

UiO  **Faculty of Theology**  
University of Oslo

# PANHERA FIELD REPORT

Pilgrimage Accomodation and New Host Expertise in Rural  
Areas – an Erasmus+ Project  
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## CONTENT OF REPORT

<b>THE PROJECT AND THE SURVEY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>INTRODUCTION .....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>BRIEF CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES .....</i>	<i>2</i>
<b>PART 1 ITALY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>INTRODUCTION .....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>ON THE INFORMANTS .....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>ON THE HOSTING STRUCTURES .....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL COMPETENCE .....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>HOST EXPERIENCES .....</i>	<i>8</i>
Positive experiences .....	8
Success factors .....	9
Negative experiences .....	9
Challenges and difficulties .....	9
<i>NETWORKING .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>EDUCATION/COURSE .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>DISCUSSION .....</i>	<i>10</i>
USE OF DATA .....	10
RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BACKGROUND .....	10
SIZES OF HOST STRUCTURES AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES .....	11
EXPERIENCES, POSSIBILITIES AND HURDLES .....	12
LEARNING MORE? .....	13
<b>PART 2 SPAIN .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>INTRODUCTION .....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>ON THE INFORMANTS .....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>ON THE HOSTING STRUCTURES .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCE .....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>HOST EXPERIENCE .....</i>	<i>16</i>
Positive experiences .....	17
Success factors .....	17
Negative experiences .....	18
Challenges and difficulties .....	18
<i>NETWORKING .....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION .....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>EDUCATION/COURSE .....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>DISCUSSION .....</i>	<i>20</i>
USE OF DATA .....	20
RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BACKGROUNDS .....	20
HOST STRUCTURES AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES .....	20
EXPERIENCES, POSSIBILITIES AND HURDLES .....	22
LEARNING MORE? .....	22

<b>PART 3 BULGARIA .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<i>INTRODUCTION.....</i>	23
<i>ON THE INFORMANTS .....</i>	23
<i>ON THE HOSTING STRUCTURES.....</i>	24
<i>INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCE.....</i>	25
<i>HOST EXPERIENCE.....</i>	25
Positive experiences .....	26
Success factors .....	26
Negative experiences .....	26
Challenges and difficulties .....	27
<i>NETWORKING.....</i>	27
<i>HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION.....</i>	27
<i>EDUCATION/COURSE.....</i>	28
<i>DISCUSSION .....</i>	28
USE OF DATA .....	28
RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BACKGROUNDS .....	28
SIZES OF HOST STRUCTURES AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES .....	29
EXPERIENCES, POSSIBILITIES AND HURDLES.....	30
LEARNING MORE? .....	30
<b>PART 4 TURKEY.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<i>INTRODUCTION.....</i>	31
<i>ON THE INFORMANTS .....</i>	31
<i>ON THE HOSTING STRUCTURES.....</i>	32
<b>INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCE.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<i>HOST EXPERIENCE.....</i>	33
Positive experiences .....	34
Success factors .....	34
Negative experiences .....	34
<i>Challenges and difficulties.....</i>	34
<i>NETWORKING.....</i>	34
<i>HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION.....</i>	35
<i>EDUCATION/COURSE.....</i>	35
<i>DISCUSSION .....</i>	35
USE OF DATA .....	35
RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BACKGROUNDS .....	35
SIZES OF HOST STRUCTURES AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES .....	36
EXPERIENCES, POSSIBILITIES AND HURDLES.....	37
LEARNING MORE? .....	38
<b>PART 5 NORWAY .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<i>INTRODUCTION.....</i>	38
<i>ON THE INFORMANTS .....</i>	39
<i>ON THE HOSTING STRUCTURES.....</i>	40
<i>INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCE.....</i>	41
<i>HOST EXPERIENCE.....</i>	41

Positive experiences .....	41
Success factors .....	42
Negative experiences .....	43
Challenges and difficulties .....	43
<i>NETWORKING</i> .....	43
<i>HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION</i> .....	43
<i>DISCUSSION</i> .....	44
USE OF DATA .....	44
RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BACKGROUND .....	44
SIZES OF HOST STRUCTURES AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES .....	45
EXPERIENCES, POSSIBILITIES AND HURDLES.....	46
<i>LEARNING MORE?</i> .....	46
<b>PANHERA FIELD REPORT PART 6 ROMANIA.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<i>INTRODUCTION</i> .....	47
<i>ON THE INFORMANTS</i> .....	48
<i>ON THE HOSTING STRUCTURES</i> .....	48
<i>INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCE</i> .....	50
<i>HOST EXPERIENCE</i> .....	50
<i>Positive experiences</i> .....	50
Success factors .....	51
Negative experiences .....	51
Challenges and difficulties .....	52
<i>NETWORKING</i> .....	52
<i>HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION</i> .....	52
<i>EDUCATION/COURSE</i> .....	52
<i>DISCUSSION</i> .....	53
USE OF DATA .....	53
RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BACKGROUNDS .....	53
SIZES OF HOST STRUCTURES AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES .....	53
EXPERIENCES, POSSIBILITIES AND HURDLES.....	55
<i>LEARNING MORE?</i> .....	55
<b>PART 7 COMPARING AND CONCLUDING REMARKS.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<i>INTRODUCTION</i> .....	56
<i>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</i> .....	56
Small structures dominate .....	56
Well-educated hosts .....	57
Highly motivated idealists .....	57
Positive and negative experiences from the field .....	57
Variations regarding digital competence and presence.....	58
Accreditation and networking .....	58
Learning more: History, culture, religion .....	58
<i>LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR HOSTS?</i> .....	58
<b>LITERATURE AND SOURCES .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....</b>	<b>59</b>



# PANHERA FIELD REPORT

Birgitte Lerheim

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## THE PROJECT AND THE SURVEY

### INTRODUCTION

The survey presented in this report is done on behalf of the Erasmus+ PANHERA project, *Pilgrimage Accomodation and New Host Expertise in Rural Areas*.

PANHERA is a partnership between organisations and institutions in Romania, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, Turkey and Norway <sup>1</sup>, and the aim of the project is to study and enhance the host competence along pilgrimage and/or cultural routes in Europe. The project aims at 1) Mapping all the hosting structures (managed by religious and other kinds of organizations) along pilgrimage or/and cultural routes in certain routes of the actual countries , 2) Analysing the current state of affairs in each area and 3) Identifying good and bad practices already implemented. Through the field research part of the PANHERA project, data was collected by a qualitative online form, analysed and, together with local competence from the national partners, used as background material for developing training courses that can enhance the host competence along the routes.

The project has been studying host experiences and host competences along pilgrimage and/or cultural routes in the partner countries. These routes are shortly presented in the subsections presenting data from the different countries. They can be grouped in three subtypes: Pilgrimage routes with medieval origin, rekindled in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in West/North European countries (Spain, Italy, Norway), traditional pilgrimage routes and sites in Eastern Europe (Romania, Bulgaria) and a newly constructed route on biblical/historical premises (Turkey).

The Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo (by Associate Professor, PhD Birgitte Lerheim) was responsible for the field research part of the PANHERA project in collaboration with the Pilgrim Centre of Oslo (led by dr.theol. Roger Jensen). Regarding positionality, dr. Jensen and dr. Lerheim are married. Dr. Lerheim has experience from several pilgrimage walks in Norway, Germany and Italy, and

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<sup>1</sup> Centre for Dialogue Between Sciences and Theology, University of Craiova (Romania), GAL DEL DUCATO SOCIETA CONTSORTILE SAR, (Italy), Isparta Municipality (Turkey), Asociación desarrollo Rural Terras de Pontevedra Norte (Spain), Fondatsiya za Regional no Razvitle (Bulgaria) and the Pilgrim Centre of Oslo with subpartner Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo (Norway)-

have visited sacred spaces all over Europe. She has also been an active member in the local Pilgrim Confraternity of St. Hallvard before, during and after the period in which the research was carried out. Besides her academic training, she has a long-time knowledge of the field.

The survey form was developed in cooperation with all partner countries, and was assessed by the [Norwegian Centre for Research Data](#) and thus fulfil the ethical demands of data protection in research. The data collection took place via [Nettskjema](#), the University of Oslo's secure tool for online data collection in the period of March to November 2019, and the part reports were subsequently presented and discussed with the project partners in Panhera meetings in Isparta, Turkey and Craiova, Romania and in Skype meetings during the research period.

The project partners in Italy, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria and Spain have contributed to the field research with network building, mapping local hosting structures, recruiting informants for online survey and implementing research on the local level, coordinated by the academic partners. The final output of the project, training courses for people working in host structures along the cultural routes/pilgrimage roads of Europe, will be coordinated by and situated at the Centre for dialogue between sciences and theology, University of Craiova, Romania via prof. Gelu Calina.

The survey's main aim was to explore qualitative information like experiences and motivations of people working in the actual field, but also some quantitative data regarding sizes, annual volume and facilities of the structures surveyed.

A total number of 113 informants answered the form:

- Bulgaria 21
- Norway 27
- Italy 7
- Spain 25
- Turkey 12
- Romania 20 (6 of these not of direct relevance to the project)

The consent form and the web questionnaire are attached in the appendix of this report.

## **BRIEF CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

This report has a rather inductive approach, focused on mapping the *state of and experiences from the field*. Anyway, some current theoretical perspectives have been useful in interpreting and comparing the data: *Caminoisation* and

*heritagisation* (Bowman and Sepp 2019). The western renaissance of foot pilgrimage to sacred sites that have been taking place during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has its core in Spanish Santiago de Compostela. Pilgrimage and Cultural routes from all over Europe lead to the cathedral of the town, and from a small-scale start in the early seventies with only a few hundred foot pilgrims pro anno, the town now receives more than 275000 pilgrims pro anno, most of them have been walking for at least five days. The popularity of the Camino got a boost by being recognized as a European Cultural Route in 1987 and as a UNESCO Cultural Itinerary 11 years later, with subsequent political and economic investments (Bowman and Sepp 2019, 77) This exponential growth has inspired e.g. Norway to rekindle the medieval St. Olav pilgrimage traditions, where a combined state and church initiative waymarking the route from 1997 has led to a development that resemble the first phases of the Spanish one.

What has happened in Norway during the recent decades is an excellent example of what current research on pilgrimage labels *caminoisation* – “the process whereby various aspects and assumptions of the contemporary Camino, particularly as encountered by non-traditional pilgrims, are transplanted and translated to other pilgrimage sites, routes and contexts”. In order to serve pilgrims in “caminoised” routes, it is important to have knowledge of what characterizes the current western pilgrimage renaissance. It is not as simple as saying that the medieval pilgrim is back. She is not. While medieval pilgrimage was embedded in a meaning-making system provided by the church and had theological presuppositions and consequences, the situation is different and more complex today (Jensen 2018).

Recent German research on Santiago pilgrims shows that rather few of the walkers describe their aim with and process of pilgrimage within traditional religious categories, even though several of their thoughts and experiences can be described as spiritual and existential. Only 6% of the pilgrims in the survey mentioned reaching the sacred site as an important reason for their journey. In contemporary western pilgrimage, the way and the walk itself now seems far more important than the goal (Heiser, and Kurrat 2012).

Traditional Orthodox pilgrimage in the Eastern European Countries, on the other hand, have, compared with what characterizes the current pilgrimage renaissance of Western countries, another kind of historic continuity both regarding practices and understandings of pilgrimage. In this context, the pilgrimage goal also is far more important than both the way itself and the way you get to the goal (Bakalova 2001). According to Bakalova, the cultural practices of pilgrimage in Bulgaria stress the continuity of Orthodox traditions and fill a gap in the spiritual life of Bulgarians today.

The Orthodox Church thus plays a more prominent role in current Eastern European pilgrimage practices today than what is the case for the Catholic and Lutheran majority churches in Western Europe regarding current Western European pilgrimage practices. But the image is not clear-cut:

Another example of Eastern European pilgrimage tradition and how the goal is more important than the way itself, is described by Mirel Banica (Banica 2016), where trips by coach/minibus is being organized to traditional sacred sites. The practice of visiting these sites were vivid even during the communist regime, and the trips are definitely a product of a longer and specific history. But at the same time, the way these trips are organized today, by private actors, in a simple, low-cost and not so organized way, these trips also represent, the author argues, a reflection of the privatization of religion and is as such a sign of the larger deregulation of religion going on in both Western and Eastern Europe. The motivation of the people taking part in these trips are also more complex than just visiting the sacred sites, the author claims. Romanian traditional pilgrimages, especially the festivals, may also have strong folkloristic elements.

And: Even in the Eastern European countries caminoisation now knock on the door. In 2019, a new foot route inspired by the translation of the relics of St. John of Rila is being marked in Bulgaria, inspired by Camino traditions. The two examples mentioned shows that the picture regarding the relation of the way vs. the goal in East vs. West is not clear-cut and in motion.

Regarding Turkey, the situation is different from both Eastern and Western Europe. The country has a Muslim majority population, but its cultural history has many elements of Christian origin and the related sites are important both when it comes to the cultural history of antiquity in general and Christianity in particular. Thus, these attract a complex group of visitors. Turkey has a large network of cultural walker routes (see <http://cultureroutesinturkey.com/st-paul-trail/>), of which St. Paul's way and Abraham's way are being named after biblical persons. In the context of this project, the first route is in focus. Research on the use of this route has not been found.

Even though we see these significant differences between the countries in the study, these different developments can be seen through a common lense, namely as processes of *heritagsation*. Heritagisation means, according to Rodney Harrison, processes through which objects, places and practices are turned into cultural heritage. Harrison describes heritagisation as processes through which traces and memories of many different pasts pile up, constantly surfacing and intervening in our present. In the context of heritagization, Harrison argues, such processes are being framed within ongoing late-modern social and economic (and here we may add religious) changes. Redundant structures like industry



buildings or churches may be reused or re-purposed and such turning into heritage rather than serving its original purpose (Harrison 2013)

Such processes are not being left undiscussed. As a case example of this, Dutch researchers Dan Beekers and Birgit Meyer's study of reuse of Dutch church buildings may be mentioned. The transformation processes which these buildings are going through «evoke vivid public debates about proper and improper ways of reusing church buildings and about how to best safeguard this Christian material culture, now commonly framed as 'cultural heritage'» (. Beekers argues that close-down or conversions of churches should not be solely interpreted in the light of unchurched or secularization discourses. Such processes are far more complex and multi-dimensional, he states: «Abandoned and repurposed church buildings often operate as cultural-religious nodes charged with multiple layers of history, memory and emotion. They tend to constitute focal points of debate about the place of religion in society as well as sites of cultural and religious innovation» (Beekers 2018). This understanding is indeed relevant regarding the recent and still ongoing changes and processes regarding European pilgrimage practices.

## PART 1 ITALY

### INTRODUCTION

The territory of GAL del Ducato is crossed by several cultural itineraries. Some of them can be considered pilgrimage routes, such as Via Francigena, Via degli Abati (The Abbots Way), the Columban Way, etc.

