



## Program Description

### Master of Science Program in “Sustainable Tourism and Rural Development”

The Master of Science program in Sustainable Tourism and Rural Development represents an advanced academic offer, designed to provide in-depth theoretical and professional training in accordance with contemporary higher education standards and labor market requirements.

The Master of Science program in “Sustainable Tourism and Rural Development” aims to prepare experts and professionals with managerial and research competencies to contribute to the sustainable development of rural tourism. The significant growth of enterprises operating in the field of rural tourism has driven an exponentially increasing demand for specialists in the management of accommodation facilities, agritourism, and tour guiding, as well as for trained experts capable of assessing the impacts of this growth. This trend also requires high-level professionals who can analyze, formulate, and implement policies and strategies for sustainable development across economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions.

This program is closely linked to the Bachelor in Business Management and continues the profile “Rural Tourism Management,” where students acquire basic knowledge of tourism—especially rural tourism—including tourism economics, rural development, the legal framework, and community sociology. The master’s program provides graduates with more advanced competencies compared to the bachelor level, particularly in the field of sustainable rural tourism development.

The Master of Science program in “**Sustainable Tourism Management and Rural Development**” aims to form professionals with advanced theoretical and practical knowledge, capable of contributing to the sustainable development of the tourism sector and rural areas.

Upon completion of the program, students will be able to:

- Critically and professionally apply contemporary methods and practices of sustainable management in rural tourism enterprises and destinations.
- Integrate innovation and digital technologies into the planning, management, and development of tourism services, increasing their efficiency and competitiveness.
- Design and apply scientific research methodologies for analyzing and assessing the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental impacts of rural tourism.
- In-depth analyze public policies and develop strategies and management plans in accordance with the legal framework, socio-economic context, and international sustainable development standards.
- Effectively manage the tourism value chain by fostering collaboration among local stakeholders, ensuring quality, and promoting local resources, including traditional products, handicrafts, and cultural heritage.

The program addresses existing gaps at the bachelor level by providing advanced competencies in policy design, scientific research, and innovative management of rural tourism enterprises and destinations. It also aims to prepare professionals capable of operating in a dynamic and

competitive environment in line with European and international standards, strengthening the link between theory and practice through case study analysis, fieldwork, and cooperation with public and private sector stakeholders.

## Main Objectives of the Program

The Master of Science program in “Sustainable Tourism Management and Rural Development” aims to provide:

1. The application of sustainable management methods in rural tourism enterprises and destinations.
2. The use of innovation and technology in the management of tourism enterprises.
3. The design and implementation of research and scientific methodologies to assess the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental impacts of rural tourism initiatives.
4. The analysis of policies and the development of strategies and management plans in accordance with the legal, socio-economic, and cultural framework, as well as international sustainability standards.
5. The management of the tourism value chain, with a focus on fostering cooperation among stakeholders and local communities, ensuring quality and standards, and promoting local resources (e.g., traditional local food, use of natural resources, handicrafts, cultural heritage, etc.).

## Key Competencies Acquired

Graduates of this program will be equipped with a broad range of theoretical and practical competencies oriented toward economic analysis, policymaking, and decision-making in the field of sustainable tourism development and local development.

The program is designed to develop advanced analytical, critical, and managerial skills, enabling graduates to effectively contribute to the planning, management, and evaluation of sustainable development processes in rural and tourism contexts. These competencies represent an important competitive advantage for their integration into the labor market.

The master’s program is structured over two academic years, following a progressive approach that gradually builds students’ theoretical foundations, analytical skills, and practical preparation. During the first year, students acquire fundamental and integrated knowledge on sustainable tourism development, with a particular focus on rural tourism, destination management, digital marketing, the role of communities in tourism, public policies for regional development, project management, as well as the European and international legal framework in tourism. This stage creates a solid foundation upon which more advanced competencies are built in the second year of studies.

At the same time, the program also includes interdisciplinary courses from natural and technical fields, enabling an integrated and comprehensive approach to sustainable development.

## Employment Opportunities

Graduates of the Master of Science program in “Sustainable Tourism Management and Rural Development” have wide employment opportunities across various sectors related to tourism and rural development, both at national and international level, including:

- Tourism development agencies and ministries
- Rural development programs and NGOs
- Tourism and environmental consultancy firms
- Entrepreneurship development in the ecotourism and agritourism sector

In addition, graduates may pursue academic and research careers, contributing to advanced studies and analyses in the field of sustainable tourism and rural development.

## **Employment Fields and Professional Profiles in Sustainable Tourism and Rural Development**

- *Sustainable Tourism Consultants:* Provide expert advice on the development and implementation of sustainable tourism practices.
- *Rural Development Experts:* Work in rural areas to promote economic development through tourism.
- *Tourism Managers:* Lead tourism departments, manage rural destinations, or run tourism businesses.
- *Tourism Marketing Specialists:* Promote rural destinations and tourism products.
- *Researchers:* Conduct studies on tourism trends, impacts, and policy development.
- *Policy Makers:* Develop and implement tourism policies at local, regional, and national levels.

## **Structure of the Program**

The Master of Science program is divided into two academic years, each of which is designed to progressively build students' theoretical foundations, analytical skills, and practical preparation.

**In the first year,** students acquire knowledge in sustainable tourism and rural tourism development, tourism destination management, digital tourism marketing, the role of rural communities in tourism, public policies for regional development, project management, and European and international tourism law. This period creates a solid foundation upon which more advanced knowledge is developed in the following year. In addition, this year includes interdisciplinary courses from natural and technical fields.

**The second year** represents a crucial stage, as students engage with core courses such as territorial tourism products, risk management in tourism businesses, environmental policies, strategic management in tourism enterprises, and tourism planning policies. This profile also includes interdisciplinary courses aimed at transferring knowledge to rural environments, research work, and the preparation of the Master's thesis.

In summary, this program aims to build a strong theoretical and analytical foundation aligned with the specializations required by the labor market in the field of Sustainable Tourism and Rural Development.

## **Interdisciplinary Approach**

The program is based on the principle of interdisciplinarity, integrating theoretical approaches, research methods, and analytical tools from various fields such as economics, management, social sciences, environmental sciences, and technology.

This approach enables the development of applicable knowledge and a deeper understanding of the complex challenges that characterize sustainable tourism and rural development. The program promotes a problem-solving oriented approach, encouraging critical thinking, innovation, and evidence-based decision-making.

At the same time, interdisciplinarity is strengthened through the connection between theory and practice, including case studies, fieldwork, and collaboration with public and private sector stakeholders. This prepares students to operate in complex and international contexts, while developing transferable skills such as teamwork, professional communication, and leadership—essential for today's labor market.