



## **Hospitality Goes Green! How can the hospitality trade promote its commitment?**





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## 1 Introduction: the responsibility of the trade and its CSR.

This report is to testify to our results and lessons to be drawn, both for the benefit of the training environments and also for the trade itself. It is synthetic and straightforward and is meant to open up avenues based on the experience of a 3-year collaboration between the hospitality trade and education.

The hospitality industry does not have a high reputation with regards to sustainability whatever the pillar, social, environmental, economic. The survey we undertook showed that a strong awareness of professionals has been arising, particularly through the momentum created by big corporate groups like Accor, le Groupe Barrière in Normandy, and some vibrant samples of smaller businesses eager to develop a sustainable policy as fostered in the case studies we collected for our learners to analyse.

Businesses association like the UMIH and GNI, also well aware, release brochures and guidebooks to advise companies to take action. Many of the businesses we came across throughout our project were interested but sometime hopeless in terms on concrete methods to start and boost actions.

We decided to introduce the topic of CSR in our pedagogical guide: it is meant to foster what a sustainable business is through a definition as concrete as possible and easily accessible to companies which encompasses the main provisions.

Therefore what is our view of CSR in hospitality?

***We insisted on the importance of the way in which the establishment is integrated in local development through respect of the three pillars of sustainable development or the 3Ps bottom lines (planet, people, profit). A sustainable business following a CSR policy must prove:***

- ***That the establishment is an actor and a beneficiary of local development with regard to tourism, culture and heritage.***
- ***That the establishment is profitable – respecting the environment and the future of the earth.***
- ***That the establishment's human resources policy is in favour of diversity; is attentive towards the disabled and those suffering from poverty, and shows no sexual discrimination.***
- ***That the establishment is engaged in training students and apprentices.***
- ***That the establishment is engaged in training and raising awareness of permanent staff as regard the importance of sustainability.***

## 2 The experience of ERASMUS PLUS “Green Guest”

### 2.1 Tagline development, choosing the right logo and graphic layout.

The partnership started its reflection through a specific tagline development process led by Mosqi.to, a partnering interactive marketing company. It was an important process to confirm that we all shared the same concepts and would start our work on good bases.

The objective of our tagline development was to promote the values we shared, enhance our image, and strive to expand our influence by creating an original and memorable tagline that:

- Leverages the key assets and advantages of our project
- Reflects our vision and core values of sustainability and support of learners, trainers and companies to implement it
- Elevates our visibility and reputation

The main branding process was simple brainstorming, discussions and vote on our logo, tagline and graphic designs.



The logo conveys the idea of nature through the stylized drawing of a plant or vegetable, of course in the green colour.

“GREEN GUEST” was the title of the project. The sheer addition of the simple tagline “FRIENDLY” fostered one of the key element of our project: **businesses have to match a CSR policy and a guest-wise approach. That was to be the red-thread of our project. We could venture to say that we believe this is also what should be the key motto for the whole industry.**

## 2.2 Edutainment, a way to be more attractive to learners, the Green Quest our serious game.

Our edutainment approach was also a way to find the right channel to communicate with our learners. We created the serious game : the GREEN QUEST.

*“Marco Greenhope is a student attending a training to work in hospitality sector. In the future, he wishes to work in a truly green business. This is the reason why he has applied to do an internship in Clara Evergreen’s Hotel. Today is a big day for Marco as he is going to meet Clara Evergreen who is the owner of the greenest hotel in town. If everything goes well, he will be allowed to do his internship in this company. Clara is going to check if Marco is as interested and enthusiastic about sustainability as he pretends to be. At the beginning of the visit, she will ask him a few questions about general principles of sustainability. Afterwards, he will be allowed to visit the different departments of the hotel: the kitchen, the bedrooms, the garden, the spa, the lobby ... Everywhere he goes, Marco will collect tips in order to be entitled to answer multiple choice questions. According to his answers, he will collect or lose points and according to the results of his quest, we will know how much he has learnt about sustainability during his internship in the hotel.”*



Playful pedagogy is based on a specific philosophy which enables the individual to learn with all kinds of solicitations, although today the concept reaches another dimension with video games which are obviously part of everyday life of our target groups, learners engaged in VET pathways, which legitimates our edutainment and gamification approach of offering a motivating tool in keeping with students’ lifestyle routine. The Green Quest learning tool, as a so-called “serious game”, tends to match two concepts : video games and e-learning, based on the benefits that gaming has on learning. Therefore the Green Quest which provides data on the sustainable issues through an educational, casual, playful pathway is an opportunity to get acquainted to complex learning contents.

