Policy Recommendations by Horizon2020 Sustainable Cultural Tourism Projects

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the direct result of the policy workshop of 5 July 2022 in Lisbon and Brussels' round table of 11 October 2022, organized by DG RTD and REA and involving six research projects on cultural tourism funded under the recent Horizon 2020 calls. The report contains the main findings and outcomes regarding three main areas: (i) EU Policy and Europeanization, (ii) Research and Innovation, and (iii) Sustainability and Infrastructure.

Within the area of EU Policy and Europeanization, the authors highlight the tangible and recognized potential of cultural tourism but note that additional steps are needed in order to make Tourism a full-value policy sector, also being more specifically recognized within the Green Deal and Structural Development Fund programmes. European routes and joint ticketing systems are identified as important programmes to create linkages around common themes, instigating a sense of 'Europeanization' which can further be supported through education, particularly via Erasmus and Erasmus+ programmes.

On the area of Research and Innovation, main policy recommendations relate to the consolidation of new and developed technologies, calling for a Cultural Tourism Cluster to aggregate already developed tools in order to avoid dispersion and reduced usage. Furthermore, within the EC Research & Innovation coordination policy, non-research partners could be asked to deliver credible business plans for measurable and tangible exploitation of results. Innovation is seen as having a crucial role for the further (sustainable) development of cultural tourism and continued support in the form of funding is of particular importance. This also entails providing clear and accurate congregated information on funding possibilities and guidelines for optimal usage. At the same time, in order to make innovations work for local communities, support training for local communities and business should be a central focus.

Finally, within the reflection on Sustainability and Infrastructure, the focus is placed primarily on strategies and policies to support sustainable cultural tourism development. Active heritage communities, included via participatory methodologies are seen as valuable approaches to more effectively integrate potential stakeholder conflicts and overcome these. Furthermore, action-training mechanisms can not only activate local heritage communities in co-developing methods but also in adapting these to local contexts to further facilitate the spread of good practices. Furthermore, in an economic sense, the characteristics of tourism as often consuming – for large part – public goods and leading to an uneven spread of costs and benefits, require a rethink of possibilities to sharing (pooling) costs and benefits of territorial development in more equal fashion. Lastly, even with best intentions, modern innovations, digitization, etc., certain marginal territories do

remain limited by important material problems such as lack of infrastructure and mobility. Methodologically analysing such situations, including searching for good practices, and conditions for locally implementing least costly solutions might help to overcome these deficits, particularly when combined with potential financial mechanisms.

Technical Information

List of abbreviations and acronyms used

Acronym	Description
CT	Cultural Tourism
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
H2020	Horizon 2020
PO	Project Officer
REA	Research Executive Agency
R&I	Research & Innovation
SME	Small & Medium Enterprises

Introduction

Six of the H2020 funded projects (IMPACTOUR, SPOT, SmartCulTour, TExTOUR, INCULTUM, Be.CULTOUR) convened in Lisbon (UNINOVA premises) on July 5th, 2022 under the coordination of UNINOVA, to share research results and common experiences in the evaluation, management and development of Cultural Tourism across European regions with the objective to provide recommendations to the EU policy making authorities.

The outcomes of the July 5th meeting were centred on three important aspects of Cultural Tourism:

- EU Policy and Europeanisation
- Research and Innovation
- Sustainability and Infrastructure

A follow-up meeting with the REA Project Officer (Rodrigo Martín Galán) was held on October 11th 2022 online in which presentations related to the proposals on the three aspects mentioned above were exposed.

1.EU Policy and Europeanization

1.1 Horizontal and vertical Europeanization

Claudio Radaelli (2003, p.30) defines Europeanization as the "processes of (a) construction, (b) diffusion, and (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'way of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies. From a policy perspective, it has been seen as both an 'upstream' - of national policies to the European level – and 'downstream' – of EU policies to the national level – process of policy diffusion. Both upstream and downstream processes reflect a strategy of vertical Europeanisation: a political strategy aimed at achieving policy harmonisation.

As mentioned by the European University Institute (2018), this 'policy' is not merely limited to legislative frameworks but broadly encompasses beliefs, norms, rules, institutions, paradigms, styles, procedures and routines. Notwithstanding, the publication also mentions how studies on Europeanization have traditionally emphasized the political dimension – i.e. governance of the internal market, liberal democracy and the rule of law, adoption of human and minority rights – generally focussing less on economic, social and cultural Europeanization.

A move away from institutional Europeanization – indelibly linked to accession criteria – to social, cultural and economic Europeanization, particularly related to the attitudes and behaviours of citizens can lead to more complex and contentious impacts with potentially limited convergence effects and an absence of causal relationships. Furthermore, it requires a reinterpretation of Europeanization as a process – dissemination of EU policies in their broadest sense – rather than an outcome – the extent of the state of policy alignment (European University Institute, 2018).

When considering the process of Europeanization, literature on policy diffusion first distinguishes between direct – where EU actors directly seek to influence policy-making in a vertical sense – and indirect – in which the role of the EU is more passive and *laissez-faire* – mechanisms. From the point of view of member countries/regions, adoption can be based on a logic of consequences or a logic of appropriateness (March & Olsen, 1989). Under the logic of consequences, the utility of a choice is maximized, highlighting a pragmatic approach to Europeanization.

This can be linked to the idea of externalization which links behaviour to the avoidance of net costs – e.g. most prevalent in EU internal market access. On the other hand, the logic of appropriateness is related to the normative acceptance of EU ideas and norms through socialization and learning. While earlier studies suggest that a pragmatic approach of conditionality is more effective than socialization, socialization and internationalization of EU ideas and norms might be considered on a longer time horizon. Crouch (2018) therefore emphasizes the need to involve 'horizontal' mechanisms, particularly in the case of post-accession, resulting from transnational socio-cultural processes, where Europeanization is a side-effect of largely autonomous developments in mobility, tourism, migration, etc.

In this context, **culture, cultural heritage and cultural tourism** can have a primary role in conveying a sense of belonging and togetherness among European communities, promoting horizontal processes of cultural Europeanisation. Culture, cultural heritage and cultural tourism have indeed a great potential to strengthen relationships and cohesion between European communities, building on common roots and values.

