

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 3 | MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR THE PROMOTION AND VISIBILITY OF HERITAGE IN THE DANUBE REGION

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INTRODUCTION

1. Routes4U Project

The project aims to enhance regional development through the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in the four macro-regions of the European Union. It contributes to cultural cooperation, offers a network for related stakeholders by introducing new activities, good practices and knowledge transfer for better cultural developments and sustainable cultural tourism. The project framework is shown by Figure 1:

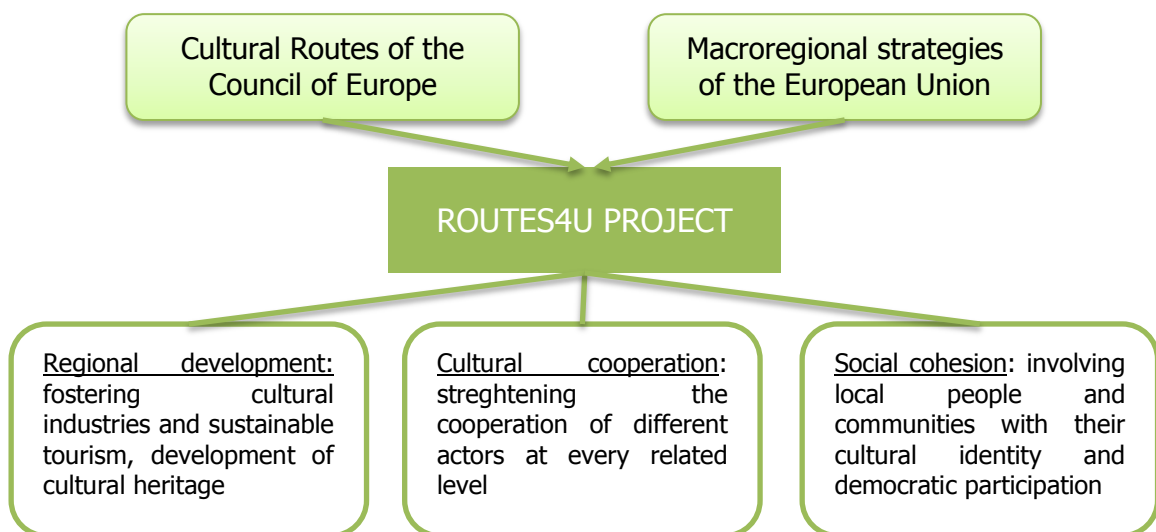


Figure 1: Routes4U Project framework

2. Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

The Cultural Routes, launched by the Council of Europe in 1987, demonstrate, by means of a **journey through space and time**, how the heritage of the **different countries and cultures** of Europe contributes to a **shared and living cultural heritage**.

Routes4U Project

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



Implemented
by the Council of Europe

The certification “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” is a guarantee of excellence. The networks implement innovative activities and projects pertaining to five main priority fields of action: co-operation in research and development; enhancement of memory, history and European heritage; cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans; contemporary cultural and artistic practice; cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.

Each route has to undergo an evaluation procedure, the steps and content of which are regulated by Resolutions of the Council of Europe. When a route meets the requirements – that is a “trademark of quality”, the certification is a **brand in cultural heritage**. There are **33** certified Cultural Routes at the moment, **21** of them are located in the Danube Region.

3. EU Strategy for Danube Region

The Danube Region has been changed in the past years. Being the most international river basin in the world, its territory now mainly belongs to the European Union. The **EU Strategy for Danube Region** can contribute to the main EU policy initiatives defined by the Europe 2020 strategy.

The Danube Region is a functional area defined by its river basin. Geographically the river concerns the following countries:

- EU members: Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria
- Non-EU members: Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova, Ukraine

