



**IBRAVE**

the way to brand

**NEWSLETTER 05**

BUZAU

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ROMANIA

# IBRAVE OPENED OUR EYES

In January 2015, when we had our first IBRAVE meeting I was a little curious how a school will fit in that amalgam that was our team. But I learnt so much in the 2 days. Everything was so intense that I understood that it would be a big plus for our school being a partner in such a project.

Then I was a little frustrated that I could only involve a very small number of people directly in the project. I would have liked that all my colleagues and students could experience what I, Adina, Irina and Cristina experienced. It was impossible....

So, I come up with the idea of students and teachers' study visits in our region with the goal of promoting rural areas. And this was, in my opinion, the big gain for my students. They could see with different eyes the places they previously considered not interesting, not appealing. They could discover the strength and opportunities for many villages that are their home. They could discover that tourism can be an opportunity for our region, for their villages, for their families, for themselves.

And my colleagues and I ....we also discovered places we never knew were so close to us, wonderful places. We discovered what a big touristic potential we have. We then started to promote our region. We started to think of new projects, making more reliable connections with local communities.

It was a win, win situation.

And here was our last meeting in September 2016.

It was a great honour for us to have almost all our partners here, in Buzău. And we tried to show them a little part of what we have:

.....a quiet oasis in the middle of the forest...Cetatuia mansion...

.....our beautiful Town hall....and our wonderful students (Romanian and Croatian) presenting their outcomes from this project...

.....some Muddy volcanoes, unique in Europe and such a strange landscape....

.....some traditional food in a traditional old Mill... Moara veche/ Berca...

.....an original sculpture camp in the middle of the forest....with 256 statues made in 16 years.....

.....a Romanian Monastery....with peace and quiet....Ciolanu

.....a very good example on what a cellar is and what is great winetasting....Lacerta....

It was enough..... it was not enough.... we just hope that we opened your appetite for Romania.... and that you will come back.

We will be here.... discovering new wonderful places to show you....

And THANK YOU IBRAVE for that!



ROMANIA

# THE IBRAVE EXPERIENCE

For me, IBRAVE was not a simple project which I was part of, as many other similar ones. It was an extraordinary experience for many reasons:

- ▶ I learnt a lot as a statistician, as a teacher, but also as a citizen of a region in my country.
- ▶ I met great people, coming from different backgrounds and different regions of Europe: teachers, representatives of local authorities, specialists and business people.
- ▶ I faced experiences and situations where people intervened successfully, changing locations' fate and destinies; I now think of "LA CONSERVERA" (Spain) and The shoe factory in Belgium.
- ▶ I learnt about the problems faced by communities in rural areas, discovering that the sale of traditional products, for example, is a problem in Romania, as it is in Spain. Part of the citrus groves in Mink (Spain) remain unpicked due to transportation costs being higher than the profit (in an oversaturated market). This image leads me to the orchards of plum trees (many of them old and unkempt) in the Buzau Valley;
- ▶ I started from the same set of indicators, and at the end the colleagues at the University of Almeria provided us with development models specific to each area. I remember the interest in the subject at our first meeting, when each of the participating countries presented the main economic and social situation, as well as the tourist objectives from the reference area;
- ▶ I met good practice examples - the Van Gogh experiment - that can be applied successfully in our localities, helping us to promote national values and to mobilise Romanian people of different ages and professions; we already plan to apply the Dutch school model during the Brincusi experiment;
- ▶ I saw beautiful places, each with its own specificity
- ▶ I made direct contact with local people, I understood their lifestyle and tasted their traditional products.

The experiences are timeless, there is no past, present or future:

IBRAVE is alive by what it has seeded in our souls.



CEUTI - SPAIN

# IBRAVE: A GREAT EXPERIENCE

A beautiful room full of young, enthusiastic and involved students: that is what I found when I came into the Conference Room in Buzău Town Hall. This 5th workshop organised by Colegiul Economic Buzău has added great value to the IBRAVE project. Our two vocational education partners have done an incredible job with their students, involving them in every step of the project. It was worthwhile dedicating a meeting to their good practices, so that we all could learn from them.

Students from both institutions presented their work and experiences. They all agreed they have acquired many skills, different from those just attending lessons. The work carried out by their teachers within EU projects is really appreciated. It was very satisfying seeing the teachers' faces, how proud they were of their students.

I tried my best to explain the IBRAVE project conclusions to the students and show them opportunities for their future in the tourism sector, from what I have learnt during these two years.

This workshop has given me lots of new ideas on how to collaborate with the vocational school in Ceuti. We are already working in a project with secondary students, through which they will participate in an ideas contest to develop cultural and leisure activities for them. When applying for LEADER funds, we want to be sure that we use the public money on what our citizens need. Groups winning this contest will participate in the development and implementation of their idea, learning how things really work.

The Spanish Education System is mainly based in theory and lectures, collaboration between the vocational school and the municipality to develop new ideas to promote our town would be a very valuable experience for students. The new LEADER period is an opportunity for these activities to get funded.