Via Francigena and Via degli Abati Routes are the ones with the longest history of management from a specific organization, while the other ones are more recent and some still in start-up phase.

Via Francigena are, together with Santiago Route and St. Olav Route among the the most known pilgrimage routes in Europe.

The European Association of Via Francigena is based in Fidenza (in Parma Province): they are managing the international network which links partners from Canterbury to Rome. Via degli Abati (The Abbots Way) can be considered a sort of mountain variant of Via Francigena which, in Pavia, separates from Via Francigena to reconnect to it in Pontremoli (Tuscany). The Columban Way is inspired by Saint Columban, an Irish Monk who travelled from Ireland to Bobbio where he founded the homonymous Monastery where he died and is buried.

While in the Camino of Santiago the statistical data are collected and published by the local religious authorities, in this case, at the moment, it doesn't exist an official system to register the pilgrims. The associations managing the routes communicated that the number of pilgrims is increasing every year (Via Francigena around 10.000 pilgrims per year and Via degli Abati about 1.500 pilgrims per year).

Both the Associations managing the Routes offer information through specific websites and Facebook pages.

One of the main problems is the need to increase accommodation services along the routes and qualifications of the hosting structures.

The Field Research included also other Itineraries crossing the territory of Gal del Ducato (i.e. Via dei Linari, Sentiero del Tidone, Via dei Longobardi), which are constantly growing up and are already crossed by a significant number of tourists.

A total number of 7 informants responded to the form. The informants represented 5 different cultural or pilgrimage routes.

- Sentiero del Tidone
- Cammino via di Linari
- Via del Langobardi
- The Columban Way
- European Association of Francigena ways/Via Francigena (2 informants)

### ON THE INFORMANTS

4 of the informants were working as managers, the rest had other roles at the host structures. All informants except 1 were between 30 and 60 years and were educated at least at baccaureat/matura level, 4 of them with university degrees of which 3 on MA level. These 6 had all been working in the pilgrim/tourism field for less than 10 years, 4 of them less than 5 years. The single informant with only compulsory education was above 60 years and also the most experienced of the informants, with more than 10 years of experience.

The occupational background of the informants was diverse, but with emphasis on travel, culture and tourism. Craft, cultural work, sport, architecture, tourism and organizational work are among the mentioned backgrounds.

Gender was alas not being surveyed, but should have been.

Why choose to work in the actual field? Here, the free-text answers are also rather diverse. Economic reasons were being mentioned by two of the

informants, one of these mentions the restoration of old buildings making it possible to have a second income. One informant mentions the development of the actual route as a motivation. Religion and culture are also being mentioned, a sense of patriotism as well \*("love of my country"), plus a sense of responsibility for the sector.

### **ON THE HOSTING STRUCTURES**

Ownership (public, commercial and religious) varied. Some structures contained several parts like bed and breakfast plus visitor centre and/or church. One was a hostel only and two hotels only.

All structures were of rather small or medium size, with up to 5 employees. One structure could manage up to five guests at one time, two could manage max ten guests and the rest more than twenty guests. In 2018, two of the structures had up to 50 guests (the smallest ones), one had up to 100 and the four last had more than 200 guests.

Regarding main target groups, two centres mentioned tourist/visitors, two centres mentioned pilgrims and the rest a combination.

Four of the structures were accredited in some way.

Most structures offer several services. The exception was the one structure offering only accommodation and a toilet. This structure was run by the most experienced, but less educated host of the survey.

Besides accommodation and toilet facilities, most structures offered fresh water, possibility to buy food for self-catering and cook it, and a shower or a bathroom. Only two offered a laundry machine.

Wifi is offered only by three structures, a guest PC is offered only by two.

Three of the structures had a dedicated place for prayer/worship/meditation, two of these offered organized worship/meditation.

Only two of the structures offered badges or souvenirs, four offered stamps for pilgrim's credentials and five offered folders/brochures.

### **INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL COMPETENCE**

All of the structures in the survey used social media for information and communication. Only one used online booking sites. Five had their own homepage. Three also marketed themselves through local or regional tourist info pages, four at the homepage of their local route/path.

Regarding booking solutions, six of the structures offered booking by phone or email. Four structures offered booking through digital platforms, for one of those, this solution was the only booking possibility.

For payments, all structures accepted cash. Four accepted credit/debit card on site, two accepted credit/debit card online. Only one structure accepted payment by thirdperson online alternatives (e.g, PayPal).

Two of the structures did not collect feedback from their guests in a systematic way. A total of three did orally, a total of three did by paper and one digitally (multiple answers possible).

## HOST EXPERIENCES

This section opened up for more qualitative answers than the previous.

Five of the informants felt that they mostly met the expectation of the guests. One informant stated that he/she rarely met the expectations, one that he/she did always meet the expectations.

We asked the informants to mention up to three positive and three negative experiences. Here, the answers varied in topic and the informants did in fact answer kind of different questions, although we were after their own experiences: Some regarding feedback from guests, other wrote about their own feelings/experiences meeting guest, and other again wrote about aspects regarding the context and surroundings of their host structure.

### Positive experiences

Several of the informants mentioned contact with people with different cultural backgrounds and feedback from guests as positive experiences. Typical quotes.

- "Meeting people from all over the world, being able to provide a service tailored for the need of the pilgrims"
- "Meeting people with different culture and to see they come back to our structure because they like our facilities"
- "Guest always leave positive comments, for the quality of the stay, thanking you for your kindness and willingness to give information"

Gastronomy was mentioned by two of the informants.

- "Possibility to eat typical local products"
- "Visitors appreciate the meals and tastings we provide for them"

Nature, culture and religion were factors mentioned by a few.

- "Good climate, very nice and signposted path"
- "Beautiful landscapes, far from traffic"
- "Contact with nature and spiritual dimension"

### Success factors

Several success factors were already mentioned among the answers in the section “positive experiences”, in addition these were mentioned:

- Network of similar structures, presence of European and local associations promoting the route
- Cleanliness, tidiness, cordiality and politeness (that is, necessary features of the host)
- The importance of the local saint
- Foreign guests
- Exceptional nature of the places

### Negative experiences

Two of the informant claimed to have no negative experiences. The other informants mentioned several negative experiences, several of them connected to infrastructural factors larger than the single host structure:

- Lack of information on the territory, the territory is not ready to welcome tourists
- Lack of connections and public transport, especially on red calendar days
- Young and recently rediscovered route, many elements still missing
- Bad internet coverage in the mountains
- Unsecure parts of the route

Lack of networks, lack of language skills (English), problems with heating and low presence on online booking platforms are also mentioned among the negative experiences.

### Challenges and difficulties

Again, some such were also mentioned among “negative experiences”.

- Attracting enough guests to support a sustainable economy
- Keeping the structure open during winter, with few guests
- Language skills
- Lack of funding and knowledge

### NETWORKING

Three host structures were not part of a network, but one of those would like to. The rest were parts of networks, either with coordinating or other host structures.

The expectations of an actual or possible network were diverse. Sharing experiences were most important, then marketing and assistance in formal/economical matters. The largest structures were those most interested in marketing. Accrediting and lobbying functions were mentioned by only two respondents.

## **HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION**

As the routes in question originate from historical/cultural/religious factors, we asked informants on the knowledge of their actual routes. Two felt that they had sufficient knowledge, four stated that they had knowledge, but wanted to learn more, and one stated that he/she had not, but would like to learn.

The historical, cultural and religious heritage of the actual route is being expressed in some way or another at all the host structures. All had art or photos related to their heritage, most (six) provided oral or written storytelling. Five structures mentioned gastronomy, five mentioned nature and environment. When it comes to music, interior and decorations and worship/liturgy, only one informant responded positively on each of those. Three informants mentioned having books available, four mentioned monuments/cultural sites and a couple of them mentioned architecture, secular or sacred.

Three of the structures had a dedicated place for worship/prayer/meditation, and two structures provided organized worship/meditation.

## **EDUCATION/COURSE**

All informants saw themselves as possible participants in a host competence course. Desired learning outcomes were mentioned as followed: Nature and environment (all informants), language (six informants), marketing (five informants), history and culture (five informants), service (four informants), digital skills (four informants), laws and regulations (three informants). Only two informants wanted to learn about religion or economy, only one about security.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **USE OF DATA**

The Italian respondent rate was not high, but 7 informants is just sufficient to give rather saturated and analytically significant data when it comes to the qualitative parts of the report, although statistically/quantitative representativity is rather low.

### **RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BACKGROUND**

Most of the respondents (save one) were between 30 and 60 years and had less than 10 years experience in the field. Apparently, many of these had working in the field as a second and/or side career. Their backgrounds were rather related, with emphasis on cultural, organizational work, sport, tourism, craft and agriculture.

The absence of the business /economy field regarding background and is noteworthy. Neither do economy appear to be an important motivation factor for working in this field, As we can see, both inner and outer motivation factors are



mentioned. We can of course presuppose that economy is a motivation factor for all paid work, but our data points to that the more inner, contextual: idealistic motivation factors are as well important for those who work in the sector.

### **SIZES OF HOST STRUCTURES AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES**

The sizes of the host structures mentioned in the survey are either small or medium. All structures have less than five employees, and the three smallest ones, with up to 50 (two) or 100 (one) guests will hardly provide enough income for a living for one person and will probably only do as a side income. The four structures with more than 200 guests/year might have a chance to provide enough income for maybe a person or two, but not only from housing services. From the data provided, we saw that several of the structures provided other services than housing only, with potential to increase the income.

Only four of the structures had stamps for credentials. This is, by our experience, something wanted by most pilgrims, and such stamps are relatively cheap to produce. Only two structures provided badges or souvenirs. Small badges are cheap to produce and can be sold for a euro or two. Pilgrims are because of the weight rarely interested in other souvenirs. *Suggestion:* A network structure can make a deal with a stamp and badge producer, securing cheap and effective delivery, and encourage the structures to have their own stamp or badges.

Only three host structures have wifi and only two a guest PC. This would probably not be a challenge for European guests, as phone costs are the same all over EEC and EU no matter country, but might be a challenge for guests from other continents. But given that wifi and phone coverage are being mentioned as a problem or challenge in general along the route, wifi probably will come in useful for guests and being welcomed by them.

The digital competence among the informants seems up to date. All structures used social media and most provided booking via email, four on digital platforms, in addition to phone booking. Not all accepted credit/debit cards, neither on site nor online. An explanation can be both tax reasons and the cost of having a card machine. *Suggestion:* Thirdperson online alternatives like PayPal (used only by one) or simpler and cheaper solutions like iSettle might come in useful for economic reasons, especially for small businesses.

Whether and how feedback collection was taking place at the host structures varied. *Suggestion:* When it comes to feedback, a standardized form, and guidance in how to systematically collect, use and interpret response might be of help.

## EXPERIENCES, POSSIBILITIES AND HURDLES

The positive experiences of the hosts, and what they held as success factors, corresponded with what we interpret as inner motivations for working on the route or path. Personal and relational factors, like receiving positive feedback from visitors/guests, and meeting people from different countries and cultures are told to be important by several informants. Nature/landscape (also being away from traffic), safety and spiritual dimensions are also being mentioned here.

The negative experiences from the work at the host structures are, in opposition to the positive ones, being linked to structural and infrastructural issues rather than personal/inner issues. Challenges and difficulties are about factors like volume and sustainability, lack of funding and knowledge (including language), wifi and phone coverage, security, way-marking etc.

This binary – inner and relational motivation and positive experiences vs. structural/infrastructural negative experiences and challenges/difficulties is stunning, and something one should be aware of. We have a group of highly motivated people, many of them idealists, vulnerable to structural and infrastructural challenges. – The informants' expectations regarding a contact forum or coordinating structure are being dominated by the wish of sharing experiences and marketing, but accrediting, lobbying and assistance in formal and economic matters are also being wanted. *Suggestion:* The challenges need to be met both locally and on a higher level. A network structure would be necessary and helpful regarding the last. A course also might need to deal with approaching and lobbying towards authorities.

The one most experienced and less educated host providing the simplest and most traditional host structure (only beds and a toilet, payment with cash only) seems to be the most satisfied among our hosts. The other structures of the survey are more complex, and many of them serve both tourists and pilgrim, and report on more challenges and difficulties.

Three of the structures had a dedicated place for worship/prayer/meditation. One of the structures incorporated a church, two provided organized worship/meditation. *Suggestion:* A dedicated place for worship/prayer/meditation that could be used by the visitors can be rather easy established, and can also be established outdoors for a low cost with simple artefacts. A simple cross or icon, a place for lighting candles or yoga mats for praying or meditating would probably be appreciated by many, would add to the spiritual dimension of the place, and also be open enough to leave the choice of use to the pilgrim,

## LEARNING MORE?

Among the informants, even as they appear for us as well-educated and resourceful people, there seems to be a high willingness to participate in a host competence course. The scores of the different topics should not be interpreted statistically due to the low number of respondent, but rather analytically. Generally, it seems like the informants would like to learn more about things that already interest them, and to develop this interest further, rather than learning about things that are totally unknown.

The high score of “nature and environment” (seven) as a topic corresponds with seeing nature as a success factor and resource, likewise the high score on language (six) corresponds with seeing language as a hurdle or challenge. History and culture (five) and marketing (five) also correspond with resources and challenges.

Here, in opposition to earlier, we sorted out religion as an own category that only two informants ticked for. But it could rather be put into “history and culture” as it is impossible to tell the stories about the pilgrimage path (or the cultural history of Europe) without mentioning religion.

Four respondents ticked for digital skills, although all informants seemed to have up to date digital competence. For a course, possible digital solutions that would make managing, payment, marketing and safety easier and more accessible should be considered. We consider it important to search out low-cost solutions, as the income possibilities of this business is not high.

Service is being mentioned as a positive experience and success factor by several informants, and is also being ticked for as a possible course topic by four informants.

Gastronomy was mentioned as an asset/resource, and three informants ticked for it to be a part of a possible course. Laws and regulations had the same score, perhaps not so interesting, but necessary. Security was mentioned by one of the informants.

There are probably differences from country to country (a comparison of the Italian data with the transnational picture points in this direction), which will make a slight different approach to a training course necessary. The analyses of the data from the other countries will throw more light upon this issue. 3 on MA level. These 6 had all been working in the pilgrim/tourism field for less than 10 years, 4 of them less than 5 years. The single informant with only compulsory education was above 60 years and also the most experienced of the informants, with more than 10 years of experience.

The occupational background of the informants was diverse, but with emphasis on travel, culture and tourism. Craft, cultural work, sport, architecture, tourism and organizational work are among the mentioned backgrounds.

Gender was alas not being surveyed, but should have been.

