



**2nd Croatian Congress on Forest Therapy**  
Krka National Park, Eko Centar Puljani (Croatia) 22-23/09/2023

**Forest-based care as nature-based innovation and entrepreneurial opportunity in Europe: Perspectives for rural development and tourism from Green4C and RESONATE EU-funded projects**

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1

## Outline

1. Premises: context, definitions
2. Two EU-funded projects in our experience
3. Green care tourism, with a focus on forests
4. Opportunities/challenges for green jobs/rural development
5. Final remarks



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2



3

**1. Premises: emerging trends in tourism**

Not only *sustainable tourism* (UNWTO) but also *esperiential, slow tourism (and green tourism, ecotourism)*

- no longer: "Where have you been?", rather: "What have you done?"
- from quantity to quality
- *nature, culture, sport*

4

### 1. Premises: trends in EU citizens tourism



Source: Attitudes of Europeans towards tourism – EC Eurobarometer, 2021

- The **natural environment is the 2<sup>nd</sup> aspect considered by EU citizens when selecting tourism destinations** (together with the price of the overall trip!)
- A large majority of EU citizens (82%) are prepared to change some of their habits to support more sustainable tourism (e.g. **"35%: paying more to protect the natural environment"**)

5

### 1. Premises: Nature provides multiple Ecosystem Services (= human benefits from natural settings)



Source: WWF, 2016

- Instrumental values of Nature
- Allow for nature managers being **remunerated** for their interventions on land/natural resources (**Payment for Ecosystem Services – PES**)
- And allow for **green jobs creation**

6

## 1. Premises: tourism/recreation as a Socio-Cultural Ecosystem Service (= human benefits from natural settings)

**"Traditional" eco-tourism activities**

**Culture**  
(art museums, concerts in Nature, theater performances, land art,...)



**Tourism&recreation**  
(walking, visits to special landscapes and sites, wild products picking, camping, pic-nic, ...)



**Sport**  
(hiking, nordic walking, mountain bike, orienteering, hunting, adventure parks, ...)



**Pedagogy & education**  
(kindergarten or outdoor schools, educational farms, scout groups, ...)



**Spiritual & religious**  
(meditation and worship, ecological burial, ...)



**Emergent activities - Green care**

**Social inclusion**  
(activities for the elderly, disable people, refugees-displaced, prisoners, victims of violence...)



**Nature-based wellness and therapy**  
(forest bathing-Shinrin-Yoku, forest therapy, pet therapy, ...)



Source: Doimo et al. 2020; Masiero et al. 2020; Mammadova et al. 2021 – mod.

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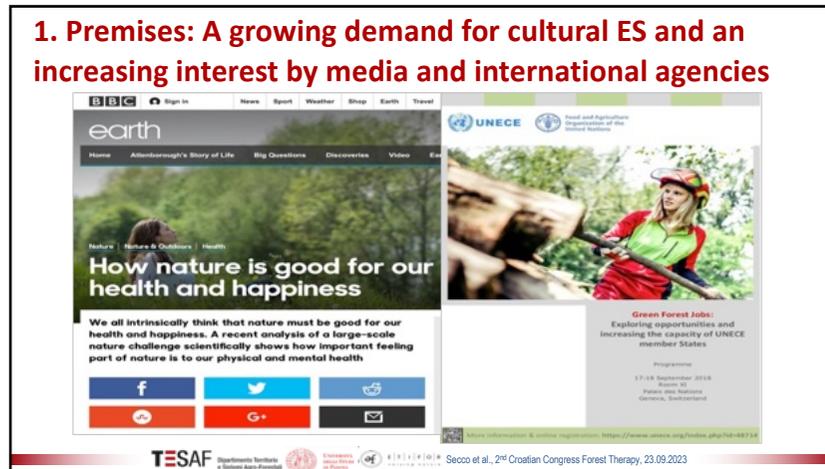
7

## 1. Premises: trends in recent EU forest-related policies

- **EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030** - COM(2020) 380 final  
*"Nature is as important for our **mental and physical wellbeing** as it is for our society's ability to cope with global change, health threats and disasters. **We need nature in our lives**" (p.1); and "Biodiversity conservation has **potential direct economic benefits** for many sectors of the economy" (p.1).*
- **EU Forest Strategy for 2030** – COM(2021) 572 final
  - ✓ *"Forests and the forest-based sector provide multiple socio-economic functions and benefits, including **additional jobs and growth opportunities in rural areas and recreational functions contributing to citizens' physical and mental health**" (p.3);*
  - ✓ *"The growing trend of nature tourism and nature-based wellbeing services, [...], are an opportunity to [...] **provide significant income opportunities in rural areas**" (p.5)*

