



Be.CULTOUR
Beyond cultural tourism

Romania-Moldova, Cross-Border Region

Action Plan



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PREFACE

The Route “Stephan the Great and Saint” is encompassing a chain of tourism objectives and areas, relevant for the history of both Romania and Republic of Moldova. Stephen III of Moldavia (or Stephen the Great), Prince of Moldavia in mediaeval age, is a landmark and is seen, after centuries, as a “symbol of stability, consistency, economic development and justice”. His legendary personality is connecting (both historical and emotional) the communities from both sides of the Prut river, from the former province of Moldavia.

The cultural route is covering a cross-border area, mixing in a charming way territories and stories from these two countries: Romania and Republic of Moldova. It was initiated by the National Agency for Investments (Republic of Moldavia) and Ministry of Tourism (Romania) and comprises a chain of sites, related to the history of Stephan the Great. From these, 20 tourist sites are situated in Romania and 9 are in the Republic of Moldavia. Additionally to the elements of tangible heritage, an important role is played by the intangible resources that are giving life and content to the tourism experiences offered here (stories, legends, knowledge, crafts and traditions), all linked to the great Prince of Old Moldavia.

The development of the route has great chances: on trans-national and cross-border level the personality of Stephan the Great is still part of the common imaginary and national spirit of both countries. The number of thematic trails in Romania is quite limited, so there exists an important potential for this trail to engage interest and to generate tourist flows over the next years. On an international level, with appropriate promotion and product development efforts, the route can be added to the European Cultural Routes.

The challenges that are addressed by the Be.CULTOUR project, are related to the accessibility of remote areas (part of the route), to “the quality standards for cultural tourism and cultural mediation”. Nevertheless, the switch to the principles of circular tourism, will open doors for a sustainable, modern development of the tourism in the destination, serving both the interest of the tourists and the wellbeing of host communities. The proposed actions are only the start for a systematic change toward circular tourism, through a reliable cooperation in the community of practice, established for this Be.CULTOUR pilot site.

This Action Plan was authored by Local Pilot Heritage Site Coordinators and their Contributors

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What makes us unique? Introduction and context.

Pilot Heritage Site – short characteristic

The cross-border region of North-East Romania and Moldova has shared history, languages, cultures, and traditions. The Route of Stephen the Great stretches between the countries and symbolises this connection, under the name of this important personality. The cross-border region hosts many UNESCO-listed monasteries and churches, as well as notable practices related to the traditional occupation, that can still be observed and life-experienced in several rural areas from both sides. Particularly in Moldova, touristic wine routes also exist and in Romania handicrafts such as weaving, ceramic making, wood carving or eggs painting could still be found in the traditional villages. The tourism offer is centred on the cultural resources such as history, expression of spirituality, traditional way of living, traditional occupations, pilgrimage, nature as reconnection with the self, outdoor activities and others. Despite the modest numbers in terms of international tourists, the area has an important potential for cultural tourism that can be exploited for a sustainable development of communities.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Sites are places of importance to cultural or natural heritage as described in the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, established in 1972. Cultural heritage consists of monuments (such as architectural works, monumental sculptures, or inscriptions), groups of buildings, and sites (including archaeological sites). Natural features (consisting of physical and biological formations), geological and physiographical formations (including habitats of threatened species of animals and plants), and natural sites which are important from the point of view of science, conservation of natural beauty, are defined as natural heritage.

The Republic of Moldova ratified the convention on 23 September 2002. As of 2021, Moldova has one World Heritage Site listed, the Struve Geodetic Arc, which was listed in 2005. It is a transnational site, shared with nine other countries. There are also two sites on the tentative list.

In the Register of monuments of the Republic of Moldova protected by the state, approved by the Decision of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova no. 1531/1993 includes 5695 monuments. Of these: 4575 monuments are of national category and 1120 of local category.

The register contains the following types of monuments: archaeological sites - 2858; architectural and history monuments - 1712, including: 1 cultural-natural reservation, 1

protected built site, 91 ensembles (65 mansions, 16 monasteries, 10 hospital complexes), individual monuments (constructions) - 1619; war memorials - 1125. Law no. 1530/1993 on the protection of monuments stipulates that the monuments located on the territory of the Republic of Moldova are part of the cultural heritage and are under state protection. The responsibility for protecting these monuments rests with the specialised central public administration authorities, the local public administration authorities and the owners / managers of the monuments.

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage including visitor hot-spots – North-East Romania

All the cultural heritage sites pertaining to Stephan the Great History have an important place in the communities and are, in most cases, on the list of the visited spots. component based on tangible and intangible heritage (stories, books, legends, movies, knowledge, crafts and traditions, linked to the great Prince of Old Moldavia – which comprised North-East of Romania and the today Republic of Moldavia). Through Be.CULTOUR workshops, the tourism objectives, part of the route were mapped. All 29 sites situated on the route are very important, but we can identify some exquisite places, that are already highly appreciated and visited, or, some others, that have great chances for a future valorisation in cultural tourism packages:

- In Suceava county: Voroneț Monastery (1488) and Pătrăuți Monastery (1487) (Holy Cross Church), which are UNESCO Heritage Monasteries.

- In Neamt County: the Bison Land and the linked cultural heritage area from Neamt County, around Targu Neamt town. This area is promoted by Bison Land Association, Ozana Valley Association and Eco-tourism Association. They are “harbours a priceless spiritual and natural heritage, lands full of divine grace, located on the border between reality and fairy tale”. The reappearance of the bison, after years of efforts, is a feature that was promoted as a competitive advantage in the last decades. The specificity of the region is given by the intermingling of the natural beauties with the cultural and spiritual values.

The monastic community present here is the second largest in Europe (after the one from Mount Athos), the monastic villages (Văratec, Agapia, Neamț), with their special organisation, represent a unique European cultural heritage. The territory includes the Vânători Neamț Natural Park. The park means much more than the place where the Romanian bison live, it is an area of about 31,000 hectares, of which over 26 thousand are covered with forests,

in the northern part of Neamț county, harbouring a diversity of cultural, historical and natural value, along with four protected natural areas: Silver Forest, Silver Oaks, Reservation of Bison Dumbrava.

This area could be transformed in an open lab for circular economy, and it is labelled as eco-tourism destination (among the other 11 from Romania).

In the Republic of Moldova, the Capriana Monastery, Archeological Complex Old Orhei, Soroca Fortress, Tighina Fortress, Mereni Village and the wine region Stefan Voda (Stephan the Prince) are the targets of the project. The pilot site in Moldova includes the Biosphere reserve Lower Prut in Moldova, directly managed by VEM partner.

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage including visitor hot-spots – Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova has a rich and beautiful cultural heritage being tangible or intangible. Some of the representative elements are: the traditional blouse and traditional costume, the Moldavian carpet, crafts, folk music and many others. By travelling through Moldova one can visit a lot of representative locations, where elements of cultural heritage are exposed and the people can impress with stories about the history and Moldovan traditions.

Intangible cultural heritage is an important source for the development of circular cultural tourism: areas such as social practices about man and the universe, crafts, gastronomic heritage, and all this accompanied by artistic expressions, folk traditions and social representations are a complex of tools that contribute to the development and strengthening circular cultural tourism as a stimulus for economic development. The natural setting and the traditional culture of the local communities are an advantage in this respect. At present, 512 elements are included in the National Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage managed by the Ministry of Culture. Others are included in the Local Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage of ATU Gagauzia.