1.2   Cultural Tourism governance

Within the above framework, cultural tourism, linked to culture and cultural heritage, can be seen as a horizontal process indirectly influencing the enhancement and reinforcement of social and cultural Europeanization through a logic of belonging. Cultural tourism offers a vehicle for soft power with the aim of European integration and shared value creation offering benefits for both local destinations to introduce

their cultural variety to interested visitors and for visitors to learn and appreciate similarities and differences across European countries. This potential is exacerbated by the significance of tourism in Europe.

The European continent has long been the most important international tourist destination, with a global share of 51% in international tourist arrivals in the pre-COVID year 2019. Due to the slowdown in Asia and the regional tendencies resulting from the COVID-pandemic, this share even increased to 67% in 2021. Through these international arrivals, tourism contributed 4.3% to the GDP in Europe in 2019 (UNWTO, n.d.). Of particular relevance for the Europeanization effects of tourism is that in 2019, 55.7% of international arrivals in the EU-27 region came from the internal European market (excluding domestic tourism which was 1.5 times the size of international arrivals). Non-EU-27 origin markets accounted for 44.3% of international arrivals. In the post-COVID year of 2022, the share of internal European tourism in international arrivals became even more pronounced at 73.2%, compared to a 26.8% share of non-EU-27 origin markets. Again, domestic tourism was still a multitude of international arrivals by a factor of 2.8 (Eurostat, n.d.).

While tourism is, in its totality, a high-value sector, not the entire domestic and international tourism can be identified as having a cultural motive. Even though exact numbers are difficult to estimate due to a lack of data, conservative estimates suggest that around 11% of tourists travel with specific primary cultural motivations (ATLAS Cultural Tourism Group, n.d.) while optimistic estimates cite that 40% of all European tourists choose a destination based on the cultural offerings (UNWTO, 2018). It is clear that both tourism in general and cultural tourism, in particular, contribute significantly to the European economy – both in terms of revenue and in terms of employment. At the same time, on both the European level and on national levels, tourism is often combined with other policy fields, predominantly within economic departments while culture frequently resides with education. This can lead to an underestimation of the significance of tourism and suboptimal relationships between tourism and culture even though, particularly in a European context, both are strongly intertwined and dependent upon one another for successful development.

Policy recommendation: Tourism as a full-value policy sector
• Tourism should be recognized as a full-value policy sector at the EU level. It currently resides under Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs.
• Tourism and cultural tourism should be seen as complementary forces spanning several spheres of government (economy, transport, rural development, culture, etc.).
• Cultural and Tourism Ministries, while having sometimes different motivations, worldviews and timescales, need to work together within a sustainable development framework. This requires tourism development to look beyond 'growth' as the most

1.3 Linking the origins of 'European-ness'

Many of the elements of being European pre-date the creation of nation-states. The origins of European culture are there to be explored as part of the re-discovery of our commonalities. Our common heritage transmitted via the Roman Empire, the Catholic church, the music and art (opera etc.) shared by interlinked royal houses across Europe, the rule of the Spanish in, for example, the Netherlands, the shared cultures and architecture apparent from 600 years of trade through the Hanseatic League, the commonality promoted by the Byzantine empire, the widespread cultural influence of the Vikings even through the Mediterranean, the influence of the Republic of Venice in Cyprus and Eastern Europe, the spread of art and design discovered through pre-historic excavations and the common threads (and possibly timescales) observed in widespread Neolithic sites, and many more remarkable examples of shared roots and cultural heritage expressions throughout European countries, suggesting levels of commonality and understanding going back many thousand years. Moreover, European Cultural Routes and the European Heritage Label can represent an effective cultural communication factors.

All these are ripe for development as vehicles for cultural understanding – so, for example, combined ticketing for opera across different capitals will encourage this; people interested in one Neolithic site may be encouraged to explore the differences and similarities in another; the common philosophies and customs across Hanseatic League cities make cultural tourism a comfortable experience; art and design through the ages and across distances can encourage more attention being given to art galleries and museums.

The vehicle of Cultural European Routes can be a strong connective tissue to allow for the formation of inter-regional shared culture while respecting local contexts, including EU and the neighbouring countries promoting cross-border cooperation, collaboration and dialogue.

European Heritage Label (EHL) focuses on the promotion of the symbolic European values and the significant role that cultural heritage sites and expressions have played in the history and culture of Europe. The EHL sites offer valuable educational activities, especially for young people, which have a large exploitation potential for European tourists who could find and understand the 'traces' of common roots

through cultural tourism, contributing to their re-interpretation and transmission between present and future European generations.

European Cultural Routes and European Heritage Label could also be relevant for non-Europeans, promoting knowledge of the European history and values, including a sensitive approach to natural heritage preservation, and becoming exemplary initiatives contributing to place Europe at the forefront of cultural management policies worldwide.

All these help to establish a common European identity (or identities) – not to replace national or local identities, but to add to them. They are elemental in our experience of what it is to be European.

Policy recommendation: Introduce programmes to link institutions, including music venues, art galleries and museums around common themes of our heritage and highlight the importance of European Routes
• European Cultural Routes – links and differences in the cultures encountered
• European Heritage Label – understanding the European value of heritage
• Promoting studies and initiatives (such as Eurobarometer 466) aimed at a deeper understanding of the value of cultural heritage for European citizens, as well as how and why it can be able to convey European cultural identity and values, being a key factor of social cohesion
• Opera and Ballet joint ticketing – a nation can be proud of its offering; being able to demonstrate it against other European offers gives both strength and context

1.4 Cultural tourism to support local identities, marginalized communities

Cultural tourism is uniquely positioned to support the development of marginalized regions due to the abundance of culture and the relative lack of large investment needed to initiate (small-scale) tourism. Opening up marginalized communities to display their unique strengths and local identities to interested visitors have been found to improve confidence, support broader world-views and if developed with respect for cultural rights holders, can give a sense of ownership and pride.

