BEST PRACTICE LYCÉE POLYVALENT HÔTELIER MARGUERITE YOURCENAR

Submitted by: EURAKOM

CIRCULAR ALBANIA TOURISM

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SECTION 1: BASIC INFORMATION

- Title of the Best Practice: Lycée Polyvalent Hôtelier Marguerite Yourcenar
- Website of the Practice: https://lycee-marguerite-yourcenar.fr/
- Location: Beuvry (France)

SECTION 2: PRACTICE OVERVIEW

- **Short Description of the Practice:**

The company Ptipot helped the Marguerite Yourcenar high school build a kitchen garden to educate and raise awareness among students about the importance of growing local food and using local products, insisting on a "holistic and systemic" approach. As the high school provides professional training, future professionals can interact and practice their skills while learning the basics of sustainable agriculture, creating a "learning ecosystem." The plan for the garden was co-designed by Ptipot, the teachers, and the students, not only resulting in a kitchen garden, but also in an overall stimulating and innovative learning experience that the students can apply in their professional lives.

- **Implementation Period**: 2023
- **Status**:

[ ] Planned [ ] Pilot phase [x] Fully implemented [ ] Ongoing and evolving

- **Thematic Areas Addressed:**

[X] Farm to Fork / Sustainable Food Systems
[ ] Waste Management
[ ] Resource Efficiency
[ ] Other: _____

- **Describe how the practice aligns with the selected Thematic Areas.**

Kitchen gardens epitomise sustainable food systems by integrating production, consumption, and education in a single space. The short supply chain cuts transport-related carbon emissions, eliminates packaging waste, and ensures that ingredients are as fresh and nutritious as possible. This practice ensures fresh and high-quality ingredients for the school kitchen while reducing reliance on external suppliers, contributing to food security and resilience. Kitchen gardens naturally follow seasonal cycles and use locally adapted varieties, which strengthens biodiversity and reduces the environmental footprint of cultivation. They also encourage the reuse of organic waste as compost, closing nutrient loops and minimising residual waste going to landfills. In an educational setting, such as with hospitality students, kitchen gardens become living classrooms where future professionals not only learn how to grow their own products, but also how to integrate sustainable sourcing into their future businesses. This practical knowledge supports the transition towards a tourism industry rooted in responsible, resilient and sustainable food systems.

- **Explain how this activity fits within the tourism sector.**

This practice fits perfectly into tourism and hospitality education but can also be implemented by professionals who include food as a key part of their offer, such as restaurants, hotels, guesthouses, etc. By growing their own products, both schools and businesses increase self-reliance, reduce costs, and ensure a steady supply of fresh, high-quality ingredients that will improve the quality of dishes and gastronomic offer. These homegrown products can be showcased in teaching the preparation of local dishes or menus, cooking demonstrations, or in the case of businesses also garden tours before or after their meal, offering guests an authentic and memorable experience that reflects the local environment and culture. In a competitive tourism market, a visible commitment to freshness and sustainability helps a business stand out, build trust, and strengthen its reputation. For visitors, enjoying a meal prepared with ingredients sourced just a few meters away adds both transparency, a sense of place and trust.

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- **What learning value for VET training, curriculum development or capacity-building of professionals does the practice offer?**

It offers strong practical and theoretical value within a hospitality training programme. On the practical side, students learn how to grow their own produce, from soil preparation to harvesting, giving them the confidence and skills to replicate these methods in future workplaces. Theoretical learning is embedded through lessons on sustainability, seasonality, biodiversity, and responsible sourcing, including which herbs, seeds, and varieties to select. As demonstrated by Ptipot, co-constructing such a project involving both teachers and students also provides a model for collaboration, multilateral decision-making, and project management. This approach ensures that students do not only understand why a kitchen garden is valuable for sustainability and business, but also how to design, implement, and manage one. The skills acquired, such as the combination of ecological awareness, operational know-how, and multilateral work, are invaluable to future hospitality and tourism professionals. Such a practical project as part of the curriculum also supports teachers in conveying sustainability concepts to their students and makes them more tangible. The practical involvement of the students makes it much more likely that they will fully understand the value of this work and implement it in a future work context.

