

USPEE „CONSTANTIN STERE” HAS ENTERED THE FAMILY OF A NEW ERASMUS+ PROJECT

Participation in national and international projects represents an important priority in modern university life and is also included in the Institutional Strategic Development Plan of USPEE „Constantin STERE”. As of January 1, 2024, our University has become a member and partner in a new European project under the Erasmus+ program, namely the project titled **„Designing Green Tourism Concepts Through Learning”, with the acronym ENRICHER – hubs**. The new project is part of the Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) project family and is funded by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Union. Such projects aim to strengthen the institutional capacities of universities in Western European countries. The main objective of the ENRICHER–hubs project is to accelerate the transition towards stimulating the recovery of the European tourism industry by identifying skill and competency mismatches between what is taught in higher education institutions (HEIs) and what is required by the labor market.

Within this ambitious project, the University of European Political and Economic Studies „Constantin STERE” has become a member of a renowned international consortium, which includes a number of higher education and research institutions from across the European continent. Among them is Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (HHUAS) from Helsinki, Finland, which serves as the coordinator of the consortium and general manager of the ENRICHER-hubs project. From our country, two other universities are also involved – Moldova State University and Comrat State University. In addition, the consortium includes three universities from Georgia: Caucasus University, Akaki Tsereteli State University, and Iakob Gogebashvili State

University. Two more institutions are from the European Union – the University of Genoa (Università degli Studi di Genova) in Italy and Management Center Innsbruck Internationale Hochschule GmbH in Austria.

In the initial days of the ENRICHER-hubs project, the project's emblem/logo was discussed and approved. We present it below, as it highlights the fact that through this project, USPEE has joined an even larger family of universities – Ulysseus. The green color in the project logo symbolizes its commitment to promoting ecological tourism, which is increasingly referred to as „green tourism”.



Between February 26–28, 2024, the project kick-off meeting took place in the city of Helsinki, Finland, at the headquarters of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. During the meeting, the coordinators welcomed the partners, and the project's objectives and methods of collaboration were thoroughly discussed. Immediate and long-term tasks were also outlined. It was the first opportunity for the partners to meet in person after two years of work and online meetings during the development and submission of the ENRICHER-hubs project proposal, which was later selected for funding by the EACEA.



As part of this visit, the host university also showcased initial best practices in the preservation of the country's natural and historical heritage, by organizing a trip to Suomenlinna Island. This island was once a historic fortress, located in a naturally inaccessible and hard-to-conquer environment, and today it hosts a vast open-air museum. Here, visitors can admire the well-preserved and carefully maintained natural area, while also learning about the glorious historical past of the Finnish people.



The project delegation was also impressed by the way traditional historical spaces can be repurposed and adapted to meet the needs of modern life.



During the ENRICHER-hubs project partners' meeting at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki, the specific objectives to be achieved over the three years of activity were analyzed and discussed:

- Reducing the gap between the skills of future graduates, developed within higher education institutions, and those required by the labor market, with a focus on sustainability in general and sustainable tourism in particular, as well as the need to design green tourism service concepts.
- Introducing new and innovative pedagogical approaches, along with modern service design methods and tools, applied in the teaching and learning process to develop the skills of future graduates, which they will use in their professional careers.
- Strengthening collaboration between higher education institutions and the tourism industry to develop new concepts for ecological tourism services.

The ambitious goals of the new ENRICHER-hubs project, part of the Erasmus+ CBHE family, open up new academic and inter-university cooperation perspectives—both nationally and internationally—for all actors involved in training tomorrow's green tourism professionals: professors, students, and specialists from various fields within the tourism industry. In doing so, the project will contribute to further integrating Moldovan universities into the European Higher Education Area, while also supporting the development of a more environmentally friendly and sustainable business environment.



The Erasmus+ ENRICHER hubs project – “Designing Green Tourism Concept through Learning” (Project number: 101082919) is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them. Project is implemented by the consortium members: project grant coordinator - Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (Finland); MCI The Entrepreneurial school® (Austria); University of Genoa (Italy); Caucasus University (Georgia), Akaki Tsereteli State University (Georgia), Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University (Georgia); University of European Political and Economic Studies Constantin Stere (Moldova), Moldova State University (Moldova), Comrat State University (Moldova). More information: www.enricher.eu