expert groups at the Ministry of Agriculture: Council for development of agriculture and Slovenia - European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2021.



Davinia Galea, Managing Director, ARC Research & Consultancy and IGCAT Expert - Malta

Davinia Galea has worked in the cultural and creative sectors for more than thirty years in various roles including musician, cultural event producer, policy maker, managing director and consultant. Davinia is the founder and Managing Director of ARC Research & Consultancy aimed at servicing creation, practice, and production within the cultural and creative sectors. Throughout her career, she has been Executive Director of the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts (2007-2013), has chaired and co-authored Malta's Cultural Policy (2011) and has been responsible for the setting up of the Malta Arts Fund (2009). She has been a member of the interministerial commission that successfully applied for Valletta, ECoC 2018 and a founding member of the Fanac Fund (2019). Davinia has also worked as short-term consultant to the World Bank Group and is a visiting lecturer at the School of Performing Arts at the University of Malta.

(Photo credit: Lindsey Bahia)



Prof. Roberta Garibaldi, Professor at University of Bergamo and IGCAT Expert - Italy

Roberta Garibaldi is Professor of Tourism Management at the University of Bergamo and author of the "Rapporto sul Turismo Enogastronomico Italiano" (Report on Food & Wine Tourism in Italy). Furthermore, she is member of the Board of Directors of the World Food Travel Association, member of Board of Advisors of the World Gastronomy Institute, member of the Presidency Council of the Italian Society of Tourism Sciences (SISTUR), member of the Association Internationale d'Experts Scientifiques du Tourisme (AIEST), and member of the Association for Tourism and Leisure (ATLAS).



Jaume Gomila, IGCAT Executive Board Member - Spain

Jaume Gomila is both a restaurant owner on the island of Menorca and expert in the fields of education and culture. In his former role as Director General for Culture for the Balearic Islands, he was responsible for supporting the Mediterranean Diet declaration as Intangible World Heritage by UNESCO. He is now also Chairman of the Adult Schools of Menorca and has been instrumental in Menorca's successful bid for the European Region of Gastronomy 2022 title.



Sharifa Hasanova, Head of Product Development, Azerbaijan Tourism Board - Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan Tourism Board is a national tourism organization of Azerbaijan for promoting as tourism destination. Our destination brand invites potential travellers to 'take another look' at Azerbaijan's rich culture, ancient heritage, amazing nature and warm hospitality. As a Product Development Head, Sharifa is in charge for establishment of tourism products development, to regulate and increase tourism experiences and activities, to create good conditions for infrastructure, facilities and services in place for tourism products, to ensure and increase of quality standards of tourism products, to establish tourism destination's competitiveness and sustainability. Prior to this, Sharifa was leading Sales and Marketing teams in various hospitality groups in Azerbaijan.



Vesna Horvat, Consultant, Maribor Tourism Board - Slovenia

Vesna Horvat is a regional coordination consultant with more than 15 years of experience in the field of tourism. For the last 10 years, she has been working at the Maribor Tourist Board. Along, she has gained a deep insight in the ecosystem of one of the best restaurants in Slovenia. As one of the initial team members of the Maribor's biggest attraction, the Old Vine House, she has developed broad knowledge in oenology and performance of wine tastings. Recently, she participated in the establishment of a new destination brand Maribor. Currently, she is establishing a new brand for quality and local products in the field of gastronomy Our Finest (Naše najboljše) and developing a new gastronomy unique experience in Maribor.



Diana Hounslow, Director of Pas-de-Calais Tourism and Ambassador of Hauts-de-France, European Region of Gastronomy candidate 2023

Diana Hounslow has lived in New Zealand, Ireland, Algeria and England before finally settling in France in 1985. After hostessing for Hoverspeed, teaching English to local businesses and selling Titanium Dioxide, she started marketing her region as a destination to the UK in 1987. She built up a relationship with local businesses and notably restaurateurs. Her passion and knowledge of fine food grew with the help of chefs, journalists and food critics. Food is resolutely at the top of the list of tourism experiences that travellers most look forward to. Like most regions of France, Hauts-de-France has plenty of seasonal local produce on offer, the tourist board's aim is to cultivate creative use of it at home, in restaurants and sometimes in surprising places... From chip van to Michelin starred restaurants Pas-de-Calais Tourism are developing local culinary experiences for every palate and every purse.



Antti Iire, Manager, Research and Development, Savonia University of Applied Sciences and IGCAT Expert – Finland

Antti Iire is Manager of Research and Development of the Cross-sectoral Research, Development and Innovation Unit at Savonia University. He takes care of stakeholder cooperation and public-private partnerships and generates and facilitates a big variety of development projects together with the university, companies and working life organizations of the Kuopio Region. His professional expertise areas cover SME business development, entrepreneurial education and startup acceleration together with designing business models with modern tools for different purposes, also internationally.