The use of the Green Quest has been praised by learners and training teams as well as company mentors. Edutainment proved to be the right channel to develop the awareness of future professionals who were to gain the basic knowledge on what sustainability must be like in a business. Green hotel is far ahead of mainstream businesses and the gap was obvious during many traineeship periods. Yet many businesses and trade representatives from AJA, GNI and LPPDLG are well aware of the efforts that have to be made and of the support which should be brought to companies to do so. Erasmus Plus Green Guest outcomes cater for that.

### 2.3 The animated video sketch, a marketing tool: the trade is on its way to be more sustainable!

The purpose of this animated cartoonlike video sketch created by Mosqi.to, with the collaboration of the whole partnership has several purposes to promote the engagement of the trade. Initially it was to be used in our events to equip our event-driven approach. It sums up as an up-to-date marketing tool the efforts made by the trade and promotes our particular approach with the 3 pillars of sustainability presented in a genuine synthetic way. We soon realized it could have many uses for example an introduction to our learning pathways or conferences. Its use is indeed very flexible.

The main message conveyed by the sketch can be summarized as follows.

*“Many studies show that most of our guests are sensitive to the environmental impact of our businesses. We strive to inform and involve them! Many efforts to become greener are made by our trade. As an industry, we know that saving the planet and satisfying our guests at the same time are fundamental issues. **Investing in sustainability is good for the environment, socially responsible and economically worthwhile!** This is why we also believe that upskilling and training our employees to be enthusiastic eco responsible professionals is paramount: Green Guest is meant for that.”*

### 2.4 You-tubing, efficiency of videos

Videos were shot by LPPDLG to advertise our event in May 2019. This proved very effective and the impact was really unexpected and we were told by some participants it was a real incentive to attend.

The character of the video, a young woman representative of the trade, is presenting the topic following a very similar script as the video sketch... she speaks French with English subtitles and addresses the professionals of the trade in a very friendly, humorous manner. The video is typical of U-tubers attitude and provides again a very up-to-date means of promotion in spite of its technical imperfections ... which paradoxically could also be an asset since the presentation appears very natural typical of U.tubing. The video was shot with a very specific purpose prior to our event; considering its success partners wished to have a

new version of the video to complete the video sketch as an alternative according to the audience we target. The video is less formal and straightforward and completes the cartoonlike sketch which is also very motivating.

## 2.5 Ways to promote sustainability in the Hospitality industry

- Dissemination events and our event driven approach.

Our multiplier and dissemination events were often embedded in bigger events like les “Salons des Métiers de l’Hôtellerie restauration in Normandy, the tourism training centres meeting in Estonia, the aftermath of the Green challenge in Italy. These events commit a lot of stakeholders of the trade, employment agencies, vocational education, catering suppliers, contributors to our round tables and conference... this is the basis of our event-driven approach which enables a wider impact on a great variety of stakeholders through the presentation of our toolkits which raised the interest of many attendees who were eager to get access to them. Our own agenda within the event is perfectly identified with its own programme and promotion of Erasmus Plus.

Here is one of our reports which perfectly illustrates our approach :

*“GREEN GUEST multiplier event on 14th March 2017 in Caen, was hosted at « le Salon des Métiers de l’Hôtellerie ». It was a great opportunity to present the project progress to an audience of professionals of the trade, job seekers, people engaged in Vocational pathways, stakeholders of the chamber of commerce and from the training environment. Over 500 people attended the event. This event gathers a wide partnership : « Pôle Emploi » implements a job fair, training providers promote their offer, students and trainees undertake culinary demonstrations. With its own agenda, Green Guest presented its activities regarding the training of professionals to sustainable development. Italian, Estonian, Hungarian, Polish partners contributed to the event. Partners held. A permanent stall with posters and flyers available for visitors to get in touch with the project stakeholders.*