8

**1. Premises: A growing demand for cultural ES and an increasing interest by media and international agencies**



9

**2. Two EU-funded projects in our experience**



10

## 2. Project: Green for Care (Green4C) - Erasmus+ KA (2020-2023) (612623-EPP-1-2019-1-IT-EPPKA2-KA)

<https://www.greenforcare.eu/>

- Development of **entrepreneurial skills and models for green care** (4 thematic sub-sectors)
- EU-wide assessment (4 **report/outlook studies**)
- 16 international **case studies**
- **Training needs assessment**
- **Training and support to business ideas/start-ups**

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11

## Outlook on green care tourism market: Methodology

40 respondents across Europe  
36 questions, 4 languages:  
- General information  
- Organizational framework  
- Revenue and funding  
- Customer base

4 experts and practitioners (Italy, Belgium, Netherlands and Austria)

Covering Italy, Finland, and Ireland

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12

## 2. Project: RESONATE – Horizon Europe (2023-2027)

Building individual and community RESilience thrOUgh NATurE-based therapies



**resonate**

RESILIENCE THROUGH  
NATURE-BASED THERAPIES

The Resonate project is funded by the European Union's Horizons Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101081420 and through associated funding from UK Research and Innovation grant award No. 10063874)

- psycho-physical-sociological effects
- 9 case studies
- Environmental, social, economic, institutional aspects
- 3 Resilience Hubs (Social Innovation Actions: Padova - IT, Salzburg - A, Barcellona - ES)

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e Saúde da Paisagem



13



14

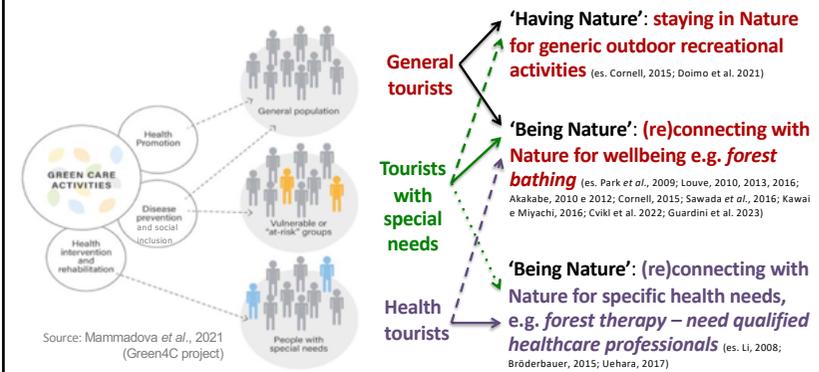
### 3. Green care tourism

*"A wide range of **organised tourism experiences and products that rely on nature and wild spaces for tourists in search of health, well-being and regeneration**"*

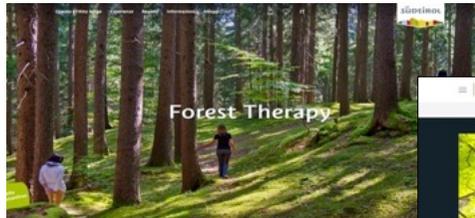
(Mammadova et al. 2021)



### 3. Types of target groups/aims of green care tourism



### 3. Examples in the Alps: AltoAdige - Südtirol



<https://www.suedtirol.info/it/esperienze/benessere-e-relax/forest-therapy>

- Typically, single initiatives at local scale



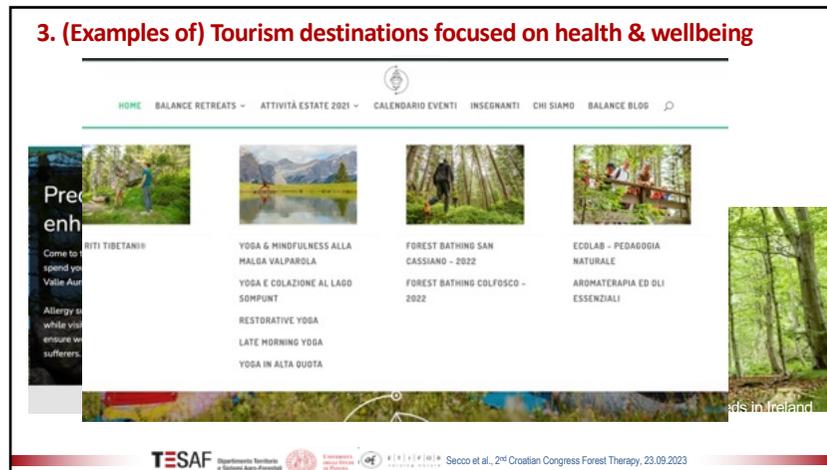
<https://www.rainews.it/tgr/bolzano/video/2021/04/blz-parco-bioenergetico-bolzano-passeggiata-baden-powell-lungo-isarco-alberi-organifrequenze-elettromagnetiche-5a348c5e-6fdf-4c2d-8006-a74748104e12.html>