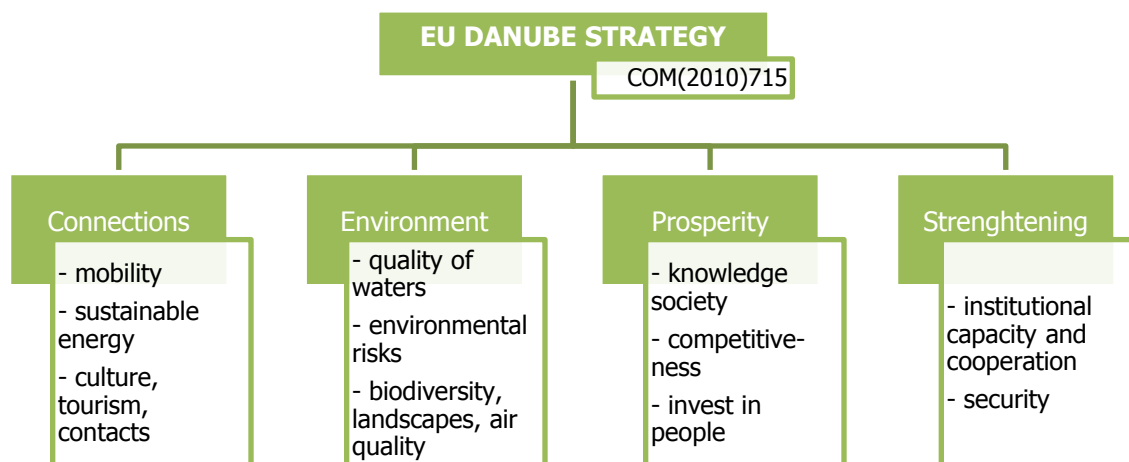


Figure 2: Four pillars of the Danube Strategy

Thus the Region, stretching along the one-fifth territory of the EU, with its 100 million inhabitants, has vital role in Europe’s life. Concerning transport and mobility, the Danube is one of the most important TEN-T, and also, a prospective ecological corridor. On the other side, the economic and social factors are very different within the region. The EU Danube Strategy is based on four pillars, as it is shown by Figure 2. Tourism and culture are part of Priority Area 1, as a distinct field of action. The document says:

"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 publicizing these opportunities should make the Danube Region a European and world BRAND."

Culture – as the river – can connect people and regions, history and traditions, regardless to politics, religions, ethnics or economic situation, thus cultural heritage can be a focal point in brand-building, a good base for developing a regional brand of the Danube Region.

But why branding is so important?

4. Tourism and marketing trends and approaches

Tourism has also changed during the last decade. According to UNWTO, 2017 was a highly important year in global tourism. It was a record year for international tourism. International tourist arrivals grew for the eighth consecutive year, a sequence of uninterrupted growth not recorded since the 1960s. Destinations worldwide welcomed 1,323 million international tourist arrivals, some 84 million more than in 2016. Tourism has grown above average, at around 4% per year, for eight straight years.

Regarding the latest trends (International Destination Marketing Association, 2014), **brands** are becoming focal points of travel decisions, when tourists seek their "dream holiday". Tourists are interested in the local, authentic life, the "Meet the locals" tendency is increasing. Special, personalised tourism products are in the centre of the demand, especially as the number of travels grows and their length shortens. Tourists are more experienced and critical. In this regard, stems the need to develop **new products and conceptions representing added value, authentic offer and diversified experiment.**

According to the latest issue of Special Eurobarometer on **Cultural Heritage**, the vast majority of Europeans (84%) feel that cultural heritage is important to them personally, and 90% believe that it is important to their country. There is also a strong feeling that cultural heritage is a crucial part of European **identity**, with 80% believing that it is important to the EU as a whole. Many Europeans are **proud** of the history and culture within their local communities; 82% take pride in historical monuments or sites, works of art or traditions from their region or country. Also, 7 in 10 agree that they take pride in a historical monument or site, work of art or tradition from a European country other than their own. The majority (70%) claimed that living close to places with remarkable examples of Europe's cultural heritage can give people a **sense of belonging to Europe**. Moreover, 71% also believe that living near places of importance to Europe's cultural heritage can improve their quality of life. 2018 is the European Year of Cultural Heritage. Cultural heritage enriches the lives of citizens and helps to build a stronger and more cohesive society, but it is also economically important, providing employment and tourism opportunities.

Branding – thus – is a special issue now in tourism marketing. In the context of Cultural Routes and the Danube Region, place branding and destination branding topics are the best methods to use in developing a culture-based regional brand in the Danube Region.