Importantly, Europeanisation should then not be seen as a drive for homogenization but rather as a process that showcases the palimpsest of the European region and how local identities historically developed through shared and diverging underlying value frameworks. European Cultural Routes and European Heritage Label can be strong incentivises here to appreciate both differences across regions as well as the overarching Pan-European storyline.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Policy recommendation: Cultural tourism supporting minorities and marginalized communities via community-led initiatives</td></tr>
<tr><td>•</td><td>Europeanization in Cultural Tourism terms is complementary to national and regional concepts of culture and should not be seen in competition with them or attempt to overwrite local identities for a homogenized worldview, valorising cultural diversity as the richness of Europe.</td></tr>
<tr><td>•</td><td>Cultural identities – particularly of minorities and marginalized communities – can be important drivers for the development of all European regions when actively promoted and valorised by the cultural rights holders. More focus could be given to the potential role of cultural tourism for the valorisation of minority cultures, rather than top-down planning and development approaches.</td></tr>
<tr><td>•</td><td>Joint cultural events can help disparate sections of a community to work together.</td></tr>
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1.5 Leveraging the educational role of Cultural Tourism

Cultural Tourism can contribute to the education of visitors and residents on a number of levels. First of all, cultural practices can demonstrate historically sustainable ways of life and therefore educate visitors on the importance of sustainability agendas. Conversely, the existing threats of climate change on our existing cultural heritage can also become a call to action for hosting communities, in a direct sense towards the collective care and protection of these valuable resources, and in an indirect sense promoting sustainable lifestyles becoming sustainable cultural tourism destinations in which visitors can directly learn as 'temporary residents'.

Culture has also a significant potential in inspiring resilience to change among local communities. The values transposed onto heritage and culture, are constantly evolving. Understanding the changing nature of heritage can help alleviate the general fear of change and disenfranchisement that sometimes arise from conflicting local-global narratives. Furthermore, historical contexts can help to demonstrate the inter-connectedness of the European experience and is of particular relevance in regions with dissonant heritage and politicized ethnic narratives. Cultural Tourism can be a driver for supporting objective historical facts. Particularly with an eye towards younger generations, Erasmus and Erasmus+ study programmes have proven valuable instruments for an improved cultural understanding. Also within wider European research frameworks, the integration of cross-country networks as case studies/pilot regions helps to further integrate academics and practitioners.

Policy recommendation: The importance of Cultural Tourism as education process
• Cultural Tourism can be used as a vehicle for educating visitors on sustainability agendas and demonstrating historical sustainability practices as a way to inspire innovation.
• The valuable and vulnerable nature of heritage sites can inspire a call to action to address climate change and take care of cultural heritage collectively, promoting collaboration capacity, social capital and social cohesion enhancement.
• Interpreting the evolving nature of culture and heritage can be a source of improved resilience for local citizens in dealing with change. A critical aspect is an objective nature of cultural heritage and the trust in cultural tourism as providing factual information, particularly when relating to contested heritage.
• European programmes such as Erasmus and Erasmus+ and European funding frameworks including cross-country pilot cases should be fully leveraged to maximize the beneficial effects of education through diverse forms of cultural tourism.

1.6   *Capacity-building programmes to support Cultural Tourism*

As was said before, cultural tourism can be an excellent vehicle for the development of remote, less-known and marginalized regions throughout Europe, driven by local community-led initiatives. However, in order to introduce tourism to low-income areas, clear demonstrators, training programmes and guidelines on sustainable business models are needed. Particularly in rural areas, access to training and available workforce might be problematic. The academic knowledge developed in European funding programmes such as Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe should find its way to local communities through developing, disseminating and promoting practical tools to enhance local innovation ecosystems in rural and remote areas. Part of such dissemination should also involve the collection, monitoring, evaluation and interpretation of critical data for the development of sustainable Cultural Tourism.

Policy recommendation: Capacity-building programmes and platforms
• In order to support the development of remote and marginalized regions through Cultural Tourism, the promotion and dissemination of findings from European-funded programmes should be improved and translated to a practical level of implementation.
• Sustainable development processes require collecting, monitoring, evaluating and interpreting important data on Cultural Tourism, not only in well-established tourism destinations but also in remote and rural areas. Such data need to be collected on a granular level and ideally share an underlying data architecture and conceptual frameworks that build on earlier monitoring tools such as the European Tourism Indicator System. This can lead to the establishment of an EU Cultural Tourism Observatory.

2.Research & Innovation importance in Cultural Tourism

Cultural Tourism (CT) is an important and growing segment of the tourism industry, with the potential to drive economic growth and development in the European Union (EU). Research and innovation (R&I) play a crucial role in the CT development, providing new and innovative tools, technologies, and approaches to enhance the visitor experience, improve sustainability, and support the growth of the sector.

Many H2020 and other programmes projects are concentrating in CT with the objective that the deployment of their innovative solutions developed and tested, allow societies to sustainably grow and benefit from them. In order to ensure that these **newly-developed innovative technologies and solutions in CT are effectively consolidated**, it is important to create the right conditions. This includes investing in the necessary infrastructure, such as digital connectivity and data management systems, and providing support for the development and testing of new technologies, that sometimes might go beyond the lifespan of a project. It is also important to foster collaboration between research institutions, the private sector, and other CT stakeholders to develop new and innovative solutions that meet the needs of visitors, destinations and society.

In addition, providing incentives for the adoption of new technologies in CT could prove essential. This can include financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to invest in new technologies also aimed at environmental sustainability, as well as the development of standards and certification schemes that can help to build trust and confidence in new solutions. It has been a great discovery that including SMEs in the development process of solutions helps researchers and project teams stay focused in the real needs of the sector.

It cannot be forgotten how important it is to provide training and support for CT stakeholders in order to help them effectively integrate new technologies and sustainability objectives into their operations and improve the overall visitor experience.

In order to ensure that R&I projects in CT deliver real and lasting benefits, it is important to ensure that **non-research partners involved in EC projects** present credible business plans for results exploitation. This can help to ensure that the results of R&I projects are effectively exploited and scaled up, and that the benefits of these projects are widely shared. Business plans should include clear and measurable objectives, a realistic assessment of the market potential for the proposed solution, and a clear strategy for commercialization and scaling up. This can help to ensure that R&I projects in CT deliver real and lasting benefits, and that the sector continues to grow and develop over time.