The charm of the intangible cultural heritage consists in its temporary and unique character. The owners and transmitters of the intangible heritage elements are the natural persons, members of the local communities, so that the practice of the same element can vary from one person to another. The inclusion of intangible cultural heritage in actions to promote circular tourism will contribute to the conservation, preservation and safeguarding of practices specific to human communities.

Of particular interest are the elements specific to the Republic of Moldova included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, but also those

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localities, cultural centres, local communities, creators and bearers that have been included in the file:

1. Men's group Carol (Christmas time ritual ") was inscribed, jointly with Romania, in the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2013. Carolling in the fog has meant since ancient times the habit of young men to assume responsibilities in the community, and other members of the community, through the habit carol learn community solidarity and social communication.

One of the most representative groups is "Mocănașii" from Slobozia Mare village, Cahul district, which has significantly contributed to the rehabilitation of carolling as a whole, and carolling in the male crowd, especially an essential component in maintaining the viability of the Christmas and New Year holidays. New Year. The team participated in various events to promote carolling at national and international level, being known both in the Republic of Moldova and abroad.

Slobozia Mare is one of the few localities that preserves and promotes authentic traditions related to Christmas and New Year customs, including the popular winter dress. Thus, the locality becomes a representative "centre" of the intangible cultural heritage.

2. Traditional techniques for making barks in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, included in the Representative List jointly with Romania in 2016. There were times in the history of our people when a carpet that was passed down from generation to generation was the most precious wealth of a family, its nobility crest. Knowing the symbols, motives and elements of the traditional carpet, we learn about the history of our nation and our ancestors. This craft was considered representative for the majority of localities of Moldova until the beginning of the 20th century. Later, people started to be more interested in the traditional carpets, its way of being confectioned, authentic models and ornaments. To respond to the needs of society, cultural institutions, including the Ministry of Culture, initiated activities aimed at revitalising the techniques of confectioning the traditional carpets.

The purpose of weaving has changed from past initiation to present aesthetic roles. The traditional techniques and patterns are respected at the Crafts Complex „Rustic Art”¹ by Ecaterina Popescu and her employers. The main goal of the Crafts Complex „Rustic Art” is to research, revive, preserve and to promote the crafts, the authentic carpets and traditional costumes. The aesthetic value is determined by the diversity of patterns, models, symbols and motifs used on carpets and costumes. Because of the thematic coherence and the stylistic

¹ <https://rusticart.md/>

richness of crafts products, the Complex is considered a real homeland of carpets and traditional costumes.

Due to the great contribution to the research, preservation and promotion of the intangible cultural heritage, of crafts and national identity, the Crafts Complex „Rustic Art” was inscribed in the National Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Moldova.²

3. The cultural practices associated with March 1 (Martisor) were included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2017, jointly with Romania, Bulgaria and Northern Macedonia. Martisor signifies the harmonious transition from winter to spring, bringing health, abundance, luck and protection to the wearer. The importance of martisoara in contemporary society is represented by its archaic symbolism and special chromaticism: white signifying the purity of a new beginning, and red - the love of life and the rebirth of nature. By giving a martisor as a gift to our loved ones, we show them the love, respect and care we have for them.

4. In March 2021, Romania together with the Republic of Moldova submitted for registration in the UNESCO List the nomination file Art of the shirt with hats - an element of cultural identity in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, classified in the National Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Moldova. no. VIII.49.1 ..

The traditional blouses are the most important pieces of the traditional Romanian folk costume for both men and women. The traditional blouse with *altiță* combines an extremely simple cut with rich ornamentations which are stitched using complex sewing techniques, in a palette of diverse and harmonious colours. The dominant colour, the white of the loom woven fabric of natural fibres (flax, cotton, hemp or floss silk) gives the blouse its simplicity and solemnity. The comfort and freedom of movement are provided by the improvements and innovations made over time, among which the ‘altiță’ and the ‘smocking’. The motifs and ornamentation have a wide variety: from geometric and stylized registers to natural ones, from sombre colours to an exuberance of the colour compositions. The art of making traditional blouses with altiță involves only handwork. All operations, starting with weaving, are carried out according to techniques that women learn and practice in families and communities. Current attempts to

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<https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/capitolul-viii-tehnici-si-cunostinte-legate-de-mestesugurile-artistice-traditionale>

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mechanise some operations, to simplify the ornamentation, and the sewing, embroidery and finishing techniques constitute deviations from traditional rules.

An enormous potential in the development of cultural tourism in the Republic of Moldova is held by craft centres, as well as individual craftsmen who respect the authentic traditions in the process of making products. They inherited the knowledge from their parents, grandmother, close relatives and continue their activity keeping the authentic elements. They use ecological products and techniques, so that the finished product symbolises the communion between man and nature, so specific to our people.

At the base of the crafts is the tradition, understood as a set of mechanisms through which the essential characteristics of the culture are transmitted from generation to generation. All crafts follow models confirmed and permanently promoted by the community. The objects produced with the help of traditional artistic crafts are very valuable to understand the spirit, strength and greatness of the artistic and technical creativity of the communities. The shape of objects is adapted to their practical functions, but tends to fit into aesthetic patterns. The decoration of the objects is the result of a double artistic-technical action. Priority in its configuration seems to be the combination of motifs and colours according to artistic criteria, but these, in turn, are the product of the techniques used. Through the traditional artistic crafts, all the riches of the natural environment in which the communities live have been capitalised. The processing of wood, stone, clay, rushes, reeds, straw, twigs are ancient activities, promoted so far to create various basic necessities. The decoration mirrors through the ornamental motifs the universe of social, mythical, folkloric, symbolic, historical representations of the communities that own this patrimony.

Examples of centres and communities that have managed to transform the inherited passion into circular economic activity are: Crafts Centre "Rustic Art" from the village of Clișova Nouă, Orhei district, founded by Ecaterina Popescu, Private Museum "Father's House" from the village. Palanca, Călărași district, founded by Tatiana Popa, "Casa Olarului" from Hoginești village, Călărași district, etc. With the support of partners and donors from the country, but also from abroad, these centres have become over the years tourist attractions, which promote the culture and traditions specific to the region. The respective centres have arranged thematic exhibitions, but also organise workshops to stimulate visitors to discover the traditions of making handicrafts. Tourists can participate in workshops and make certain objects themselves. The centres constantly organise cultural events and sittings, in which folklore, performing arts, music and folk dances are promoted. These events, determined by the rustic and natural

setting, are of significant interest from foreign tourists, but also from those in the Republic of Moldova, who aim to rediscover the ancestral traditions.

On June 24, in Moldova, the Day of the Traditional Costume is marked. This day has the role of emphasising the rebirth of traditional culture and promoting values in ensuring the continuity of Moldovan traditions. Copies of the traditional Moldovan costumes can be seen, the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History has over 2330 traditional costumes. Also, at the "Rustic Art" Cultural Complex can be found many new things regarding the traditional costume. The traditional techniques for manufacturing carpets in Romania and the Republic of Moldova have been registered in the UNESCO cultural heritage. In order to see the history of the carpet, also the design of the carpet actually implies, the cultural complex "Rustic art" can be visited. The feast of Mărțișor - the best known symbol of spring in the Romanian space, is marked every year on March 1. The Mărțișor is a small ornament object, made of two threads wool or silk, twisted, one white and a red one, which is said to bring luck. It is given on the first day of spring and is worn during the month of March.