Why choose to work in the actual field? Here, the free-text answers are also rather diverse. Economic reasons were being mentioned by two of the informants, one of these mentions the restoration of old buildings making it possible to have a second income. One informant mentions the development of the actual route as a motivation. Religion and culture are also being mentioned, a sense of patriotism as well \*("the love of my country"), plus a sense of responsibility for the sector.

## PART 2 SPAIN

### INTRODUCTION

A total number of 25 informants responded to the form, representing several cultural or pilgrimage routes. The routes mentioned were;

- Via de la Plata (Silver Route)
- Via del Invierno (Winter Way)

The Silver Route crosses Spain from south to the north, and is an ancient pilgrimage and trade way. In 2018, a total number of 9127 or 2,79 % of the Santiago pilgrims chose this way (<https://caminoways.com/the-camino-in-numbers-top-camino-routes-pilgrims-2018>).

The Winter Way goes from Ponferrada to Pontevedra and is an alternative to a part of the famous French Way heading to Santiago. It is yet a small-scale route, but in growth. In 2018 the number of visitors was doubled up to 2500 and has experienced an increasing focus online (<https://www.elprogreso.es/articulo/ribeira-sacra/camino-invierno-duplico-ano-2018-numero-peregrinos/201901191322371354905.html>).

### ON THE INFORMANTS

19 of the informants reported to be working as a manager, and the rest reported to be working as employees. No volunteers responded to the form. The age group between 40 and 50 years dominated, around 60 % of the informants belonged to this group. A few were younger, a few were older.

Roughly 60% of the informants had been working in this field for more than 10 years. Around 20% had been working less than 10 years, nearly 20% have been working less than 5 years in the field, and only one informant was new to the field.

Around 60 % of the informants had education on level 4, baccalaureat. Three persons had compulsory school only, around 20% had university/college education on bachelor level and only two were educated on master level.

Most informants had previous work experience from other fields. One had been a teacher, one had been a nurse, two had been social workers. Several had either been into commercial vocations like business, sale or banking or tourist/service related jobs like waiter or in the hostelry field. Only one came from agriculture, a rancher. Some former entrepreneurs were also represented in the group.

Why had the informants chosen to work in this field? None of them mentioned religious reasons and only two mentioned economic reasons explicitly. Several mentioned their love and passion for their vocation (cooking, wine and contact with the public was mentioned as examples. Self-employment was mentioned by about 1/3 of the informants as a motivation factor. Family business or taking care of family resources like old houses was mentioned by an equal amount. Two informants, namely the teacher and the nurse, said that there was no work to find in their fields.

### **ON THE HOSTING STRUCTURES**

Most of the hosting structures were run commercially, only two were publicly owned. Two of the structures in the survey were pilgrimage centres, eleven of them were reported as "other" (from other answers we can suppose those are cafe/restaurants (and twelve of the structures offered accommodation (one hotel, seven hostels, four bed & breakfasts).

Regarding size, nearly 80% of the structures surveyed had up to five employees, the remaining 20% had up to ten.

1/3 of the structures were not accredited at all. The rest were, some of them by more than one accreditation structure. 60% of the total structures were accredited by SICTED, one by Calicia Calidade and four by Q.

None of the structures mentioned pilgrims only as their target group. About 80% reported to have a combined target group, three mentioned tourists/visitors as their main target group and the rest did not answer the question.

Twelve of the hosting structures did not provide accommodation. For those who did, eight structures could manage max 20 persons at one time, two structures

could manage max 10 and three structures could manage more than 20 persons at one time.

Most structures providing accommodation had more than 200 visitors/guests in 2018, only two had less than 200.

Most structures offer several services. Thirteen of the structures offer accommodation. Fresh drinking water is offered fifteen places. Self-catering is offered four places, but only one place also sells food for self-catering. Twenty structures have a cafe/restaurant/taverna (twelve of these are only this and has no accommodation). All structures have a toilet, fourteen offers a shower or a bath, but only three offer a laundry machine. WIFI is offered by eighteen structures. Only one structure sells souvenirs or badges, but around 1/3 of the structures has a stamp for pilgrims's passports/credentials. 2/3 offers info folders or brochures. None of the structures offer organized worship/prayer/meditation nor have a dedicated space for such activities.

### **INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCE**

80% of the structures used social media, some fewer; seventeen had their own homepage. Nearly half of the structures were present on online booking sites, nearly 40% were present on local or regional info pages. Only one structure was visible on the homepage of the actual cultural route or pilgrimage path.

Nearly all structures offered booking by phone. Two offered booking by a traditional mail, half of the structures offer booking via digital platforms. Around 80% offers booking by email.

All structures accept cash as payment. Eighteen of the structures accept card on site, only seven structures accept card payment online. Only one structure accept payment by third person alternatives like PayPal or similar.

Only three structures reported not to collect feedback at all, these were cafes/tavernas/restaurants. 1/3 of the structures reported to collect feedback by paper, nearly the same amount collected feedback digitally. 2/3 of the structures collected feedback orally. There were some overlaps between the groups here.

### **HOST EXPERIENCE**

This section opened up for more qualitative answers than the previous sections. The Spanish data provided (together with Norway) richer qualitative data than the other countries.

80% of the informants said that they felt that they mostly met the expectations of the visitors/guests. Two said that they sometimes did, three said that they always did.



### Positive experiences

We asked the informants to mention up to three positive experiences. Three sorts of experiences were typical. Meeting and dealing with clients was a typical positive experience, and many emphasized meeting people from other countries and contexts. Here, maintaining the family business and working independently was also emphasized by some., as when we asked the informants of their motivation earlier in the questionnaire. Informants working on hosting structures serving food also mentioned this as positive experiences. Being able to contributing to rural development was also mentioned here.

Some typical answers:

- The contact with the pilgrims, the daily relationships with the clients-friends, introduce new recipes in a small village.
- Cultural exchanges. Be able to advise those who need it, to know different people every day
- To be able to develop my personal project, to know people from other regions and countries, to help customers enjoy their holidays.
- Work for yourself, know people from other countries and new experiences
- Recognition of satisfied customers, support local training, collaborate in the protection of our culture and nature
- Promote the image of my people through Spain and Europe

### Success factors

We asked for what the informants held as the most important success factors of their work. The answers focused mostly on delivering on quality products and holding a high standard regarding customer service, but also on context regarding nature and other attractions (a motor circuit was mentioned). Typical answers:

- Quality and relationship quality price, respect for the product and tradition
- The customer service, our coffee

- Local product of high quality, devotion and respect for traditional cuisine, and customer service
- Location, the care of our facilities both the outside and the inside and a nice decoration
- Relationship quality price, family hotel, friendly service

### Negative experiences

Five of the informants wrote "none" here. These were representing cafes/tavernas/restaurants. Otherwise, the typical negative experiences listed concentrated upon working in unpractical schedules and seasonal work including having little room for vacations, plus some bad experiences with customers including bad treatment of facilities and even thefts. Two informants mentioned bad signposting and/or condition of the Camino, one informant only mentioned lack of network and joint promotion, and one informant mentioned something of direct relevance to the PANHERA project, namely the lack of specialized training for the sector. Some examples of answers:

- Endless schedule, not having free days, which difficulty family conciliation. There is no offer of specialized training in my sector
- We need more and better information to give it to the client, the bad condition of the Santiago way
- Lack of an adequate tourist network, lack of signalling, lack of joint promotion
- People who do not care for facilities, bad education of some clients, sometimes the efforts to improve do not have a reward.

### Challenges and difficulties

We asked for what the informants held as the most important challenges and difficulties for their work. Several mentioned depopulation, getting qualified employees, the bad condition of the Camino and also legal norms/cooperation with authorities. Joint planning and cooperation were also reported as wanted. Typical answers:

- Lack of qualified personnel, changes in regulations that will create problems
- Find qualified staff and be able to open a hostel for pilgrims (this informant did only have a cafe/taverna/restaurant at the moment)

- The legal norms too strictly, difficulty to perform market studies, improve business management.
- Fall of population in the village and lack of companies that increase employment.
- Improve occupation the rest of the year
- Little help from the local administration

## NETWORKING

Only slightly more than 40% of the respondents were in contact with coordination structures. Around 15% were in contact with other hosting structures. Six respondents had neither. Four of those would like to, two said such contact was not needed.

Regarding possible function of a contact forum or coordinating structure, all respondents save two mentioned sharing experiences. Nine out of twenty-five mentioned accrediting, eight mentioned marketing, seven mentioned lobbying towards government/local authorities and three mentioned assistance in formal and economical structures.

## HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION

Here, we asked for the informant's historical, cultural and religious knowledge of the road or path on which their actual hosting structure was situated. One informant meant that he/she had sufficient knowledge of the actual path, four meant that they had not, but would like to learn and the rest stated having knowledge, but still wanting to learn more.

The historical, cultural and religious heritage of the actual route is being expressed in some way or another at all the host structures. The points "organized events" and "gastronomy food and drinks" was mentioned by half of the informants. Most of these were representing cafes/tavernas/restaurants. "Nature and environment" and "storytelling" was being mentioned by just more than 40% of the informants. "Art and photos", "monuments and/or other cultural sites" and "books (culture, history, nature and/or religion" was being mentioned by around 1/3 of the informants. Fewer mentioned factors like "sacred architecture/buildings", "secular architecture/buildings" and "music". None of the informants mentioned "interior and decorations".

## **EDUCATION/COURSE**

We asked the informant whether they were willing to participate in a host competence course for people working along the pilgrimage roads and cultural routes of Europe. Nearly 80% answered yes, the rest said maybe (4) or no (1).

Regarding desired learning outcomes, around 80% of the respondents mentioned language and service. Marketing was mentioned by nearly half of the respondents, digital skills, nature and environment, gastronomy/food/drink and digital skills was mentioned by around 1/3. Only a few mentioned economy, history and culture, religion and laws and regulations.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **USE OF DATA**

The Spanish respondent rate was rather high for qualitative purposes and provides saturated and analytically significant data, and to a certain degree also statistically interesting data. The qualitative answers provided rich data compared with other countries. As multiple answers were possible on several of the topics on the survey, we emphasize analytical rather than statistical significance.

### **RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BACKGROUNDS**

The group of informants from Spain is of varying age and have several kinds of educational and professional backgrounds. However, there is a cluster on the age group 30 – 40 years and a cluster around level 4 education (baccalaureat/matura/vocational school level. Only a little less than 25 % have higher education (here, the data differs from e.g. Turkey and Bulgaria). The professional backgrounds are more evenly distributed, but are clustering around business/economy, relational professions like health/education/social work and service professions like chef, hostelier and waiters.

Regarding motivation, several informants focus upon their profession or vocation (e.g. chef or waiter). Being independent by self-employment seems to be held of great value among several of the informants. Running a family business also seems to be held valuable and likewise functioning as a motivation factor for a great part of the informants. Those very few mentioning economy explicitly is people having to work in the field and not finding employment in their original profession

### **HOST STRUCTURES AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES**

80% of the hosting structures were reported to have commercial ownership. Three of them were reported to have public ownership. The two remaining, we don't know. The field explored in this survey. Even if most of the structures are small, the impression of a high guest rate/turnover (more than 200/year) all over is left.

Eleven of the host structures provide accommodation, and seven of these are hostels, four b&b's and one hotel. Thus, the simpler kinds of accommodation structures dominate, as expected on the Camino with its decades-long pilgrimage traditions. Most (80%) structures were rather small regarding number of employees. Only 20% reported to have up to ten employees. Smaller businesses with capacity of max 20 persons/night dominated. Thus, private ownership, small businesses and high turnover dominate the picture. Together with information from the qualitative data on host experience, this leaves an impression of a well-functioning but still very vulnerable field, with seasonal work and demographic factors like depopulation and the domination of a certain age group in the business as important factors.

Two structures reported to be pilgrimage centres, the remaining reported to be cafes/tavernas/restaurants and did not report on the number of guests using the structure in 2011. The high engagement and passion rate of the informants working in these structures is however visible in the qualitative parts of this study. There seems to be a high degree of love and proudness of the different service vocations in this field, which must be looked upon as a resource. At the same time, the same vulnerability factors probably challenge this part of the field as for the accommodation structures.

In the material, we see a higher accreditation rate than in several other countries explored. Some of the structures are accredited by several networks/authorities. Still, nearly 1/3 of the structures in the Spanish survey are not accredited in any way. This means that there is still a potential here.

The digital competence of the informants seems rather up to date, with many structures holding own homepages and many structures offering WIFI. WIFI is useful, especially for non-European guests with high mobile phone costs, and will encourage people to share photos from their visit. Guest PC, however, was nearly absent as a service. The digital presence of the structures is overall rather high, and the use of social media common. The presence of several structures on local/regional info pages also has potential. But nearly any structures are visible on the homepage of the cultural route/pilgrimage path. Whether this is because the homepage do not provide such possibilities or there are other reasons for this, we do not know, but e.g. in Norway this is an important marketing channel for the hostels. A couple of informants mention the need for more coordination work regarding this problem later in the survey.

Not all structures accepted credit/debit cards, neither on site nor online. An explanation can be both tax reasons and the cost of having a card machine. Third-person online alternatives like PayPal (used by none) or simpler and

cheaper solutions like iSettle might come in useful for economic reasons, especially for small businesses.

Most structures collected feedback orally, but paper and digital feedback collections were also represented. The survey did not collect information on whether this feedback was systematically used for improvement work, but we see from the info on experiences that good feedback from guests is a motivation factor for many.

The material presence of local cultural heritage on the sites was definitely there, but could also be further developed. An interesting thing is that religion as a topic is nearly invisible in the Spanish material, when we think about the rich religious heritage of the Camino. None of the structures had spaces for or organized for worship/prayer and meditation. But it can be that they leave such things to the churches. Offering a stamp for the pilgrim's passport/credential was also not as common as we expected. Further, religion was absent as a motivation factor for working in the business. None of the structures was dedicated for pilgrims only, and the tourist/pilgrim dichotomy that is present in many places is not visible in the Spanish material.

#### **EXPERIENCES, POSSIBILITIES AND HURDLES**

The positive experiences mentioned by the informants corresponded for a great deal with their motivation for working in this kind of business. What we call relational experiences circled around meeting and dealing with clients, often emphasizing the international focus. What we will call heritage experiences was about maintaining family business, traditional culture and nature, often expressed by gastronomy and contributing to rural development. What we call vocational experiences was about fulfilling the informant's professional skills.

Many of the negative experience mentioned was also be of the relational kind, about dealing with guests. Other were structural: Demographic and infrastructural challenges were highly present – depopulation, bad conditions on the Camino and challenges around formal matters like laws and regulation was also present in our Spanish material. This is probably as expected, but nevertheless this shows a vulnerable side of running businesses related to the pilgrim/cultural routes of Europe.

