

First Routes4U conference for the Danube Region (EUSDR)

“Strengthening regional development through the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe”

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WORKSHOP 1: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CULTURAL TOURISM. BUILDING PROSPERITY IN THE DANUBE REGION

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INTRODUCTION

1. Main characteristics and specifics of the Danube Region

The Danube Region is a functional area defined by the world’s most international river basin, crossing through 10 countries and extending into 19 countries. The socio-economic situation in the Danube Region is not only determined by the fact that people and countries share the same river, but also by historical, economic, political, and cultural interdependencies. It has been the scene of cycles of integrations and disintegrations in the recent history as well as in the more distant past. Most recently, there have been the 2004 and 2007 waves of EU enlargement. The Region is now largely a European Union (EU) space. **The legacy of those cycles is manifested in widely different levels of development between the Northern-Western and Southern-Eastern parts of the Danube Region.** The Danube Region includes the most successful but also some of the poorest regions in the EU: the wealthiest region’s GDP per capita in 2015 being around six times higher than that of the poorest¹.

These and other socio-economic characteristics and features of the Danube countries pose a number of challenges. **The main challenge, from a regional perspective, is the enormous heterogeneity and wide disparities.** Another challenge is **to improve cohesion and increase competitiveness through cooperation.** The Danube Strategy of the European Union provides a sustainable framework for policy integration and coherent development of the Danube Region. The strategy seeks to create synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives taking place across the Region.

At the same time, **the regional economic and cultural diversity offers many opportunities** that may be exploited for fostering regional development, thus bringing prosperity to the Region. It has many areas of outstanding natural beauty. It has a rich history, heritage and culture. This in other words means that **the Region has enormous potential for tourism development.** Developing tourism in the Region under the

¹ Centre for European Economic Research GmbH (ZEW). Socio-economic Assessment of the Danube Region: State of the Region, Challenges and Strategy Development, Final Report Part I – Update, 2015 http://ftp.zew.de/pub/zew-docs/gutachten/DanubeRegionFinalReportPartI_Update2015.pdf

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common regional brand will contribute to connecting the Region and people to people contacts, which is one of the four Pillar of the European Union Strategy for Danube Region².

2. Tourism in Europe and in Danube Region – Facts and potential

Europe at large (both EU and extra-EU) remains the most visited region in the world, accounting for 50% of the world's tourist arrivals in 2016, and continues to lead growth in absolute terms. A quarter (26%) of tourists visit the Danube Region. However, their distribution among the Danube Region's countries defer much. 55% of the tourist arrivals of the Danube Region are concentrated in the most developed parts of the Region (Bavaria, Baden Württemberg, Austria), while only around 10% of tourists visit less developed parts of the Region. Although the growth of tourist arrivals outside the most developed parts of the Region is high in recent years, the differences are still high³. The main challenge is how to approach the development of tourism in the Region on a sustainable way, how to make the entire Danube Region more visible on the global tourism market, how to promote the flow of tourist within the Region, focusing on the remote areas with cultural and natural heritage.

3. Cultural tourism and Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe as a basis for cultural tourism development

Cultural tourism plays a leading role in creating new socioeconomic opportunities for tourism development at local, regional, national and transnational level. It has recently become one of the fastest-growing tourism trends. Cultural Routes have become an extremely valid strategy for the development of regions and areas, which, in many cases, have been marginalised from tourism dynamics, which is also the case of great part of the Danube Region.

With common history and tradition, culture and arts reflecting the diverse communities of the Region, as well as its outstanding natural heritage, the Region has attractive assets. The Danube Delta is a world heritage site offering sporting and other recreational options. A common and sustainable approach to improving and publicising these opportunities should make the Danube Region an European and world "brand"⁴.

Certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and many proposals for the certification of new cultural routes in the Region show that cultural stakeholders are interesting in promoting the cultural heritage of the Region, are ready to cooperate in this field and are aware of the potential of cultural tourism for the economic and social development of the Region. However, the question is, are they well equipped, do they have the capacity to take the lead role in fostering the development of cultural tourism in the Region, having in mind that for the creation of attractive cultural tourism products and experiences much more than just unique cultural heritage is needed to attract tourists to the Region. The attractive cultural tourism experience includes nature adventures, several tourist services and products and several public services, adequate infrastructure etc., which are provided by several

² European Union Strategy for Danube Region. EC. COM(2010) 715 final.Brussels, 8.12.2010

³ Data are obtained from various statistical databases.

⁴ European Union Strategy for Danube Region. EC. COM(2010) 715 final.Brussels, 8.12.2010

individual companies, NGOs and public sector institutions. This requires networking, cooperation, planning and investing together, and developing links with many industries, including creative industries, which are becoming an essential part of cultural tourism.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this workshop is to exchange experiences among participants and to discuss the main challenges of the Danube Region regarding cultural tourism as a driver for growth, jobs and sustainable economic development, in order to bridge the gap among developed and less developed parts of the Region, connect the people and increase prosperity.