Traditional Moldovan dances represent an important part of the immaterial cultural heritage. The dances are different from village to village, from one area to another. Sârba and Hora are two of the most known and practised dance forms in Moldova. The Sârba is interpreted in a quick tempo and with clockwise rotating movements, and the Hora is much quieter, having more the role of representing an artistic manifestation. One of the most famous popular dances is the national academic ensemble "Joc". Its name is in honour of dance - Joc. The ensemble participates in numerous international festivals where he gets high distinctions along with representatives of other countries such as Romania, Russia, France, Belgium, Italy and others.

A little category used in the Republic of Moldova - is the industrial heritage. In European countries, for several decades, the industrial heritage is reused and revitalised by transforming it into cultural and tourist attractions. The implementation of these practices would significantly contribute to the development of the circular economy, but due to the poor state of conservation of the mentioned objectives, the restoration and renovation works would impose significant financial costs.

An example of good practice regarding the reuse of industrial heritage is the water tower, which was transformed into the History Museum of Chisinau, which is located in the building of the former water castle with a fireplace. II sec. XIX, monument of history and architecture of national category, registered with no. 195 in the Register of monuments of the Republic of Moldova protected by the state. The museum has 26,879 pieces of mobile cultural

heritage, of which 1075 units are exhibited in the permanent exhibition. The local museum is on the balance of Chisinau City Hall, being subordinated to the Culture Department of Chisinau. The tower building was built in the late nineteenth century as part of the aqueduct on the highest point of the city at that time.

The tangible cultural heritage objectives that have a good state of conservation and that have been restored represent a special tourist attraction. In this context, we note some examples:

- Gr.Vieru House-Museum, Pererita village, rn. Briceni;
- the building of the National Museum of Art (Dadiani headquarters);
- National Museum of History of Moldova; a vernacular house within the cultural-natural reservation "Orheiul Vechi";
- Organ Hall; Republic Musical-Dramatic Theatre „B.P. Hasdeu ”from the town. Cahul;
- Shciusev House-Museum (MNIM branch); the administrative block of the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History;
- The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in Causeni, etc .;
- Village Museum (MNEIN branch);
- House-Museum „A.S. Pushkin ”.

The restoration of these objectives, according to European practices, was possible with the financial and methodical support of the Ministry of Culture and external partners (US Embassy in the Republic of Moldova, Romanian Embassy in the Republic of Moldova, USAID, etc.).

The archeological patrimony is present in all the areas of the Republic of Moldova, in the vicinity or in the space of the contemporary localities, in agricultural, industrial, forestry, aquatic areas, etc. Nationally, at the beginning of 2022, in the National Archaeological Register, established and managed by the National Archaeological Agency, are included about 10,200 archaeological sites: resorts, open settlements, fortified settlements, linear fortifications, mounds, flat cemeteries, etc. At present, the archaeological heritage is less capitalised and integrated into the tourist circuit. One of the main reasons is their location and lack of infrastructure, but also the need to protect the sites from the anthropogenic factor.

Among the categories of sites that can be capitalised are the resorts in caves or natural caves. At present, about ten caves with archeological vestiges from different periods of the Paleolithic are documented. Among them, the best researched through archeological excavations, in

which specialists from the sciences related to archeology also participated, are the caves from Duruitoarea Veche, Ofatinți, Bânzani, Buzdujeni, Butești and Trinca.

An important category, although not too numerous, of existing archeological sites on the territory of the Republic of Moldova is made up of fortresses or fortifications, so far being identified about 90 such monuments. Representing portions of land with traces of human habitation or real settlements surrounded by artificial and / or natural fortifications, fortresses or fortifications are characteristic only for certain epochs or historical periods. Located on high promontories and naturally protected on three sides, the respective settlements were reinforced with ditches and earth waves on the accessible portion. Of particular interest are the sites whose fortification systems are better preserved, such as Saharna Mare, Saharna Mică, Stohnaia - La Revechin (Rezina district), Rudi - La Trei Cruci (Soroca district), Stolniceni - La Cetate (Hâncești district), Horodca Mică (Ialoveni district), Durlești - Cetățuie (Chisinau municipality).

The most numerous archaeological sites in the Prut-Dniester area, as well as on the entire Eurasian continent, are mounds or burial mounds, so far on the territory of the Republic of Moldova being identified over 6,930 such archaeological monuments. A special place, well individualised in the cultural landscape of Moldova, is occupied by large mounds, some of which have their own names. The most famous mound with its own name is Movila Măgurii, which is about 15 m high and over 80 m in diameter, being located on the top of Măgura hill (388.8 m high) near Țâghira village (Ungheni district). The impressive dimensions and the dominant position of the Măgura promontory, on which there is also a Cucuteni-Tripoli settlement from the 4th millennium BC, made the Măgurii Mound famous. Unfortunately, this very valuable archeological complex has been affected over time by landslides and some unauthorised interventions in the ground.

In recent years, museums in the Republic of Moldova have begun to stand out as **Tourist Information Centre** and institutions promoting circular cultural tourism. In the Register of Museums of the Republic of Moldova are registered 128 museums, of which 7 are subordinated to the Ministry of Culture, 97 museums subordinated to local public authorities, 6 private museums, 18 institutional museums or subordinated to other types of organisations. The Ministry of Culture is the founding authority for seven museums, four of them have the status of national museums.

1. **The National Art Museum** is the single museum with an art profile from the Republic of Moldova. It was created in 1939 and has in its patrimony almost 40 000 exhibits that reflect the development of arts since the XV century until nowadays.

2. **The National Museum of History of Moldova** was founded on December 21st 1983, when the Order of the Ministry of Culture No. 561 was issued. Now it has more than 350 000 cultural goods with different typology that represent the evolution of the historic territory of Moldova during the centuries, from the prehistoric era until the contemporary epoch, attesting the human habitat, events, and portraits of personalities.

3. **The National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History** is the first public museum in the Prut-Dniestr area and it was created in the autumn of 1889. It has a collection that counts more than 150 thousand objects from different fields: palaeontology, zoology, botanic, petrography, archaeology, numismatics, ethnography, traditional art, old books, religious objects, photography and urban culture.

4. **The National Museum of Literature „Mihail Kogălniceanu”** was created in 1965 under the auspices of the Moldova Union of Writers and in 2012 it was transmitted to the Ministry of Culture. The collection of the Museum counts more than 100 000 pieces: old books and documents, objects of art.

5. **The Cultural Naturale Reserve „Orheiul Vechi”** was established by the Law No. 251/2008³ as a public law institution, subordinated to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Moldova. The Reserve includes historical and cultural heritage assets (archaeological sites, cave complexes, vernacular architecture complexes, ethnographic objectives), traditional settlements), natural heritage goods (geological and landscape ensembles, flora and fauna), terrestrial and aquatic surfaces in which the regulated capitalization of natural resources is carried out, agricultural, industrial and tourist activities are practised.

Within the territory of the Reserve, the heritage site Orheiul Vechi Archaeological Landscape was established in 2014, and in 2017 it was included in the UNESCO Tentative List, according to the provisions of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

6. **The Museum „A.S. Puşkin”** was created in 1948 and it is dedicated to the Russian poet Aleksandr Puşkin. It hosts a collection of 33 000 pieces that are representative of the XIXth century, when the poet lived in Chişinău.

7. **The Museum of History of Jewish People from the Republic of Moldova** was created by the Government Decision No. 1019/2018. It has the goal to preserve, research and promote the Jewish cultural heritage from the Republic of Moldova. By the Decision of Government no. 1216/2018, the Jewish Cemetery from Chişinău was transmitted as a branch of the Museum.

