



ISTOG / ISTOK

EU/ COE JOINT PROJECT –
Support to the Promotion of Cultural Diversity
Local Economic Development component
Pilot Actions



JP - EU/CoE Support to the Promotion of Cultural Diversity (PCDK)

Funded
by the European Union



Implemented
by the Council of Europe

BACKGROUND

The Local Economic Development (LED) component of the European Union / Council of Europe Joint Action Support to the Promotion of Cultural Diversity in Kosovo* (PCDK) has been inspired by and closely associated with the Local Development Pilot Project (LDPP) of the Council of Europe's Regional Programme for Cultural and Natural Heritage in South East Europe.

While the Regional Programme has a wider scope in the sphere of economic development, PCDK / LED focuses specifically on one aspect of the regional programme: heritage tourism. In this capacity, PCDK / LED aims to create conditions to facilitate social cohesion and economic development through utilising the potential of cultural and natural heritage for the region of Kosovo West.

Working with the six municipalities of Kosovo West (Pejë/Peć, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Klinë/Klina, Deçan/Dečane, Junik/Junik and Istog/Istok), the PCDK project highlights the importance of heritage protection, maintenance and management with an integrated approach in the process of local

economic development. This pilot project sets a feasible structure, methodology and examples of how, if managed effectively, heritage could be an asset of great benefit to local communities as part of a dynamic social and economic development process.

In preparation for the Regional Heritage Plan, the PCDK project acknowledges all heritage sites and assets in the region, based on the information provided by local and central authorities and institutions. These actions, however, have focused on attractions and features that are currently accessible and presentable to the general public and visitors for the purpose of heritage tourism.

This booklet has been prepared for stakeholders in the municipality of Istog/Istok to accompany the Regional Heritage Plan and its recommendations. It encourages the active involvement of local communities and stakeholders in the implementation of priority actions in the municipality, in coordination with the five other municipalities in the region, as well as with central authorities.

*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.

Water spring



St. John's Church in Cirkolez/Crkolež village

Zallq/Žax bridge



OBJECTIVES

Local Economic Development activities and pilot actions focused on the:

- Assessment of the capacity of natural and cultural heritage of the region;
- Creation of a strategic planning instrument for heritage protection and revitalisation;
- Development of effective partnerships between different stakeholders and encouragement of public/private initiatives on heritage;
- Establishment of a community based regional coordination office for heritage management.

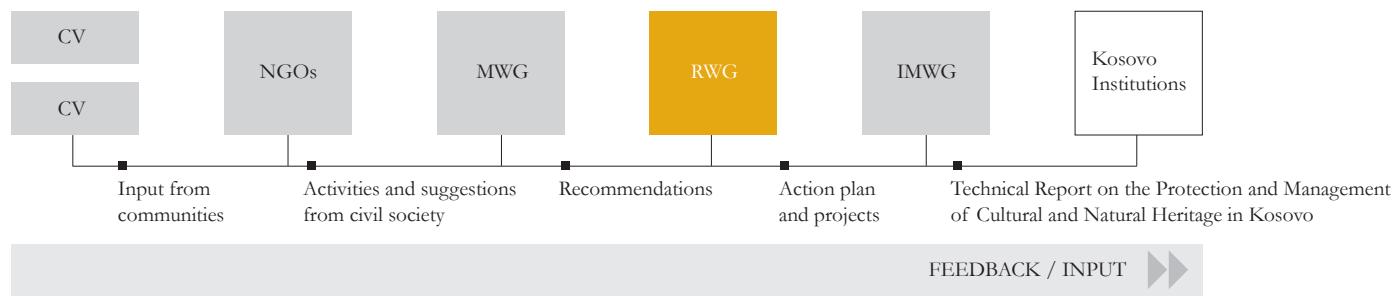
METHODOLOGY

The Heritage Plan is a dynamic process providing a strategic context for community actions with existing resources to ensure the greatest benefits to the local communities in the region. It aims to facilitate joint actions in the identification of priorities for the distribution of available funds for the conservation and promotion of heritage, in coordination with the central government, the municipalities and other interested parties.

To ensure active engagement of stakeholders, the PCDK project adopted the following methodology and workflow where there is continuous feedback and input from communities into policy-making, while regular knowledge and skill transfer is encouraged at the community level.



KNOWLEDGE / SKILL



MUNICIPALITY OF ISTOG/ISTOK



Traditional woman clothes of Podgori

The municipality of Istog/Istok is located in northwestern Kosovo near the border area with Montenegro, and linked by mountain range rising over 2,000 metres above sea level. The municipality includes the town of Istog/Istok and 51 villages. The population is estimated at 56,000 inhabitants, of which the majority is Kosovo Albanians with more than 2,200 Egyptians and 1,600 Bosniaks. Kosovo Serbs number around 800 inhabitants, mainly residing in 7 villages (Cerkolez/Crkolez, Osojan/Osojane and Llukavci i Thatë /SUVI Lukavac, Muzhevinë/Muževine and Zallq/Žač).

