




CULTURAL ITINERARY INITIATIVE

'A community-based and collaborative process
that promotes responsible use and manage-
ment of local resources by local communities'



Support to the Promotion of Cultural Diversity

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'A community-based and collaborative process
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ment of local resources by local communities'

Working toward building Cultural Itinerary of Kosovo* West where communities and visitors

- Come and visit traditional stone structures
- Experience local cultural practices
- Taste distinctive food and drinks while enjoying their time with their family
- Appreciate beautiful nature, sports and arts in a natural environment



* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.



INTRODUCTION

The 'Cultural Itinerary of Kosovo West' is an inspiration and testimony to the rich diversity of the landscape, peoples and heritage of Kosovo, which presents intriguing potential for tourism in the region. This initiative offers a number of innovative actions, looking into existing local resources and utilising them while improving the quality, design and presentation of products. In doing so, it also adds a public education dimension where awareness is raised on the values and responsible use of resources for future generations. A sense of pride of being from a place and its traditions are closely linked to the daily life practices of the local population and their relationship to their surroundings. Therefore, the Cultural Itinerary is fun, educational, and entertaining while valuing local cultures, heritage assets, and leading to dynamic and economically sound practices.

The 'Cultural Itinerary of Kosovo West' stimulates regional integration through joint initiatives by involved communities and municipalities while encouraging respect for cultural rights, cultural democracy and diversity, valuing common heritage and contributing to fundamental European principles for better understanding.

BACKGROUND

The initiative stems from the Heritage Plan for Kosovo West, introduced by the Joint EU/CoE Support to the Promotion of Cultural Diversity (PCDK) project in 2012, with an objective to demonstrate possible methods of raising public awareness and a gradual social and economic growth based on the existing local resources. Cultural Routes are managed by local communities with an inclusive and integrated approach.

Recent research undertaken on the potential of heritage and discussion sessions carried out with local stakeholders concluded that highlighting specific aspects of existing resources that are known to communities could be a good

starting point. Further, this would create a useful platform for local development activities in the region.

This research, which was carried out by local and international experts in six municipalities, focused on specific themes in each town, as part of the cultural itineraries initiative.

This preliminary analysis toward the development of the initiative lays out the foundations of the programme, which encourages potential public-private partnership schemes. Proposed activities have distinct characteristics contributing to local heritage tourism development but also play a collective role in its entirety. Its strength comes from working with already existing and somehow established single initiatives, utilising well conducted research on each topic, and the intention to further involve various disciplines.

MISSION AND VISION

Inspired by the Council of Europe (CoE) cultural routes, the implementation of this programme was begun in 2014 with a long term vision of developing cultural routes on stone structures in cooperation with neighbouring countries. Initially, the PCDK has been focused on cultural itineraries in 6 municipalities of Kosovo West in order to assess the viability of this vision. In the immediate future, each municipality with its particular theme of the cultural itinerary is planned to become a hub where practitioners, local communities, researchers and institutions can contribute and link with creative industries.

The next steps call for continued research, with active community involvement to prepare itineraries to gradually take its place on the tourism destination list of Kosovo. The programme intends to progress organically with active community participation and leadership, promoting the cultural and heritage of Kosovo West and offering attractive itineraries.



COMPLEMENTARITY

While each initiative would act as a single programme, the complementarity of all programmes will create a synergy and constitute a general attraction for the region. The topics chosen to build a cultural itinerary/network of the region arose from the specificity of cultural and natural heritage in the region as well as the willingness expressed by local stakeholders to be part of the development of such a programme. Basic preconditions for successful programme implementation were based on completed pilot actions as well as by the observations on heritage potential made by local and international experts.

PROGRAMME FOCUS

Junik: Stone structures will be rehabilitated and developed as a tourism attraction, and to provide professional education on the rehabilitation of heritage.

Gjakovë/Đakovica: Attractive intangible cultural heritage practices and products will be promoted while traditional handicrafts are developed.

Pejë/Peć: Nature sports and traditional games will be promoted, providing special tourism offers, valuing the beauty of the Rugova Mountains.