*The result of the mapping survey of the vocational syllabi, the approach for the businesses’ enquiry, the elearning tool method raised the interest of over 60 people with regards to GREEN GUEST expected results. A round table gathering 7 contributors was held. The contributors were experts in sustainability : hospitality professionals, trainers, CSR leaders. It was to complete the panorama of sustainability in the trade produced by the partnerships (IO 1). A video of the round table is available from the project website. The round table demonstrated how the hospitality trade gets committed to sustainability. The audience was composed of professionals from the trade and from vocational education, people engaged in training paths, employment guidance officers, job seekers in search of occupational projects.” ( a video of the debate is available on our website)*

- Sustainability, the red thread of our Green Challenge

The “Green Challenge” was a thorough conclusion to the learning process and a strong enhancement of the knowledge, skills competence about sustainability gained through the Pathways.

It was organised at a European level (Estonian, Italian, French participants) and was in the continuum of the blended learning paths



It consists in the organisation a proper cooking challenge with teams of learners. Each team was advised by a professional chef as a mentor who has an interest in sustainability.

From baskets of various foodstuff among which non-sustainable products ( long distance supply, off season ...) together with sustainable ones, each team , advised by its mentor had to choose the right ingredients according to sustainable issues ... Each team was advised by its mentor. A jury of professional assessed the production of dishes. The assessment regards the quality of the dish its sustainable aspects, and the capability of the teams to argue on the choices they made to address the sustainable issues.

An award ceremony with local hospitality stakeholders was arranged to enhance the efforts of the learners. Press coverage was important.

**Such a challenge was again a great opportunity to promote sustainability and the commitment of the trade towards external stakeholders. This good practice is likely to be reproduced at regional, local even school levels.**

### 3 The real involvement of the trade: green washing and genuine efforts of businesses which must be enhanced

#### 3.1 Efforts to go green and obstacles to overcome

Two main obstacles that hospitality has to overcome concern the training and upskilling of the personnel and meeting the legal requirements and anticipating the requirements to come.

Through the surveys we undertook, we noticed that some recommendations already exist in national VET curriculum, they are quite scarce yet point out to important issues.

The qualifications and jobs mostly affected by efforts towards sustainability are especially cooks and operators of the catering services. In their curricula the most frequent recommendations relate to :

- practices respectful for environment (reducing the use of energy)
- nutrition and healthy diet principles (vegetarian and vegan offers, organic short supply food)
- sustainable and rational choice for food and raw materials (short supply chain)
- applications of the norms related to environment, hygiene and food safety
- prevention of occupational risks in the scope of sustainability.

Another survey undertaken with businesses fostered an important result that came up in multiple answers: respondents acknowledged that they can hardly put any energy into educating their employees on topics of environmental protection, which shows how valuable the Green Guest project is. Thence the importance of offering VET teams tools to support learning processes towards knowledge and competences to be gained by professionals of the trade.

New regulations are now enforced for businesses, they mainly concern the sorting out of waste, incentives to fight against food wastage... Businesses are required to undertake virtuous practices which are not always known of guests and the general public. They are nevertheless part and parcel of the general commitment of the trade to sustainability. The Engagement of big corporate groups are seen as a momentum to boost the overall commitment of the trade. Sometimes the engagement is questioned as insincere green washing. Green washing is when a company or organization spends more time and money claiming to be “green” through advertising and marketing than actually implementing business practices that minimize environmental impact. Yet these groups mainly claim that the involvement and enrichment of the communities they serve strengthens their business by fostering acceptance and adoption of new models for business, and by educating future generations of business and community leaders, scientists, scholars, activists, educators and consumers. It must not minimize the fact that some smaller businesses see a genuine environmental and economic advantage in developing green policies. We also noticed that some businesses took sustainable actions without knowing it and of course never communicate it with their customers.

### 3.2 Involving guests in the virtuous circle, be more attractive: the real issue!

**Being able to tell the story of the business is paramount for the guests, for the press, for local authorities when required and when all kinds of opportunities arise.**

It is important to **make the sustainability stories specific to the establishment**. For example People expect hotels to be recycling nowadays and companies must prove they do it. But if they want to excel in their sustainability program they must be aware of the ways they can communicate. Not all customers are eco-warriors, some don't care and don't want to be bothered, some care, some are happy to be informed and act. Yet it is important to show guests what kind of advantage they get and what virtuous circle they are involved in, for example the consumption of local seasonal food, the contribution to save energy and water by not asking towels to be laundered every day. It is real added value!

