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Regional Stakeholders Conference

Black Sea Synergy: the way forward

Thursday, 7 November 2019

Athens, Greece

Working Group 1: Culture & Tourism

Concept paper

CULTURE AND TOURISM IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

A. Background

Tourism is a thriving, global industry. New tourism trends encompass alternative forms of activities; agritourism, pesca-tourism, religious tourism, gastronomic and film tourism, and even medical tourism, are becoming increasingly popular.

The Black Sea Region possesses remarkable cultural diversity, rich historic and architectural heritage and diverse natural resources, attracting travellers from around the globe. In this respect, tourism not only represents a great chance for regional sustainable development, but also a motivation for closer regional cooperation in every field, such as culture, environment and transport.

According to the **EC Joint Staff Working Document** entitled [‘Black Sea Synergy: review of a regional cooperation initiative - period 2015-2018’](#) culture and tourism are in the second circle. They are identified as having made some progress, but receive interest from the partners in the Region and hence have a great potential to be developed further.

Additionally, as noted in the latest **UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) brochure on ‘Tourism in the BSEC region’**, tourism is a major economic pillar in some mature destinations of the area, while in emerging ones the potential for growth is still high.

On the other hand, the sector is largely dominated by traditional business models, and there is still low access to financing and to new technologies, affecting mainly SMEs. Brain drain especially among young people, is an important challenge for the Region. Additionally, it is crucial to



underline that the unregulated development of the tourism industry jeopardises the sector itself. Protection of the cultural heritage by tackling illicit activities and environmental degradation; supporting youth entrepreneurship and life-long learning; promoting alternative forms of tourism and encouraging mobility, are key challenges that require immediate action.

As a cross-cutting sector, tourism requires an interdisciplinary approach, as well as coordination of all involved stakeholders, from public and private sectors, academia and civil society, in order to generate successful outcomes. Coordinated action at national and regional level is expected to help untap the potential of the area, hence mitigating challenges such as brain drain, social inclusion of vulnerable groups, environmental protection, and increasing the ownership of the different policies focused on the region by the final stakeholders.

B. Existing regional projects/initiatives targeting tourism and culture in the Black Sea

- European Union

The EU has been actively supporting cooperation on education, training, youth issues and sport in the Black Sea Region through the [Erasmus+](#) programme, and in the areas of culture and audio-visual under the [Creative Europe](#) programme. Particularly, the Creative Europe programme has been funding 174 transnational cooperation projects involving cultural and audio-visual organisations from five countries in the Black Sea Region: Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine.

Tourism is traditionally an area that brings Black Sea countries together. However, this is limited to project-based cooperation. In this regard, a number of projects were launched between 2015 and 2018. These were supported by the Joint Operational Programme Black Sea Basin ([ENI CBC BSB](#)) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund ([EMFF](#)).

As regards coastal and maritime tourism, according to the Black Sea Synergy review, structural regional cooperation enhances the competitiveness and sustainable growth of the tourism sector in the region. The participation in cultural cooperation projects is very positive.

During the last period, the maritime sector in the Black Sea Region has been addressed by the [Facility for Blue Growth in the Black Sea](#). During the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea ([Black Sea SRIA](#)) was launched, and the [Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea](#) was endorsed by the Ministers of seven Black Sea countries (i.e. Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine). Both documents include targeted policies and actions on the empowerment of coastal tourism in the Black Sea Region.

- BSEC Organisation



The key priorities for the **Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)** in the field of culture and tourism are defined by **GOAL 8: Development of Tourism and Protection of Cultural Heritage** of the *BSEC Economic Agenda 'Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership'* (2012). In addition, there are two dedicated BSEC Working Groups; BSEC WG on Cooperation in Tourism and BSEC WG on Culture that meet twice a year.

- **UNWTO's [Silk Road](#) and [Western Silk Road](#) initiatives**

UNWTO's Silk Road initiative functions as a collaborative platform designed to enhance sustainable tourism development along the historic Silk Road routes. The initiative aims to maximise the benefits of tourism development for local Silk Road communities, while stimulating investment and promoting the conservation of the route's natural and cultural heritage. Additionally, it is working to foster greater cooperation between Silk Road countries and regions, with the established aim of creating a seamless and memorable Silk Road travel experience.