Klinë/Klina: Natural heritage, biodiversity and performing arts will be the focus, through development of educational, awareness raising and cultural events in a natural environment.

Deçan/Dečane: A library of children's games will be developed, introducing heritage through play, stories and performances.

Istog/Istok: Traditional food & gastronomy of the region will be promoted through quality production and presentation.

CRITERIA

Some of the key elements considered to develop the programmes and to build the network are:

- Heritage potential of a cultural/natural districts, areas, places, events or products should be recognised by the community as common heritage.
- Selected heritage assets should be accessible, available and of quality.
- Community support and involvement in heritage development and its enhancement should be ensured.
- Public policies on planning, management and assessment/evaluation of heritage assets on local and central level should be created.
- Education and training on the value and potential of heritage for the owners of heritage, local businesses, schoolchildren and other interested stakeholders should be provided through capacity development activities.





EDUCATIONAL AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME ON STONE STRUCTURES IN **JUNIK**

The Junik municipality is known for its stone structures - residential facilities (kullas) surrounded by stone walls as well as its natural beauty. As beautiful traditional structures in this rural environment, the stone structures should be widely recognised as remarkable features for cultural tourism development. A centre for restoration and rehabilitation of architectural heritage with complimentary elements of nature and stories of people embodied in the “Stones that Talk” programme, initiated by the PCDK, is an important step toward a long term vision of Junik becoming a “Stone Town”.





The programme supports

Activities that demonstrate the potential of Junik as a specific tourism destination. More specifically, educational activities that acquire knowledge, skills and practice in restoration and rehabilitation of stone structures; community initiatives and active participation in cultural tourism development; revitalisation and advancement of local traditional practices.

Activities conducted to present

Studies on stone structures for the Local Development Urban Plan have been carried out. A case study on rehabilitation was developed based on an urban unit, in the neighbourhood of the restored kulla of Vehbi Ukë Isufaj , the current seat of the Regional Tourism Centre in Junik. Promotional activities on the potential of stone structures were organised for municipal authorities and community members, and with the endorsement of the municipality and a community consultation group, a programme proposal for a summer camp and summer school was developed.

Next steps

- Fund-raising campaign for implementation of the Summer camp/ Summer school programme.
- Workshops with the owners/occupants of the facilities selected to be rehabilitated.
- Workshops and training of local community representatives interested to participate in programme activities.
- Detailing education and rehabilitation programme.
- The owners/occupants agreement on the rehabilitation works to be carried out.
- Capacity development of a local NGO for running the summer camp and summer school programme.
- Setting up a Summer Camp on Moronica Hill.
- Project for design market area and market activities.
- Action and operational plan to begin implementation of the programmes.



Regional Tourism Centre, The Courtyard



Regional Tourism Centre, Junik



Amphitheater in Moronica Park



INTANGIBLE HERITAGE AND ARTISANSHIP IN **GJAKOVË/ ĐAKOVICA**

Gjakovë/Đakovica is well known for its Old Bazaar as one of the most developed oriental trade markets in the Balkans. Although the architectural heritage of the Bazaar is still easily seen and enjoyed, the traditional crafts of the Bazaar are slowly disappearing. The revitalisation of traditional handcrafts and practices will promote inter-cultural dialogue among generations and build awareness on valuable endangered practices where transmission of these skills to new generations will be highlighted. Increased interest and attraction will boost interest for creative industries that can contribute to local economic development. With the vision of making local craft industries valuable contributors to the economy of the region west, this initiative will work with the entire region of Kosovo West while embracing local knowledge, practitioners and traditional values as resources, and take a distinct role in the cultural itineraries.



The programme supports

Increasing the capacity of the craft association in order to develop, manage and market the handcrafts practices in the region with a strategic centre based in the Bazaar area. Combined with complimentary actions, region-wide programmes with practitioners and the younger generation will be developed with attractive events, adding to the uniqueness of the town and the region.

Activities conducted to present

Pilot actions for the promotion of handcrafts as intangible cultural heritage elements were organised. An assessment was carried out with the practitioners of traditional handicrafts on the perspective of their practice and production, and awareness raising activities took place to promote the need for preserving the authenticity and functionality of the Bazaar. A study on the potential of the Bazaar for the local economic development was conducted and initial actions were identified.