The IBRAVE project has been a very rewarding experience, not only from the professional point of view, but also at a personal level. Working locally with everything I have learnt from other

partners has allowed me to work much more strategically, collaborate with new stakeholders, develop projects in many different areas, count much more with citizens when applying for funding, but above all, meeting new wonderful people with whom I hope not to lose contact.



ALMERIA - SPAIN

# ALMERIA GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The participation of University of Almeria in IBRAVE Project has been a very good experience. Taking into account the partners of this European Project (four local governments, two Vocational Training Institutions, a private brand/design Enterprise and the University of Almeria) the Project has received many interesting points of view from different public and private organisations. They all have different experiences that have been exchanged during the project.

IBRAVE Project has help us to develop ideas to promote entrepreneurship education specially oriented to employability and new business creation regarding tourism issues, and of course it has help us to develop the analysis of the existing trends.

University of Almeria has incorporated many ideas in the Marketing degree and Tourism degree regarding the IBRAVE Project. Our project has contribute to identify the most interesting strategies and practices in tourism issues, and we have learned the importance of working closely with local and Regional Public Administrations, SMEs and citizens of the territory.

Main conclusions especially important for us:

- ▶ It is very important a comprehensive tourism offer based on the defence of the territory and of local resources
- ▶ Set the branding strategy objectives high, but realistic
- ▶ Developing a common strategy around a local feeling of the whole community
- ▶ Key issue: feedback from visitors in any territory
- ▶ Joining tourism and culture in the same strategy
- ▶ Return to the origins through a concept of rural environment

We can say that IBRAVE Project and its intellectual output (Handbook "Destination branding. A compilation of success cases") will be use in the future to present different alternatives to create and develop "place branding" strategies by tourist destinations. University of Almeria is ready to carry on with the aims of the Project in the future as we consider that a good management of place branding in any territory will provide a better life conditions and a more equal society.

CROATIA

# OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

Participating in this project coincided with the introduction of a new subject; 'The basis of tourism', in our new curriculum. The students had the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of marketing, see the role and importance of branding, the way that things work in tourism and finding a certain market niche where they might look for their employment or realise their career.

The school benefited from the project approach to EU projects in general. Teachers who were not directly involved in project activities showed interest in the development of IBRAVE and gave us support. It also encouraged them to look for partners and join other projects, crossborder cooperations, giving the students more opportunities to visit new countries and towns and make new friends. The students were involved in humanitarian and voluntary work to raise money for some of the projects. We can say that this project really made them 'citizens and tourists' of Europe.

The school acquired a new European dimension and became recognisable in our town as the only school participating in projects on an international level, taking their students abroad, as well as bringing students and teachers from other countries to our town, showing them interesting places and products that this region can offer, but also showing our citizens, local government and other institutions that our school became active in Europe.

It is needless to say how much interest local media showed in those activities, helping us to promote the school as an educational institution that recognised the importance of developing students' social and soft skills which are at least as important as theoretical knowledge, if not even more so. The students were given chance to participate in real life situations, having to use and learn new skills.

The school also realised new and closer cooperation with SMEs, the Tourist board, local authorities and other municipalities in nearby villages who were given at a glimpse of what kind of school we are and what we were doing.

The most valuable was the realisation that the young people's opinion had changed in seeing and recognising opportunities about development of tourist destinations of this region which can be used as guidelines for planning future development.



BELGIUM

# BUILDING BRIDGES IN BUZĂU

The final, September 2016 IBRAVE partner group meeting in Buzău, Romania proved to be a most interesting one. The Flemish partnership was given the opportunity to interact directly with the youngsters from the participating Romanian and Croatian schools.

Their lively reports and comments clearly showed the added value effect of involving students in a very direct way in the profiling of a region's touristic and economic potential, and in the identification of innovating and realistic/low cost, attractive gimmicks and marketing tools, aimed at improving a region's image.

In addition, the lively interaction and the continuous exchange of good practices and positive learning effects between the students of the Croatian and Romanian schools, was clear proof of the importance of transnational (personal) contact between people in general and young people in particular.

The idea of engaging one or more schools to 'analyse' the economic/touristic profile of a region and formulate a youthful, attractive marketing program was taken back to Flanders, and discussed at the regional project platform, on October 14. It is most likely that a similar exercise will take place in the region of Mid West Flanders, during the first half of 2017.

In general, the IBRAVE project has provided an innovative and refreshing approach of regional analysis. The branding toolkit will provide local authorities in Mid West with a wide range of various successful examples from other parts of Europe.



DENMARK

# WHAT LEMVIG KOMMUNE FOUND USEFUL IN BUZĂU

It is so refreshing to see young people being so devoted to a subject/a project/a place, to see young minds creating, shaping and disseminating with such interest materials/brochures/movies and other marketing materials and to see young students being so thankful for the given opportunity – it's literally refreshing. Also the results of their work exceeded all expectations.