#### **LEARNING MORE?**

As shown earlier in the report, there was a high will among the informants to participate in a possible training course. The, to us, surprisingly high demand for language training that we found in our material on Spain may have to do with fewer informants holding higher education than in the other countries explored. Service and marketing were also popular topics. The cultural, religious and natural heritage of the pilgrim roads/cultural routes was represented among



wanted topics, but the score was not so high as expected. Those wanting gastronomy related topics were mostly informants connected to the cafes/tavernas/restaurants. The desire to learn more about what you already have competence about is present here as in the material from other countries. The exception is probably language – here informants probably want to learn more because they have a weak competence.

## PART 3 BULGARIA

### INTRODUCTION

Religious tourism to and pilgrimage in Bulgaria has been an important feature of Bulgarian public life for more than 1000 years and still are. There are more than 1000 monasteries and churches that are pilgrimage goals, and eight of them are listed as UNESCO world heritage ([https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/sites/silkroad/files/knowledge-bank-article/the religious tourism in bulgaria.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/sites/silkroad/files/knowledge-bank-article/the%20religious%20tourism%20in%20bulgaria.pdf)) These attract a high interest both from Bulgarian and foreigners. Pilgrimage routes for walking between some of these are recently being marked, inspired by Santiago pilgrimage (<https://bnr.bg/en/post/101096534/bulgarian-pilgrimage-route-to-connect-veliko-turnovo-with-rila-monastery>) but more important and traditional are several annual pilgrimages organized by the Orthodox church on feast days. These are also subject for marketing towards tourists (see <https://www.cityinfoguides.com/sofia/sofia-tours/69-sofia/sofia-tours>).

A total number of 21 informants responded to the form, representing several cultural or pilgrimage routes. Those mentioned were;

- Pilgrimage route of St.John the Rila relics
- Northern part of Bulgaria
- North-West of Bulgaria
- Vidin-Belogradchik
- Cultural route in Bulgaria
- Both cultural and pilgrimage routes
- Cultural - traditional village Koprivshtitsa
- Bulgaria - Bansko and Razlog resorts
- South East Bulgaria

As one can see, some informants mentioned location rather than actual route.

### ON THE INFORMANTS

10 of the informants work as managers, the rest had other roles – 7 were employees, 3 were volunteers and 1 informant replied "other". More than 2/3 of the informants were experienced people from the age 40 and up, with the age

span 50 – 60 years dominating (9 informants). 4 were between 30 and 40 years, and 2 below 30. Gender was alas not being surveyed, but should have been.

More than half of the informants (12) had been working in the actual field for more than 10 years, 4 less than 10 years, 1 less than 5 years and only 1 informant was a beginner with less than 1 year experience. In addition, the group as a whole is well educated. 15 informants have higher education on level 6/7 (8 with MA level and 7 with BA level), 5 have education on level 4/5 (baccalaureat) and only 1 informant have compulsory education only. This leaves the impression of a well-educated and well-experienced group of informants.

The occupational backgrounds of the informants are diverse, but dominated of some distinct areas, namely tourism, food and drink business, teaching, economy and religious occupations like priest and nun. One informant was a former engineer.

Why have the informants chosen to work in the actual field? Five informants mention religious/faith factors, one of those tells in addition about his desire to bring young people to church. Six informants mention personal development or self-realisation, six mentions economic factors (one of those mentions the fantastic surrounding nature in addition). Personal development is being mentioned by four. One informant mentions the Bulgarian heritage, and the particular traditional architecture of the actual host structure. Here, multiple answers were possible.

### ON THE HOSTING STRUCTURES

Two of the structures did not offer accommodation, the rest did. The most common form was hotels, then monastery accommodation, bed and breakfast.

Regarding size, seven structures had less than 5 employees, 6 structures had 5 – 20 employees and 6 structures had more than 20 employees. (two informants did not mention number of employees, this were probably the two structures that did not provide accommodation).

Despite that several structures have few employees and low capacity, the accommodation activity seems overall medium or high. Sixteen of the host structures had more than 200 visitors each year. One structure had only up to 25 visitors, one structure had up to 50 visitors and three structures had up to 200 visitors.

Regarding main target group, six informants mentioned pilgrims, six informants (all hotels) mentioned tourists/visitors and nine mentioned both groups (these nine included both a monastery and hotels).

Only one host structure was accredited ("Bulgarian register of hosting structures"). It might be that the question was not properly understood.

Most structures offer several services. As mentioned, nineteen of the structures offered accommodation, including toilet and shower/bath. Seventeen provided fresh drinking water, the same number of structures offered info brochures. Fifteen offered wifi. Ten, mostly of the larger structures, serve food. 8 structures offer a dedicated place for worship/prayer/meditation (this means that not only monasteries but also hotels offer this), five structures offered organized worship/prayer/meditation. Only nine, mostly medium or smaller structures offered self-catering, six of these also sold food for the same. Five, mostly smaller structures, provided a washing machine. Three had a guest PC. None of the host structures offered a stamp for pilgrim's passport/credential.

### **INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCE**

Fifteen of the host structures had their own homepage, fourteen of the structures also used social media. Only four structures were represented on the homepage of the actual pilgrimage/cultural route. Seven were represented on local or regional tourist info pages. Twelve structures, mostly larger ones, were represented on online booking sites.

Regarding booking, seven of the structures still offered booking by letter. 18 offered booking by phone (the smallest structure in the survey offered this only), sixteen offered booking via digital platforms and thirteen by email.

All structures save one accepted cash as payment. Of those accepting cash only, all were church/monastery structures. Ten structures accepted credit/debit card on site, five structures accepted also online payment.

Almost all structures did collect feedback from visitors, mostly orally, but also by paper (seven structures) and digitally (four structures).

### **HOST EXPERIENCE**

This section opened up for more qualitative answers than the previous sections.

Sixteen of the informants felt that they mostly met the expectation of the guests. Four informants felt that he/she did always meet the expectations.

We asked the informants to mention up to three positive and three negative experiences. Here, the answers varied in topic and the informants did in fact

answer kind of different questions, although we were after their own experiences: Some regarding feedback from guests, other wrote about their own feelings/experiences meeting guest, and other again wrote about aspects regarding the context and surroundings of their host structure.

### Positive experiences

Some types of experiences were clearly connected to religious host structures: Two respondents tell about people who have experienced miracles in contact with a healing icon, and people willing to support the monasteries practically or economically.

- “A woman over 40 years old, and could have children. She came to pray in the monastery (there is miracle icon) got pregnant thanks to her prayers.”
- “People come and want to donate money to restore the churches in the surroundings”

Several informants tell about interaction with other types of events or activities, like providing riding lessons, organizing or cooperating with local cultural festivals or offering locally produced food

- “In the restaurant we offer only traditional local dishes and this has increased the visits of casual tourists who have seen our daily menu offers.”

Several informants also value the feedback from visitors and their interest to participate in activities.

### Success factors

Several success factors were already mentioned among the answers in the section “positive experiences”, in addition these were mentioned:

- Good promotion
- Cooperation between church, state and institutions
- Good services
- Good management
- Trained staff
- Additional attractions
- Low prices
- Willingness to satisfy clients
- Delicious food
- Advertising

### Negative experiences

Some of the negative experiences listed were particularly related to religious structures, like the clash of lifestyles between young visiting people and the

strict lifestyle of the monks in the monastery, or that the monastery become too crowded by pilgrims certain days.

Incompability of guests with crashing expectations was mention both by religious and commercial representatives.

Cancellations of bookings were mentioned by more than one informant.

Children and young people seem not to be very popular guest at the host structures.

Lack of travel infrastructure was also mentioned.

### Challenges and difficulties

Again, this point and the last one was a bit mixed up.

- Not enough funding (this applies especially to religious host structures)
- Lack of infrastructure
- Poorly developed area regarding economy and cultural history
- Depopulation
- Lack of qualifies staff
- Communication with local community
- Perhaps the people who don't come here as pilgrims but only as tourists
- Competition
- Finding skilled staff

### NETWORKING

Five host structures were not of a part of a network or had contact with other host structures, two of those stated there were no need for so either. Five of the host structures had contact with coordinating structures, eleven with other host structures.

The expectations of a actual or possible network were diverse, but with sharing experiences as the most important factor (mentioned by eighteen informants). Marketing was mentioned by eight of the informants, lobbying by four of them, and assistance in formal and economic matters were mentioned by only two. None of the informants mentioned accrediting

### HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION

As the routes in question originate from historical/cultural/religious factors, we asked informants of the knowledge of their actual routes. Roughly half of the informants said that they had sufficient knowledge, the other half said that they have knowledge, but still wanted to learn more.

The historical, cultural and religious heritage of the actual route is being expressed in some way or another at all the host structures. Nearly all informants said these aspects were being disseminated through oral or written storytelling. More than half of the informant had art or photos related to their heritage.

Three structures mentioned gastronomy, eight mentioned nature and environment. When it comes to music, interior and decorations and worship/liturgy, only one informant responded positively on each of those. Six informants mentioned having books available for guests, three mentioned monuments/cultural sites and five of them mentioned architecture, secular (one) or sacred (four). Worship/liturgy was mentioned by four of the informants. Ten of the informants also mentioned organized events. Only one informant each mentioned music and interior/decorations.

### **EDUCATION/COURSE**

All informants answered yes or maybe regarding participation in a host competence course. Regarding desired outcomes, history and culture were the most popular themes (twelve informants). Gastronomy, service, and marketing got six ticks each, religion and nature/environment got five ticks each and digital skills got three ticks each. Laws and regulations and language were the least popular themes.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **USE OF DATA**

The Bulgarian respondent rate was rather high for qualitative purposes and provides saturated and analytically significant data, and to a certain degree also statistically interesting data. As multiple answers were possible on several of the topics on the survey, we, however, emphasize analytical rather than statistical significance.

#### **RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BACKGROUNDS**

The group of respondents from Bulgaria as a whole consists of mostly educated, experienced and mature people (regarding age). Their backgrounds and experiences are diverse, but dominated by some distinct areas, namely tourism, food and drink business, education, economy and church.

Both inner (like religion, self-realisation, personal development) and outer (like economy, Bulgarian heritage and nature) motivations for working in the field are being mentioned by respondents. We can of course presuppose that economy is a motivation factor for all paid work, but our data points to that the more inner, contextual: idealistic motivation factors are as well important for those who work in the sector.



## SIZES OF HOST STRUCTURES AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES

The sizes of the Bulgarian host structures of the survey are mostly medium or large and have a high turnover with high accommodation rate. More than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the host structure had an accommodation of more than rate per anno more than 200. This means that most structures have a potential of economical sustainability regarding guests attending. Several structures offered multiple services and were, as already mentioned, run by experienced people.

From the material, we suspect that the users of the host structures are mostly Bulgarian Christians and not so many international pilgrims. Abroad visitors are hardly mentioned in our data. The tradition of pilgrim's credential and stamps, important in western pilgrimage, seems to be absent. Only a few host structures provided souvenirs.

Worship/prayer/meditation seemed to be a visible feature of Bulgarian host structures, more than one third of the structures providing a dedicated place for this. Not all of the structures that provides such a place was run by the church either.

Around  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the host structures have wifi but only three had a guest PC. This would probably not be a challenge for European guests, as phone costs are the same all over EEC and EU no matter country, but might be a challenge for guests from other continents. Wifi is probably will come in useful for guests and being welcomed by them.

Possibilites for self-catering and laundry is probably something that will be valued by western foot pilgrims visiting Bulgaria. However, the accommodation costs are generally being experienced as rather low for western visitors in Bulgaria, so these will maybe be using hotels as well as hostels. Most host structures in the survey were hotels or monasteries, only a couple was of simpler standard like B&B's. Traditional pilgrim hostels, as we know them from the Camino in France and Spain is probably not represented in this survey.

The digital competence among the informants seems up to date. Around  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the informants said that their structure had a homepage and used social media, and most provided booking via email, several on digital platforms, in addition to phone booking. Interestingly enough, several still accepted booking by traditional letter. Only one structure, the smallest one, accepted booking by post only. The digital presence at coordinating structures like homepage of the cultural path or the region was not particularly high. There probably is a potential for more effective marketing and branding here.

Not all accepted credit/debit cards, neither on site nor online. Those who accepted cash only were mostly small and/or owned by the church. An explanation can be both tax reasons and the cost of having a card machine. Thirdperson online alternatives like PayPal (used by none) or simpler and cheaper solutions like iSettle might come in useful for economic reasons, especially for small businesses.

Whether and how feedback collection was taking place at the host structures varied. Most did collect feedback orally, but several also collected feedback digitally or on paper. *Suggestion:* When it comes to feedback, a standardized form, and guidance in how to systematically collect, use and interpret response might be of help.

### EXPERIENCES, POSSIBILITIES AND HURDLES

The positive experiences of the hosts, and what they held as success factors, corresponded partly with what we interpret as inner motivations for working on the route or path. Personal and relational factors, like receiving positive feedback from visitors/guests seem important by several informants. Human or relational capital is a factor that stand out both when it comes to positive experiences and success factors.

Regarding the length of the average experience and the high education level among the informants, this is as expected: Food, pricing, service and advertising/marketing is what an experienced host probably would mention. More analytically interesting is the call for cooperation between church, state and institutions, combined with the information that nearly none of the host structures in the survey is accredited. Here, there is a potential.

Nature/landscape and spiritual dimensions are also being mentioned in the survey. The healing power of an icon is promoted by. Church workers.

The negative experiences reported from the work at the host structures are, as the positive ones, are also partly as expected. But demographical and infrastructural factors like depopulation (here lack of qualified staff is connected), poorly developed area and conflicts with local population are of high analytical interest. This is known, but nevertheless important, problems regarding development of rural Eastern Europe. – Funding also seems to be a problem for religiously owned structures. The pilgrim/tourist dichotomy also appears in these data, likewise the clash of secular and religious lifestyles.

### LEARNING MORE?

Among the informants, even as they appear for us as well-educated, experienced and resourceful people, there seems to be a high willingness to participate in a host competence course. Interestingly enough, when reading the data closely,

people seem to want to learn more about what they already know a lot about and are already interested in. Monastery hosts wants to learn more about religion, managers want to learn more about economy. They want to develop their interests further.

History and culture were topics wanted by more than half of the informants, religious and commercial structures likewise. Here, in opposition to earlier, we sorted out religion as an own category that only two informants ticked for. But it could rather be put into “history and culture” as it is impossible to tell the stories about the pilgrimage path (or the cultural history of Europe) without mentioning religion.

Gastronomy, service and marketing were popular among the hotel informants. All these were also mentioned among positive experiences and success factors. Religion and nature/environment were wanted by around ¼ of the informants. Formal matters like law/regulations was not popular.

There are probably differences from country to country (a comparing of the Bulgarian data with the transnational picture points in this direction), which will make slightly different approaches to a training course necessary. The analyses of the data from the other countries will throw more light upon this issue.

