

First Routes4U meeting for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

"Strengthening regional development through the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe"

6-7 September 2018, Oslo, Norway

(Arts Council Norway, Mølleparken 2)

Workshop 1: Regional development through cultural tourism

Moderator: Tomasz DUDA, Phd Lecturer and Tutor "Tourism geography, cultural tourism and tourism routes valorization", Department of Tourism and Recreation, University of Szczecin, Poland.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary development of regions is determined by economic, cultural, geographic and environmental factors. Their level and way of use set the **sustainability** of the development process and affect the **competitiveness of the regions**, meaning that some regions are more developed and competitive than others. **Bridging these differences (while respecting cultural differences and unique features of the various areas) and ensuring cooperation in the framework of cross-border partnership have become the most important challenges of contemporary European regional policy and economy**, hence a key issue for the Baltic Sea Region.

Well-conceptualized and managed cultural tourism, as an alternative to mass leisure tourism, can be an excellent tool for regional economic development, enhancing economic growth by attracting visitors who are driven by their interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle offerings of the Region and of its community.

The global scale of cultural tourism has however created also a series of challenges for many regions with regards to the sustainability of development, the preservation and promotion of heritage, as well as to social equity, participation and cultural values. In order to maximize the impacts of cultural tourism in terms of fostering sustainable development, the cultural tourism offer needs to focus on **authentic experiences of cultural environments**, including landscapes, values, traditions and events. In this respect, cultural tourism may not only satisfy the cultural and leisure aspirations of the tourists, but may primarily, significantly and positively contribute to the cohesiveness of the regional communities, to the perception and the value of the Macro-region in the context of its economic, tourism and social development, as well as the trans-boundary collaboration and partnership.

The development of cultural tourism also contributes to raise the level of social awareness, building regional identity and sensitivity towards culture and heritage. This translates into increasing local entrepreneurship in the promotion and protection of the Region's assets, as well as creating cultural tourism products, contributing to

Routes4U Project

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Implemented
by the Council of Europe

employment growth (i.e. in the field of tourism services, related infrastructures and cultural events) prompting regional economic development.

The Baltic Sea Region is a good example, not only of a strong diversity of nations, but also of cultures, traditions, religions (catholic, orthodox, protestant) and languages (Slavic, German and Finno-Ugric). **The Baltic Sea Region is not a homogenous area**, also because of its countries' diverse social and economic state and level of development, as well as involvement in the processes of globalization, European integration and interregional cooperation.

The **need to create a strong, cohesive and stable Macro-region with the Baltic Sea itself as bonding element** is paramount. Its central location, with excellent access from almost every point of the Region, presents a key potential as a link between Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and other parts of the continent. As in historical times (e.g. during the Hansa time), the Baltic Sea could be further enhanced as a crossroad for trade, communication and transport, as well as for the transfer of knowledge, technology and innovations. It would also be advisable to strengthen the cooperation between the countries and sub-regions surrounding the Baltic Sea and define development priorities, in order to protect and sustainably use the Region natural heritage.

Cultural tourism based on existing Cultural Routes crossing the Baltic Sea Region can also play a significant role in view of this cooperation, which would contribute to increase the Region's competitiveness, its distinctiveness, originality and importance across Europe.

A good solution in order to bridge the discrepancies and gaps among the countries within the Baltic Sea Region could be undertaking and/or strengthening common **cross-border activities based on cultural values and heritage elements**. Creating trans-national tourism products and services based on existing thematic routes, organizing cultural events and building international and intercultural links are just some examples of good practices, to a certain extent already implemented in the Baltic Sea Region, which could help putting in place that solution. Cooperation within existing Macro-regions and joint partnership, as well as innovative forms of cultural tourism based on new technologies may play a key role in increasing the attractiveness of the Baltic Sea Region and its competitiveness with respect to other European regions.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

Transnational, thematic cultural routes are an integral part of the cultural tourism space and are a manifestation of the cooperation of numerous economic, social, cultural and tourism stakeholders.

In the Baltic Sea Region, there are over a dozen of certified Culture Routes of the

Council of Europe. Tourists' mobility based on thematic cultural routes requires, however, planned activities that **maximize profits for the Region, while minimizing negative environmental and social impacts** at the same time (management, infrastructure, information are fundamental issues in this respect). In this regards,

the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe help shaping the cultural tourism spaces of the Region, promoting regional identities and the experience of the "authenticity of the Region".

The positive impact of well-functioning cultural tourism products is evidently linked to the clear identification and engagement of the local community with their cultural heritage. This aspect can further translate into an increase of entrepreneurship by the community and promotion of the brand-image of the Region, hence into regional development.

An extremely important element of macro-regional development is building intercultural and international ties and bridges based on shared elements of heritage (not only cultural, but also natural), sometimes even related to a complicated history.

