

More than 100 international students participate in the university project ‘The value of Human Rights on the Camino de Santiago’

- This Project is organised by the World Tourism Organization in partnership with the Compostela Group of Universities and Helsinki España.
- The initiative identifies the Camino de Santiago as an exemplary crossroads of the values that arise from sustainable tourism and dialogue between cultures.

Santiago de Compostela, 17 March 2018 – The international university project ‘The Value of human rights on the Camino de Santiago: harnessing the power of tourism to promote cross-cultural dialogue and achieve the sustainable development goals’ brings together representatives of universities from three continents from 17 to 23 March to walk this pilgrimage route and participate in the International University Forum in Galicia.

At the welcome reception for students and professors, held at the University of Santiago de Compostela, the Rector Juan Viaño Rey, highlighted the dimension of this international project that "involves the entire university community: students, professors and rectors". He also explained that the initiative is "a reality thanks to the effort and will of many actors. The World Tourism Organization, Helsinki Spain and the Compostela Group of Universities, of which the University of Santiago de Compostela is a founding member".

The Secretary General of Universities from Xunta de Galicia, José Alberto Díez de Castro, commented in his speech that thinking of the Way as a method to promote intercultural dialogue, human rights and even the objectives of sustainable development "means returning to the origin, to the first cause and effect of pilgrimages". In this sense, he indicated that this project has the support of the Xunta de Galicia because they understand "the importance of tourism and its capacity to seek and achieve goals beyond economic ones. This is the reason that gives strength and sustenance to many of our great projects, such as Xacobeo itself", he said.

The Director of Affiliate Members of the World Tourism Organization, Yolanda Perdomo, explained that "this initiative is a great opportunity to get young people to embrace the sustainable development objectives of the United Nations, applying them in practice through the development of innovative tourism products. Their commitment, and that of the educational institutions they represent, is proof of the positive transformation of the society to which we all aspire".

Speaking to the participants, the executive secretary of the Compostela Group of Universities, María Teresa Carballeira Rivera, reminded them that from today they would become into pilgrims. "Travellers who travel through strange lands and enjoy an important quality are free and transmitters of values and knowledge", she explained. In addition, she noted that the institution she heads is proud to participate in the initiative.

In her speech, the President of Helsinki Spain, Ana Nieto, said that this project is promoting the main objective of her organisation, which is "the study and reflection on human rights".

After this welcoming ceremony, the participants in the project took a bus to start a five-day walk along the different routes of the Way and put into practice the knowledge acquired during the previous online training. This online course, held between January and March, addressed topics such as sustainable tourism, human rights and the values of solidarity and cooperation conveyed by this pilgrimage route.

The International University Forum

On March 22nd, after a pilgrimage divided into four groups, they will meet again in Santiago de Compostela to put the final touches to the project and participate the next day in the International University Forum. In the event an Institutional Rectors' Declaration that sets out the commitment of participating universities to work towards achieving sustainable development goals, protecting human rights and promoting tourism that contributes to economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability will be signed