## **PART 4 TURKEY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Turkey has a large network of cultural walker routes (see <http://cultureroutesinturkey.com/st-paul-trail/>), of which St. Pauls way and Abraham’s way are being named after biblical persons. In the context of this project, the first route is in focus. Research on the use of this route has not been found. The St. Paul’s Ways a walking route that goes from outside Antalya near the south coast of Turkey and ends up in Egirdir.

A total number of 12 informants responded to the form, representing one and the same pilgrimage/cultural route, namely the St. Pauls route.

### **ON THE INFORMANTS**

Of the twelve informants, four of them acted as managers, five employees and three were volunteers. Three of these were relatively new in the business, with less than 1 year of experience. Three had less than 5 years of experience, four less than 10 years and the last two had more than ten years of experience in pilgrimage/cultural route related work. This leaves the impression of a mixed group where on half had few years of experience, on third had medium experience and two out of twelve were very experienced.

This mix was also reflected in the age of the informants. Half of them were between 40 and 50 years, two were more than 60 years, two were between 18 and 30 years and two between 30 and 40 years.

The occupational backgrounds of the informants are diverse, but dominated of some tourist related business – like waiter, local guide, pension owner and similar. Some of the respondents had their occupational background in agriculture/farming. A former guard, housewife and international relations worker were also among the informants.

Regarding education, half of the informants had university education up to BA level/level 5/6. One had college/university education on master level/level 7. Four had education on level 4/baccalaureat. Only one informant had education on compulsory level only. This was the one we know was a woman (gender was not surveyed in general, by a mistake).

Why have the informants chosen to work in the actual field? One says that he came into the business because of his son, three mentions love for nature, hiking or the location, some tells that they are motivated by the guests – seeing walkers and wanting to help them or feeling the guests being like sons. Only a couple mentions money/economy specifically as a motivational factor. One mentions his boss as a motivator and one getting to rent out his camping area as the biggest motivation. Multiple free texts answers were possible here. No informants mentioned religion as a factor here.

### **ON THE HOSTING STRUCTURES**

Different types of ownership (commercial and religious) were represented among the structures to which our informants were connected. Three of the structures were hotels, the rest hostels, bed & breakfast or visitor centers.

Regarding number of employees,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the structures had less than five employees, two had up to ten and only one had up to twenty employees.

The host structures were of different dimensions.  $\frac{1}{3}$  were so small that they only could take max 10 guests at a time,  $\frac{1}{3}$  could take max 20 and  $\frac{1}{3}$  could take more than 20.

Half of the structures had more than 200 visitors in 2018. Among these are structures with low capacity and many guests and high capacity and relatively few guests. One third of the structures had up to 100 guests in 2018 and only one had up to 25 guests (but had the capacity to take more).

Most structures report not to be accredited. Only two of the informants reports that their structure is accredited, but does not say on which way.

Most structures report having both pilgrims and tourists as their combined target group, only one informant replies pilgrims only here.

The structures offer several services. Eleven out of twelve offers fresh drinking water, nine out of twelve a café, restaurant or taverna. Four out of twelve offer self-catering, two of these also sells food for the same. Ten out of twelve has a toilet and a shower/bath. Six structures have a laundry machine, three have wifi, but only one have a guest pc.

## **INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCE**

Only three out of twelve host structures had their own homepage. Nine, however, used social media. Two of the structures were present on online booking sites and two on local/regional tourist info pages (these were hotels). One host structure is represented on the homepage of the actual pilgrimage route. Two structures ticked for “other” on the actual question, but did not specify. Three out of twelve structures had no digital presence at all.

Regarding booking, all structures accepted booking by phone. Only three structures accepted booking by email and four via digital platforms.

All structures accept cash payment. Five structures accept card on site. For two structures, online payment is accepted (these are hotels, and probably those present on online booking sites).

Regarding feedback, only two structures did collect feedback digitally, but nine collected feedback orally. One structure had no feedback system at all.

### **HOST EXPERIENCE**

This section opened up for more qualitative answers than the previous sections. One informant did not answer all parts of this section.

Only one informant reported that he/she always did meet the expectations of the guests. Six said that this happened mostly, four reported this to happen sometimes, and one reported that this rarely happened.

We asked the informants to mention up to three positive and three negative

experiences. Here, the answers varied in topic and the informants did in fact answer kind of different questions, although we were after their own experiences: Some regarding feedback from guests, other wrote about their own feelings/experiences meeting guest, and other again wrote about aspects regarding the context and surroundings of their host structure.

### **Positive experiences**

Some of the positive experiences reported were of the relational kind, like "making new friends", "got a girlfriend", and "meeting new people". Other had to do with nature and environment, like "live in nature" and "one day deer comes to the workplace". One informant compared this kind of work (in a positive way) to his previous job as a farmer. Another informant stated that he/she liked preparing food for guests.

### **Success factors**

Several success factors were mentioned. Some were relational, like the necessity of loving human and nature, giving the guests a good welcome, good working habits and the habit of exchanging experience. Some were structural, like the habit of making advertisements and like offering good accommodation, good food, shower, cooking possibilities and parking possibilities. The last type of success factors was related to language skills – "knowing English".

### **Negative experiences**

A couple of the informants mentioned bad experiences with "crazy" (or similar adjectives) guests and guests not liking the meals served. Animals could also be a problem – like dogs on the trail and bears in the forests. Structural factors like parking challenges and lack of marketing of St.Pauls trail was also mentioned.

### **Challenges and difficulties**

The lack of network/organisation for St. Pauls trail was mentioned as a challenge. Several informants also told about challenges related to work load, inconvenient working hours and sustainability. Challenges related to gender and age were mentioned by a couple of informants. Government laws and "the system" were also reported to be challenging

### **NETWORKING**

Seven informants stated that they were networking with other host structures. One stated "not needed", the rest would like to.

Possible outcomes of networking were mentioned.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the informants did mention sharing experiences as an important feature of networking.  $\frac{1}{3}$  mention marketing. Lobbying, accrediting, assistance in formal/economic matters was mentioned only by one informant.

## **HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION**

As the route in question originates from historical/cultural/religious factors, we asked informants of the knowledge of their actual routes. 2/3 of respondents told that they had such knowledge, but that they also would like to learn more. @one informant said that he had sufficient knowledge. Two of the informants stated that they had no such knowledge but would like to learn. One informant said that this was of no relevance.

The historical, cultural and religious heritage of the actual route is being expressed in some way or another at all the host structures.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the informants tell that heritage of their trail is visible through art and/or photos.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the informants mentions monuments and other cultural sites here. Five out of twelve informants mention oral or written storytelling as an expression of heritage. Books, secular architecture/buildings, interior and decorations, nature/environment and music is being mentioned by one informant each.

## **EDUCATION/COURSE**

10 out of 12 informants were willing to participate in a host competence course. One said no to this, one said maybe.

Regarding wished learning outcomes, seven informants mentioned marketing, five mentioned history and culture, two each mentioned nature and environment, gastronomy and laws and regulation. One each mentioned digital skills and economy.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **USE OF DATA**

The Turkish respondent rate was medium high for qualitative purposes and provides sufficient material for getting quite saturated and analytically significant data, and to a certain degree also statistically interesting data. As multiple answers were possible on several of the topics of the survey, we, however, emphasize analytical rather than statistical significance.

There were some language challenges in the Turkish data (the qualitative answers were shorter than for Italy and Bulgaria, and a couple of answers were hard to understand), but nevertheless we have a rather adequate picture of the situation.

### **RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BACKGROUNDS**

The group of respondents from Turkey as a whole consists of a mixed group regarding age, education and experience. All save one had education at least at baccalaureat/matura level, more than half of them had. Only one informant, the one we know is female, had compulsory education only.



No single age group dominated in the group of informants. The age group between 50 and 60 years lacked. As mentioned before, a couple informants mentioned age as a challenge, and that you had to be young to do this kind of work.

Their backgrounds and experiences of the informants are diverse, but dominated by some distinct areas, namely tourism and agriculture. This may be a resource, presupposing that these areas of praxis give good local knowledge. Regarding for the informant's motivation to work at the host structures, we see three distinct types; Relational, nature/environment-related and economic factors. Religion is not being mentioned as a factor. We can of course presuppose that economy is a motivation factor for all paid work, but our data points to that the relational factors and nature/environment-related factors are important besides economy.

### **SIZES OF HOST STRUCTURES AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES**

Hostels/bed and breakfast dominates the group of the Turkish structures that we did survey, only a couple were hotels. Small and medium businesses dominate, both regarding capacity and employees. Even so, half of the structures had more than 200 visitors in 2018, among them low capacity and high capacity structures. It seems that some places, the capacity is larger than the actual use. Therefore, there is an unfulfilled potential in several of the structures.

From the material, we cannot say so much about the users of the St. Pauls way. But as language skills are being mentioned as success factor, we can presuppose that a certain amount of the guests are of foreign origin. The tradition of pilgrim's credential and stamps, important in western contemporary pilgrimage, seems to be absent, and none of the structures seem to be selling souvenirs. Religion also seems to be absent, apart from the name of the route. No informants mention possibilities for worship/prayer/meditation, neither Muslim nor Christian.

Only 1/4 of the host structures have WIFI and only one had a guest PC. This would probably not be a challenge for European and other foreign guests, as phone and roaming costs are very high for Europeans in Turkey. WIFI is probably will come in useful for guests and being welcomed by them and allows the guests to share their experiences from the St Pauls trail on social media without too high costs, something that will create positive advertising/marketing value for the structures.

Possibilities for self-catering and laundry is probably something that will be valued by western foot pilgrims visiting Turkey. However, the accommodation costs are generally being experienced as rather low for western visitors in Turkey, so these will maybe be using hotels as well as hostels. As St.Pauls trail is among the most physically demanding pilgrimage/cultural routes of the survey,

we can expect many experienced walkers/pilgrims here, probably being used to simpler accommodation, but being foreigners in many cases having the funds for more advanced accommodation since this is cheap in Turkey for Europeans. The digital presence among the informants has room for improving. Only 1/4 of the structures had their own homepage, but 3/4 used social media. 1/4 of the host structures had no digital presence at all. The digital presence at coordinating structures like homepage of the cultural path or the region was very low, likewise were the representation on coordinating webpages low. There probably is a huge potential for more effective marketing and branding here, also via guests. Establishing hashtags for social media and encouraging guests to use those may be valuable.

Booking by phone is the most common way of booking among the host structures of the survey. That only 1/4 accepts booking by email and only 1/3 by digital platforms leaves room for improvement.

Less than half of the host structures accepted credit/debit cards on site. Those who accepted cash only were mostly small. An explanation can be both tax reasons and the cost of having a card machine. Those structures present on online booking sites offered online payment. Thirdperson online alternatives like PayPal (used by none) or simpler and cheaper solutions like iSettle might come in useful for economic reasons, especially for small businesses. Many visitors prefer card payment for security and insurance reasons.

Whether and how feedback collection was taking place at the host structures varied. 3/4 of the structures did collect feedback orally, but only two collected feedback digitally or on paper. *Suggestion:* When it comes to feedback, a standardized form, and guidance in how to systematically collect, use and interpret response might be of help.

#### EXPERIENCES, POSSIBILITIES AND HURDLES

The positive experiences of the hosts, and what they held as success factors, corresponded partly with what we interpret as inner motivations for working on the route or path, like nature and a wish for caring for guests. Personal and factors, like receiving positive feedback from visitors/guests seem important by several informants. Human or relational capital and nature/environment is a factor that stand out both when it comes to positive experiences and success factors.

The negative experiences reported from the work at the host structures are, as the positive ones, are also partly as expected. They can also be grouped into relational, nature related and structural factors. (Lack of) marketing and lack of a coordinating structure for the trail were mentioned here, and combined with the information on the capacity and actual use of the host structures this makes

sense. Better marketing seems to be crucial in order to fulfil the potential these host structures actually carry.

A certain awareness regarding gender and age of the hosts is also advised. The pilgrim/tourist dichotomy does not appear in the Turkish data, in fact religion is hardly being mentioned at all.

### LEARNING MORE?

Among the informants, even as they appear for us as well-educated, experienced and resourceful people, there seems to be a high willingness to participate in a host competence course. Only one informant said that such a course would be of no relevance.

Regarding wished learning outcomes marketing was the most popular, mentioned by more than half of the informants (seven people). Marketing was also one of those factors that were mentioned as a challenge. Five of the informants mentioned history and culture as a possible topic for a training course. Regarding the visibility of the cultural, historical and religious heritage at the host structures, there seem to be a potential for improvement here. Two informants mentioned nature and environment. As this topic also was mentioned by more informants both as an asset or resource and a source of motivation, this can be worth following up. Gastronomy and laws and regulations were also topics being wanted by a couple of informants (and likewise thematized as challenges or hurdles). One informant each mentioned digital skills and economy as learning topics. We would suggest that digital skills being taken into the curriculum, regarding the unfulfilled potential here mentioned above. There are probably differences from country to country (a comparing of the Turkish data with the transnational picture points in this direction), which will make slightly different approaches to a training course necessary. The analyses of the data from the other countries and a following comparing will throw more light upon this issue.

## PART 5 NORWAY

### INTRODUCTION

The Norwegian data was collected from informants connected to different part of the St.Olav's Ways to Trondheim (se [www.pilegrimsleden.no](http://www.pilegrimsleden.no)) . The ways are recognized as a European Cultural Route. The oldest part of the route, Gudbrandsdalsleden, was waymarked in 1997, and the number of pilgrims is increasing with about 20% every year. The responsibility for coordinating, marketing and serving the route is placed in 6 regional and 1 national publicly financed Pilgrim Centres. The centres cooperate with voluntary organizations

and other public institutions. The national, state-funded pilgrim's work in Norway rests upon five "columns": Church, culture, environment and business.

The number of pilgrims increases by around 20% each year. Last nearly 1400 pilgrims got the St. Olav's letter by arrival to Trondheim. A high number of pilgrims comes from abroad, with Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and Italy as the most important countries.

A total number of 25 informants did respond to the form, most of them from the oldest and most important way Gudbrandsdalsleden (the stretch from Oslo – Trondheim), but other stretches like St. Olavsleden (coming in east towards Trondheim from Sweden) and the newly established Valldalsleden were also represented in the data.

### ON THE INFORMANTS

Of the twenty-five informants, twenty-one acted as managers, one was an employee and the other answered "other" regarding their role in the actual host structure. Around half of the informants had more than 10 years of experience, 9 of them had between 5 and 10 years of experience, three less than five years, but only one was a newcomer with less than a year of experience in the field.

This mix was also reflected in the age of the informants. Around half of them were over 60 years old. Around 1/3 was between 50 and 60, four were between 40 and 50 years old and only one was less than thirty years old.

The occupational backgrounds of the informants are rather diverse. Public employed occupations like teacher, nurse, police, municipality administration and army are represented, likewise cultural and business work like journalism, marketing and management. A few had experience from hosting structures like hotels and restaurants, and former and current farmers were also represented. Only a couple had their sole experience from tourism/pilgrimage work.