The name of the town and the municipality comes from the archaic version of the old Serbian word istok which means “well” or “water source”, and refers to the springs of the Istog/Istok River, a tributary of the Drini Bardhë/Beli Drim River. This natural characteristic of the area is expressed through the many of water springs, and gives the municipality of Istog/Istok a great opportunity for development of eco- and rural tourism. The Istog/Istok spring, Drini

Bardhë/Beli Drim spring, Vrella/Vrelo spring, as well as the Istog/Istok River are the most attractive sites for water sports. The healing thermal waters of Banjë/Banja are also considered an important asset for the development of spa tourism.

The rich water landscape of the area has throughout time presented many opportunities and endowed it with a unique character. This is expressed through the many bridges and mills which still exist as cultural monuments, including the Stone Bridge in Zallq/Žač (17th century) and the Qelë Bicaj Mill in Vrellë/Vrelo village (19th – 20th century). The area also has kullas, as characteristic stone tower residential buildings, such as the Kulla of Qerim Rugova in the Llukavc/Lukavac village which was built in 1900. The traditional rural life of communities in Istog/Istok are represented by the organisation of common events such as the Lama’s Dinner, which celebrates a successful season and harvest in livestock and agriculture across the region.

INVOLVEMENT OF ISTOG/ISTOK MUNICIPALITY IN THE LED ACTIVITIES

In the context of the PCDK project, a number of actions were carried out with the active involvement of local stakeholders from Istog/Istok municipality.

- Research on cultural and natural heritage assets and their heritage tourism capabilities were undertaken through surveys, interviews and semi structured meetings with stakeholders, with the participation of:

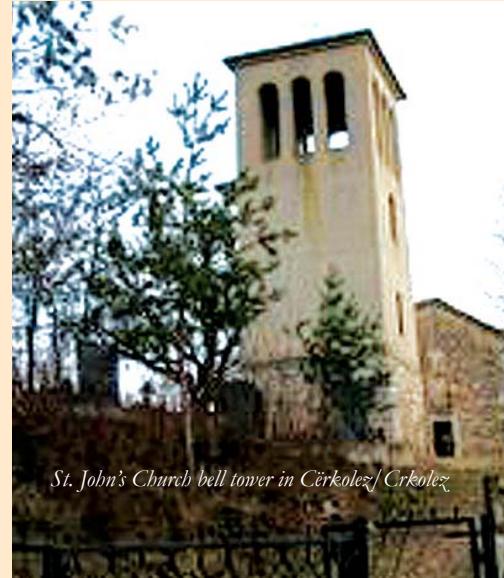
- UBO Research Company
- NGO Podguri
- Community volunteers
- Regional Centre for Cultural Heritage in Pejë/Pec

- Pilot actions were implemented simultaneously in the six municipalities of Kosovo West. These pilot actions were comprised of three components which played crucial role for community engagement in preparation of the Regional Heritage Plan.



Activity	Local Stakeholders
A. IDENTIFICATION OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSETS	
I. Data collection of selected natural and cultural heritage assets	
<i>Data collection of immovable cultural heritage assets</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qelë Bicaj Mill (Vrellë/Vrelo village, 19th-20th century) • Qerim Rugova Tower (Llukavc/Lukavac village, 1910) • St. John's Church (Cërkolez/Crkolez village, 14th century) • Stone bridge (Zallq/ Žač, 17th century) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO Podguri - PCDK project team.
<i>Data collection of intangible cultural heritage assets</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lama's Dinner in the village of Cërrcë/Cerc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO Podguri
<i>Data-Collection of natural heritage assets</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural water spring near the town of Istog/Istok • Thermal water spring – Banjë/Banja village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO Podguri - Valmira Gashi (MESP)
II. Promotional material	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of Heritage Map of Istog/Istok • Design of Heritage Tourism Information Panel for a group of selected natural and cultural heritage assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO Podguri - Municipal Working Group of Istog/Istok
B. INTANGIBLE HERITAGE PRACTICE	
I. Identification	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lama's Dinner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO Podguri
II. Organisation of event on intangible cultural heritage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of the Traditional Podguri Women's Clothes exhibition (5th October 2011), held in the Cultural Centre of Istog/Istok • Catalogue of Traditional Podguri Women's Clothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO Podguri
C. JOINT REGIONAL EVENTS ON CULTURAL TOURISM	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation on the Regional Autumn Festival, held in Istog/Istok on 25th November 2011. Istog/Istok municipality was represented by the exhibition of Podguri traditional clothes, artisans, local food producers and traditional music performers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGO Podguri; - Artisans, producers and performers of Istog/Istok - PCDK project team.