Next steps

- Adaptation of a restored facility (kulla), located next to the Bazaar, as the main seat of the activity.
- Development of a programme for specific handcrafts, promoting the “brand(s)” starting from the Gjakovë/Đakovica Bazaar and gradually including the entire west region.
- Organisation of workshops on public awareness on the potential of the traditional handcrafts as one of the priorities for creative industries and tourism development.
- Design a programme for promotional events in the Bazaar.
- Together with practitioners and associations in the region, carry on pilot actions / events for the implementation of the programme for “branding” handcrafts.





OUTDOOR SPORTS AND TRADITIONAL GAMES FESTIVALS IN PEJË/PEĆ

The Rugova Mountain with its caves, gorges, lakes and rivers is recognised as one of the most attractive recreational area for the people in Kosovo. Besides outdoor sports in the natural environment that have long been practiced, such as hiking, climbing and skiing, there are initiatives for promoting alternative sports such as kayaking, abseil into the gorge and discovering previously inaccessible caves. This striking mountainous landscape has always inspired the local population, generating numerous interesting stories and recently reflected through the traditional games festival, known as “Rugova Games”. Coupled with a number of heritage attractions in the town, Pejë / Peć will be the itinerary point for traditional games and outdoor sports for the entire region of Kosovo West.





The programme supports

Actions to create and manage a programme for the promotion of nature sports in the region. In addition, the adaptation of the traditional Haxhi Zeka Mill as a base for the activities and training centre for outdoor sports and traditional games will be a priority.

Activities conducted to present

The “Rugova Games” festival was supported and a proposal for the “Regional Programme for Outdoor Sports and Recreation” was prepared by local experts. Pilot actions were organised on the promotion of natural and cultural heritage of the Pejë/Peć region. Preliminary assessment on the condition of Haxhi Zeka Mill's architectural complex was conducted.

Next steps

- Development of a project for the adaptation of Haxhi Zeka Mill into a training centre.
- Setting up a programme for outdoor / nature sports, based on the expert report.
- Identification of an entity to manage the program in coordination with other initiatives in the region.
- Organisation of events in order to research and promote traditional games and nature sports in the entire region of Kosovo West, including “The Rugova Games” festival.





NATURAL HERITAGE, BIODIVERSITY AND PERFORMING ARTS IN **KLINË/KLINA**

The Klinë/Klina municipality is rich with its natural landscapes, including 6 rivers and abundant biodiversity, as well as a diverse population, located in the central crossroads in Kosovo. The attractive Mirushë/Miruša waterfalls and the caves in its surrounding area have been recognised for their potential in the development of the area while archaeological sites surfacing through recent digs in the area.

Klinë/Klina has particular characteristics allowing for the possible implementation of the European Landscape Convention will be explored, where landscape and leisure can meet harmoniously and turn into an opportunity for the local population and visitors. Activities that were instigated by the PCDK project and are being carried out in partnership with municipality and civil society organisations highlight the existing resources and responsible use, contributing to the promotion of natural diversity and to raising awareness for its responsible use. The foreseen performing arts initiative in the appropriately arranged and well-maintained natural environment will provide an attractive cultural outlet for both rural and urban local communities and tourists to Kosovo.



The programme supports

Establishment of a sample educational centre and programme for safeguarding the natural environment and biodiversity in a designated facility. Rehabilitation activities for the designated area(s) and a feasibility study on Performing Arts, combined with the programme will lay the groundwork for future steps in the entire region of Kosovo west. The foreseen Landscape Observatory will be an asset to Kosovo, valuing and managing its assets effectively.

Activities conducted to present

A preliminary assessment on biodiversity, a landscape inventory and assessment on educational activities were carried out. A Natural and Cultural Heritage Inventory of the municipality with pilot actions on the promotion of these assets was assisted in the planning stage. A location for the rehabilitation of a “brick kulla” located on the periphery of Klinë/Klina to be used as a Landscape Observatory was identified. Consultations with the local and central authorities on the potential of natural heritage, biodiversity and landscape have been carried out.