### 3. Tourism experiences focused on forest-based health & wellbeing: an example in Italy



- Travel agency and tour operator (headquarters in Basilicata, South Italy)
- 3-6 days long forest-bathing retreats**
- In 5 Italian regions, specific sites (parks)





19



20

#### 4. Green jobs in the forest sector



Green Forest Jobs provide **forest-related goods and services** while meeting the requirements of **sustainable forest management** and **decent work**

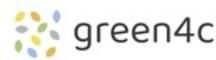
(Forest Europe, 2022)

#### 4. Challenges in the European context

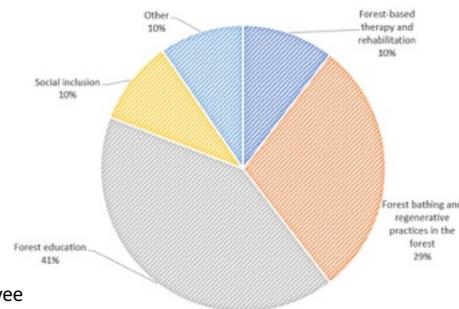
- European initiatives are relatively young, with **different levels of business maturity and features**.
- Diverse professionals involved from different backgrounds (not previously networked each other).
- **Lack of** framework, definition and information on the initiatives.
- Sometimes **uncertain quality**.



#### 4. The supply side: providers of the forest-based care initiatives



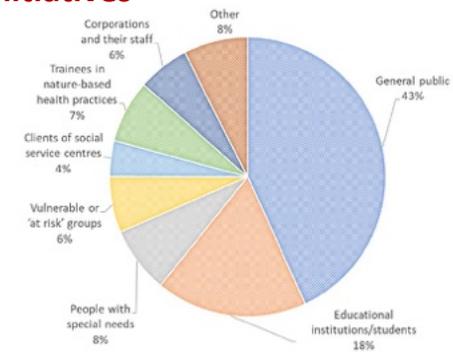
- Often 1 initiative provides multiple services and mostly guided experiences
- 5-10 years old
- **no-profit organisations (38%)**
- **The used forests are often:**
  - in rural area (n=23)
  - public land (n=15)
  - between 1-5 ha
- 26 out of 40 do not have any employee
- Key role: **volunteers!**



#### 4. The demand side: beneficiaries of the forest-based care initiatives



- Services offered **mainly to the general public (43%)**
- 5-50 or 100-500 participants per year
- Increase in customer base (despite COVID-19)
- Forest-based practice starts being promoted by doctors and municipalities (e.g., Scotland)



#### 4. Key-issues: Financial and social capital

Practitioners of forest-based care initiatives mainly rely on

- **Own personal financing for starting-up, philanthropy, volunteering engagement**
- **Well-established and strong personal/local networks**
  - **Collaboration with local stakeholders**
  - **Collaboration between practitioners**



Source: [www.societasefratica.org](http://www.societasefratica.org) - Festival ConsiglioInVita 2023

25

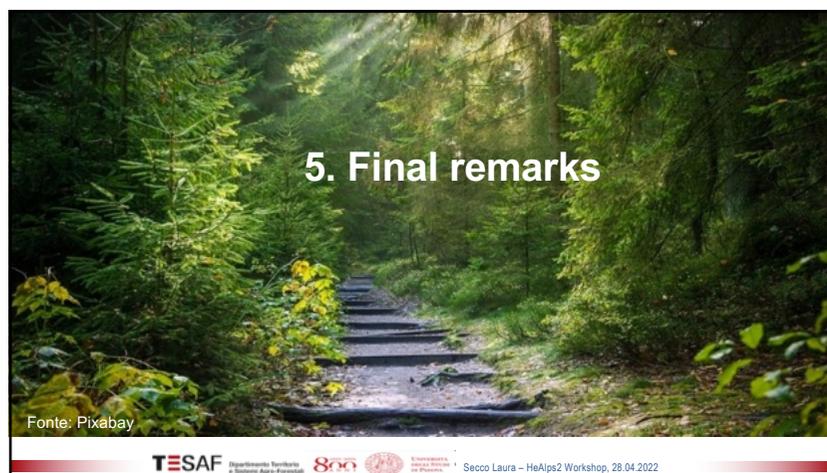
#### 4. Key-issue: "Certification"