Mirna Jelčić, Director of Herzegovina Region, USAID - Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mirna Jelčić is Herzegovina Region Director in USAID Developing Sustainable Tourism in BiH project and former director to Herzegovina Regional Economic Development Agency. She studied in Croatia, worked in Bosnia but returned home to Herzegovina to focus on tourism and sustainable development in this region, strongly believing in growing opportunities in wine and food tourism of Herzegovina. With experience in the public, private and non-governmental sector, Mirna has grappled with the obstacles and challenges to sustainable destination development. As part of a team of expert professionals, she is currently setting the stage to deliver the Herzegovina Wine Route to the global market.



Dr. Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, Senior Research Adviser, Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) – Croatia

Daniela Angelina Jelinčić holds a Ph.D. in Ethnology from the University of Zagreb and her specific interests are in cultural tourism, cultural heritage management, cultural/creative industries, cultural policy, creativity, experience economy and social innovations. She is a senior research adviser/full professor at the Institute for International Relations (IRMO), Croatia and, as an adjunct professor, she teaches at the University of Zagreb, Zagreb School of Business, Edward Bernays University College in Zagreb and occasionally at the UNESCO Chair for Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development, Institute for Advanced Studies (iASK), Hungary. She served as the Council of Europe expert for cultural tourism and is the author of several scientific books and a number of scientific articles and book chapters, national/international studies as well as of several national/local strategic documents.



Dr. Dezső Kovács, Honorary Professor, rural researcher and entrepreneur - Hungary

Dr. Kovács's work as rural researcher and entrepreneur mainly focuses on rural development and tourism development in the countryside. He has done research on rural tourism, wine tourism and wine roads, rural heritage and world heritage, experience economy, honey and beekeeping, ecotourism and eco-gastronomy, equal opportunities, rural women and issues of active ageing. He has also managed and was involved in several research and development projects in Hungary and abroad. Currently a retired university lecturer, he has taught at the Economic and Social Sciences Faculty of Szent István University (Gödöllő, Hungary), the Economics Faculty of West Hungary University (Sopron) and the Kodolányi University in Székesfehérvár. Between 2007-2011, he worked at the Regional Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Pécs). Dr. Kovács has published more than 120 studies and articles, as well as five books on the themes of rural tourism, world heritage, rural development, wine tourism and beekeeping.



Heidi Lazani, Communications Specialist, Bespoke Communications - Greece

Heidi Lazani is a Communication Specialist, Political Scientist & founder of Bespoke Communications firm. Former Office Director and Special Advisor to the Governor of the Region of South Aegean and Head of the Executive Committee of South Aegean, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2019, Heidi has extensive expertise in communications, project management, community engagement, media relations and holds an MA in Contemporary European Studies from the University of Sussex.



Henna Lehtikainen, RDI-Specialist, Project Manager, Savonia University of Applied Sciences - Finland

Henna Lehtikainen is coordinator of Kuopio, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2020 and project manager at Savonia University of Applied Sciences. Henna is Master of Health Science (Nutrition) and expert in the fields of nutrition, special diets and education. She works to strengthen co-operation between local food operators and SMEs and enhance the development of the sector, with the long-term goal to build continuity in the development of responsible food tourism in the Kuopio area. Previously, she worked for over 10 years at the Finnish Coeliac Society as authorized nutritionist and project manager.



Niko Micklin, Communications & Sales Manager, Visit Åland – Finland

Since 2020, Niko Micklin has worked as Communications & Sales Manager at Visit Åland, the official tourist and member organisation that markets Åland as a travel destination and works with the local tourist industry to develop tourism in the Åland Islands. One of his main tasks is to develop and manage gastronomy projects to create interest in Åland's food culture and fine ingredients. Prior to that, he worked as Commercial Director at Ålandhotels, the largest local hotel group on the Åland Islands.



Iulia Niculica, Funding, Procurement and Development Manager, European Travel Commission and Secretariat, European Tourism Manifesto - Belgium

Iulia Niculica has been working for the European Travel Commission for more than 7 years, contributing to the promotion of Europe as a tourist destination in long-haul markets. She has experience with advocacy and marketing projects, EU funding, managing relationships with National Tourism Organisations, as well as facilitating partnerships and affiliations with external organisations. She is also holding the Secretariat of the European Tourism Manifesto, an alliance bringing together more than 60 public and private organisations from the Travel & Tourism sector. Iulia Niculica has a certification in Project Management for Sustainable Development from APMG (PM4SD). She was member of several juries.