To avoid dispersion and reduced usage of developed tools, it is recommended that a **CT Cluster** be developed under the EC. This cluster could serve as a hub for the development and testing of new tools and technologies in CT and as a platform for sharing best practices and knowledge across the sector in the long term. The cluster could also provide support for SMEs and other CT stakeholders, helping them to adopt new technologies and innovative sustainable solutions, and providing access to additional funding and other resources. This could help create a more competitive and dynamic CT sector, and to support the growth and development of the sector over time.

2.1 Policy recommendations on EC Research & Innovation coordination

R&I play a crucial role in the development of CT in the EU, providing new and innovative tools, technologies, and approaches to enhance the visitor experience, improve sustainability, and support the growth of the sector. The following EC Research & Innovation coordination policy recommendations are suggested to be adopted by the EC:

Policy recommendation: EC Research & Innovation coordination policy
• Conditions should be given, so that new and developed technologies could be consolidated;   • Non-research partners involved in EC projects should present credible business plans for results exploitation;   • Develop a Cultural Tourism Cluster (under EC) to aggregate developed tools, thus avoiding dispersion and reduced usage.

2.2 Innovation policies to support development and adoption of new technologies

Innovation is a key driver of growth and development in the CT sector in the EU. In order to fully realize the potential of innovation in CT, it is important to develop and implement effective policies and strategies that support the development and adoption of new technologies, approaches, and business models in the long-term.

To effectively support innovation CT, it is important to **congregate clear information about different funding possibilities**. This could include, among others, to develop a comprehensive database of funding opportunities at both EU and national levels, as well as information about the application process and eligibility criteria. In addition, it is important to provide support and guidance to CT stakeholders in order to help them navigate the funding landscape and identify the most appropriate sources of funding for their projects. This could include providing

training and support for grant writing, as well as connecting stakeholders with potential partners and investors at different geographical levels.

In order to **maximize the impact of financial support for CT**, it is important to optimize its usage. This could include providing support for the development and testing of new technologies and solutions, as well as support for marketing and promotion activities. It is also important to ensure that financial support is targeted to the most innovative and promising projects, and that there is a clear focus on achieving tangible outcomes and benefits. This could include setting clear performance metrics and evaluation criteria, as well as providing support for monitoring and reporting on project progress.

Several activities under Be.CULTOUR project are focused on the analysis of ESIFs evolution in the sustainable cultural tourism sector and on drawing up a proposal on the implementation of innovative ESIFs based financing mechanisms dedicated to the addressed sector in order to leverage private investments.

Many barriers prevent investment in cultural tourism sector in the perspective of circular economy: lack of knowledge, decision-making, lack of incentives, limited community engagement, balancing cultural significance and economic viability, commercial risk and uncertainty, technical difficulties etc. (Ikiz Kaya et al., 2019). To achieve the desired sustainable investment targets in cultural tourism, it is fundamental to build an enabling environment for investments at EU and national/regional levels. Investors require good information on costs, benefits and impacts for investment proofing and decision-making. Both the availability and quality of data on cultural tourism initiatives costs and benefits should be improved in order to attract the whole spectrum of potential investors. Indeed, many projects are not being undertaken not because of lack of financial resources but rather the lack of good practices.

In this perspective, public funds can be used to support for example the implementation of feasibility studies, to evaluate the economic viability and expected impacts of cultural tourism investments. The employment of public funds will contribute to enhance the investment maturity/readiness of cultural tourism initiatives and mobilise private investments. This form of technical assistance, is already used by the European Commission for energy efficiency sector.

A financial supporting mechanism – an Investment Readiness Facility (IRF) (CLIC & Be.Cultour projects) - for sustainable cultural sector (comprising also cultural heritage) will allow to address the barriers and challenges mentioned above and improve the financial landscape for cultural tourism initiatives.

The IRF can be managed by the respective public authorities and funded through dedicated European Structural Investment Funds (ESIFs) or through the direct funds of the EC.

The instrument can support the following goals:
• Design circular business models and organisational innovation;
• Build technical, economic, financial, impact measurement and legal expertise;
• Ensure high degree of replicability of similar initiatives;
• Remove existing barriers (administrative, financial, market failures etc.);
• Mobilize private investments;
• Bundle projects and mix interventions to reach critical size, exploit also financially and economically unsustainable projects and achieve the expected returns and impacts.

Different new impact investment funds have appeared across Europe under the form of incubators, accelerators and programmes to support start-ups, social entrepreneurship, seed investors and many investment vehicles have emerged. None of these instruments focuses specifically on the sustainable cultural tourism and circular cultural heritage initiatives and the adopted circular business models.

The proposal of a Revolving Circular Impact Fund (also "the Fund") aims at fostering the valorization of cultural tourism and cultural heritage through sustainable business models, by financing valuable initiatives for people and environment that generate cultural and social impacts.

The main impact areas of the investments shall be: cultural and natural heritage protection and safeguard, social inclusion and integration, culture and education, health and well-being, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements, sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, directly linked to the SDGs.

The main features of a Revolving Circular Impact Fund shall be the following:
• Public ownership (financed through ESIFs) with private co-investment requirement;
• Revolving approach;
• Blended finance;
• "Use-of-proceeds" for the circular economy;
• Impact and/or ESG invest;
• Results-based financing;
• Project bundling.

The revolving approach of the Fund has the meaning of a pool of "patient" capital to be dedicated to specific circular cultural tourism initiatives, with the restriction that the monies are returned to the Fund to be reused for similar activities. The most common source of up-front capital for the revolving funds is represented by grant

aid from regional or local authorities but, also from local foundations and corporations. It is important to evidence one more time here the relevance of the ESIFs use to start-up the Fund.

The Fund can include different circular financial instruments that can be also used under the blended finance formula. For example, the Fund can be set up with the following instruments:
• Equity and quasi equity;
• Low-rates loans;
• Sustainable bonds.