³ Law No. 25/2008 on the Code of Conduct for Civil Servants, available in Romania at:

https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=107130&lang=ro

Existing development strategies and identified gaps – North-East Romania

The conclusions of the OECD Report, evaluating policies, plans and action strategies in relation to the objectives of the National Sustainable Development Strategy SDD2030, reflect the orientation of strategic documents towards the green transition and the development of different sectors towards the green economy, but without identifying essential actions/measures in the fields of circular economy, clean economy, biodiversity, restoration and pollution control.

The strategies at national and regional level are subordinate to the development directions from the strategies elaborated at European level. So, the objectives related to the circular economy are tackled in the strategies in Romania, but at both regional and local level, the circular economy is understood / approached mainly in the fields of waste management, sustainable water management, agriculture and industry.

The development of tourism in the NE Region of Romania is harmonised generally with the regional strategies for economic development. Just a limited number of regions have a dedicated tourism strategy, developed with a participatory approach, connected with the real needs, challenges and unique selling points.

The strategic documents that were consulted, in the process of development of the action plan, are listed here below:

- Territorial Agenda 2030
- Circular economy action plan (European Union)
- Circular economy strategies and roadmaps in Europe: Identifying synergies and the potential for cooperation and alliance building. Final Report
- National Strategy of Romania, for Tourism Development 2019-2030
- National Plan for Resilience, Pilon IV, Component 11, Tourism and Culture
- Regional Action Plan for Culture and Tourism in NE Region (PRAT) 2021-2027
- Tourism Master Plan for Neamt County, 2020-2030
- Regional Development Plan N-E 2021-2027
- Development Strategy of Bacau County
- National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030
- R&D Strategy for Smart Specialisation of NE Region
- Development Strategy of Suceava County 2021-2027
- Sustainable Development Strategy of Botosani County 2021-2027
- Socio-economic Development Strategy of Vaslui County 2021-2027
- Tourism Strategy for Iasi and Metropolitan Area 2018-2030.



The strategic directions identified in the North-East Regional Action Plan for Culture and Tourism 2021-2027 are⁴:

1. culture - factor of the development of the region
2. sustainable capitalization of the tourist potential.

In the same document, the strategic direction supports the reduction of the carbon footprint by encouraging new ways to create and provide more environmentally friendly tourism experiences.

The strategic development of tourism is, in most cases, a part of the general regional strategic development, with a poor attention for the development of cultural tourism, despite the fact that it is the most important segment for the region, and has the most significant impact on the future development of tourism. As well, in what concerns circular tourism, in the national strategies for sustainable development, the principles of circular economy are partially approached, without a coherent plan or strategic vision for a switch from linear to circular economy.

For this reason, the mission of the Be.CULTOUR project and action plan is of highest importance, being a flag and example for the subordinated regions and for the stakeholders members in the Be.CULTOUR community.

By 2030, most tourist destinations in the European Union should implement their sustainability strategy to reduce GHG emissions. The way in which the tourism ecosystem contributes to the achievement of climate neutrality, the circular economy and other sustainability objectives will be followed in the BeCULTOUR action plan.

⁴ Regional Action Plan for Culture and Tourism in NE Region (PRAT) 2021-2027, pag 96-97

Existing development strategies and identified gaps – Republic of Moldova

In the context in which tourism is developing in the Republic of Moldova, it becomes a factor of economic and social development. The main stakeholders in the development of circular cultural tourism in Moldova are the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Environment. According to point 6 of the Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the Ministry of Culture, approved by Government Decision no. 147/2021, the Ministry performs the functions in the field of culture and cultural heritage, but also of tourism. Thus, the Ministry constantly supports, including financially, projects aimed at developing and promoting circular cultural tourism.

Another interesting factor are the local public authorities: district councils, town halls, local councils. Within the specialised directorates within the district councils, there is a specialist responsible for the fields of culture, cultural heritage and tourism. They permanently organise cultural events in order to promote tourist destinations, but also circular tourist products. Analysing the situation in the mentioned sector, the local public authorities are not willing to invest in the modernization and promotion of tourist destinations, due to the existence of a number of other significant problems in the field of health, security, education, but also in the social field. However, the development of the tourist infrastructure and the inclusion of the localities in the national and international tourist circuit would bring income to the economic agents on the territory managed by LPA, thus contributing to the improvement of the living conditions of the inhabitants, but also to stopping rural migration.

Public institutions in the field of culture (museums, theatres, libraries, houses of culture) are a category that has recently been included in the tourist circuit. Tourist information centres have been opened in some museums, and their employees need to be trained so that they are able to promote the whole community and not just the museum they represent.

According to point 6 of the Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the Ministry of Culture, approved by Government Decision no. 147/2021, the Ministry performs the functions established in the fields of culture, national cultural heritage and tourism. Thus, according to the specified attributions, the Ministry is responsible for the elaboration of policy documents, draft normative acts in the established fields; collaboration, in accordance with the national legislation, with profile institutions from abroad; monitoring the quality of public policies and normative acts in the fields of activity specific to the Ministry, including in collaboration with civil society and the private sector; drafting normative acts and

implementing international treaties of the Republic of Moldova in the areas provided; preparation of reports on their execution; coordination and monitoring of the activity of the subordinate administrative authorities and of the public institutions in which he has the quality of founder, etc.

The normative framework in the field of tourism is regulated by Law no. 352/2006 on the organisation and development of tourism in the Republic of Moldova, which establishes the legal relations related to the development and promotion of state policy in the field of tourism, organisation and coordination of tourism and entrepreneurial activity in the field of tourism, forms of tourism, the creation and activity of national tourist areas, establishes the requirements regarding the quality of tourist services and ensuring the security of tourists, as well as the principles of international collaboration in the field of tourism. The law in question contains several provisions regarding the development of cultural and rural tourism.

By Government Decision no. 338/2014, the Tourism Development Strategy "Tourism 2020" and the Action Plan for its implementation in 2014-2016 were approved. In the period 2019-2020, the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure (which coordinated the field until 2021), developed a new tourism development strategy and was placed in the public approval circuit. Following the central public administration reform in 2021, the normative act was withdrawn from the approval circuit, and at present, it is in the phase of re-evaluation and re-examination by the Ministry of Culture.

In the field of cultural heritage, each sector is regulated by distinct legislative acts.

Law No.1530/1993 on the protection of monuments, available in Romanian at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=130151&lang=ro#

1. Law No. 413/1999 on Culture, available in Romanian at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=108404&lang=ro
2. Law No.262/2017 on Museums, available in Romanian at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=115926&lang=ro# ;
3. Law No.251/2008 on Formation of Cultural and Natural Reservation "Orheiul-Vechi";
4. Law No.218/2010 on the protection of the archaeological heritage, available in Romanian at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=106616&lang=ro
5. Law No.192/2011 on Public Square Monuments, available in Romanian at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=106450&lang=ro
6. Law No.280/2011 on Protection of National Movable Cultural Heritage, available in Romanian at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=106379&lang=ro



7. Law No.58/2012 on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, available in Romanian at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=106304&lang=ro
8. Law No.21/2013 on Artists and Artists' Unions, available in Romanian at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=113042&lang=ro
9. Law No. 135/2003 on Folk artistic crafts, available in Romanian at: https://www.legis.md/search/getResults?doc_id=27751&lang=en

The mentioned normative acts contain provisions regarding the regulation of the activities for the promotion of the patrimony objectives, the rights and the properties over them.