Louise Nørgaard Reifling, Project Manager, Aarhus-Central Denmark Region, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2017 - Denmark

Louise Nørgaard Reifling is project manager of Aarhus-Central Denmark Region, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2017. She is seated in the branch organisation The Food Organisation of Denmark, where she works for the gastronomic development among the whole food chain in the Central Denmark Region.



Rafael Oliveira, Founder, Feel Agency, Minho, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2016 - Portugal

Rafael Oliveira began his career in communication and strategic marketing, being responsible for several agencies, assuming management positions at different business sectors. He founded Feel Agency where, for the last 12 years, he has focused his knowledge, personal development and organizational projects on gastronomy, tourism and sustainability, developing and implementing several international and national projects to private and regional/local public governance authorities, such as the Minho Young Chef Awards and the Qualification & Valorization of "Minho Gastronomy" Project. He is recognized as Alto Minho's curator for gastronomy on the European Sustainable Tourism Charter. He is a board member of the Confraria dos Gastrónomos do Minho, as well as vice-president in charge of tourism and gastronomy on the Braga Business Association.



Maja Pak, M.Sc., Managing Director of Slovenian Tourist Board

With over 20 years of work for the Slovenian Tourist Board, Maja Pak has not only witnessed, but also led the transformation of Slovenia from a nice country in the heart of Europe to the world's first green destination and a leader in sustainability in tourism. Her vision in this process is clear and has gained unanimous support among stakeholders in Slovene tourism: Slovenia is a green boutique destination for 5-star experiences.



Mojca Polak, Lecturer, Vocational College of Hospitality and Tourism Maribor - Slovenia

Mojca Polak is a lecturer of several culinary subjects at Vocational College of Hospitality and Tourism Maribor. She is the (co)author of many culinary articles and books, including A Strategy for the Development of Slovenian Gastronomy. As a member of committees, she participates in many national and international competitions. Her professional focus is promotion of Slovene cuisine and its contemporary modification. She is collaborating in certification process for many local products that are certified in accordance with strict standards, and by respecting traditional values, sustainability, local materials and ingredients.



Morana Polovič, Project Manager at Slovenian Tourist Board - Slovenia

Morana Polovič's career has been built in the tourism industry. She is a tourism professional with more than 25 years of experience. Gastronomy is her passion since childhood, as her first steps in the hospitality sector started at her family restaurant. Currently she is working at the Slovenian Tourism Board as a Project Manager, working on gastronomy projects, Slovenia Unique Experiences project and organizing events and on-line webinars.



Dr. László Puczkó, CEO and Co-founder, Health Tourism Worldwide - Hungary

László Puczkó has been working in the field of travel and health for 25+ years. László is an experience engineer, strategist, mentor and trainer, and wellbeing intelligence expert. He has gained experiences in private as well as in public sector environments both in medical and wellness tourism. László is one of the very few people in the world who has been active in every aspect and domain of health tourism, i.e. medical and wellness tourism alike. He is an economist and art & design manager, and holds master degrees, a PhD, and is a Certified Management Consultant. László has been lecturing and running tailor-made trainings and masterclasses in over 40 countries all around the world. He has been actively involved both in industry as well as academic arenas and authored numerous industry reports, specialist books and publications. He was the project lead on the path making report for UNWTO & ETC titled Exploring Health Tourism, as well as a pioneering study for Global Spa Summit titled Wellness Tourism and Medical Tourism: Where do spas fit? László is a hot spring and wellness enthusiast and holds a Diploma in Forest Bathing!



Ariadna Ribas, Wine & Food Tourism Brand Manager, Catalan Tourist Board - Spain

Ariadna Ribas Merino is an expert in Tourism Marketing and specialised in Wine & Food and Cultural Tourism. As a representative coordinator of Catalonia, European Region of Gastronomy 2016 she was responsible for the development of the project's action plan and results evaluation. With an international experience, she lived and worked in Germany in the travel industry.



Kristine Rise, Project Manager, Oi! Trøndersk Mat og Drikke - Norway

Kristine Rise works at Oi! Food Organisation in Trøndelag, Norway. The aim is to build a strong food-region through food festivals, recruitment for chefs and hospitality, research on sustainable food production, public meals and building a strong identity for the public. Kristine has expertise in communications, project management and organizational development.



Joana Santos, Associate Professor - Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo (IPVC) - Portugal

Joana Santos is an Associate Professor of Biological Sciences at the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo (IPVC), Portugal. She has carried out several research and consulting activities such as planning, coordination and development of research and consulting activities for local authorities, consortium and businesses. She has been involved in the Qualification & Valorisation of "Minho Gastronomy" Project, which aims to value the potential of developing a base of activities associated with the agri-food sector and gastronomy, namely, through qualification, innovation and training in key areas of the main territorial resources.