All the financial instruments under the Fund management shall be based on circular and sustainable finance principles and the EU Taxonomy. The use of different financial instruments on a case-by-case base and their blending, when necessary, can contribute towards further mobilization of private investments and long-term value creation.

Based on the recent best practices at global and European level in issuing green, social and sustainable bonds, a "use-of-proceeds" approach shall be chosen for the design of the financial instrument (EU Technical Expert Group on Sustainable Finance, 2020).

Finally, a crucial step in the circular financing is the impact assessment of the investments. The process shall regard the qualitative and quantitative assessment of all the generated impacts by the organization or by the project.

Digital promotion and information dissemination play an increasingly important role in the CT sector, and can help to enhance the visitor experience, improve sustainability, and support the growth of the sector. To foster digital promotion and information dissemination in CT, it is important to develop and implement effective policies and strategies. This could include supporting the development of digital marketing and promotion tools, such as social media campaigns, mobile apps, and virtual and augmented reality experiences. It is also important to **provide support for the development of digital content and information resources**, such as online guides, maps, and cultural heritage databases.

Only through training and support, it can be ensured that local communities and businesses can effectively participate in the innovation process in CT. This could include providing training in new technologies, methodologies and approaches, as well as support for business planning and development. It is also important to promote and foster collaboration and knowledge exchange between local

communities and businesses, research institutions, and other stakeholders in the CT sector. This could include developing networks and platforms for sharing best practices and knowledge, as well as providing support for the development of collaborative projects and initiatives.

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Policy recommendations: Improving support for Innovation in Cultural Tourism

As already mentioned several times in this document, Innovation plays a crucial role in the development of CT in the EU, through innovative tools, technologies, and approaches to enhance the visitor experience, improve sustainability, and support the growth of the sector.

The aforementioned recommendations can help to support innovation in CT long-term, by providing targeted financial support, fostering digital promotion and information dissemination, and providing training and support for local communities and businesses. By implementing these policies and strategies, the EU is expected to continue to grow and develop as a leading destination for CT.

In conclusion, they can be listed as:

- Congregate information about CT funding possibilities;
- Optimally usage of CT financial support;
- Foster CT digital promotion and information dissemination;
- Support training in innovation for local communities and businesses.

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3. Sustainable cultural tourism

Community participation and collaboration in tourism development is widely accepted as a criterion for sustainable tourism. As a service industry, tourism is highly dependent on the goodwill and cooperation of the host communities. Sustainable tourism development is a long-integrated process with wider economic, social, cultural and environmental policy considerations within an overall sustainable development framework that maximizes economic, environmental, social, and cultural environment benefits (WTO, 1998; Hall, 2008; Kahle-Piasecki, 2013). Several authors (inter alia, Bosak, 2016; Simpson, 2008; Edgell, 2006) argue that it is a community-based activity that relies on long-term planning and a balanced action between traditional financial goals and environmental-social goals. Sustainable tourism develops the relationship between tourists, host communities, businesses, attractions, and the environment, and can contribute to protect and enhance natural and cultural resources for future generations (OECD 2018; Swarbrooke 1999). It is also concerned about how to reduce the negative effects of tourism activities on the environment (e.g. mass tourism), society and economy so that ecological sustainability, economic feasibility, and social equality can be achieved (Pan et al. 2018), as well as cultural diversity preservation. Participation in cultural tourism is about strengthening the relationship between cultural institutions and professionals,

and everyone interested or engaged in cultural heritage, active civil society, public institutions, property owners, businesses, etc.

3.1   Drivers and barriers of sustainable cultural tourism

Three elements of participatory governance play a crucial role in sustainable cultural tourism: balancing top-down coordination and bottom-up participation, legitimising the initiative (internally and externally), and enabling and organising communication. This approach was developed based on empirical studies in Vienna, Matera, and Rome and on their common characteristics. One of the biggest challenges is to find the right mix between governance and participation. The main drivers that can help in sustainable cultural tourism are:

Table 1. Drivers of participatory approach in the sustainable cultural tourism

Inclusion	Of all people, or representatives of all groups who will be affected by results of a decision or process
Equal partnership	Recognizing that every person has a skill, ability and initiative and has and equal right to participate in the process, regardless of their results.
Transparency	All participants must help to create a climate conducive to open communication and dialog.
Sharing power	Authority and power must be balanced evenly between all stakeholders to avoid the domination of one party.
Sharing responsibility	All stakeholders have equal responsibility for decisions that are made, and each should have clear responsibilities within each process.
Empowerment	Participants with special skills should be encouraged to take responsibility for tasks within their speciality, but should also encourage others to be involved to promote mutual learning and empowerment.
Cooperation	Sharing everybody´s strength reduces everybody´s weakness.

Source: Eladway et al. (2020)

Based on literature review, we can identify barrier to successful implementation of sustainable cultural tourism.

Table 2. Barriers to sustainable cultural tourism implementation

Information and knowledge barriers	Insufficient, unclear, or missing information about cultural heritage, cultural tourism and possibilities to participate.
Practical obstacles	Remote and difficult access to location and inappropriate timing of opening hours of cultural institutions.
Financial barriers	Tickets for cultural events are expensive compared to the average salary and pension.
Social barriers	Cultural offer does not affect certain parts of the population,

	especially socially disadvantaged groups, minorities, etc.
Cultural barriers	The potential audience lacks the knowledge and/or competencies needed to fully perceive the offer of modern culture.
Lack of interest and/or ignorance	Lack of lack of interest on the part of residents and local communities[1].
Individual and institutional barriers	Lack of ownership, capital, skills, knowledge, and resources.