Regarding education, two of the informants held compulsory education only, and five of them had education on level 4 (baccalaureat/matura/vgs/vocational school). Eleven held education on bachelor level and seven held education on master level.

What do the informants say about their choice to work in the actual field, and their motivation for it? Communication, relations and hospitality plays an important role, likewise self-realisation:

- «As I have hotel management background and having a part of the pilgrim track on my property i liked the idea to use one of the old buildings on my farm as a pilgrim hostel»
- “I have an interest in international work and relational communication with different people”

History and culture are also of importance to many of the informants.

- “...taking care of ancient houses on an old farm close to Ringebu stave church”
- «...build on historical and cultural traditions»

Religion (Christianity) was also important as a motivation:

- «I am a Christian and happy to use parts of the farm to host pilgrims.»
- “...having a Christian faith where the Golden Rule says “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you» it was natural for me to open the doors for pilgrims here at my farm»

Only a couple of the informants mentions economy/business *only* as a motivation.

## ON THE HOSTING STRUCTURES

Regarding the questions on hosting structures, multiple answers were possible. Two of the respondents represented churches, one pilgrim centre was represented, two hotels and the rest were b & b or hostels. Three of the respondents also named their structure a retreat centre.

Around  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the structures had less than five employees. Three had up to 10 employees, the remaining had up to 20 (those were hotels).

The size of the hosting structured surveyed varied. Seven of the structures could only take max 5 visitors at one time. Seven could take max 10, 6 could take max 20 and 7 could take more than 20 (the hotels were in the last group).

Slightly more than half of the structures had more than 200 guests pro anno in 2018. Several of these were actually structures with a low capacity, but a high turnover. Two structures had up to 25 visitors in 2018, the same number applied to up to 50 and up to 200 visitors. Three structures had up to 100 visitors.

Around  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the respondents replied no or do not know to the question on accreditation. 40% of the respondents were accredited were accredited by Pilegrimsleden, the national pilgrim’s ways organization. Other accreditations

named by single respondents were Gudbrandsdalsvert, Certo, booking.com and Miljøfyrtårn.

Around ½ of the structures mentioned pilgrims as their main target group, four mentioned tourist/visitors and nine mentioned both,

The facilities offered by the host structures varied. All structures offered accommodation, fresh drinking water and a toilet. Only one structure did not offer a shower or bath 16 structures had a laundry machine available for the guest. Around 80% of the structures offered self-catering/cooking facilities (half of the overall structures also sold food for self-catering), wifi or a stamp for pilgrim's credentials/passports. 40% of the structures had a dedicated place for worship/prayer/meditation but only 20% had organized activities in this field. Four structures had a guest pc or offered souvenirs/pilgrim's badges. 505 of the structures offered info folders/brochures.

### **INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCE**

80% of the host structures had their own homepage, the same number applied to structures using social media. Around 1/3 were present on online booking sites, around ½ were present on local or regional tourist info pages. 18 mentioned to be represented on the homepage of the actual pilgrimage path/cultural route (but the number is probably a bit higher as the list there were used for getting in touch with possible informants).

All structure but one accepted cash payment. Slightly more than 60% accepted card payment on site, 40% accepted card payment online. Close to ¾ of the structures accepted third-person online payment alternatives, probably the Norwegian mobile phone app Vipps. This is widely used in Norway.

Around 60% of the informants said that their structures collected feedback orally, and close to 40% said that they did the same digitally. Around half of the structures collected feedback by paper, only two said that they did not collect feedback at all. (these were among the smallest structures surveyed).

### **HOST EXPERIENCE**

Nearly 60% of the informants reported feeling that they mostly met the expectation of the guests. 40% of the informants, mostly those representing the smaller structures, said that they felt that they always did meet the expectation of the guests. A couple of the informants did not answer the question.

#### **Positive experiences**

We asked the informants to mention up to three positive experiences from their work. Here, and in the three following issues, the answers were particularly rich. Many informants told about meeting interesting and nice people, being able to

solve people's challenges and problems, and exchanging pilgrim's experiences. Having competent colleagues and receiving the gratitude of the guests was also mentioned as being positive and inspiring factors. Some of the respondents told small stories from their work:

- "A young pilgrim, also a composer, got to use our piano for practicing. Meeting him was very pleasant. When he arrived back to his home country, he sent us a CD of his, together with a very nice letter"
- "We do group events in our garden. If we have pilgrims here at the same time, we always invite them to take part. This is positive for all participants"
- "Happy guests get a unique experience here. I teach them things that I love – yoga and sauna".
- "I have experienced that I have meant a difference in other people's life, have learnt that different people with different backgrounds can experience good things together and learn from each other.

### Success factors

Many different success factors were mentioned by the informants. Cultural heritage like Medieval churches, authentic and ancient farm buildings, proximity to the only steam boat of Norway were mentioned by several as important success factors.

Besides expected factors like good food, hospitality, friendliness and cleanliness, many of the informants stressed the personal meetings and treating the guest like friends as important success factors of their host structures. The awareness of the particular needs of the pilgrims, and the willingness and flexibility regarding helping the guests out with practical challenges, were also being mentioned by more than one informant. One structure also mentioned that offering a blessing/prayer for leaving pilgrims was something that is well received by their guests. Some stories:

- "We live at the same estate as our hostel, and the pilgrims come close to our daily life. Our hostel is a special timbered building from 2007 with a good standard."
- "We have authentic buildings, we are good at facilitating regarding the needs of the pilgrims, we have a little library for the visitors (with books on environment, history, culture and religion), our values are related to culture, nature and environment and we are willing to give extra services like helping people to see a doctor, order plane tickets and let them watch football matches in our living room. We also are available by phone when not present at the sites, and a key box makes it possible for our guests to attend the place if we are not at home"



### Negative experiences

Not all informants mentioned having negative experiences from their work. But those who did mentioned things such as long working days, low income, being stuck to the work during summer in lack of other employees, unpredictability regarding bookings and guests and guests blaming the host structures for problems they are not responsible for, like lack of cell phone coverage and weather. Group bookings that blocks for other guests because of low capacity at the actual leg of the way can also be a challenge. Some also tells about guests expecting free stays because they are pilgrims, and that some guests have to high expectations towards the simpler hostels. One informant wanted better help and support from the national pilgrim organization Pilegrimsleden. A couple of stories:

- “The most negative experience was the thieves last summer who stole money, and worse: They nearly stole my TRUST on which I build my business”.
- “Low-budget pilgrims that use a tent near our hostel, but still wants to use all out facilities without paying as our other guests”

### Challenges and difficulties

Both time and capacity problems were mentioned here. Small structures are not too interested in having to many visitors, and one mentions that they have to much job for one person, but too little for two. Those who run a structure as a side project to their day job mention that time for cleaning up between guests can be hard to find. Getting skilled help/employees is also challenging. Church structure mentions lack of volunteers as a problem.

The short season (in Norway, you can only walk from mid-May to September) is challenging. The infrastructure at the sites is also a challenge for some, especially regarding sanitary facilities.

### NETWORKING

Around half of the Norwegian informants stated to have contact with coordinating structures. A little less told that they had contact with other hosting structures. The two respondents remaining stated that they either would like to or did not need to.

Nearly 80% of the informants saw sharing experiences as the main function of networking. Around 70 % mentioned marketing. Nearly 25% wanted assistance in formal and economic matters. Lobbying was only mentioned by one and accrediting by two informants.

### HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION

As the route in question originates from historical/cultural/religious factors, we asked informants of the knowledge of their actual route. ¼ of the informants said

that they had sufficient knowledge, the rest said that they had knowledge, but would like to learn more.

The historical, cultural and religious heritage of the actual route is being expressed in some way or another at all the host structures. 80% mentioned storytelling here, 65% of the informants mentioned nature and environment here and nearly half of the structures expressed heritage through art and photos. 40% of the structures mentioned interior and decorations and nearly the same number of respondents mentioned secular architecture/buildings, monuments and cultural sites, gastronomy/food drink and organized events. Only three informants mentioned worship/liturgy and two mentioned music.

#### **EDUCATION/COURSE**

Slightly more than half of the informants saw themselves as a possible participant in a host competence course. Nearly 30% of the informants answered maybe here, the rest declined.

Regarding wished-for learning outcomes, marketing and history/culture got the highest score (around 80% wanted to learn about these topics). Nature and environment were wanted as a topic by nearly 60% of the informants, religion and laws/regulation was mentioned by nearly 1/3 of the informants, the same applied to economy. Language and security got a low score with only a couple of informants wanting these topics.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **USE OF DATA**

The Norwegian respondent rate was rather high for a qualitative survey and offers sufficient material in order to get saturated and significant data on the topics explored. As multiple answers were possible on several of the topics of the survey, we, however, emphasize analytical rather than statistical significance.

The Norwegian group of respondents provided the most elaborated qualitative data compared with other countries, especially in the free writing-answers. This may have to do with good language skills in Norway, where English has been learnt from early age in schools for decades.

#### **RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BACKGROUND**

The group of respondents from Norway represents a mixed group regarding age, education and experience. However, around  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the informants is more than 50 years, half of the informants are over 60. This might be explained with the fact that many has this kind of business as a second and/or side career, but it also gives the field a certain vulnerability as a well experienced, well-educated (nearly 75% of the informants have education at university level) and skilled group in the actual field is approaching retirement age during the next decade.

Regarding background and experiences, there is a diversity among the respondents. Several have cultural and educational or health background. Management and business provide another distinct group. Tourist/service business and agriculture/farming are the last groups represented. All these areas seem relevant for one or more aspects of the pilgrim work.

Regarding the motivation of the informants, the information can be grouped into three distinct types: Relational, religious (inner motivation) and outer motivation like cultural/historical/heritage-related, and business related.

#### **SIZES OF HOST STRUCTURES AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES**

Small to medium-scaled businesses of simpler standard (hostels and b&b) dominates in the Norwegian data, even if larger hotels are also represented. But it appears that several of the structures have low dimension, but high turnover. The size and dimension of the structures might be a challenge both for runners and guests. As some businesses are smaller side projects for the owner, they provide wished-for income, but also demands a lot if you have a day job too. Some businesses are thus not so interested in growing, but rather want to run a low-scale structure. The season is short, shoulder seasons are challenging and near the goal Trondheim there is a cluster of guests around St. Olavs eve (29<sup>th</sup> of July) that is very challenging regarding capacity.

We know from statistics that a high amount of the pilgrims is foreign. Language skills, however, are hardly mentioned as a success factor in the material, that may have to do with the fact that English knowledge is high in Norway in general. The tradition of pilgrimage credential/passport and stamps as seen in Spanish Santiago traditions is present and vivid in Norway, with 80% of the structures having their own stamp. This is something encouraged by *Pilegrimsleden*. Having a credential (the Pilgrim Centres sell them) also give discounts at the host structures. The host structures get free marketing in the lists at the homepages of *Pilegrimsleden*/the Pilgrim Centres, thus many of them are listed there.

Religion is a topic quite visible in the Norwegian material. It is both mentioned by some of the informants as a motivation for their work, and 40% of the host structures reports to have a dedicated place for worship/prayer/meditation. 20% of the structures provides organized worship/prayer and meditation. The pilgrim/tourist dichotomy do, however, not appear in the Norwegian data.

The digital skills among the informants and within the structures seems high, and both own homepages and the use of social media is widely present. When it comes to payment, only a bit more than 60% of the structures offers payment by

credit card, this may seem surprising in the very digitalized society like Norway. But having a card machine is expensive and may not be sustainable for small structures. But again, the same amount of structures offers payment by third-person online alternatives. This is cheaper, easy to manage in a way that also can be used for statistical purposes, and widely used in Norway.

Nearly all structures in the Norwegian part of the survey offers both accommodation, toilet, fresh drinking water and shower. The possibilities of self-catering are also very common, even some informants mention this as a challenge regarding. The standard seems overall sufficient, even if some informants tell about grumpy guest or guests with too high expectations. Some pilgrims also expect low or no-cost accommodation, or uses more facilities than they actually pay for. From the homepages of Pilegrimsleden we know that the standard of the host structures varies from leg to leg of the Pilegrimsleden, so that a walker can experience very different types of accommodation during her pilgrimage. It is not yet as in Spain, where walkers can expect priceworthy hostels at each leg. The turnover is not yet so high that running parallel host structures at one and the same leg is not yet sustainable.

Feedback collection appears to be common among Norwegian host structures. Collecting feedback digitally seems to happen more frequently than in other countries. This may also have to do with the fact that nearly 1/3 of the structures are present on online booking platforms.

#### **EXPERIENCES, POSSIBILITIES AND HURDLES**

Positive experiences success factors mentioned by the hosts, and what they held as success factors, corresponds to a great extent with what earlier in this report is mentioned as inner motivations and outer motivations, save economy. Relational and/or religious experiences – human, cultural and spiritual capital is both important as a motivation and likewise manifest themselves as positive experiences and resources in the work of the informants. Economy was, even if mentioned as a motivation by some, not mentioned among positive experiences, but was mentioned as a hurdle and among the negative experiences and/or challenges.

#### **LEARNING MORE?**

Even if the informants appear as an experienced and well-educated group of people, there is still a rather high interest in participating in a training course. It is interesting that it seems to be a high awareness towards cultural heritage and marketing. The high score of digital skills is also interesting regarding the apparently already high competence in this field. Both digital skills, cultural heritage, nature and religion has a rather high presence overall in the Norwegian data and are still topics being wanted in a course. As expected and mentioned

earlier in the report language skills, especially English, are good in Norway, and language has a low score as a wanted learning outcome.

## PANHERA FIELD REPORT PART 6 ROMANIA

### INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the introduction of the report, the Romanian Orthodox Church plays an important or even dominant role in Romanian practices of pilgrimage. The pilgrimage goals are, naturally, run and served by the church, and much of the transport to these goals are organized as minibus/coach trips, also by the church. Here, the church experiences competition from private businesses, though.

The two main traditional pilgrimage goals in Romania is St. Parascheva of Iasi and the pilgrimage to Saint Dumitru cel Nou in Basarabov, Bucharest. The pilgrimages of these sites, along with several smaller, regional ones, have a long and still continuing tradition. Feast days are important for both Romanian Orthodox practices of faith and for upholding more folkloristic traditions. More than 70000 people attended the feast of St. Parescheva in 2019

(<https://www.romania-insider.com/st-parascheva-pilgrimage-2019>). The largest single pilgrimage festival in Romania takes place during Pentecost in Sumuli Ciuc (<https://www.romania-insider.com/religious-romania-churches-and-monasteries-that-attract-the-largest-crowds-of-pilgrims-every-year>).

Romanian pilgrimage practices is, like Bulgaria and unlike Santiago, a part of a continuous tradition and not yet so much subject to caminofication. But cultural and/or pilgrimage routes are now being established, like Via Transilvanica (<https://www.romania-insider.com/via-transilvanica-segment-mehedinti-september-2019>) and may well attract typical western foot pilgrims.

