

Startup Competition Seeks Ideas to Accelerate Rural Development Through Tourism

Madrid, Spain, 6 April 2021 - *The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has launched a new competition to identify the best ideas that will help rural communities recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Global Rural Tourism Startup Competition will also support the entrepreneurs and enterprises that can help rural communities seize the economic and social opportunities that will come as tourism restarts.*

The United Nations specialized agency has recorded rising interest in unique and authentic travel experiences, including in nature-based and outdoors tourism. With this trend expected to accelerate as tourism restarts, the Startup Competition is looking for those ideas that will help ensure rural communities are best-placed to benefit. The competition will also look for ideas that will help build resilience in rural communities.

The Competition aims to support rural tourism as a key tool to fight depopulation, promote inclusion and reduce regional inequalities in income and development as part of UNWTO's special focus on tourism for rural development.

Applications are now open for four categories:

People –Leaving no one behind: Projects that incentivize the creation of jobs and opportunities, promote gender and youth empowerment, and build opportunities for vulnerable groups in rural areas.

Planet – Building back better Projects related to the promotion and protection of natural resources, including addressing tourism's impact on climate change, as well as waste and resource consumption.

Prosperity- opportunities for growth Startups that provide innovative solutions through new business models, instruments that promote access to finance, markets and marketing for tourism in rural areas.

Propulsion of Rural Tech – Implementation of new technologies to advance tourism and development in rural areas.

The deadline for applications is **1 July 2021**. Winners will be invited to take part in the UNWTO General Assembly, to be held in Marrakesh, Morocco, this October.

The new competition builds on the success of UNWTO's search for the best startups in Spain. That initiative saw more than 150 projects put forward for consideration, with the winners receiving mentorship and support from the Spanish Government and Google. For this global edition UNWTO welcomes Viajes National Geographic as its media partner. It also enjoys the support of key institutional collaborators, namely Air Europa and Wakalua as Travel Partners alongside Amazon Web Services Activate, HèPic, Impact Hub, the International Trade Centre, Fademur, The Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge of Spain, NEST Portugal, Telefonica Open Future and the TUI Care Foundation.

For more information and to apply, [visit the UNWTO Startup Competitions and Challenges webpage](#).

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[UNWTO: Tourism Competitiveness](#)