Source: Cole, 1999; Goodson, 2003; Javorská, 2018; Kadir Din, 1996; Sheyvens, 2003; Sofield, 2003

3.2   Digitalisation and sustainable cultural tourism

Digital transformation is a new phenomenon evident in all sectors. According to Sonkoly and Vahtikari, digitalisation of cultural heritage "seems to be the most obvious instrument of democratisation of cultural heritage" (Sonkoly & Vahtikari 2018, p. 38). It can be defined as a change in the scope and direction of governance supported by technologies and electronic processes to ensure better value creation for the benefit of customers and companies (Mergel et al., 2019; Margiono, 2020). Vial (2019) adds that important elements to achieve this change are information, computing, communication, and connectivity technologies. According to EU (2019), digitalisation relates to economic, social, cultural, and organisational transformations, which are the result of digital technologies. The term digital participation refers to active involvement in digital society through the use of modern information and communication technology (ICT), such as the Internet. This participation includes access not only to the Internet but also to various online services and content (Seifert & Rossel, 2019).

Culture, tourism, and ICT and their mutual interactions and applications offer a tremendous potential for the digitization of cultural heritage, thus largely affecting the way cultural products are produced, assessed, consumed, managed, and promoted for tourists (Stratigea et al., 2017). Creation and proper management of cultural content, but also further developments in the field of digital technologies targeting the modelling, analysis, understanding, and preservation of cultural heritage are nowadays at the forefront of technological research and innovation endeavours. Developments in the field are expected to widely affect the marketing potential of cultural destinations and their ability to strengthen their attractiveness, based on a well-planned strategy and the use of ICT for its implementation (Panagiotopoulou et al., 2019). As pointed out by EC, cultural tourism, should maximize the impact of the heritage digitization investment (cf. European

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[1] Kadir Din (1996) considers ignorance as the greatest barrier to participation, but that ignorance is not limited to residents, but 'also affects the planning machinery and bureaucracy vested with implementation.'

Commission, Directorate-General Information Society 2002, p. 72) as it can help to increase cultural tourism experience (e.g., Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2014; Neuhofer et al., 2015).

The European Commission highlights that the momentum is now to preserve our culture and cultural heritage and bring it to this digital decade. European Commission published Recommendation 2021/1970 on a common European data space for cultural heritage. This Recommendation encourages Member States to put in place appropriate frameworks to enhance the recovery and transformation of the cultural heritage sector and to support cultural heritage institutions in becoming more empowered and more resilient in the future. This will lead to higher quality digitisation, reuse and digital preservation across the EU, and have spillover effects in other key sectors of the European economy, such as tourism, research, and other cultural and creative sectors (for more information see (Commission Recommendation 2021/1970).

Unprecedented opportunities brought by technologies, such as Data, AI, 3D, and XR bring cultural heritage sites back to life. Virtual museums offer visitors the possibility of seeing art works in context and experiencing objects or sites inaccessible to the public. The transformation of the sector results in easier online access to cultural material for everyone. The Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content & Technology of the European Commission has conducted extensive policy coordination and funding actions to supplement the cultural policy of the Member States. These actions cover the areas of digitalisation, online access to cultural material, and digital preservation (EC, Shaping Europe´s digital future, 2022).

The output of the digital transformation is usually innovations in the delivery mode of services, forms of direct interactions with customers, as well as the proliferation of smart products that enable real-time monitoring and updating, and services that transform production processes and customer relationship (Mergel et al., 2019). Innovations, including digital transformation in the preservation of cultural heritage, are crucial to the development of the tourism sector and to ensure competitiveness in tourist destinations (Gajdošík et al., 2017).

The impacts of digital transformation in cultural institutions are reflected not only in empowering the customer; enabling staff to think 'beyond my service', encouraging staff to explore new and more efficient ways of working or empowering and supporting staff to continuously improve, encouraging customer-focused thinking and focusing on developing organizational culture (Curtis, 2018), but can also bring new stimuli for city development, for example, increased demand for additional services for tourists. Innovations in cultural and creative industries can arise into new

ideas, mobilizes the creative potential of places in the form of new products, services, information, technological innovations, non-technological processes, and outputs that generate creative capital that is increasingly important for the growth of cities and regions (Batabyal & Nijkamp, 2016; Borseková et al., 2021, Florida 2003; Vitálišová et al., 2022). Innovations can also bring about the new way of utilization the historical and cultural heritage in other economic activities (e.g., old abandoned historic buildings rebuilt to hotels, restaurants, business offices in a form of co-working space or incubators, etc.). However, all implemented innovations, especially in cultural and cultural industries, should be carefully prepared with respect to local identity, acceptable by the local community and its shared values (Martinat et al., 2016; Vitálišová et al. 2019). Therefore, the participation of local communities plays a crucial role. The optimal model for the development of sustainable cultural tourism is presented in the following figure.

Figure 1. Sustainable cultural tourism based on interaction between participation, innovation and digitalisation

Digital infrastructure, digital tools and smart data management can enhance the accessibility and sustainability of remote and less-known cultural sites. Digital tools such as applications for cultural events, virtual travels, augmented reality, sharing economy services such as shared mobility, accommodation, guides etc., can significantly improve the overall quality of the cultural experience and support marketing strategies. Digital infrastructure is also key for enabling territories to become "remote working" destinations. Moreover, implementing a human-centred approach, digital tools can be implemented to monitor the performance and attractiveness of cultural sites. However, the availability of quality data in remote areas remains an open question, calling for enhanced data management systems to provide the information needed for better decision-making over time. Finally, digital skills are required to make the "smart" and human-centred digital tools work in the

target areas. Research should highlight how to collect and use tourism data especially in remote areas, as well as which new infrastructure, services, tools and investments can be leveraged to enhance the digitalisation of remote cultural sites and their attractiveness.

Policy recommendations for cultural sustainable tourism
Provide an EU digital skills training for circular cultural tourism providers

4.3 Policy implications and recommendations for sustainable cultural tourism

Despite the remoteness, less-known areas can be particularly rich in tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage. These places can offer an unusual cultural experience grounded on authenticity, connectedness, slowness, silence, genuine human relationships, nourishing food, and nature. In this perspective, remoteness could become a value for a specific target of visitors and temporary or stable residents. The need to provide basic services and enhance accessibility and quality of life as attractive destinations should be balanced with the conservation of their authenticity, integrity and sense of place, focusing on quality rather than quantity, to avoid turning today's less-known places into usual/mass tourism destinations. Less crowded areas can offer deeper relationships with local people, heritage and nature, "slow" tourism and "diffused" hospitality models, and learning opportunities while reducing costs, identifying diverse revenue streams, and enhancing the quality of life and services should be a priority. EU funded projects can demonstrate how to enhance less-known and remote cultural sites as "human-centred" cultural tourism destinations.