Next steps

- Case study on rehabilitation of designated area (sections along Klinë/Klina and the Drini i Bardhë/Beli Drim rivers).
- Launching of the initiative for an educational centre establishment with active participation of the local authorities, local schools representatives and the Ministry of Education and Science representatives.
- Biodiversity education workshops.
- Project for rehabilitation of the “brick kulla” to be used by the Landscape Observatory, with a special support of the MCYS.
- Feasibility study on Performing Arts and programme development.



Jakaj's brick tower in Ranoc village, Klinë/Klina



Wicker fences, Klinë/Klina



Drini i Bardhë/Beli Drim river, Klinë/Klina



CHILDREN'S GAMES AND PERFORMANCES IN DEČAN/DEČANE

Home to a World Heritage Site, stunning mountainous landscapes and numerous traditional types of stone towers (houses), the Dečan/Dečane municipality has great potential with its existing resources. While rehabilitation of the traditional houses have been the priority for some time, increasing cultural events and business activities are opening new cultural and economic perspective for the area; with unique rituals including sheep shearing, traditional games and emerging festivals such as a Chestnut Festival. Local products coming from local communities, including the Dečan/Visoki Dečani Monastery provide diverse opportunities to visitors. The Cultural Itineraries Initiative sees this area as a great opportunity for children's education, through creation of a children's games library as an attractive place for children and their families, where games and performances associated with their tangible and intangible cultural heritage will take place.





The programme supports

Adaptation of the “kulla” interior and exterior for a children's games library and the training staff for the selection and production of applicable games and children's programme. In addition, involvement of the neighbourhood for activities and side initiatives will be encouraged.

Activities conducted to present

A preliminary assessment of the selected building was consulted and consultations on the initiative with the local interested stakeholders were carried out. Pilot actions on the promotion of heritage assets in Deçan/Deçane municipality were organised and a programme proposal was developed for children's games.

Next steps

- Training of human resources.
- Together with the authorities, adaptation of the location for the new function.
- Setting up Children's games library.
- Design of selected games.
- Presentation of the programme in the schools interested to participate in the activity.
- Organise neighbours for small entrepreneurship including snacks, souvenirs.
- Coordinate visits.





TRADITIONAL FOOD & GASTRONOMY IN ISTOG/ISTOK

As an integral part of community's culture, traditional food is always dependent on what nature provides in a particular region. Due to the favourable climate conditions, the wider area of Istog/Istok municipality is known for its fish hatcheries and its apple orchards. Local communities celebrate the harvest time and share through traditional dinner, 'Darka e Lamës'. This rich table celebrating diversity of food and drinks is an inspiration to expand its focus to the entire region and promote its local products, and their traditional preparation and presentation. Cultural itineraries hope to work with local communities of the region and brand its products in a more systematic and diverse way, attracting visitors with the unique hospitality they offer.





The programme supports

A feasibility study for branding products and traditional gastronomy specialties. Identification and adaption of the interior of selected facility for products presentation, testing and culinary course is expected to inspire local communities and visitors of all ages. Campaigns to raise the interest of local inhabitants for the benefits of their involvement in the process are foreseen as immediate actions to be supported.

Activities conducted to present

The Annual Harvest (Apple) festival was supported to sample positive outcomes of such action. Analysis on Traditional Food in Western Region was made by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

An assessment of the condition of a traditional building (kulla) was carried out as a potential place for promotion of traditional food and drinks.

Next steps

- Project for restoration of the facility that should be rehabilitated in a shop, restaurant and place where the culinary course could be organised
- Promotion of the initiative among the local stakeholders, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education and Science
- Technical support to development of a programme for a cooperative approach in the region, production of diverse products with quality and presentation, branding the products, practices and rituals for tourism attraction.



Lama's dinner, Istog/Istok



Apple festival, Istog/Istok



Zenel Salihaj's tower in village Shushice, Istog/Istok



CONCLUSION STATEMENT

The essence of the initiative promotes an ever developing network in the region among involved stakeholders across the territory, encouraging research for constant improvement. Once the itineraries are set and the involved parties are mapped out, each itinerary point will be a platform for local stakeholders to gather around a cooperative production and marketing.



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