SECTION 3: CHALLENGES AND ALIGNMENT WITH CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRINCIPLES

- **What challenges or barriers were addressed (based on the report findings)?**

[X] Waste management and disposal
[X] Energy/resource use
[X] Infrastructure limitations
[X] Seasonality
[X] Skills and capacity gaps
[X] Low awareness of CE
[X] Behavioural resistance
[X] Financial or funding constraint
[ ] Other : _____

- **How were these challenges overcome?**

One of the main challenges addressed was the skills and capacity gap, since the project targeted high school students with limited prior experience in gardening or project design. Behavioural resistance could also be tackled by participating in the project from start to finish and understanding its wider impact. Rather than treating this as a simple skills deficit, the initiative integrated the learning process into the curriculum. By involving students in every stage - from drawing the schematics to preparing the soil and planting - the project became an exercise in co-construction. This approach not only built technical gardening skills but also taught project planning, teamwork, and step-by-step problem solving. Ptitpot, as specialists in permaculture, played a key role in guiding both students and teachers through the process, ensuring that learning was practical and rooted in expert knowledge. Another barrier was infrastructure. The solution was to repurpose an unused green parcel on school grounds, turning an underutilised space into a productive garden. Again, Ptitpot's expertise was valuable in designing a layout adapted to the site and local conditions. Finally, the project addressed resource use and environmental impact. By producing food locally, it reduced CO_2 emissions from transport, used only seasonal crops to match natural growing cycles, and lowered water consumption. This reinforced the environmental values that are central to both permaculture and sustainable tourism. Having their own garden also reduced waste since the school could use their own produce from the garden.

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- **Which circular economy strategies does this practice address?**

[X] Waste reduction / reuse / recycling
[ ] Renewable energy / energy efficiency
[ ] Water conservation
[ ] Circular product/service design
[X] Sustainable food systems / short food chains
[ ] Eco-certifications or green standards
[ ] Repair, refurbishment, or reuse of infrastructure/furnishings
[ ] Digital tools for circularity or sustainability

- **Describe why this practice can be considered as a 'best practice' and how it contributes to one or more circular economy principles:**

This initiative can be considered a best practice because it combines education, sustainability, and economic opportunity in a tangible, replicable model that demonstrates circular economy principles in action. A shorter food chain is a cornerstone of both sustainable and circular systems, and the kitchen garden achieves this by enabling students to grow, harvest, and cook homegrown produce, eliminating emissions linked to extraction, packaging, and transport. It fosters self-sufficiency and gives students agency over what they cook and consume, empowering them at a time when fewer people have the skills to grow and prepare their own food. This practical knowledge can then be replicated and scaled in the hospitality and tourism sectors where they will work. For businesses, producing a portion of their own ingredients guarantees quality, strengthens their local identity, and helps them stand out as environmentally conscious and socially responsible in a competitive tourism market. Adding practical projects to the curriculum supports the students' development of a variety of essential skills including sustainability and makes it more tangible for the students. The practice also supports teachers in their professional development linked to sustainability.

- **Describe why this practice can be considered as innovative. What new, creative or underused approach brings added value to circular tourism development?**

Engaging students directly in every step of the project - from initial design and planning to managing the kitchen garden and harvesting - transforms it into a holistic and innovative learning experience. Instead of outsourcing cultivation, learners become co-creators, drawing planting plans, sowing seeds, monitoring soil health, and gathering the harvest. Through this, they experience the full lifecycle of produce and gain a concrete understanding of seasonality, resource use (for example the value of water, the impact of climate change on resources etc.), and sustainable agriculture (for example the responsible use of fertilisers, pesticides, importance of pollination etc.). This practical, down-to-earth approach integrates practical skills with theoretical knowledge, an approach much welcomed in hospitality training. By carrying these skills and values into hotels, restaurants, guesthouses and destination management, professionals contribute to authentic, low-impact food systems that reduce transport emissions, showcase local quality produce, potentially also local agricultural traditions and food varieties and strengthen Albania's positioning as a sustainable tourism destination.