It is obvious that a sustainable cultural tourism development project has nothing in common with the tourism projects of the last century which relied on volume to guarantee an economic model. The 21st century tourists are not anonymous tourists, totally alien to the territory, who are taken from one "spot" to another without their consent, who buy standardised low-quality products and who will not come back, sucked in by the thirst for new destinations with an ever-higher carbon footprint. This paradigm shift is becoming more pronounced with the climate transition and its negative effects (pandemics, depletion and discrediting of fossil fuels, etc.) accumulate.

The "sustainable" tourists are tourists who are at least partially integrated into the heritage community. They intend to return to the area, or at least to stay there long enough to feel the spirit of the area visited, understand its logic, and move around

slowly, so as to be able to grasp all its specificities. They appreciate local cultural and agricultural products, and in buying them, they contribute to local economy. Long-term relationships can be established between local actors and visitors, and the latter may choose to settle in the region in the long term. To encourage this type of interaction, it is important to act on both the supply and demand sides.

Studies on the conditions for the development of demand in sustainable tourism (Huang & alii 2017; Santos-Roldan & Alii 2020) show that the motivation alone (to reduce one's carbon footprint, to participate in culturally enriching activities) is insufficient to trigger the act of 'buying' a form of sustainable cultural tourism. They indeed insist on the importance of the tourist's perception of the effects of their choice that are immediately perceptible not only on the natural and social environment, but also on their wellbeing and the quality of their stay.

The promotion of sustainable cultural tourism must therefore implement communication strategies that are radically different from those traditionally used in this sector. They should be based in particular on the distinction, the uniqueness of the experience and its correspondence to a certain number of values while avoiding making it an object of repulsion for the popular categories. Increasing opportunities for quality interaction between tourists and local actors (Murphy & Murphy, 2004) and allowing visitors to participate directly in local cultural activity (Carvalho & alii, 2016) are ways to contribute to this outcome. In this way, tourists are no longer seen simply as passengers in transit, casual encounters, but as potential members in the making of the heritage community (Sgard, 2010). Experiments such as Wellbeing tourism (Pyke & alii, 2016), which are currently in full swing (Notteau & Lipinska, 2022) in a context where tourism and mobility are undergoing unprecedented changes, imply a strong and visible commitment of tourism actors to the preservation of the environment and the cultural ways of existence of local communities.

However, these paths of innovation do not seem to be sufficient to fully integrate initiatives for the development of sustainable cultural tourism into an overall territorial project. Entering the process from the sole perspective of tourist activity presents risks: it can contribute to excluding the most fragile and "invisible" inhabitants from the process, and only be accessible to the social categories that have the means to finance luxury activities. Moreover, it risks to arouse the opposition of the rest of the actors contributing to the maintenance of the common good that is the landscape or, more widely, the heritage. These may indeed consider to be unrewarded for their efforts or even oppose the development of an activity that they consider harmful (Mora, 2022). Indicators still need to be developed to determine the acceptability thresholds (social, economic and

environmental impact measurement) and to identify the characteristics that would make them more acceptable.

Policy recommendations: To build active heritage communities
This approach is made more effective by the use of participatory methodologies that allow for the identification of heterogeneous representations and areas of potential conflict, as well as for imagining, with the stakeholders, ways to overcome these difficulties (Marcandella & alii, 2020, Lloyd & Moore, 2015). Particular attention must be paid to identifying and formalising the thresholds of acceptability of the different groups present with regard to the actions of others.
Policy recommendations: To develop action-training mechanisms that allow learners to play an active role, enabling them to co-develop the methods and adapt them to their local context
The different methodologies for animating emerging heritage communities (Ruritage, 2020) still need to be tested, and the results of the research must be disseminated to all the stakeholders in the territories concerned to facilitate the spread of good practices. This dissemination cannot take the form of a simple "top-down" presentation, but rather of action-training mechanisms that allow learners to play an active role, enabling them to co-develop the methods and adapt them to their local context. If it is not possible to train the entire population, it is necessary to identify resource persons in the local ecosystem and to rely on their capacity to pass on information. Valuing the work of the facilitators is a key element in the success of this type of project. To facilitate these approaches, the implementation of Rural Heritage Hubs (conciergeries, third places) (RHH, De Luca et al., 2021) seems to be of great help, but their animation represents a significant initial investment even if it allows for the generation of economies of scale later on.
Policy recommendations: To develop a detailed econometric approach to the conditions of possibility of multi-activity and to evaluate the possibility of transposing local inventions that have been successful in other contexts
The question of sharing (pooling) the costs and benefits of territorial development implies involving all stakeholders as much as possible in the implementation of the cultural tourism project. The identification of the legal frameworks that can be mobilised locally must also be the subject of more structured approaches, while a prospective effort is absolutely necessary on the evolution of national and European rules in this area at a time of upheaval brought about by the climate transition.
Policy recommendations: The identification and the means of overcoming the material problems of marginal territories
The identification and the means of overcoming the material problems of marginal territories (lack of infrastructure, logistical problems, especially including mobility) can be the subject of more methodical approaches which will be enriched by comparisons and the identification of good practices. When the solution exists, the conditions for its local implementation need to be studied. And when it does not exist, it is necessary to imagine the system that will provide the least costly response to the problem concerned, as well as the potential financing mechanisms for its deployment.

4. Conclusions and Remarks

Europe has held the first spot in international tourism arrivals since the advent of mass-market tourism in the early 1950s. Due to its valuable, diverse, authentic, and well-preserved cultural heritage, culturally-inspired tourism is one of the main types of visitation on the European continent – depending on the sources estimated to be between 11% and 40% of total tourism demand. The potential of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism as a competitive regional advantage and production factor in local wealth creation has been recognized and supported by various EU policies and funding and research mechanisms. At the same time, it is recognized that the potential needs to be carefully managed in order to avoid negative externalities overtaking the benefits of Cultural Tourism.