In 2014, in view of the integration of the Republic of Moldova to the EU, a Cultural development strategy was elaborated by the Ministry of Culture and adopted by the Government. The Strategy's mission is both to protect and value the country's cultural heritage as a national priority by providing the cultural heritage sector with a coherent, efficient and pragmatic policy framework, based on the priorities described in the document. For the cultural heritage component, the Strategy focuses on defining the national regulatory framework for the protection of cultural heritage, completing the national institutional framework for the protection of cultural heritage, creating a market for services of preservation / restoration of cultural heritage built, and creating the cultural heritage protection system in the administrative-territorial units.

At the moment, the Ministry of Culture is in the process of elaborating a new strategy for the development of culture and cultural heritage, which should correspond to international norms.

During the last 20 years, the European Union has been an important development partner for the country and since 2009, European Union support has been intensified. Nowadays, cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union (EU) is guided by the EU-Moldova Association Agreement (AA) which was signed in June 2014. Under Article 132 of AA, the parties concentrated their cooperation on a number of fields such as cultural cooperation and cultural exchange, intercultural dialogue, policy dialogue on cultural policy, cooperation in international organisations such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe in order to preserve and develop cultural and historical heritage, promote the participation of cultural actors from the Republic of Moldova in cultural cooperation programs. Through the Moldova-European Union Association Agreement, the parties undertook to cooperate in the field of tourism, aiming at consolidating a competitive and sustainable



tourism sector, as a factor generating economic growth and emancipation, employment and foreign exchange.

The recommendations for improving the situation in the field of capitalization of cultural heritage would be the following:

1. Adapting the legislative framework to the real and current needs, including the International norms in the field, in order to stop the degradation and destruction of the inherited cultural heritage. It is necessary to draft a new law on the protection of historical monuments in the context of international experience in the field and compliance with the obligations of the Republic of Moldova to European partners and UNESCO, which will replace the current Law on the Protection of Monuments from 1993;
2. Modifying the provisions of the Law on Authorization in Constructions, in order to make impossible the issuance of permissive documents for interventions at monuments by the Local Public Administration, without the prior mandatory approval of the National Council of Historical Monuments attached to the Ministry of Culture;
3. The Republic of Moldova must honour its commitments under international treaties and conventions in the field of cultural heritage;
4. Elaborating the National Strategy on safeguarding the cultural heritage of the Republic of Moldova;
5. Correcting the General Urban Plan of Chişinău and bringing its provisions for the central historical part of the city, in accordance with its status as an area of national category built and protected;
6. Establishing some integrated plans for the protection of cultural heritage, in accordance with the principles of the International Conventions to which Moldova is a party.

A long-term solution for financing the cultural heritage could be the public-private partnership. The amendment of the Law on Philanthropy and Sponsorship will stimulate private companies and economic agents to invest in the field of restoration of cultural heritage, benefiting from fiscal facilities. At the same time, it is necessary to create the infrastructure and capacities to receive visitors in areas with cultural potential, thus promoting cultural values and products for cultural consumption.

How can cultural heritage innovations bring us to circular cultural tourism?

The implementation of an autonomous IT cataloguing system for the built heritage of Moldova, for example, is of strategic importance in the perspective of a general policy for the development of Moldovan institutional and administrative assets. - *The catalogue aims to identify and describe the cultural heritage for which the artistic, historical, archaeological or ethno-anthropological importance has been recognized. The general catalogue of cultural heritage collects and centralises the descriptive and administrative data of protected monuments. It also collects the data on monuments that are not yet registered and those that are protected for research purposes.*

The legislation in force on the cultural heritage of the Republic of Moldova does not provide a unique system for cataloguing real estate cultural heritage. The classification system is based on the registration of assets in the Register of Historical Monuments, based on the proposal of the Ministry of Culture. Although in recent years the legislation has been repeatedly completed and updated, the procedure for the registration of cultural property remains unclear.

The classification mechanism is confusing, the procedures for identifying, describing and cataloguing the assets are quite complex and are not applied or they are applied only to a minimum. In this context, any digitization project is virtually impossible due to the lack of homogeneous databases, infrastructures and technological systems. In addition, the fragmented nature of competencies and regulations between the different protection systems weakens the whole system. Thus, it is currently difficult to develop a common digital documentation system that could make the necessary data available to the various stakeholders. One of the worst problems is the lack of an efficient link between the registers and the cadastral system.

This link would strengthen the practice of protecting private property. The lack of a unified cataloguing system makes it virtually impossible to implement the information systems connected to other national databases, preventing the creation of effective urban and spatial planning tools or the development of risk maps. In Chişinău, there is an obvious lack of concordance between the Register of monuments of the Republic of Moldova protected by the state and the Register of Monuments of local importance of Chişinău municipality, which assigns a different classification (national or local) to the same monument. Due to this many errors are committed in the record of real estate heritage and its protection.

Moreover, the data included in these inventories were not designed for IT applications, so they are not suitable for homogeneous transposition into a digital information system. In order to overcome this problem, professional data analysis is mandatory. It is also necessary to address the spatial analysis of data, which is not yet regulated. In order to create an efficient information system of the built cultural heritage, it is essential to adopt a progressive and a modular unitary cataloguing system that applies to all types of immovable cultural heritage. Modularity would allow it to respond to the diversity of goods, offering a series of specific modules adapted to different types (archaeological, monumental, historical...) within a unified data structure.

The adoption of databases for asset identification (administrative data, geo-referencing, location, cadastral data, properties, metadata) would be of particular importance. Such an approach to the cataloguing process would also facilitate the access to the various levels of detail required for the procedural steps, from the first identification of the asset to the proposal for listing, protection and monitoring.

Cultural heritage management is a complex set of legal and institutional frameworks, capacities, resources that, together, ensure the physical protection of property, adequacy in related management activities and public satisfaction. The catalogue aims to identify and describe the cultural heritage for which the artistic, historical, archaeological or ethno-anthropological importance has been recognized. The general catalogue of cultural heritage collects and centralises the descriptive and administrative data of protected monuments. It also collects the data on monuments that are not yet registered and those that are protected for research purposes.

The general catalogue of cultural heritage would be a suitable tool for the protection and consolidation of cultural heritage, planning interventions for conservation and is the fundamental level of knowledge for spatial planning and for effective prevention of natural and man-made threats. In Moldova, the heritage protection policy and decision-making processes include various degrees of vertical autonomy and low levels of horizontal relations [6]. On the one hand, this is due to the lack of adequate technical equipment, and on the other hand—the lack of easily accessible and common basic information on heritage.

This constraint could be exaggerated if the basic heritage information were more easily accessible in a common, coherent way through up-to-date information technologies. The implementation of an autonomous IT cataloguing system for the built heritage of Moldova is of strategic importance in the perspective of a general policy for the development of Moldovan institutional and administrative assets.