**Our case studies are based on the efforts made by smaller businesses. To create the tools, we had to work on story telling with the owners who had never thought of doing it, others had their story ready to be told.**

Here is an example of a French family run restaurant, “Le Pommier” in Bayeux which was not known as a typical sustainable business; you will notice that the story perfectly fosters the 3 pillars of sustainability.

“Le Pommier in Bayeux is a well-established restaurant located in the picturesque medieval city of Bayeux, close to its very famous cathedral and at a walking distance from the legendary Queen Mathilda’s Tapestry. The restaurant is well known by an international and French clientele and its reputation is based on a specific culinary approach dedicated to Normandy products. The owners Isabelle and Thierry Lhuillery are strongly attached to the region and its typical specialities from the nearby farmland and fishing ports. Their cooking is both original and typical. The owners know pretty well the local producers, with whom they have been working for many years. When the ingredients are cooked, it is always in the respect of their original flavour, only spices and fresh herbs are added in order to make the best come out of them. Therefore the restaurant is accredited by the “Maître Restaurateur label”. This is the only **certificate delivered by the State** for French gastronomy businesses.



“Maître Restaurateur” is an accredited catering professional who commits her/himself to cook in her/his kitchen from raw products, mainly fresh, particularly from short distance supply. This accreditation is awarded by the Préfet, representing the State, as the outcome of a control audit to be renewed every Four years. The professional has to volunteer to get into this process. The “home made” label called « fait maison » in French is attributed to a dish produced in the restaurant kitchen out of raw products. The accreditation is a guarantee for guests to be treated with dishes made from raw foodstuff, mainly fresh and produced locally.



“fait maison” logo

The restaurant was created in 1998, succeeding a very small catering business of 20 guests. Today the number of guests is 80 with 8 full time staff. For Thierry the challenge is to match the feasibility of recipes and the quality of dishes to satisfy customers and be up to the restaurant reputation. As a manager he is strongly concerned about reducing kitchen staff stress at rush hours, so the à la carte menu and daily specials are always discussed with the chef to

tackle this particular issue. At the same time it improves productivity and is beneficial for all. Moreover the business is keen on being part of its local, social, touristic environments. Thierry Lhuillery is a member of the tourism office board and for many years has been strongly committed to the promotion of the catering industry and its jobs as a “Trade Ambassadeur” (title delivered by Normandy Regional Council) and also as a leader of “Les Petits Plats Dans Les Grands” , an association of hospitality businesses whose goal is to support the development of CSR in the trade. All of the staff have been trained to be mentors of apprenticeships and internships: and the restaurant keeps offering work experience placements and has always taken on apprentices as a commitment to vocational education and training. Thence “Le Pommier” is a dedicated partner of the vocational training environment. The staff is also regularly upskilled to various issues such as hygiene, food safety, foreign language skills... Thierry and Isabelle are also very keen on giving fragile people job opportunities. For many years their pastry cook was a disabled person who had been trained as an apprentice in the restaurant. This very successful family-run business is a good example of the involvement of the catering industry in Corporate Social Responsibility”

## 4 Conclusion

Green Guest ambition was to produce learning tools and open up avenues to support and boost the commitment of the hospitality trade to sustainability with a marketing toolkit. Communicating and advertising our approach was paramount: this is why we wanted to find the right communication channels in every area of the project.

Is Hospitality going green? By all means, even if we are at the beginning of the process and the recent emergency of the environmental and climate issues is even more evident than 3 years ago when we started the project. The way we promoted Green Guest involvement, lessons we draw from our communication policy pave the way for the industry to promote its commitment.

It is expected that in a trade whose jobs suffer from a poor image, the commitment of our businesses and the promotion of its evidence are to be an incentive to seize its career opportunities. All of our tools: the learning ones, the marketing toolkit to which this particular report belongs to, are meant to be invested by the stakeholders both from the trade and from the vocational environments. All of them are now available from our website.