This report resulted from two policy workshops on 5 July 2022 and 11 October 2022, involving six H2020 research projects on cultural tourism, focusing on policy recommendations within three main areas of significance: (i) EU Policy and Europeanization, (ii) Research and Innovation, and (iii) Sustainability and Infrastructure. The main aim of the report has been to identify areas where additional policy attention can further strengthen the position of cultural tourism, support innovations and digital transitions, and protect sustainable development initiatives.

The report highlighted 11 broad policy recommendations, across three main themes and often further subdivided in a few action points. Within the area of EU Policy and Europeanization, the need to transform Tourism into a full-value policy sector with specific recognition in important documents and programmes such as the Green Deal and Structural Development Funds is highlighted. European routes and the Erasmus and Erasmus+ programme were highlighted as good practices and potentially to be further elevated via joint ticketing systems in order to support 'Europeanization' and education.

The Research and Innovation recommendations provide a call to action for the development of a Cultural Tourism Cluster with the specific goal to aggregate developed tools and methods in order to concentrate and synergize past and present research efforts. Further potential extrapolation of research towards practical use can be supported via the inclusion of non-research partners and the provision of credible business plans as prerequisite within the project lifetime. At the same time, innovation, having a central place in the sustainable development of the sector, needs continued and smart investment which can crucially be supported by providing clear and accurate information on funding possibilities and guidelines for optimal usage.

Sustainable cultural tourism development in its contemporary conceptualization highlights the needs for active heritage communities and the inclusion of multi-stakeholder networks via participative methodologies. While these approaches can help to create mutual understanding of different positions and viewpoints, further research and policies are needed with a focus on redistributing the uneven costs and benefits of tourism, looking into possibilities of sharing (pooling) of costs and benefits across territorial levels.

Human capital development is fundamental for developing sustainable, circular and human-centred cultural tourism destinations, often neglected in sustainability strategies to focus on more tangible aspects such as economic and environmental issues. However, the circular and human-centred development of cultural areas is strictly linked to the capacity of local communities to develop innovations and high-quality cultural tourism services, enhancing territorial resources such as cultural and natural heritage. Capacity-building strategies and networking can support the development of knowledge and skills of local community members, including entrepreneurs, workers, activists, policy-makers, and researchers, to enhance their ability to recognise, re-interpret and regenerate less-known cultural heritage and provide high-quality services for cultural tourism. Moreover, it is more and more clear that Arts can have a key role in developing human capital through enhancing qualities such as creativity, empathy, and critical thinking, as well as exploring the "real" (not induced) and emerging needs of people, both residents and visitors, helping to identify "the right questions" and thus stimulating overall innovation processes.

Further considerations should be made regarding the development of innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems in remote and less-known cultural sites. Entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, innovation capacity, institutional capacity and support, networks and connections with larger innovation communities are often lacking in areas subject to depopulation and brain-drain, lowering the opportunities for youths and innovators to develop skills and invest them in these territories. Research should address how to build the innovation and entrepreneurial capacity in remote areas suffering from depopulation and brain drain. Some answers can be given thinking about the key elements and actors constituting entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems, which range from universities and research, knowledge and entrepreneurial centres, advanced education systems, "pillar" companies able to drive and inspire other businesses, public and private investors, institutions, as well as the relationships between them and shared values, identity, sense of community. Cultural heritage can have a role in stimulating the recognition and regeneration of shared identity and values in local communities. Moreover, entrepreneurial skills and capacities are fundamental to turning remote cultural sites into places of new attractiveness.

The capacity of cooperating and collaborating between different actors (public institutions, private companies and organisations, third sector, research), in a quadruple helix synergistic model should be enhanced. However, this cooperative capacity is not already done, especially in remote and depopulated areas, and should be enhanced by identifying strategies, networks/actors, and inspiring managers and leaders. In some successful cases, the local community developed as a territorial "enterprise" in which all actors have a role and contribute to shared objectives (e.g. the "community enterprises", community cooperatives and foundations). Trust is a key element of this capacity for cooperation and collaboration. Research can provide solutions on how to build trust and enhance interest in cooperation in contexts of isolation and discouragement, to support collaborative behaviours and enhance territorial synergies towards circular and sustainable destinations.

Finally, remote and less-known cultural sites aiming at becoming attractive destinations for sustainable and circular cultural tourism need to find innovative solutions and increase investments to realise high-quality infrastructure, including digital infrastructure, sustainable mobility systems and tourism services oriented to circularity, in line with the European Transition Pathway for Tourism and towards circular cities and regions (e.g. circular strategies in accommodation, food chains, transport, energy, water management, etc.). Public and private investments, if linked to clear circularity strategies and business plans, in line with the EU Taxonomy, can provide important resources to enhance cultural tourism and quality of life in the target cultural sites. To reach sustainability and circularity objectives, particular importance should be given to reaching higher self-sufficiency in terms of energy, water, and materials through renewables, recycling, and reuse strategies in cultural tourism sector, for example supporting green certifications / eco-labels, circular procurement, sustainable mobility, resources sharing networks, biodiversity enhancement, energy communities, traditional landscape maintenance.

The present proposals and recommendations stemming from six EU funded research & innovation projects can represent a starting point for a broader discussion at EU level, engaging local, regional, national and international stakeholders to promote a sustainable, circular and human-centred cultural tourism model that enables local communities to thrive in difficult times enhancing trust, cooperation, collaboration, resilience, cultural identity and a new sense of European togetherness. Small urban areas, rural areas, remote areas and less-known cultural tourism destinations can be at the forefront of innovation in cultural tourism, leveraging the potential of cultural heritage and cultural landscapes for local and regional attractiveness. Cultural tourism is changing rapidly and cultural tourists are becoming more and more aware of sustainability issues (from a broad perspective: environmental, social, cultural, economic). The European cultural tourism sector,

strictly interlinked with cultural heritage and culture and environmental sectors should work to stimulate innovation, synergies and capacity building in all EU regions and destinations.

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