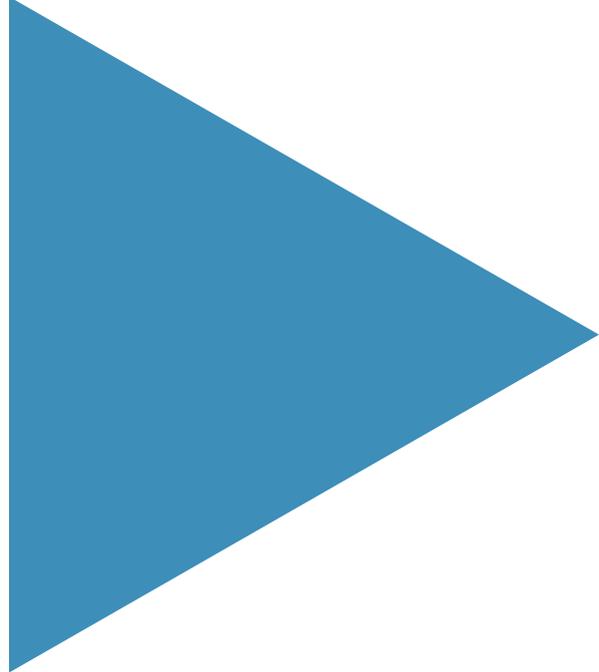
Sometimes it's all about going back to basics and starting from the beginning, trying to tackle the problem from a different angle instead of going deeper on the chosen road, especially if the results are not as expected. I think that this is what the presentations from these two educational institutions showed and taught us.

Another important aspect of this last meeting was the possibility to round up the project, to discuss the final report, and last but not least share ideas regarding the dissemination process - now that we have the toolkit, which local stakeholders could be interested in receiving/reading/discussing and even using the toolkit? The session held on this matter gave us plenty of ideas on how to disseminate the results together with the toolkit and to whom. At the same time new ideas were born, and new projects will definitely follow, projects that will be derived from Ibrave.

Thank you all for a great project and for a great last meeting in Buzău!

Kind regards,

Lemvig Kommune



SWEDEN

# SUCH AN IMPACT

Who knew that the project IBRAVE would have such an impact on so many levels when the preparatory meeting in Sweden was held in a cold November 2013 in Tranemo, Sweden?

All the efforts, all the exciting meetings and all the new knowledge that all partner organisations has gained from this project is hard to describe without writing a great report and listening to all people involved. But to mention some;

The gain and profits of working in a triple helix perspective with partners from the academic, private and public sector has brought the project to a higher level than expected.

The different views, angles, knowledge and experiences brought in to the project have built up an invaluable network for two years and will be maintained in the future. All the new contacts and the added value to the project by working together, and not on your own are priceless.

We have all got to know, not only our own regions but others' very well. We are all ambassadors for each other and we will all probably pick the intellectual output up for a long time ahead to show others great examples of local and regional branding and 'soul' given projects and results.

Our final thoughts about this project, the IBRAVE-project is that without collaboration and cooperation with others, we would probably still think that we all know best and that no one can teach us anything new.

Making new friends is one of the fundamentals in the EU cooperation, and I think that we have succeeded in that in the IBRAVE project!

UK

# UNDERSTANDING & DISCOVERY

For Exesios this trip was one of understanding and discovery (always the first stage of any Place Branding process)... and cutting through various preconceptions of Romania.

Although we had a late flight and a very long journey to our destination which meant we did not arrive until 2.30am we were touched, that Catalina (our Romanian partner) waited up for us to make sure we got there ok.

The beautiful location and quality of accommodation of the Pension Cetatuia set our minds and bodies to rest and the happy reception from the Students in Buzău was a delight. Both schools from the two partners, Croatia and Romania gave excellent presentations in English on their involvement and experiences of being part of IBRAVE. The level of understanding both of the subject and the English language was great to witness and made us realise that the project went well beyond Local Council Tourism departments and became experiences that these young people will take with them into their educational journeys.

We were given a glimpse of the Buzău region's tourist products such as the Berca Mud Volcanoes consisting of muddy volcano geysers, the extensive Soviet era Măgura stone Sculpture Park (256 Statues made over 16 years) next to the medieval Ciolanu monastery. Finishing off with an international cooperation vineyard of LaCerta that is so modern that it must be one of the best presented anywhere in Europe.

So the visions of Dracula and vampires were banished to the history books as we were introduced to a sophisticated mix of simple country life along with great food and all the trappings of a modern tourist trail. With all the positive changes going on in Romania it will not be long before 'Brand Romania' is free of it's negative communist legacy and reinstated as it was in the late eighteenth /early twentieth century as a country full of culture and modern values.

For Exesios as Brand practitioners the project has opened our eyes to the idea of a 'place' and expanded our knowledge in regions we never ever thought that we would be lucky enough to be involved with. We have gained inside knowledge of the working of local governments through the collaboration of working professionals that have shared their experiences which has made our company understand the complexities of managing branding through policy frameworks and not only traditional methods.

Although Brexit has made the future of further European projects uncertain we have made friendships that transcend borders and government policy and we are sure we will be able to collaborate with the IBRAVE 'family' in the years to come.

