

Newsletter No. 6 – December 2019

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Partnership:

- ✓ Regional Development Agency of West Region Romania (RO) – Lead Partner
- ✓ Donegal County Council (IE)
- ✓ Derry and Strabane District Council (UK)
- ✓ Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia (FI)
- ✓ Tartu Science Park (EE)
- ✓ Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship (PL)
- ✓ Region of Crete (GR)

NICHE is an Interreg Europe Project running from 1st April 2016 until 31st March 2020. NICHE will establish effective open innovation ecosystems, at both regional and interregional level, that will bring together all the relevant actors in food sector to facilitate technology and knowledge Exchange that will be translated in New products and services.

Dear Readers,

The food sector as a whole is facing major challenges that arise from changes in the sector's economic and non-economic environments. The availability of safe, sustainable and healthy food has taken a new and pressing dimension in the light of an ever-growing global population and increasing environmental and sustainability concerns. Based on that vision, 7 partners from EU Regions have established a common international partnership.

By working together the NICHE partnership aims, by 2019 and through the improvement of existing policies, achieve an average 15 % increase in the adoption of research and innovation solutions by food sector companies in their regions to give response to the demand of this sector identified as high-potential sector for their smart growth. There are already examples of fruitful cooperation between producers from the partner regions, which are presented in this newsletter.

On behalf of the project team I am very pleased to introduce you to our 6th NICHE Newsletter.

Enjoy reading!



To get further information please visit the project website at:
<https://www.interregueurope.eu/niche/>

Thousands visited Derry Slow Food Festival

This year's Slow Food Festival was and even bigger and better than before as local cuisine took centre stage once again at a series of events across the city and beyond from Wednesday 9th to Sunday 13th of October in Derry~Londonderry.

The award-winning Derry City and Strabane District Council event celebrates the very best artisan produce in the North West, with tens of thousands descending on the city for the festival, which was named the 'NI Food and Drink Experience of the Year 2018' from Tourism NI and 'Best Tourism Event' at the North West Business Awards.

The Festival Marquee was a hub of family fun and delicious food, with something for all ages and tastes as children enjoyed the street animation and kids' workshops. The star of this year's festival was be the Lough Foyle Irish Flat Oyster Bar where you can learn everything from where it was caught to how to eat it, as well as sampling the goods!

Visitors could also experience 'A Taste of LegenDerry Slow Food Dining Experience', Food Tours, Beer and cheese tours, as well as the launch of a new Irish oyster stout made with the unique Lough Foyle Irish Flat Oyster. One of the objectives of the Slow Food Festival is idea to cement Derry's growing reputation as a serious foodie destination.





Updated Food Province label ready to work

Food Province is a regional food brand in the region of South Ostrobothnia that has been further developed in the NICHE pilot action project during the past year.

The new updated brand and its operation model was launched to public in a launching event held in Seinäjoki on the 27th of November. The event was directed especially for local food enterprises and other key organisations working within the food sector that could apply for the new Food Province Label.

In the end of the pilot project it was agreed that the local Rural Women's Advisory Association will take the lead in the brand work and finalise the operation model including the rules and criteria for the brand-users.

During the fall of 2019 the Rural Women's Advisory Association has been working closely with the rules and criteria and finalised the work in early-November. The criteria for the label rests now on three core values: being South Ostrobothnian as origin, making things with quality and in co-operation with others. The label can now be licenced both to enterprises and development organisations and so far, a little bit over 10 applications have been received.

The South Estonian Food Conference

The South Estonian Food Conference took place on 25th of September in Võru, which has been chosen by the Ministry of Rural Affairs as the region of promoting Estonian food in 2019!

The main theme of the conference, which was realised as part of the implementation of the NICHE action plan, was "How to get local food in restaurants, cafes, schools?". In Estonia there is many small food producers and providers who could supply schools, hotels, restaurants with local food. Speakers tried to answer the question whether and how this can be achieved.

During conference discussions following topics were most important:

- How to organize logistics,
- How to better market local producers,
- E-platform to better connect producers and HoReCa sector.

What is more the conference was the perfect occasion for food producers to showcase their products.

Conference was organised by South-Estonian food network (incl. Tartu Science Park) and was participated by SMEs, start-ups and business support organisations.





A Feast of Donegal food at the foot of the peak

On Monday 30th September some of our most recognisable and magnificent chefs created a feast of Donegal food at the foot of Errigal, the county's highest peak. The feast consisted of Donegal produce from land and sea.

Some of our amazing Donegal producers and chefs came to one place to create dishes with spectacular local produce, including chefs John Religan – barbecue specialist, a former head chef at Holy Smoke in Cork, Ciaran Sweeney – chef at Forest and Marcy, Joe O'Hora – locally based chef who is very well known from Benny & Co restaurant, Chris Molloy of The Lemon Tree and many more.

By working closely with Donegal chefs and producers The Food Coast Donegal want to make Donegal famous for food.

6th Project Management Meeting in Rethymno, Crete_The completion of a fruitful collaboration

NICHE final partners' meeting took place in Rethymno, Crete, on 13th -14th November 2019. A successful cooperation is heading towards its completion after almost 4 years.

During the 2nd day of the meeting, the partners had the chance to experience part of a thematic route that was created in the frame of the Pilot Action of NICHE, tasting local products, weaving on a handloom and strolling around the historic village of Argyroupolis.

As part of the implementation of the Pilot Action of Region of Crete, four (4) thematic routes were designed with Cretan Gastronomy Centre (in Argyroupolis village) being their common point of reference, linking together agro-food, culture and tourism. The routes that include traditional wineries, taverns, bakeries, creameries, small and cottage industries of local food and olive oil mills are named as:

- *the route of The Mountain,*
- *the route Of the Lake,*
- *the route of The Sea and*
- *the route of Taste.*

Although NICHE ends by 31-3-2020, all partners expressed their willingness to continue and build on their collaboration, either through a new project or another kind of common action in the field of agro food and innovation.



Closing conference in West Region Romania in Timisoara

NICHE Final Conference took place in Timisoara, Romania, on September 11th 2019.

More than 35 international organisations and about 70 local ones attended the event.

Players of the food sector from 7 EU countries joined a knowledge exchange and networking experience, where successful food policies and practices have been showcased, together with their regions and their transferability potential for (re)designing food policies, as well as outstanding examples of cooperation as results of NICHE implementation in the regions.

International key stakeholders such as policy makers, support organisations for the food sector, universities and R&D centres, innovative food businesses, will be engaged in thematic sessions tackling global food trends, support services for boosting innovation in food businesses, cooperation in food value chains, responsible food production and consumption and food policies at European level.



The Food Experience as a part of Final Conference in Timisoara

The Food Experience Tour on September 12th spotlighted part of the local producers involved in Arome Proprii (www.aromeproprii.ro), a pilot initiative of West RDA to support local food consumption.

It included short visits to producers of bread, spices & herbs, wine, mustard and beer as well as tasting local recipes in places with charming sceneries.