- **So far, mainly informal quality assurance**
  - certificates of attendance to events
  - word of mouth
  - books
  - publications and reputation
- **Or second-party certification, i.e. not fully independent; rather, provided by reference network and institutions**
- Professional titles (e.g., hiking guides, educators, foresters)



Image: Korea Forest Service 2014

26



27

## 5. Final remarks

### Potential:

- Green care tourism can **take advantage of many natural settings**, both in rural and urban contexts → *market expansion, positioning, diversifying!*
- Nature-based care initiatives (**green jobs**) are a crucial foundation for a **just and green transition** in Europe → *funding, investors?*
- **Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic:**
  - USA: enormous increase of visitors into natural parks during the lockdown (for 40% of them, they visited a natural park for the first time!) (CSIT, 2021 – pers.com)
  - Germany: congestion of green areas in urban and peri-urban green areas (IFM3, 2021)

29

## 5. Final remarks

### Challenges, i.e. needs for...

- **new networks and partnerships** among existing - but not yet collaborating - sectors (e.g. tour operators, health care agencies, care givers, land and Nature managers, ...) as well as emerging professional profiles (e.g. guides of forest bathing/forest therapy)
- **new/adapted/flexible legal and institutional frameworks**
- **standards and regulations** (quality matters!)
- **Specific and new skills and entrepreneurial attitudes (not BAU!) (green economy jobs require reskilling and upskilling: 40% of workers need to learn new skills – World Economic Forum 2020)**

30

## Festival www.cansiglioinvita.it

**Cansiglio Forest (North-East Italian Alps) 1st edition, 4 days in June 2023**

**Ca 600-650 participants**  
**First time in the area: ca. 30%**  
**71 events, evaluated 9.5/10**

- University (UNIPD) + Public Authority (Veneto Agricoltura) + NGO ([www.societaselvatica.it](http://www.societaselvatica.it))
- Science, practice, art, spirituality, pro-environment movements

15-18 giugno 2023 • Foresta del Cansiglio (Prealpi venete e friulane)

Un festival dedicato alle esperienze di connessione con la natura: un'occasione per sperimentare e conoscere nuovi punti di vista sulle foreste. Quattro giorni di eventi e attività fra gli alberi, tra scienza, arte, spiritualità, cammini, saperi, tradizioni, cura del Pianeta.

**giovedì 15 giugno**  
Forest Bathing per gruppi specifici: arte ed, addebi, percorsi campestri e attività: workshop di scrittura creativa.

**venerdì 16 giugno**  
Convegno scientifico: foreste e benessere e inoltre: attività esaltate, workshop: musica, attività nel bosco in natura.

**sabato 17 giugno**  
Esperienze tra gli alberi: percorsi di scienza, bagni di foresta, laboratori del legno e molto: concerto del vivo.

**domenica 18 giugno**  
Attività fra gli alberi: conoscenza geologica, gioco, attività di disegno, del bosco e molto: spettacolo.

Da venerdì 16 a domenica 18 sarà aperto a Sport (Alpago, R3) uno spazio espositivo per conoscere meglio le organizzazioni coinvolte nei festival, i produttori e altre realtà del territorio. Saranno aperti anche il Museo dell'Uomo in Cansiglio e il Giardino Botanico Alpino.

Info e iscrizioni [www.cansiglioinvita.it](http://www.cansiglioinvita.it)

Organizzato da: TESAF, UNIPD, Veneto Agricoltura, Societaselvatica, Museo dell'Uomo in Cansiglio, Giardino Botanico Alpino.

Partecipano da: TESAF, UNIPD, Veneto Agricoltura, Societaselvatica, Museo dell'Uomo in Cansiglio, Giardino Botanico Alpino.

Con il supporto di: Eufor | Veneto Natura, LAFF Lab & MA in Environmental Humanities - Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, AOMF, Dsp Riva, Fondazione O. Angeleri - Alpi del Cansiglio APS e soci.

31



32

**In conclusion...**

**Promising** developments and trends  
Keep moving towards ambitious goals – **adopt system-thinking lenses**  
Support ongoing “green” processes by **developing appropriate/innovative tools/initiatives**  
**...still be realistic!**

The collage consists of three distinct images. The left image shows a person on a bicycle pulling a trailer heavily loaded with logs on a dirt road in a wooded area. The middle image shows a green trash bin next to two topiary bushes shaped like animals. The right image shows a bicycle rack with several bicycles parked.

33

**Thanks for attention! Enjoy Nature!**



Foto: Seariot, Tonet, Cassol (progetto Interreg SCORE) @wondergarden

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34