In this context, the main objectives are to discuss how cultural tourism based on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe could:

- **Foster regional development** through:
 - Extension of certified Cultural Routes and development of new ones;
 - Improving accessibility of cultural heritage in remote areas, and
 - Bridging the gaps among the developed and less developed parts of the Region.

- **Enhance the connectivity** in the Danube Region through:
 - Awareness raising on the opportunities of cultural tourism development for economic development and increasing prosperity in the region;
 - Establishment of regional networks and cooperation among stakeholders in the Region.

- **Ensure sustainability** through:
 - Introducing a common comprehensive regional strategic approach to cultural tourism development and
 - Creating efficient business models for promotion and marketing of cultural tourism products of the Region.

- **Foster entrepreneurship** through:
 - Awareness raising and capacity building of stakeholders and
 - Promotion of links between tourism and creative industries as new drivers of economic development in the Region.

Specific objectives of the workshop are to:

- **Identify key gaps and bottlenecks** for successful cultural tourism development in the Region.

- **Provide recommendation** on future common actions needed to enable Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe to take over the role of the driver of a sustainable cultural tourism in the Region, focusing on actions that could be implemented within the ROUTES4U project.

KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

1. Danube Region faces wide discrepancies in the level of socio-economic development. This is also true in terms of tourism development in the Region. The key question is:
 - a. **How can we bridge the gaps among the Danube Region countries in terms of cultural tourism development and, consequently, economic development?**
 - b. What are the specific needs of less developed countries for the promotion of cultural tourism?
 - c. What actions should be taken to foster the development of less developed parts of the Region through the cultural tourism? Would be the experiences of the prosperous countries and regions valuable for less developed countries? If yes, what are the tools and mechanisms for efficient transfer of experiences?
 - d. What actions could create win-win situations for all countries in the Region?

2. Cultural Routes can become a driver for jobs, employment and growth only if they are able to create unique and attractive cultural tourism experience for tourists. Creating cultural tourism products requires involvement of a wide range of social stakeholders. It requires a **well-established network of stakeholders and thus a suitable business model** that will ensure the development, promotion and sales of cultural tourism products through a variety of cultural tourism sales channels and finally excellent implementation of cultural tourism products. The key question is:
 - a. Can routes provide synergies, foster coordinated actions of several individual stakeholders and destinations, connecting networks of destinations, creative cities and rural areas?
 - b. If yes, what kind of business model ensure this? Each Cultural Route as a destination with its own destination management organization?
 - c. Do we already have the best cases in place?
 - d. What are the experiences of certified Cultural Routes regarding this question?
 - e. What are the key success factors for creating an efficient business model that will ensure sustainable development of cultural tourism in the Region?

3. Further on, **awareness among the local population** of the potential of cultural tourism development for the creation of new business opportunities, employment and increasing prosperity in the Region is one of the key issues that need to be addressed properly. The question is:
 - a. How much are the citizens of the Danube Region aware of the potential of cultural tourism development for increasing prosperity in the Region?
 - b. What kind of actions should be implemented to raise awareness among citizens?

4. In order to foster the development of a sustainable regional cultural tourism and thus fully exploit its potential for regional development and growth, a strong commitment of national and local communities for the development of cultural tourism is necessary. The commitment should be reflected in **clear strategic orientation, written in the main local and national policies and strategies**. In addition, it is important that the strategies include also a clear action plan with defined measures and resources for its implementation. The question is:
 - a. Is the cultural tourism included in local and national policies? How?
 - b. What are the main policy measures for the promotion of cultural tourism? Are they implemented effectively?
 - c. Do these policy measures include specific measures for the promotion of SMEs?

- d. Would regional cultural tourism strategy and roadmap for its implementation contribute to faster and sustainable cultural tourism development in the Region?
5. Successful development of cultural tourism depends largely on the capacity of stakeholders throughout the value chain. The lack of knowledge and skills in management, development and marketing of cultural tourism, language skills and interpretation of cultural heritage could be a major constraint for regional cultural tourism development. According to the **importance of capacity building** for the overall success of cultural tourism, this issue needs to be addressed carefully. The question is:
- a. What are the experiences of Cultural Routes regarding the knowledge and skills of stakeholders in cultural tourism?
 - b. What kind of knowledge and skills are required for a successful cultural tourism development in the Region?
 - c. How can we improve the knowledge and skills in the Region?
6. As the significance of the creative economy continues to grow, important synergies with tourism are emerging, offering considerable potential to grow demand and develop new products, experiences and markets. This new link is driving opportunities to foster entrepreneurship, growth and employment, maintain cultural identity and enhance cultural diversity in the Danube Region. The question is:
- a. How are creative industries already included in the Cultural Routes?
 - b. How can we create links between tourism and creative industries to provide innovative cultural tourism experiences for tourists?**
 - c. Do we have any best cases in the Region?

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