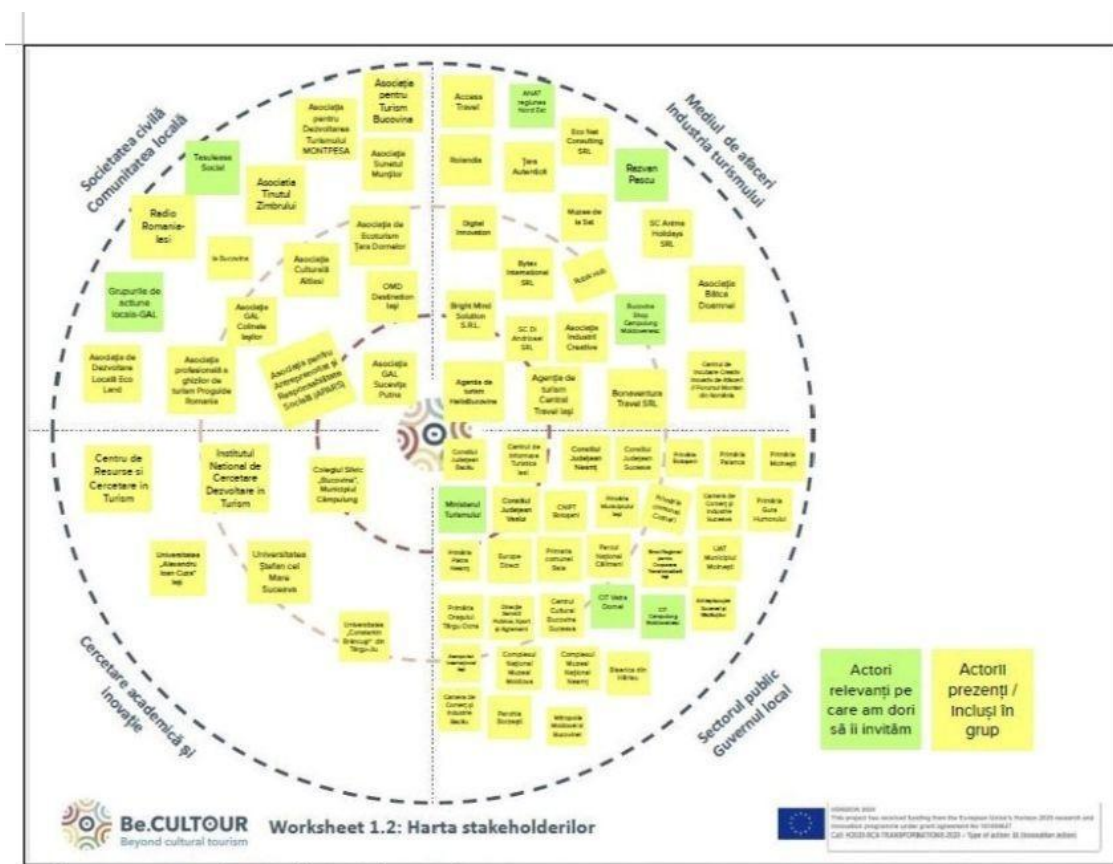
The IT cataloguing system for the built heritage of Moldova will be a relational integrated spatial database, which will allow users to explore, overlay and process the information about cultural assets and the potential risk factors. It will provide heritage managers with a technological tool to support scientific and administrative activities. This system will collect data on any type of real estate, both monumental and archaeological, regardless of classification and degree of protection, and will be an operational tool to support the decision-making process in the protection of cultural heritage, spatial planning and control. The IT cataloguing system for the real estate heritage of Moldova will be based on a database of registered and unregistered monuments and archaeological assets. The database will consist of:

- 1) Archaeological sites;
- 2) Monuments.

Both registered and unregistered. All monuments and archaeological assets will be analysed on the basis of a Unified Inventory Form and files on Monuments and Archaeological Assets. They are based on the data set stipulated in the following: ↪ Order No. 380 from 27.12.2016 on the Regulation on the National Register and Local Registers of Public Monuments; ↪ Regulation on the evidence and classification of the archaeological heritage, Order of the Minister of Culture No. 126 from 25.04.2013 has already been included in the system. The IT cataloguing system for the real estate of Moldova will be a section of the Moldovan National geospatial data fund, managed by the Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre (ARFC). The layer will collect the data already existing in the system of both the Agency for Inspection and Restoration of Monuments and the National Archaeological Agency. The application “EPatrimoniul” created by the Agency for Inspection and Restoration of Monuments on the platform <http://www.geoportal.md/> is an example of promoting the immovable cultural heritage through information technologies, which currently works and provides online data of over 1000 monuments in the real estate heritage of the Republic of Moldova. The online platform <http://www.monument.sit.md/> launched by the Association “SIT” is, in the same context, an invaluable contribution in the field of research and promotion of the architectural heritage of Chişinău. This platform in collaboration with the Publishing House “Arc” launched in 2010 the album entitled “The historical centre of Chişinău at the beginning of the XXI century. The repertoire of architectural monuments”.

Mapping of inclusive and diverse stakeholder ecosystem – North-East Romania

The destination is the most complex entity in the tourism industry, due the fact that it is difficult to be managed: if in a simple tourism company, we have tools to reach our goals, destination management should be based only on the commitment of their stakeholders, communication, transparency and co-creation. For this reason, we have taken the involvement of the stakeholder ecosystem very seriously, in order not only to access all valuable knowledge that they have, but also in order to get their commitment in the future implementation of the action plan. Due to the extension of the targeted area, the list of stakeholders resulting in LWS1 was quite extensive (about 80 organisations).



Mapping of inclusive and diverse stakeholder ecosystem – Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova has 5622 monuments protected by the state, 2689 of which are archaeological monuments, 1387 are architectural monuments, 180 art monuments and 1318 historical monuments. According to national statistical data there are 1194 cultural institutions, 8 artistic education institutions, 6 large museums located in the city of Chisinau, 4

concert halls and 12 theatres. The Republic of Moldova has 35 raions (districts) and around 902 municipalities, each village has a local history museum.

The urban development of Chişinău, doubly accelerated compared to the rest of the country, resulted in the imposing destruction of the national real estate heritage.

The “Register of monuments of national and municipal importance”, approved by Chişinău's City Hall in January 1995, includes 977 municipal historical monuments.

As a result of the evaluation of the architectural heritage of the Nucleus of the Historical Centre of Chisinau, carried out by AIRM, it was found:

- 1) 80 architectural monuments were demolished (of which 44 were demolished during 1993-2006, and 36 objectives were demolished during 2006-2012);
- 2) 17 historic buildings are in an advanced state of ruin;
- 3) 160 cases of illegal interventions that damaged the authenticity of the monuments.

In Chişinău, 254 national and local real estate monuments from a total of 977 monuments suffered due to the non-compliance with the legislation in force.

Mapping of recognized and hidden assets – North-East Romania

The mapping of recognised and hidden assets was performed using an online map of the Route Stephen the Great and Saint. The participants were asked to reflect on the assets in the areas or parts of the route they are familiar with. They have worked individually and then in small groups, exchanging their opinions and experiences. Moderator and documenter noted down challenges, linking them to assets right away. At the end all participants discussed the results and the top 5 challenges resulting from the group work. Using a MURAL board the participants could vote for the most important challenges to be addressed during the project.