One of the biggest challenges of contemporary cultural tourism is the **dialogue between the tourism and the cultural heritage sector on local, regional and inter-regional levels**. Policy makers and practitioners should generate responsible approaches to tourism and regional development linked to cultural heritage. In the last 10-15 years, many macro-regional and cross-boundary initiatives have been initiated. As part of transnational joint programs, economic differences between more and less developed countries can significantly be reduced. However, macro-regional development in the Baltic Sea Region is only possible if beside the initiative at the transnational level, also actions on the local, regional and national levels are put in place, taking into account the specificity of the Baltic Sea Region sub-regions, the importance of local communities, their traditions and economic conditions.

The Baltic Sea Region could build its own unique brand based on commercial and cultural traditions. Economic development and blurring differences between sub-regions and countries within the Baltic Sea Region should be introduced considering its unique geographical location, at the intersection of large historical trade routes (bridging the North to the South and the East to the West), as well as unprecedented connection of cultural inflows from the other regions of Europe.

KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

1. Successful cultural tourism requires the **good coordination of all aspects of travel, heritage and management**. In all cases it should bring together public and private stakeholders: those involved in tourism, those involved in economic development, those involved in infrastructure, those involved in the cultural and heritage sites...

Are there any and if yes – what are the complementary tools used for successful joint management of cultural tourism in regional development process?

2. One of the most characteristic features of the contemporary cultural and heritage tourism are thematic cultural routes as a result of cooperation between all sites' stakeholders and regional authorities or organizations responsible for tourism development. Some of them, as the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, are of transnational significance and lead through the areas of several countries.

Does the border (cross-border zone) constitute a barrier, preventing or limiting the development of the cultural tourism space? How? Or rather, is it a zone of mutual penetration of actions, thoughts, and tourism activities?

3. **How does the cultural tourism space help regional authorities in constituting economic development strategies? Any examples or good-practices?**
4. Many regions in Europe have created their unique brands, recognizable not only in Europe but also abroad, especially in the contexts of tourism and regional development. Cultural tourism (including for instance culinary, wine-related, historic) and/or recreational areas (3S – sea, sun and sand), for example, are largely attributed to the Mediterranean Region.

Is it possible also in the Baltic Sea Region? Does the Baltic Sea connect or divide? How to use the existing Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in building cross-border cultural tourism products and the image of a well-managed, branded cultural Region (e.g. in 3H style – new Horizons, Heritage and Hospitality)?

5. The Baltic Sea Region is often perceived as an area, whose strengths mainly rely in its natural resources and with a clear focus on sustainable development. This concerns especially Scandinavia and large parts of the Baltic States (but not only). The cultural landscape of the Baltic Sea Region is therefore strongly linked to the "natural" character.

Whether and to what extend is the cultural tourism based on regional natural resources? Can cultural tourism be managed to strengthen sustainable development and how does it affects the regional economy?

6. The phenomenon of over-tourism is a common issue around the world. In this context, the Cultural Routes contribute to balance tourism by leading tourists

also to rural, off-the-beaten-track, remote destinations (e.g. The Via Regia in Poland – leads tourist from the crowded Cracow to the agriculture area of Lower Poland – Małopolska).

Where can the over-tourism be observed in Baltic Sea Region? How to avoid the negative influences of increasing tourist activity in the Region? Does over-tourism promote regional economy and development or limit it?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barré H., 2002, *Heritage Policies and International Perspectives: Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Development*, Museum International, 54:1-2, pp. 126-130
- Csapó J., 2012, *The Role and Importance of Cultural Tourism in Modern Tourism Industry*, [in:] M. Kasimoglu (ed.) *Strategies for Tourism Industry – Micro and Macro Perspectives*, InTech, Rijeka, pp. 201-232
- Council of Europe *Cultural Routes* www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/by-theme
- European Commission, 2013, *European Tourism Indicator System. Toolkit for Sustainable Destinations*, DG Enterprise and Industry
- European Institute of Cultural Routes www.culture-routes.net
- Głabiński Z., Duda T., 2017, *The local community perception of tourism development. The case study of Gryfino County – Western Pomerania, Poland*, Bulletin of Geography, Socio-Economic Series, no.37 (2017), pp.7-23
- McKercher B., Hilary C., 2002, *Cultural Tourism: The Partnership Between Tourism and Cultural Heritage Management*, New York: Hayworth Hospitality Press, p.262
- O'Hare D., 1997, *Interpreting the cultural landscape for tourism development*, URBAN Design International, 2(1), pp. 33-54
- Richards G., 2005, *Cultural Tourism in Europe*, The Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS), www.atlas-euro.org
- Shackelford P., 2001, *The social context of cultural tourism*, KeK folyorat, Budapest, pp. 29-41
- Weidenfeld A., 2013, *Tourism and cross border regional innovation systems*, Annals of Tourism Research, vol. 42, pp. 191-213