SECTION 4: COLLABORATION

- **Describe any collaboration that were involved in the development of this practice ? Did this practice involve local authorities or other groups?**

The project was carried out in collaboration with Ptipot', a company recognised by the French state as "socially useful," which helps schools, businesses, associations, communities, and individuals to learn and develop permaculture. This initiative represents a successful public-private partnership and is especially relevant for a vocational high school. The development of the kitchen garden involved Ptipot', the teachers, and the students: the company supervised the project, while the teachers ensured it helped students acquire practical technical skills for their future careers. However, the primary emphasis was on the students: they participated in every phase of the project, from preparatory planning, through construction and harvesting.

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SECTION 5: RESULTS AND REPLICABILITY

- **What measurable results or outcomes were achieved?**

The project has already achieved several measurable outcomes, including the co-design and development of a 5,000 m² outdoor space integrating permaculture principles, the planned planting of 433 linear metres of hedges and shrubs to foster biodiversity, and the securing of €12,150 in subsidies to support implementation. Beyond these quantitative results, the initiative has generated important qualitative impacts: it actively involves students from hotel and restaurant programmes in the design and use of the vegetable garden and related facilities; it has created spaces such as a pond, forest garden, aromatic spiral, greenhouse and composting shelter, which extend the growing season and diversify activities; and it contributes to broader environmental objectives such as enhancing local biodiversity, managing food waste on site, mitigating climate change, and creating "cool islands" that improve the school's microclimate. However, some data are not yet available, such as the exact amount of food produced annually, the level of cost savings or reductions in greenhouse gas emissions achieved, and the number of students regularly engaged in the project. These elements would provide a clearer picture of the long-term impacts and could be monitored in the future.

- **Why is this practice relevant to the Albanian tourism context?**

Setting up a kitchen garden in VET schools is highly relevant to the Albanian tourism context. Such a project is inexpensive to set up and operate, also making it attractive for the small hotels and guesthouses common across the country's coastal and rural destinations. Initial investment is modest, with beds, seeds and compost sufficing, and ongoing expenses remain low by using on-site organic waste to produce compost. Over time, the garden reduces food procurement and transport costs by supplying fresh produce directly to kitchens, improving margins, resilience, and self-sufficiency. It also helps a business stand out in a crowded market, as visitors increasingly seek local, environmentally responsible experiences and quality produce. A visible garden signals the owner's commitment to quality and guest care, enhancing reputation, boosting reviews, attracting eco-minded tourists, and delivering a strong return on a modest investment.

- **What is the practice's potential for further expansion ? How can it be applied or adapted to other Albanian tourism destinations or businesses?**

According to Ptitpot, the kitchen garden can serve as the first step toward a more holistic approach to sustainability. Additional elements can be introduced to expand its impact and educational value. For example, installing a compost heap would allow management of organic waste on-site while enriching the soil. Leaving part of the area untouched and planting some wildflowers or fruit trees would create a space for biodiversity to thrive. A beehive could also be added, offering both ecological benefits and strong educational value, although it requires more technical knowledge to manage safely. Another option is to create a small pond, providing a humid zone that supports wildlife and serves as a treatable water source. These enhancements are low-cost, adaptable, and can be implemented in many settings, making them suitable for tourism businesses and destinations across Albania that wish to combine visitor appeal with environmental sustainability.

- **What advice would you give others looking to implement a similar initiative?**

A vocational school could start by integrating the planning, set up and running of a kitchen garden into the VET curriculum and involving students from the outset to co-construct the project, from initial design and management through maintenance and harvest. This approach leads to the development of project management skills, problem-solving abilities and promotes teamwork. The school should partner with local permaculture experts, local associations etc. for technical support, and work with the teachers to define clear learning outcomes and sought benefits for both students and educators. A concise roadmap will enable a phased, holistic plan: complementary installations such as a compost bin or a rainwater-filtration system can then be planned and added more easily once the initial garden is established.

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SECTION 6: PICTURES

- Pictures of the practice:

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