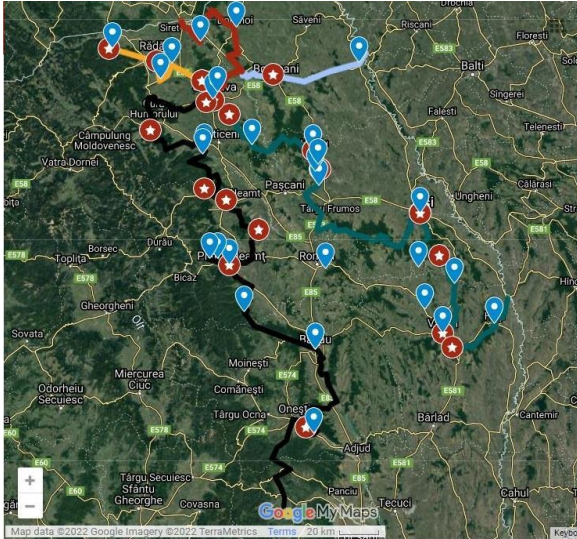


Figure 4. Assets from Romania



Figure 5. Assets from Republic of Moldova

Mapping of recognized and hidden assets – Republic of Moldova

The intangible cultural heritage of the Republic of Moldova includes a wide range of historical and cultural monuments from various historical epochs.

On the territory of the Republic of Moldova have been identified over 12000 monuments of history and culture, of which 5206 are included in the Register of monuments of the Republic of Moldova protected by the state. Of the total number of monuments, about 8000 represent archeological sites, about 100 of them are earthen fortresses, 3 mediaeval walled fortresses, 6 mediaeval cities (Orhei, Lăpușna, Tighina, Soroca, Căușeni, Chișinău), 788 churches, 129 mansions and many historical cities from the 19th century (Bălți, Cahul, Chișinău, Orhei, Soroca, Tiraspol).

Mapping of specific heritage and cultural tourism-related challenges – North-East Romania

We can confirm the previous conclusions of the Be.CULTOUR reports (D.3.4.) that there is only a limited understanding of the term “cultural tourism”. The circular economy concept has not yet garnered much awareness or activity in the two countries, and the workshops had as an additional goal the increasing awareness of the participants about this topic. According to the project deliverable D.3.4, “in Moldova, there is some discussion of the circular economy regarding waste management. In North-East Romania, a circular economy advisory group was

established in 2016 to support circular efforts in the region and one notable private organisation is working on the topic. “

Reflection on the challenges, was as well an impulse to identify areas for new improvements, to maximise the potential of the region. Among other things, attention was paid to factors such as:

- variety of places suitable for the families,
- spots for camping and hostels for young travellers,
- the possibility of developing a diversified offer of souvenirs,
- the advantages of using digital tools and the attractiveness of social media in promoting tourist facilities, good network infrastructure can also strengthen the cooperation between local stakeholders by linking presentations of their activities,
- the possibility of designing individualised tourist offers on request (for different tourist categories),
- existing examples of circular economy in terms of cultural heritage (villages in Bucovina).

Based on LWS1 discussions and online voting, the following challenges were identified. The order corresponds to the highest number of votes.

1. Awareness of different interests that the visitors could have (tangible and intangible heritage) and develop new tourism experiences.
2. The need to establish efficient local partnership with all stakeholders involved in regional tourism and beyond. The project is done by the community and for the community. The Action Plan should mirror the local needs and visions. Thus all stakeholders should be updated on the progress of the project. T
3. Improving the promotion of the tourist offer with particular emphasis on an effective presence on the Internet and with particular attention to digital marketing, digitalisations a.o.
4. Educational offer for employees in the tourist/cultural sector to help them obtain additional skills.
5. Comprehensive care of cultural heritage.

A possible weakness is that the region is not marketed internationally in an adequate way. As a result, there is no offer adequately tailored to foreign tourists (for example modern transportation operated by trained staff, adapted tourism interpretation a.o.). As well, limited online presence leads to a lack of reviews and recommendations on websites visited by tourists. In many dimensions, the level of accessibility is inadequate in terms of mobility

(including the connection between several destinations), availability of information, and cleanliness of public places. So far, the offer addressed to families has also been taken into account only to a small extent (not only in terms of comfort of the visit, but as well use of specific tools making cultural heritage accessible).

An often-recurring factor was the issue of online presence and taking advantage of the opportunities arising from the development of this area, in terms of digitization of heritage, as well as promotion, and cooperation. Missing cooperation has been highlighted as well and is seen as an obstacle.

In general, there are many factors in the region that require modernization. Stakeholders have different ideas for action, and the main challenges identified in LWS1 and LWS2 are listed below, structured on some categories.

MAIN CHALLENGES

CULTURAL HERITAGE

- ▶▶ Transformation of the cultural landscape
- ▶▶ Declining number of local craftsmen
- ▶▶ Degradation/ alteration of the built heritage
- ▶▶ Some attractions are not even known by the local community
- ▶▶ The property status (some historic buildings are private properties)
- ▶▶ Accessibility of raw materials for traditional products (eg fabric for the romanian blouse)

ADVERTISING

- ▶▶ The region is not well known/ advertised
- ▶▶ Weak presence online
- ▶▶ Online ratings with low numbers of testimonials don't offer credibility
- ▶▶ Not targeted (the tourist demand is not analysed in depths - the tourist profile is not well known)

OTHERS

- ▶▶ Many units do not offer an option for card payments
- ▶▶ Lack of interpretation areas for children
- ▶▶ The souvenir offer hasn't evolved too much in the past years, lacks diversity and some are imported from China
- ▶▶ Data is not collected separately between tourists and residents to have a true picture of the tourism impact
- ▶▶ Uneven development level between the regions
- ▶▶ Bad reputation/ perception (eg roma community)
- ▶▶ Deforestations

Be.CULTOUR Beyond cultural tourism

 This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004627
Call: H2020-SC6-TRANSFORMATIONS-2020 - Type of action: IA (Innovation action)

Romania -Moldova, Cross -Border Region

The Route of Stephan the Great
And Saint, North -East Romania -
Moldova Cross -Border Area



1

Fig. nr. 6 – Main challenges. Results of LWS1, part 1.

MAIN CHALLENGES

HUMAN RESOURCES

- ▶▶ Not enough specialised personnel (eg museum curators)
- ▶▶ Lack of skilled workforce
- ▶▶ Across all sectors the big majority of staff doesn't speak English (foreigns languages)
- ▶▶ Depopulation

LOCAL COMMUNITY

- ▶▶ Overtourism (overcrowding of some destinations)
- ▶▶ Not aware of the resources of their region / not appreciating at the true value
- ▶▶ Lack of involvement / cooperation
- ▶▶ Waste management (garbage disposal and collection)

ACCESSIBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION

- ▶▶ Long distances between the attractions on the route
- ▶▶ The transportation network
- ▶▶ Not adapted to new tendencies (bike/ ride sharing, charging of electric cars)
- ▶▶ Not enough information online
- ▶▶ Opening hours are not clear for some attractions
- ▶▶ Missing road signaling (for car and bike transportation)

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Romania -Moldova, Cross -Border Region

The Route of Stephan the Great And Saint, North -East Romania – Moldova Cross -Border Area



2

Fig. nr. 7 – Main challenges. Results of LWS1, part 2.