As a consequence of the above, we can state that the **Danube Region** has **great potential** in tourism development, due to its rich history, heritage and culture, natural beauty. In many cases, the present independent countries have common past, sharing the same values and traditions, historical personalities.

The Danube Region, with its 2800 km length, has always been a tourism attraction, with several capitals on its banks and several attractions alongside. According to the Danube Tourism Committee (DTC) – as an example – the popularity of ship trips is developing, and for instance the number of mooring just in Passau (Germany) increased from 700 in 2010 to almost 2000 in 2011. A stable, modern, cooperative tourism offer and infrastructure can be an answer for the opportunities, not forgetting the focus on strengthening competitiveness and sustainability. We also have to improve the marketing activities of the rich heritage of the Region, with emphasis on the importance of creating a regional brand for the Danube Region.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of Routes4U Joint Program is to strengthen regional development through the Cultural Routes in the Danube Region.

The main objective of the workshop is – after having provided with an insight into the framework of the EU Danube Strategy and the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe – to find answers for the new challenges of tourism marketing, especially digital marketing tools, networking and cooperation methods, route management and visibility of the cultural routes in the Danube Region, from a multi-stakeholder view. In specific:

1. Identify the main challenges of tourism / route management – organizational issues, members and supporters, fund raising, skills and competences, staff and volunteers;
2. Evaluation of present marketing and visibility of cultural routes in the Danube Region;
3. Analyses and evaluate the usage of STP1 marketing for routes, creating tourism products and their competitiveness;
4. Networking, collaboration and stakeholder management through cultural routes – how does it work in the Danube Region, what effective and interactive communication tools can be recommended;
5. Interpretation and user experience – how to use up-to-date tools in reaching new target groups and the youth;
6. Creation of a regional brand of the Danube Region and of the Cultural Routes in the Danube Region.

¹ STP is a three-step approach in building a targeted marketing plan. 1st step is Segmenting, 2nd step is Targeting and 3rd step is Positioning.

KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

According to the above, small working groups/teams are offered to be organized within the workshop to discuss and evaluate the following key questions, with formulating recommendations by the end of the discussions:

- 1. What are the critical points of route management and execution of fostering cultural connections and cooperation according to the EUSDR in order to establish proper marketing actions?**
 - a. SWOT-analysis method can be used in identifying critical points as weaknesses and threats (and how to get over them), opportunities (to exploit);
 - b. Suggest actions or possible joint projects to foster cooperation in marketing cultural heritage in the Danube Region;
 - c. How to find new (active!) members for a route network, what are the main benefits for them to participate; how to find supporter members and other "honorary" members who can support financing and especially marketing activities.

- 2. Evaluate the present visibility and marketing activities of cultural tourism and cultural routes in the Danube Region:**
 - a. How does STP marketing works – or even is it used – related to cultural offer, especially in case of existing Cultural Routes in the Region;
 - b. How are tourism products created; evaluate and analyze the existing tourism products of Cultural Routes in the Danube Region;
 - c. Identify the specific marketing tasks in different levels of a cultural route: individual members – route management and bodies – EICR and EPA.

- 3. How is a marketing strategy made? What are the main issues in case of cultural tourism products and cultural routes?**
 - a. Assess the marketing strategies of the existing cultural routes in the region, with special regard to their execution;
 - b. What key factors are needed for a successful marketing strategy for cultural routes – use of ICT technologies, harmony with higher level marketing programs, are there any performance indicators used by cultural routes, etc. – find best practices in the Region;

- 4. Evaluate the existing interpretation, heritage presentation methods and tools used by cultural routes in the Danube Region:**
 - a. What kind of content to be developed, to what target groups;
 - b. How to offer meaningful experiences in a contemporary environment;
 - c. What are the most relevant communication channels / platforms for strengthening the visibility of cultural routes.

- 5. How can tourism and cultural routes development contribute to the creation of a regional brand in the Danube Region?**
 - a. What are the main elements to build the brand on (how can we position, differentiate the Region);
 - b. How can the brand value be measured (conscious brand value building, with strong image);
 - c. Realization of brand-building (brand-culture, -character, -personality, -name, -logo, -slogan as the six consistent factors);
 - d. How can the brand support existing Cultural Routes and support new initiatives in the Danube Region?

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