Ilona Sares, International Executive Director, ProAgria Pohjois-Savo and IGCAT Board Member - Finland

Ilona Sares is International Executive Director, at ProAgria, providing advisory and development services to members and customers by adding value, quality, competitiveness and productivity to their operations. She started her career as a visual artist and she graduated from Sibelius Academy with a degree of Arts Management 2006. Later in her career, within ProAgria company she was promoted from International Project Coordinator to International Executive Director at ProAgria Pohjois-Savo; she works with rural area SMEs entrepreneurs to find new ways to develop creative tourism that she sees as a way for food, travel and creative industry sectors to find new power and business for living.



Sandra Simões, Coordinator, Coimbra Region, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2021-22

Sandra Simões has a master's in Management - from Aveiro University; a degree in Organizational Communication and a bachelor's in communication - both from Coimbra Higher School of Education. She also has a Mini MBA in Hospitality and Tourism Management - from ISCTE: Lisbon University Institute. Her professional experience in Coimbra School of Hospitality and Tourism allowed Sandra to develop a set of competences in several different areas like leadership, internal and external communication strategies, social media management, executive training management and certification skills. Sandra is now the School Innovation Advisor and manages (since 2012) the Executive Training Department of tourism professionals. More recently, (since 2018) she is also Coimbra Region: European Region of Gastronomy 2021-22 programme coordinator.



Dr. Maria Socratous, Tourist Officer, Deputy Ministry of Tourism - Cyprus

Dr Maria Socratous is Tourist Officer at the Strategy, Research & Product Development Department of the Deputy Ministry of Tourism of Cyprus. She holds a PhD in Management with a specification in gender discrimination in the workplace. She has been Director of Business Studies at The Cyprus Institute of Marketing, Visiting Lecturer at the Cyprus University of Technology, as well as Lecturer at the Cyprus Institute of Marketing on Strategic Management. She was elected as Young BPW Europe Representative for the period 2014-2017. Dr Maria Socratous is an activist and works towards the promotion of women's rights all over the world and towards gender equality both in the society and the workplace.



Dr. Edith M Szivas, International Tourism Strategy and Vice-President IGCAT - Spain

Dr Szivas is currently Vice-President of IGCAT. She is an internationally recognized tourism development expert specialising in tourism strategies and development plans, tourism investment, tourism SME development, gastronomy and cultural tourism and strategic human capital development. She has managed and worked on projects worldwide on behalf of UNWTO, UNDP, EU, USAID and various national and regional governments and corporate clients. She has extensive experience from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. She is a regular keynote speaker at tourism conferences and a research contributor. She holds a BSc degree in Import and Export from Budapest, Hungary, an MSc in Tourism Planning and Development and a PhD in Tourism Development from University of Surrey, United Kingdom.



Patrick Torrent, Executive Director, Catalan Tourism Board - Spain

Patrick Torrent is the Executive Director of the Catalan Tourist Board, whose creation he has actively participated in. He stimulated the definition of two Strategic Plans of Tourism in Catalonia (2005-2010 and 2013-2016) and coordinated the two Tourism Marketing Plans of Catalonia (2013-2016 and 2018-2022). In 2015, he was designated President of NECStouR. He was appointed Secretary of the Open University of Catalonia Foundation in 2010 and Patron from 2009 to 2011. From 2005 to 2009 he was the General Deputy Director of the Consortium Turisme de Catalunya and Deputy Director of the Catalan Tourist Board from 2010. He has also been Associate Teacher at different universities and speaker and organizer of several symposiums, seminars, workshops and forums focused on tourism and its marketing.



Niina Väänttinen, Communication Expert, ProAgria Pohjois-Savo - Finland

Niina Väänttinen is Communication Expert at the Rural Women's Advisory Organisation (ProAgria Eastern Finland) where she works on several projects including: EuReGa; Kuopio, European Region of Gastronomy awarded 2020-21; and other gastronomy and development projects related mostly with SMEs entrepreneurs located in rural areas. Her work is mainly focused on public relations, communication, marketing, education, visual solutions and branding. Her passion is to help companies and organizations succeed, grow profitable businesses and find new ways to operate. Her earlier experience includes working on several advertising agencies as Art Director and visual designer, newspaper journalist and entrepreneur.



Barbara Zmrzlikar, Head of Research, Development, Innovation and EU Projects Department, Slovenian Tourist Board - Slovenia

As the head of the department, Barbara Zmrzlikar is responsible for strategic planning, sustainable development, research, and support for the development of innovative tourist experiences. She devoted special attention to the development of the gastronomy tourism by preparing the Action Plan for the Development and Marketing of Gastronomic Tourism in Slovenia and by being a member of IGCAT Global Experts Network.