A total amount of 20 informants from Romania responded on the survey. It turned out that not all of them were relevant for the project, as the respondents were not serving pilgrimage routes and goals in Romania, but church organized pilgrim trips to goals in other countries, e.g. Athos, Greece or Jerusalem, Israel, activities that indeed play an important role in the Romanian pilgrimage field. But, these activities are not directly relevant into this project, which concentrates upon pilgrim accommodation along the cultural and pilgrimage routes of rural Europe. Therefore, those 6 replies are not taken in as a part of the survey. However, the presence of these informants among the more relevant ones tells us something important about how the term pilgrimage is understood in a Romanian context and how pilgrimage field is organized in this country. Several of these does e.g. mention the competition between churches and commercial structures.

It also turned out that one of the replies was sent twice, so in the end, only 14 of the replies from Romania are counted and discussed in this section. Not all of the informants specified on which pilgrimage or cultural route they worked, but the following sites and routes were represented in the material:

- Craiova – Iasi
- Craiova – Orsova
- Craiova – Maglavit
- Craiova – Coravia
- Craiova – Calafat

### **ON THE INFORMANTS**

Three of the informants worked as managers, three as employees. Six informants stated to be volunteers. The remaining two ticked for “other”. All informants were between 30 and 60 years with a cluster of 10 among 40 – 50 years. All held higher education, eight of them with at least master’s degree and the remaining and the remaining on bachelor level. Regarding experience, four of the informants had worked or been engaged in the field for more than 10 years, and two between 5 and 10 years. Five informants had been working with pilgrims for less than 5 years and two were rather new in the field, with less than 1 year of experience.

Two of the informants stated to have occupational background in education, one in social work and one in tourism, the rest of the informants stated their background to be religiously related, with answers like “theology”, “church” and “orthodox”.

Gender was alas not being surveyed, but should have been. However, with the seemingly high background rate from church and theology, we can assume male dominance in this group.

Why had the Romanian informants chosen to engage themselves in the actual field? Here, free text answers were possible. None of the informants mentioned economy as a reason. Self-realization was mentioned by six informants, two of them added “religious factors” to this answer. Two informants mentioned “religious factors” only. Love of God was mentioned by two, adding love for the people or for children (the latter had a background in teaching). One informant mentioned “organization” as a motivation, and one told that his engagement in the field was a part of his education in practical theology.

### **ON THE HOSTING STRUCTURES**

Different kinds of ownership were represented among the surveyed host structures. However, religiously owned host structures dominated the group. A

couple were reported to be NGO-owned, only one to be commercially owned. Likewise, only one structure reported to be a hotel.

Regarding number of employees, small structures dominated. Nine of the fourteen informants reported to be working in structures with less than five employees. Two structures had up to 10 employees and the three remaining had more than 20 employees.

Three of the structures were reported to have less than 25 guests pro anno in 2018. One structure had up to 50 guests, one structure had up to 100 guests, two structures had up to 200 guests and the resto of the structures had more than 200 guests.

Regarding main target group, four of the structures reported it to be pilgrims, one structure to be tourist/visitors, and one did not answer. The rest, eight structures, reported a combined target group of tourists and pilgrims.

Around 2/3 of the informants reported their structures to be accredited. Among accrediting authorities were mentioned church/different archbishops, state/Department of Culture and local authorities.

Four of the informants reported that their structure did not provide accommodation. Eight of the structures was reported to have a maximum accommodation of five person at one time. The remaining structures were larger, either max 10 or max 20.

Most structures offer several services, but only half of them were reported to offer accommodation, but only three offered shower/bath and only one a laundry machine. Nine structures were reported to offer wifi, the same number applied for a toilet. Eight structures were reported to have a café/restaurant/taverna. Six structures offered fresh drinking water. Five structures reported to be offering self-catering/cooking facilities and possibility to buy food for such, the same number of facilities offered souvenirs/badges or a guest PC.

Only one structure was reported to offer a stamp for pilgrim's credential.

Seven structures were reported to offer organized worship/prayer/meditation, but only five of these were reported to have a dedicated place for such activities. We suspect, however, that there is a certain under-reporting at this point, as several of the structures in the surveys are churches and monasteries. Only one structure was reported to offer an info folder/brochure.



## **INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCE**

Six structures had their own homepage, nine structures reported to be using social media. Five structures were present on online booking sites. Only three structures were represented at local or regional info webpages, and only two of the homepages of the actual route or path. Most structures were represented on several of these platforms. Two of the structures had no digital presence at all.

Regarding booking, four of the structures still offered booking by letter. Eleven offered booking by phone, eight offered booking via digital platforms and twelve by email.

All structures save one accepted cash as payment. Six structures accepted credit/debit card on site, the same number applied for structures accepting online payment. Four structures accepted payment by thirdperson alternatives.

Almost all structures did collect feedback from visitors, mostly orally, but also by paper (seven structures) and digitally (four structures).

Three structures reported not to collect feedback from visitors (these were cafés). Four collected feedback on paper, twelve collected feedback orally, five collected feedback digitally. There must be some misreporting here as twelve plus three is fifteen and we only had fourteen informants.

## **HOST EXPERIENCE**

This section opened for more qualitative answers than the previous sections.

Half of the informants reported that they mostly felt that they met the expectations of their guests. Three informants replied “sometimes” and three replied “always”. One informant ticked for “hardly” here.

We asked the informants to mention up to three positive and three negative experiences. Here, as the case was for the other eastern countries in particular, but also the western to a certain degree, the answers varied in topic and the informants did in fact answer kind of different questions, although we were after their own experiences: Some regarding feedback from guests, other wrote about their own feelings/experiences meeting guest, and other again wrote about aspects regarding the context of their host structure.

### **Positive experiences**

Some of the experiences reported was clearly connected to the religious context of the informant, other were more general. Several of the experiences reported can be labelled as relational. The informants tell in general that people are happy to come, about communication and friendliness about pilgrimage in general and about

gastronomy, and that guests are overall satisfied. Of more specific info can be mentioned:

- Accessibility, communicability and the environment
- Communication, socialization and knowledge
- Excursions, praying program and meetings
- Dialogue, strengthening of the faith, exchange of experience
- We are going with our guests to visit our monasteries, to serve our food and to relaxing with our beautiful sides of our country
- Because of the group of pilgrims, we specialized a part of our staff in this kind of services and we received a lot of customers in the last period, last 2 years because we offer specialized program.
- As part of my internship as student in pastoral theology I was very pleased to see many people happy.

### Success factors

Several success factors were already mentioned among the answers in the section “positive experiences”, in addition these were mentioned. Sincerity and seriousness were factors being emphasized by more than one. As we see, organized religion also plays an important role at this point:

- Religious attitude
- The faith and the desire to know new places of worship
- Organization
- A very good network belonging to the Orthodox church
- I think that the belief of Romanians is a strong factor
- We provide a specialized service this is the key factor in my opinion
- New people, new places, new ideas

### Negative experiences

We asked the informants to mention up to three negative experiences from their work at the hosting structures. Ca. 2/3 of the informants reported to have no negative experiences or that they “don’t know. Negative experiences mentioned were mostly related to physical and legal infrastructure and (the lack of adequate) human capital:

- Bureaucracy; cumbersome legislation; distrust
- Lack of the employees, low level of education
- The lack of seriousness of the employees
- Limited space, lack of accommodation and lack of heating
- Insufficient transport network, poor information and modest accommodation conditions

### Challenges and difficulties

At this point, information on the quality of the infrastructure dominated. One informant mentioned “modernization”, but whether this informant meant the lack of modernization of the actual host structure or modernization processes in society cannot be clearly read from the actual quote. Several informants mentioned physical infrastructure, e.g. the bad quality of roads as a challenge. Some of the challenges and difficulties reported are human capital issues like time pressure, lack of experience and not involving people were mentioned by a couple of informants. The (low) level of quality of information and description of services were also factors being mentioned.

### NETWORKING

2/3 of the structures were reported to have contact with other hosting structures. Four were reported to have contact with a coordinating structure (these groups do overlap). Two structures reported to have no contact with other structures, one of them would like to have, one of them said “not needed”.

The expectations of an actual or possible network were diverse. All informants save two mentioned sharing experiences here. Around 1/3 of the informants mentioned lobbying, around the same amount mentioned marketing or assistance in formal and economic matters. Accrediting was being mentioned by three informants.

### HISTORY, CULTURE AND RELIGION

As the routes in question originate from historical/cultural/religious factors, we asked informants of the knowledge of their actual routes. Six informants said that they possessed sufficient knowledge of their route, seven had but would like to learn more. The remaining informant reported to have no knowledge, but would like to learn.

The historical, cultural and religious heritage of the actual route is being expressed in some way or another within and around all the host structures. Worship/liturgy plus nature/environment were both being mentioned by more than 2/3 of the informants. Art/photos, monument/cultural sites and secular architecture/buildings were all being mentioned by eight informants. Books and storytelling were both being mentioned by seven informants. Music and sacred architecture/buildings were factors both being mentioned by six informants. Around 1/3 of the informants mentioned gastronomy/food/drink, four informants mentioned interior and decorations and only three mentioned organized events.

### EDUCATION/COURSE

All informants saw themselves as possible participants in a training course. Regarding desired learning outcomes, religion topped the wish list with 12

informants wanting to learn more about this topic. History/culture and gastronomy/food/drink were topics being mentioned by nine informants each. Language was being mentioned by eight, marketing, digital skills and laws/regulations were topics being mentioned by seven informant each. Then followed nature (six informants), service (five informants), economy (four informants). Security was only being mentioned by one.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **USE OF DATA**

The Romanian respondent rate was sufficient for qualitative purposes and provides saturated and analytically significant data, and to a certain degree also statistically interesting data. As multiple answers were possible on several of the topics on the survey, we, however, emphasize analytical rather than statistical significance.

### **RESPONDENTS AND THEIR BACKGROUNDS**

The group of respondents from Romania as a whole consists of well-educated (all had higher education), rather experienced and mostly middle-aged people. Their backgrounds and experiences are diverse, but dominated by church and theology. However, personal backgrounds of tourism, education and social work were also represented in the group of Romanian informants.

Regarding reasons and motivations for doing this kind of work, inner motivations for working in the field dominates the answers provided by the informants. Self-realization and religious factors seem to be those of most importance. Love for people/children is also being mentioned as a motivating factor for working in this field. Only one informant mentioned a practical reason for working in the field, namely that he did this as a part of his training in practical theology (but even here, a religiously related component is present as the informant is a theology student). As the only group in this survey, none of the Romanian informants did mention economy as a motivating factor at all. We can of course presuppose that economy is a motivation factor for all paid work, but our data suggests that the more inner, contextual, idealistic kind of motivation dominates.

### **SIZES OF HOST STRUCTURES AND ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES**

The sizes of the host structures surveyed are dominated by small structures with less than five employees. However, larger structures with up to more than 20 employees are also represented in the group being surveyed. The number of visitors in each structure varies from less than 25 to more than 200 with no particular group dominating. Thus, there are small structures with many visitors and also the opposite represented in the group.

Regarding ownership, the structures surveyed are dominated by church/religiously owned structures. This is not so surprising regarding initial information on the Romanian Orthodox church as the most important actor in the pilgrimage field of Romania. This is also being reflected by the info given on target groups, nearly all structures have pilgrims as their main target group (eight of these combined with tourists/visitors).

From our data, we suppose that most of the visitors or users are Eastern, mostly Romanian Orthodox Christians and not so many tourists or western pilgrims. Conflicts between traditional and caminofied pilgrimage or pilgrims and tourists (even if more than half of the structures reports that tourists are a part of their target group) are not visible in our material. The fact that the tradition of pilgrimage credential and stamps being nearly absent in the Romanian material is also an indication of the lack of established caminofication in Romania.

Several host structures report having a dedicated place for and/or organized worship/liturgy/meditation. Likewise, other visibility of religious heritage is clearly present and maybe under-reported in our material as it is such a self-evident part of Romanian pilgrimage traditions.

Regarding other facilities, nearly 2/3 of the structures offered wifi and 1/3 offered a guest PC. Less than half of the structures accepted digital payment, either by card or by thirdperson online alternatives. All structures save two had some kind of digital presence relevant to marketing. Nearly 2/3 of the structures were reported to be using social media, but less than half of the structures had their own homepage.

All this means that there are still potential for growth in the digital area, both regarding marketing and economy in general. We saw that around 1/3 of the informants mentioned related topics regarding possible functions of a network/coordinating structures. Such topics could also be topics on an accreditation list for an existing or coming accreditation authority, even if 2/3 of the informants reported their structures already to be accredited either church/different archbishops (most prominent in our material), state/Department of Culture and local authorities.

Whether and how feedback collection was taking place at the host structures varied. Most did collect feedback orally, but several also collected feedback digitally or on paper. *Suggestion:* When it comes to feedback, a standardized form, and guidance in how to systematically collect, use and interpret response might be of help.

Regarding facilities on the sites, our data left the impression that there are still potential for development regarding things like shower/bath, toilet or drinking

water. But as many of the structures surveyed did not offer accommodation, it might be that the challenges in this area are smaller than it seems by first glance. However, the data we got on hurdles and negative experiences may point in another direction.

When it comes to religion, Romania has a higher percentage of structures reporting dedicated places for and/or organized worship/prayer/meditation, and we also suspect that a certain under-reporting is present in this field. The visibility and dominance of organized religion is an overall feature of the Romanian data compared to other countries, maybe with Bulgaria as an exception.

As a foot pilgrimage road now is being established in Romania, a path that possibly also would attract the Camino type of pilgrims, it is suggested to develop something similar for use in Romania. Such a credential could also be used by minibus pilgrim visiting different holy sites and would provide a spiritual souvenir also for this group.

#### **EXPERIENCES, POSSIBILITIES AND HURDLES**

The positive experiences of the hosts, and what they held as success factors, corresponded partly with what we interpret as inner motivations for working on the route or path. In the Romanian data, human or relational capital and spiritual capital are factors that stand out both when it comes to positive experiences and experienced success factors. Systematic and organized work with programs for visitors is being mentioned as something providing good experience and being a resource. Religious and spiritual factors are overall more visible in the Romanian data than in other countries, and may from our data mostly be interpreted as bonding social and spiritual capital. However, a couple of informants also used buzzwords with bridging features like “dialogue”, “new people, new places, new idea” and “exchange of experience”. This is analytically interesting. Such buzzwords are more visible in the data from other countries with more international pilgrims/visitors.

Negative experiences and hurdles reported in the Romanian data mostly relate to physical and legal infrastructural challenges like bad roads and legislation. Lack of qualified employees was also briefly mentioned. Depopulation was not mentioned in the Romanian material, opposite several other countries, but from our general knowledge of Romania, we can suppose that this might be a challenge in this context too.

