

News Release

Madrid, Spain, 18 October 2018

PR No. 18078

First Global Gastronomy Tourism Startup Competition Launched

18 October 2018, Madrid, Spain - The World Tourism Organization and Basque Culinary Center (BCC), have launched a pioneering initiative for the gastronomic tourism sector, with a global call for startups or companies, mature or emerging, technological and non-technological, with innovative ideas capable of revolutionizing and integrating gastronomy in tourism and inspiring tourists with new ways and reasons to travel.

The gastronomic tourism sector is moving towards innovation and the diversification of its offerings. UNWTO, in collaboration with its Affiliated Member, Basque Culinary Center (BCC), has launched the 1st UNWTO Gastronomy Tourism Startup Competition, the first and largest initiative in the world dedicated to identifying new companies that will lead the transformation of the gastronomic tourism sector.

Intangible cultural heritage has become the decisive factor that attracts and captivates tourists. Gastronomy tourism, as a component and vehicle of culture and tradition, is an indispensable resource that adds value and provides solutions for destinations that seek to stand out through unique product offerings.

The Competition will make it possible to identify the best solutions and projects that contribute the most to the sector through pioneering proposals in the implementation of emerging and disruptive technologies, as well as emerging companies or startups. It aims to identify challenges and projects, and to catalyse innovations that can transform the Gastronomy Tourism sector in the near future.

“Innovation and tourism investments are not ends in themselves, but are means to promote better tourism products, improve tourism governance and harness its proven capability to foster sustainability, create jobs and generate opportunities,” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvili.

“Education and innovation are essential for the development of sustainable gastronomic tourism. At Basque Culinary Center, we support entrepreneurship and the development of new business projects to ensure the future of the sector. In this regard, we are proud to once again team up with our partners at UNWTO in order to continue fostering entrepreneurship and innovation linked to gastronomy tourism through this initiative,” said Joxe Mari Aizega, General Manager of Basque Culinary Center.

UNWTO and Basque Culinary Center have entrusted the process of finding startups to BCC Innovation through its Culinary Action! programme, which has accelerated nearly 50 startups by providing innovative, sustainable and high added value solutions to the gastronomy value chain.

Sustainability and technology

Startups are invited to pitch business models that are related to sustainability, respect the value chain, offer an authentic and coherent narrative, and add value to cultural and local heritage.

The winners of this competition will have the opportunity to present their projects at the 5th World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism (2-3 May 2019, San Sebastián, Spain), with the possibility of receiving personalized consulting and mentoring from the BCC experts of project accelerator Culinary Action!

Full information on the terms and conditions are available at

<https://www.gastronomytourismventures.org/>.

About UNWTO

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a United Nations specialized agency, is the leading international organization with the decisive and central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how.

About Basque Culinary Center

Basque Culinary Center is a pioneering academic institution worldwide that comprises the Faculty of Gastronomic Sciences attached to Mondragon University and a Center for Innovation and Research, BCC Innovation. It is the first Faculty of Gastronomic Sciences in Spain and the only one in the world with an R&D centre. Its board also features 11 of the world’s leading chefs. The aim of Basque Culinary Centre is higher education, research, innovation and promotion of gastronomy and food, and it is working to promote gastronomy as a lever for socio-economic development through its actions.

Furthermore, the Basque Culinary Center has created a technological centre for gastronomy, BCC Innovation. Its objectives are to transform knowledge into wealth, drive innovation in companies and to participate actively in the creation of new businesses, thus guaranteeing the future of the sector. BCC Innovation supports entrepreneurs in the development of new business projects.

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