

Innovative rural tourism project in Italy demonstrates national replication potential

Rural tourism in Rome's proximity? A pilot project in the central Italian Lazio region raises awareness for natural tourism and an authentic experience in what was once the heart of the Roman Empire – and which is less than an hour's train ride away from the Italian capital. The European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) was the starting point for the evaluation of the sustainability and attractiveness of the five participating provinces whose territory is united as *Terrae Anio Iubensanae*.

The project is one of the key initiatives of Italia Executive, a tourism marketing network with regional focus that helps Italian regions obtain structural funds since 2000. Marina Bresciani, Regional Project Coordinator at Italia Executive, says, "*Rome is a huge tourist magnet but Italy's cultural and natural heritage doesn't stop at the city's borders. We want to raise awareness for natural tourism at Rome's doorstep and use ETIS to gain recognition for our territory on the European level.*"

Throughout 2014 and 2015, Italia Executive has presented their destination-labelling concept to mayors and local authorities. Especially the younger generation of mayors quickly caught on to the idea and saw the benefits of linking agriculture, nature and sustainable tourism development. The local coordinators of Italia Executive facilitated much of the technical work required to participate in the ETIS scheme and motivated stakeholders from the private and non-government sector to accompany the process of implementing sustainable measures in the region, for instance by improving train and bus transport to the Giovenzano valley.

"Territorial design and labelling are concepts that local authorities were largely unfamiliar with, but in order to determine the sustainability and accessibility levels of the provinces, we analysed the results of the indicator testing together with the participants, which got them much more engaged and improved the understanding of why it is important to have a strong network of destinations united under the Terrae Anio Iubensanae label," says Marina.

The network idea is so very pronounced in Italia Executive's work that the team has gone on to identify other Italian regions with a strong replication potential for the project. This year, collaborations with the central Italian Abruzzo region and the Campania region around Naples are set to be intensified. Following the proverb that "*tutte le strade portano a Roma*" ("all roads lead to Rome"), the premise of Italia Executive can be described as no less ambitious than "*tutte le strade attraversano le Terrae Anio Iubensanae*".

ETIS destination spotlight: Union of municipalities of the Valle del Giovenzano district

At the Eastern doorstep of Rome, the seven municipalities of the Giovenzano valleys have formed a partnership to provide visitors with an authentic glimpse into traditional and artisan Italy. The municipalities of Saracinesco, Ciciliano, Pisoniano, Sambuci, Gerano, Rocca Canterano, and Cerreto Laziale boast rich cultural and historical heritage that can be traced back to the Roman Empire and attract nature lovers looking to find unspoilt landscapes and a gastronomic experience that relies on local produce. The region is especially suited for slow travellers and families, but also caters to day visitors coming from Rome to enjoy one of the cultural festivals that take place throughout the year.



More information:

Italia Executive

<http://www.italiaexecutive.it/>

Unione dei Comuni Valle Del Giovenzano

<http://www.unionegiovenzano.rm.it/hh/index.php>