#### **LEARNING MORE?**

Among the informants, even as they appear for us as well-educated, experienced and resourceful people, there seems to be a high willingness to participate in a host competence course. All Romanian informants saw themselves as possible

participants in a training course. People seem to want to learn more about what they already know a lot about and are already interested in. This is also something we see in the data from the other countries.

Not unexpected in the light of Romanian data already presented, religion is the most popular topic for a possible learning course – all informants save two wanted more knowledge on this topic, followed in popularity by history/culture and gastronomy/food/drink. Nature was mentioned by less than half of the informants, even if far more than this reports on nature as a visible part of the heritage being present in their structure. We also suggest economy, laws and regulations and marketing to be a part of such a course, regarding the potential in digitalization probably wanted by foreign visitors. Language were also mentioned as a wanted topic by nearly half of the informants, but there probably are several offers of courses already in this field. However, a short language session with relevant terminology could be a part of a training course.

The overall international survey shows differences from country to country, which will make slight different approaches to a training course necessary. The analyses and comparing of the data from the other countries will throw more light upon this issue.

## **PART 7 COMPARING AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As the history, contexts and current practices of the use of pilgrimage and cultural routes in the different countries are rather different (see introduction and context/theory chapter) this has some consequences for the data and the interpretation of data from the different countries. Caminoisation and heritagisation are fruitful key theoretical concepts for understanding some of these differences.

### **GENERAL IMPRESSIONS**

#### **Small structures dominate**

The project studies and promotes host competence in rural areas. Most structures explored (nearly 70%) studied are small-scale, with up to 5 employees, often less. The sizes of the structures regarding capacity vary and are rather evenly distributed. But even so, in all countries the group of structures with the highest turnover include not only large structures but also small-scale structures. We see e.g. several examples from different countries of host structures being established as a part of or as a repurposing of a farm or farm buildings.



### Well-educated hosts

One of the surprises in the data was the average high education level of the people working at host structures. Over 60% of the informants had education on university level, and nearly 30% had baccalaureat/matura/vgs/vocational school. Only 8% had compulsory education only. This pattern varies a bit between the countries, but the overall impression is that the field is being served by people that are both well-educated and experienced (many of the informants seem to have host structure work as a second and/or side carrier, hence the high educational level).

### Highly motivated idealists

The informants leave the impression of a highly motivated group of people. In the questionnaire, we asked for free-text answers on this topic, and did not use tick boxes with predefined answer alternatives. Therefore, it was interesting to see what emerged from the data. The fact that so few of the respondents mention economy at all or economy only as their motivation for working in this field is analytically interesting. Both here and from the response on other questions, we see that several of the small-scale structures appear to be side-businesses e.g. at a farm, or the owner also have a day-job.

It appears from the data on motivation that there is a high degree of idealism represented. In all countries, we see a rather high degree of *inner* motivation for working in this field, especially of the relational kind. Many informants have an interest people and cross-cultural communication, in history and cultural heritage, and also nature and environment, and this manifest itself across the questionnaire both regarding motivation, positive experiences and what they want from a training course. National and religious sentiments are also represented regarding inner motivation and experiences, the latter only explicitly mentioned in the Norwegian, Romanian and Bulgarian data material, while spirituality and religion was briefly present in the Italian material. Religion was most present in the Romanian data and not mentioned at all in the Turkish data. This is interesting regarding the countries mentioned are on different stages in their caminoisation processes. Caminoisation are a key theoretical concept to understand the differences between the countries involved in this study.

### Positive and negative experiences from the field

The pattern we identified regarding motivation also manifests itself when the hosts tell about positive experiences from the field. The relational factors and positive attitudes towards and experiences with cultural exchanges also dominate the stories here. From the Eastern European countries, we see explicit religious factors emerging in the answers from the respondents. The same pattern emerge when the informants tell about success factors.

Regarding negative experiences and challenges/hurdles, they are reported to be of both relational and structural kind. From the Eastern European countries, informants report about relational conflicts regarding the traditional and heritagisation use of the structures. The pilgrim and cultural routes of Europe are themselves examples of heritagisation on a macro-level and several of the host structures have elements of the same. Material cultural heritage is reported to be actively used at the host structures in various ways, both in its original use and in repurposed forms. We see that conflicts between traditional and heritagisation use may appear regarding this, especially in the eastern European countries that are in their starting phase of the caminoisation process. Structural challenges like lack of employees, bad infrastructure, depopulation of rural districts and lack of qualified staff is mentioned by several informants.

#### **Variations regarding digital competence and presence**

The digital competence of the hosts and the digital presence of the structures varies both within countries and between countries. There are structures on both end of the scale (e.g. booking by phone only, taking cash only vs. several booking and payment options). In all countries, there are a potential for improvement regarding digital presence and competence. A very small number of host structures seem to be actively choosing away digital payment opportunities due to infrastructure costs or due to tax issues.

#### **Accreditation and networking**

Regarding accreditation and networking, there seems to be an overall potential for improvement all over Europe. In this context, the Norwegian model with the combination of credential issued by the national organisation Pilegrimsleden, discount and stamps at the host structures, free presence for the host structures at the homepage of Pilegrimsleden is an interesting model. At the same time, it seems like multiple accreditation may reach other target groups than those who initially seek for a cultural route/pilgrim walk experience. From networking, the most popular expectations are sharing experiences and marketing.

#### **Learning more: History, culture, religion**

Generally, the overall impression is that the informants are both interested in and want to learn more about what already dominates their context. Historical, cultural and religious material and immaterial heritage are being actively used in some way or another at most structures, though in different ways and to different extents. History and culture are likewise the highest desired learning outcome for a possible course (54,9 %), followed by marketing, service, language (at this particular point, there are significant differences between countries), digital skills, nature and environment and religion.

#### **LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR HOSTS?**

We recommend that learning activities for hosts should be designed acknowledging and using the experience of the hosts in the different countries.

Their high interest in historical, cultural and religious material and immaterial culture should be nurtured and further developed, together with more technical and structural skills. We also recommend that current knowledge of caminoisation and heritagisation processes and the practical impact of such processes, and the ability to place and reflect upon own practices and pilgrimage traditions in relation to them, should be a part of the course. Trends and tendencies in the knowledge of who the users of the pilgrimage and cultural route are and how this field changes is of importance for hosts along the routes. A learning community of pilgrimage and cultural route hosts together with stakeholders from the practical and academic fields will in itself provide a meeting place between agents working in different context and stages on the road from traditional pilgrimage to caminoisation and in different combinations of traditional vs. heritagised use of material and immaterial cultural heritage including religion and spirituality.

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## APPENDIX: PANHERA QUESTIONNAIRE

# PANHERA QUESTIONNAIRE copy

## 1 ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear respondent.

You have got this questionnaire because you work or are otherwise engaged in hosting structures around pilgrimage and/or cultural routes in your area. Our Erasmus+-project, PANHERA, aims at studying and enhancing the host competence along these routes. This questionnaire has three purposes: It is aimed at 1) Mapping all the hosting structures (managed by religious and other kinds of organizations) along pilgrimage or/and cultural routes in your area, 2) Analysing the current state of affairs in each area and 3) Identifying good and bad practices already implemented. The questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to complete. PANHERA-partners in Romania, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, Turkey and Norway thank you for your willingness to participate.

This questionnaire has been assessed by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS (NSD) according to the requirements of data protection legislation. Y

our response will be handled according to the guidelines of NCRD and the Norwegian guidelines for research ethics <https://www.etikkom.no/en/ethical-guidelines-for-research/guidelines-for-research-ethics-in-the-social-sciences--humanities-law-and-theology/>).

## 2 ABOUT ME

### 2A Age

How old are you?

- ☐ 18 - 30 years
- ☐ 30 - 40 years
- ☐ 40 - 50 years
- ☐ 50 - 60 years
- ☐ Over 60 years

### 2C Country

In which country do you work?

- ☐ Italy
- ☐ Romania
- ☐ Turkey
- ☐ Norway
- ☐ Spain
- ☐ Bulgaria

## 2D Cultural route and/or pilgrimage path \*

On which cultural route/pilgrimage path are you working?

## 2E Your role \*

What is your role?

- ☐ Manager
- ☐ Employee
- ☐ Volunteer
- ☐ Other

## 2F Your time in business \*

For how long have you been working in this field?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ Less than 5 years
- ☐ Less than 10 years
- ☐ More that 10 years

## 2G Educational background, level \*

What is your educational background?

- ☐ Level 1 – 3 (compulsory education/primary or secondary school)
- ☐ Level 4 (baccalaureat/matura/gsk/vocational school)
- ☐ Level 5/6 (university/college up to bachelor degree)
- ☐ Level 7 or higher (university/college up to master degree)

## 2H Occupational background \*

In which fields have you been working previously?

## 2I Your motivation \*

Tell us about your motivation for working in your actual hosting structure (e.g. economy, self realisation, existential or religious factors or other factors).

## 3 HOSTING STRUCTURE

### 3A Kind of hosting structure \*

In which kind of hosting structure/structure do you work (multiple answers possible)?

- ☐ Publicly owned/run host structure
- ☐ Commercially owned/run host structure
- ☐ NGO-owned/run host structure
- ☐ Religiously owned/run host structure
- ☐ Pilgrimage centre
- ☐ Hostel
- ☐ Bed and breakfast
- ☐ Hotel
- ☐ Retreat centres
- ☐ Church
- ☐ Monastery accomodation
- ☐ Visitor centre
- ☐ Other

### 3B Number of employees \*

How many employees are there at your host structure?

- ☐ Up to 5
- ☐ Up to 10
- ☐ Up to 20
- ☐ More than 20

### 3C Accreditation \*

Are your host structure accredited in any way? If yes, specify in which way.

### 3D Main target group

Which is your main target group?

- ☐ Pilgrims
- ☐ Tourists/visitors
- ☐ Both

### 3E Size of hosting structure \*

If you provide accommodation, how many persons can you manage at one time?

- ☐ Max 5
- ☐ Max 10
- ☐ Max 20
- ☐ More than 20
- ☐ We do not provide accomodation

### 3F Number of visitors 2018

How many visitors/guests did you have in 2018?

- ☐ Up to 25
- ☐ Up to 50
- ☐ Up to 100
- ☐ Up to 200
- ☐ More than 200

### 3G FACILITIES \*

Which facilities do you provide at your hosting structure (multiple answers possible)?

- ☐ Accomodation/beds
- ☐ Fresh drinking water



- ☐ Café/restaurant/taverna
- ☐ Possibility to buy food for self-catering
- ☐ Self-catering/cooking facilities
- ☐ Toilet
- ☐ Shower/bath
- ☐ Laundry machine
- ☐ Dedicated place for worship/prayer/meditation
- ☐ Organized worship/prayer/meditation
- ☐ Stamp for pilgrim's passport/credential
- ☐ Wifi
- ☐ Guest PC
- ☐ Souvenirs/pilgrim's badges
- ☐ Info folders/brochures

## 4 Information, communication and digital competence

### 4A Presence on digital platforms \*

Do you use digital platforms to inform and communicate with your guests? If you do, which ones?

- ☐ Own homepage
- ☐ Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram)
- ☐ Online booking sites, e.g. hotels.com and booking.com
- ☐ Local or regional tourist info pages e.g. toscana.com, visitoppland.com
- ☐ Homepage of the actual cultural route/pilgrimage path
- ☐ Other
- ☐ None

### 4B Booking \*

How can guests book a stay at your hosting structure?

- ☐ By letter

- ☐ By phone
- ☐ Via digital platforms
- ☐ By email

#### 4C Payment \*

Which paying solutions do you provide?

- ☐ Cash
- ☐ By credit/debit card on site
- ☐ By credit/debit card online
- ☐ By thirdperson online alternatives like PayPal, Vipps etc.

#### 4D Systematic collection of feedback \*

Do you collect feedback from your visitors in order to improve your practices? How?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, orally
- ☐ Yes, by paper
- ☐ Yes, digitally

### 5 Your experiences as a host

#### 5A Meeting the expectations of the guests

Do you feel that you meet the expectations of your guests?

- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Yes, sometimes
- ☐ Yes, mostly
- ☐ Yes, always

#### 5B Positive experiences \*

Tell us about up to three positive experiences from your work at the hosting structure

### 5C Negative Experiences \*

Tell us about up to three negative experiences from your work at the hosting structure

### 5D Success factors \*

What are, in your opinion, the most important success factors for your work and your hosting structure?

### 5E Challenges and difficulties \*

What are, in your opinion, the most important challenges and/or difficulties for your work and your hosting structure?

## 6 Networking

### 6A Contact with other hosting structures \*

Do you have formal or informal contact/networking with other hosting structures and/or coordinating structures, for e.g. sharing experiences, marketing or contact with authorities?

- ☐ Yes, with other hosting structures
- ☐ Yes, with coordinating structures
- ☐ No, but would like to
- ☐ No, not needed

### 6B Possible functions of a contact forum/coordinating structure \*

If you are, or would like to be a part in some kind of contact forum or coordinating structure, what would function would you expect it to have?

- ☐ Sharing experiences
- ☐ Marketing
- ☐ Accrediting
- ☐ Lobbying e.g. towards government/local authorities
- ☐ Assistance in formal and economical matters

## 7 History, culture and religion

## 7A The road/path: Historical, cultural and religious background \*

Do you have historical, cultural and religious knowledge of the road or path your hosting structure serve?

- ☐ Yes, but would like to learn more
- ☐ Yes, sufficient
- ☐ No, but would like to learn
- ☐ No, not relevant

## 7B Expression of historical, cultural and religious heritage \*

In which ways and through which means are the historical, cultural, environmental and/or religious background for your actual route expressed within and around your hosting structure?

- ☐ Through storytelling (oral or written)
- ☐ Through art and/or photos
- ☐ Through interior and decorations
- ☐ Through music
- ☐ Through worship/liturgy
- ☐ Through books (culture, history, nature and/or religion)
- ☐ Through secular architecture/buildings
- ☐ Through sacred architecture/buildings
- ☐ Through monuments and/or other cultural sites
- ☐ Through gastronomy/food and drink
- ☐ Through nature and environment
- ☐ Through organized events
- ☐ Other

## 8 Learning more?

### 8A Course? \*

Do you see yourself as a possible participant in a host competence course for people working in hosts structures along European cultural routes/pilgrimage paths?

- ☐ Yes

☐ Maybe

☐ No

### 8B Desired learning outcomes \*

If you were to participate in a course for people managing host structures along cultural routes/pilgrimage paths in Europe, what would you like such a course to contain?

- ☐ Economy
- ☐ Marketing
- ☐ Laws and regulations
- ☐ Language
- ☐ Digital skills
- ☐ Gastronomy/food and drink
- ☐ Security
- ☐ Service
- ☐ History and culture
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Nature and environment

### 9 STATEMENT \*

I hereby state that my participation in this project is voluntary and that my response can be used in PANHERA's reserach.

☐ Yes

[Se nylige endringer i Nettskjema](#)