Cooperation in Wine Tourism and its Role in the Development of Disadvantaged and Isolated Areas.

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Wine-tourism is an important resource of income when it comes to organized wine producing countries such as France, Germany, Spain, Italy, U.S.A, Argentina, Chile, Australia and New Zealand. In these countries enjoying wine is a significant part of culture and daily life. Wine tourism in Greece emerged and developed only during the last twenty years and it’s far from being a well-organized industry.

The foundation of the “Wine producers’ Association of the Macedonian Vineyard” with the trade name “Wine Roads of Northern Greece” in November 1993 by 15 wine producers has played a decisive role in the introduction of Wine tourism in Greece. They made important decisions and created an innovation for Greek standards collective project that would reform and pre-empt any progress in wine-related activities. They established common goals and effectively addressed the challenges of the international market. They created and they suggest specific routes that go through the most picturesque points of a winery zone.

Nowadays, 37 members of the Association suggest 41 wineries open to visitors in 8 routes. The agenda also includes notable restaurants, taverns, inns and hotels, traditional products stores and places that offer alternative activities. All these businesses are members of the Wine Roads of Northern Greece and have been evaluated according to specific qualitative criteria and are thus distinguished by a special seal of approval. One of the suggested routes is the “Wine Route of the Lakes”, which includes a large part of the Municipality of Amyntaio in the prefecture of Florina.

In December of 2011 a field empirical research with questionnaires was realized in order to record the contribution of Wine tourism in the local development of a distant area. The study took place in the Municipality of Amyntaio, which is a large part of the “Wine Routes of the Lakes”. Furthermore, 11 wineries, hotels, restaurants, Environmental Centre (Arcturos), alternative activities offices operate in Amyntaio. All the businesses are intra-connected through their participation in the “Eco-touristic Company of Vitsi”.

Conclusions can be extracted by the analysis of the answers concerning the contribution of wine-tourism in the local Wine industry, the local community and the touristic businesses. Conclusions can also be drawn for the contribution of the “Wine Roads of Northern Greece” in local entrepreneurship. The study also records the restraining factors for further development.