The Western Silk Road Tourism Development initiative was part of the Enhancing the Understanding of European Tourism project jointly developed by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) of the European Commission (EC).

Co-financed with European Union's COSME Programme (2014–2020) funds, the Enhancing the Understanding of European Tourism project aimed to improve the socio-economic knowledge of the tourism sector within Europe. The knowledge gained acts as a leverage contributing towards economic growth, job creation and tourism competitiveness.

- **[Cultural Routes](#) of the Council of Europe**

Launched by the Council of Europe in 1987, the Cultural Routes 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.

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe are an invitation to travel and to discover the rich and diverse heritage of Europe by bringing people and places together in networks of shared history and heritage. They put into practice the values of the Council of Europe: human rights, cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and mutual exchanges across borders. The Cultural Routes cover a range of different themes, from architecture and landscape to religious influences, from gastronomy and intangible heritage to the major figures of European art, music and literature.

All Black Sea Synergy countries have an experience of at least one Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, and most of them are involved in one common route.

- **An example of best practice from the Mediterranean**



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The [Bologna Charter](#) is an initiative of European regions, but open to other coastal administrations of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, promoting a common framework for strategic actions aimed at the protection and sustainable development of the Mediterranean coastal area. The Bologna Charter was [presented at the BSEC-CPMR Workshop on Project Promotion](#) in March 2018 in Istanbul, as a source of inspiration for the Black Sea Region.

C. [Objectives](#)

- a) To **assess lessons learnt, opportunities & challenges**, as well as the level of engagement of all relevant stakeholders (government, industry, academia, civil society) in order to strengthen cooperation in these fields;
- b) To **identify and propose concrete ideas and projects** in the field of culture and tourism, to be further pursued by regional stakeholders, in EU programmes and financial instruments, and/or in other national, regional, international funding mechanisms;
- c) To elaborate and **propose policy recommendations** to support a practical, results-oriented intra- and bi- regional cooperation.

D. [Questions](#)

- 1) What are the priorities of your institution regarding culture and tourism?
- 2) When your institution draws up its strategic plan for the future, do you take into consideration the existing policies/initiatives? Do you launch or participate in public consultations? Do you brainstorm with other stakeholders in the area (e.g. Local and Regional Authorities, Universities, Chambers of Commerce, SMEs, Civil Society organisations, etc.)?
- 3) Are you involved in cooperation projects with other stakeholders from the Black Sea Synergy region? Lessons learnt? Examples of best practice? Outcomes and capitalisation of results?
- 4) Are there any project ideas you would like to work on with partners from the Black Sea Synergy region? What are the funding opportunities/financial instruments you would target?
- 5) In order to be sustainable, projects should have a concrete capitalisation of results and provide useful feedback to existing and potential policies. What are your priorities in terms of policy? What could be the policy recommendations we should work on during next period (mid-long term)?



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- 6) What are the needs in terms of skills that education and training institutions should take into consideration for their planning? (To be presented to the following session of the working group on education.)

The outcomes of this session will be shared with the other three working groups on **transport**, **education**, and **energy**. The results of each working group will be presented in a policy paper by ICBSS in cooperation with the moderators, to be sent to the EU as a key deliverable from the Conference.

Moderator:

Stavros KALOGNOMOS

Executive Secretary of the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission and Coordinator of the Adriatic Ionian Network of Universities, Regions, Chambers of Commerce and Cities (AI-NURECC Initiative).

Organisation:

The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions brings together some 150 Regions from 25 States from the EU and beyond. Representing about 200 million people, it operates both as a think tank and as a lobby for Regions. The CPMR focuses mainly on social, economic and territorial cohesion, maritime policies and blue growth, and accessibility. It is present in the Black Sea Synergy region primarily through its Balkan and Black Sea Commission, as well as through its Intermediterranean and Islands Commissions. For more information about the EU cooperation projects in which the CPMR and its Geographical Commissions are involved, please visit [CPMR Projects Catalogue](#).