Activity	Local stakeholders
Education and Awareness Raising	
Course design on Heritage and Diversity for elementary schools	Students, parents and teachers from the “Hysni Zajmi” elementary school in Istog/Istok municipality
HAJDE Tour - site visits	Students from “Hysni Zajmi” elementary school in Istog/Istok municipality; Groups from minority communities; People with special needs.
Teacher Training on Heritage and Diversity	1 teacher from “Hysni Zajmi” elementary school
Institutional Capacity Development	
Study visits to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Belgium, Switzerland, Ireland, Turkey, Venice, Slovenia.	MWG representatives of Istog/Istok; representatives of the NGO Podguri
“Connections: Regional conference on Intangible Cultural Heritage” March 2012, Prishtinë/Priština	NGO Podguri representative



RECOMMENDED PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR ISTOG/ISTOK MUNICIPALITY WITHIN REGIONAL HERITAGE PLAN 2012-2015

The following is a list of recommendations for actions in Istog/Istok that are in line with Regional Heritage Plan for Kosovo West 2012 – 2015, and with other municipalities in the region.

To raise awareness and promote appreciation of heritage in Kosovo West

- Participate in regional annual festivals to raise awareness among public and funds for activities, such as the apple festival, fish festival and herb festival
- Support school-based awareness raising activities in the municipality
- Continue organising of Lama's Dinner with timely promotional materials
- Utilise the regional logo for branding
- Ensure regular waste collection and awareness-raising on the importance of a clean environment

To take necessary measures for protection of heritage in Kosovo West

- Research and identify unique practices of traditions, games and heritage in Istog/Istok in order to document these according to guidelines
- Map all the built, moveable, intangible and natural heritage assets with relevant information and regularly update the central authorities
- List the buildings at risk in the municipality

To develop and encourage thorough assessment, integrated project design and planning with sound heritage management plan in Kosovo West

- Identify necessary tourism service delivery standards and provide training to local service providers
- Have a clear updated heritage tourism map of all assets that are ready for visitors
- Provide input to annual regional report on 'State of the Heritage' in Kosovo West
- Ensure proper signage for sites that are ready for tourism
- Test cultural products and marketing styles in your respective area of work in the region

To develop and coordinate appropriate management practices for the care of heritage in Kosovo West

- Organise capacity development for increased heritage management skills, including local guides
- Participate in regular meetings / forums to share developments and be informed about the regional programme
- Send locally produced brochures and promotional materials to Regional Coordination Office

Develop locally appropriate and sustainable heritage tourism initiatives in Kosovo West

- Identify a kulla structure in the municipality to participate in Cultural Routes initiative
- Invest in cultural product items based on local cultural heritage practices, such as traditional Podguri costume and Lama's Dinner
- Support Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) initiatives, including Bed & Breakfast
- Make Istog/Istok a tourist destination for gastronomy and organic food in the region

INVOLVED PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Main partners

Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports
Municipality of Istog/Istok
NGOs: Podguri, Visioni-2, and Osojane

Regional Working Group members

Avdyl Hoxha, Director of the Centre for Cultural Heritage - Pejë/Peć • Osman Gojani, Director of the Centre for Cultural Heritage - Gjakovë/Đakovica • Shpresa Gjonbalaj, Director of Cultural Department - Pejë/Peć municipality • Engjëll Berisha, Director of the Library - Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality • Musa Kaliqani, Head of Economic Department - Istog/Istok

municipality • Hajdin Morina, Education officer - Klinë/Klina municipality • Nimon Tofaj, Vice Mayor of Junik/Junik municipality • Shkëlzen Shehu, Urbanism Department - Deçan/Dečane municipality • Kujtim Rrahmani, NGO Arteza - Gjakovë/Đakovica • Shasimete Selimaj, NGO 7 Shtatori - Pejë/Peć • Rexhep Maksutaj, NGO Agimi, Deçan/Dečane

Municipal Working Group members

Istog/Istok

Raze Dreshaj, Regional Centre for Cultural Heritage – Pejë/Peć • Musa Kaliqani, Economic Department - Istog/Istok

municipality • Sami Ferati, Educational Department - Istog/Istok municipality • Enver Boletini, Ethnological Museum - Istog/Istok municipality • Qefsere Ibrahimaj, Cultural Department - Istog/Istok municipality • Qerim Rexhaj, Teacher - Istog/Istok municipality • Ismet Demaj, Civil Society representative - Istog/Istok municipality • Daut Blakaj, NGO Podguri, Istog/Istok • Rexhë Mula, NGO Visioni -2, Istog/Istok • Milka Tošić, Osojane - Istog/Istok • Albina Alihadri, Ethnologist • Blerta Xhemaj, Ethnologist • Luan Blakaj, Teacher - Istog/Istok municipality

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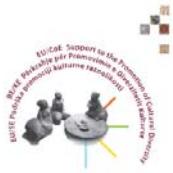
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• Zekë Çeku, freelance Consultant on Tourism development • Burbuqe Deva, representative of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports • Valmira Gashi, expert

from the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning • Arsim Mulhaxha, representative from Regional Cultural Heritage Centre - Pejë/Peć • Vergina Dyla, representative from Regional Cultural Heritage Centre - Gjakovë/ Đakovica • Jeton Aliu, Ministry of Trade and Industry: Tourism Department • UBO Consulting Company

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