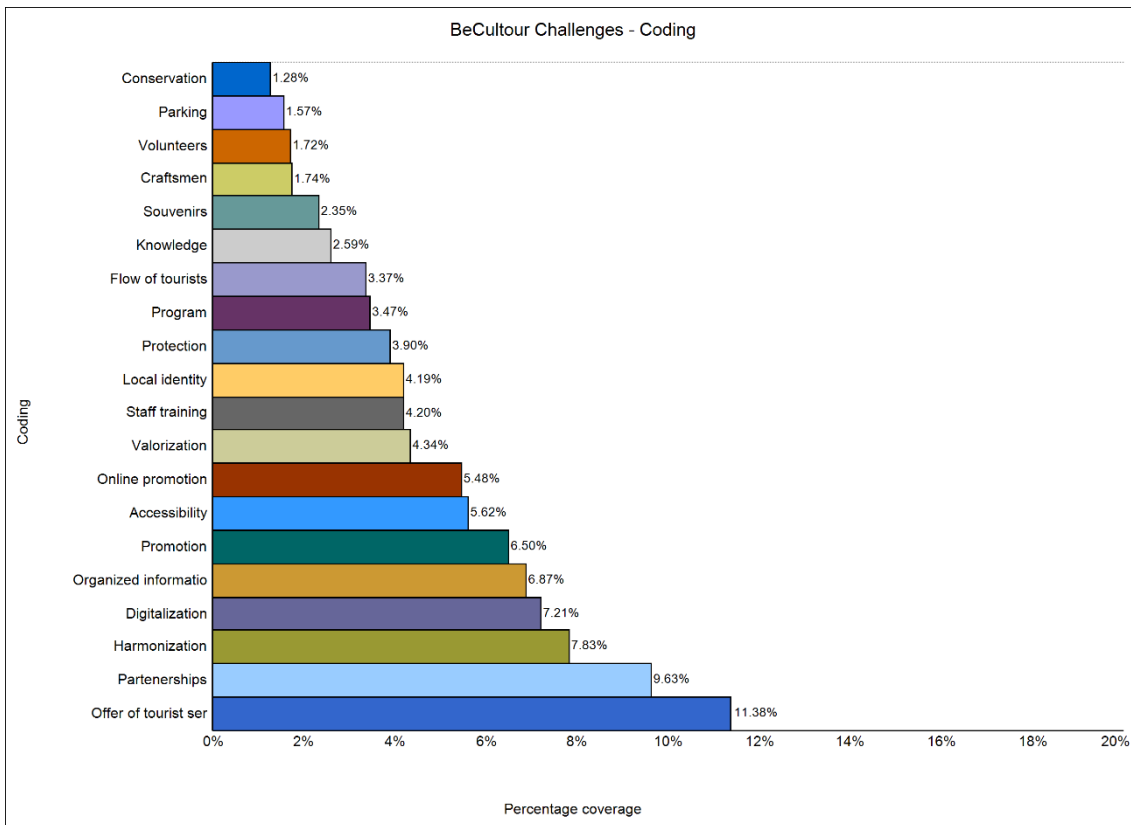


Fig. nr. 7 – NVivo clustering of the main challenges. Results of LWS1

The information regarding the met challenges, presented as unstructured text, has been gathered from the participants to BeCultour workshop, and then typed, filtered and analysed using NVivo software (see fig. nr. 7). All the related challenges have been gathered in related codes which were the springboard to developing a higher level of analysis. The percentage of coverage shows the importance of each code (challenge) in the participant's discourse.

The actions included in the Local Action Plan (LAP) are addressing the first challenges, selected by the stakeholders that have attended to the co-creation process.

Mapping of specific heritage and cultural tourism-related challenges – Republic of Moldova

At the national level, the evaluation carried out by AIRM in the period 2009-2011, on 788 monuments from 366 localities (29 districts), revealed major dysfunctions and vulnerabilities in the field of real estate in the Republic of Moldova, as follows:

- about 15% of buildings and historical sites were demolished;
- 40% of buildings and historical sites are in a state of advanced degradation;
- 111 churches were mutilated by the degrading interventions, without the permission of the authorities invested by the legislature with responsibilities for authorising such interventions;
- 80% of the 49 boyar mansions with the status of protected monument of national category are in a state of ruin;
- 18 wooden churches registered in the Register of state-protected monuments were demolished during 1993-2012;
- 4 wooden churches are in a state of advanced degradation;
- 20 buildings of civil architecture are in a degrading condition;
- 50 public monuments are in an unsatisfactory condition;
- 31 churches from various localities of the republic are currently in an unsatisfactory situation and do not meet all the norms of preventive conservation. Likewise, in most of the historical monasteries protected by the state, some interventions were operated that seriously damaged their originality and monumental value;
- 8 monasteries in the country are in an unsatisfactory state, over 20 in a wretched state.

Involvement of the community in Actions – North-East Romania

The additional achievement of the Be.CULTOUR workshops was that it configured a community of practice, that was involved in the co-creation process, that contributed to the identification of hidden assets and of the main challenges.

Stakeholders and Heritage Innovation Network

80 participants took part in the LWS1, representing various areas, including tourism industry, public administration, civil society, cultural institutions and other stakeholders from NERDA Romania and Republic of Moldova. The workshop was organised online, and due to the variety of the area covered and the large number of participants, the individual modules were adapted accordingly. Overall, the private sector was under-represented at LWS1, compared to the public sector. There were also no direct representatives of the rural areas with tourist potential. Throughout LWS2 and LWS3 the innovation network was consolidated, by the participation of important stakeholders from all countries involved in the development of the Route StGS. They are committed to support the future development of the route and will be part in the implementation of the LAP.

The diversity of the participants made it possible to discuss issues such as, among others, already existing routes like the cross-border route of wooden churches of Romania and Republic of Moldova, the Route of Stephen the Great and Saint, and new ones that are still in planning. Additionally, attention was drawn to the need for digitalization and development of new online based tools, such as applications for mobile devices (e.g. VisitNeamt), branding of heritage objects, and responding to the changing profile of the visitors..

As a result of the workshops, the ecosystem of several dozen entities potentially interested in the project was outlined.

Involvement of the community in Actions – Republic of Moldova

On 11.07.2012, the “National Development Strategy, Moldova 2020” was approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. The field of culture, implicitly, the field of cultural heritage, does not find its place among the eight development priorities of the country. In these conditions, the Ministry of Culture elaborated the Culture Development Strategy “Culture 2020”, approved by the Government of the Republic of Moldova on 29.01.2014.

It is the first strategic document in the field of culture in the Republic of Moldova, since the declaration of independence in 1991.

One of the four general objectives of the Strategy is “Safeguarding the national cultural heritage”. Among the basic actions to be taken to achieve this objective are:

- Finalising the national normative framework in the field of cultural heritage protection by adopting the Law on the protection of historical monuments, which contains for the first time, for the national legislation, detailed provisions including those regarding the protection of historic cities/protected built areas. The necessary amendments to the Criminal and Administrative Codes of the Republic of Moldova are to be made, respectively.
- Finalising the national institutional framework in the field of cultural heritage protection.
- The documentation and inventory of the built cultural heritage, including the protected built areas/historic cities, by creating the national institution responsible for the evidence.
- Creating the market of services for the conservation/restoration of the built cultural heritage—by forming the national system for training staff in the field; by ensuring a competition for access to the provision of design and operation services for conservation/restoration works based on professionalism/knowledge and specialisation in the field.
- The creation of the cultural heritage protection system within the territorial-administrative units.

The strategy did not establish separate actions against the protected built-up areas and historic cities.

To solve the existing problems, it is important to promote the perception of the built cultural heritage, including the urban heritage of historic cities, as an important resource for sustainable development of localities, and not as an “embarrassing obstacle to progress” (“progress” is usually, associated with wide streets, large urban constructions, made of glass and concrete, which “inevitably” must replace the constructions of historic centres). That perception has been educated over the past few decades against the background of the demolition of the Soviet system of protection of built heritage and not building anything new.

Meaning and value of local cultural heritage Actions for European history and culture – North-East Romania

At the regional level, it is assumed that an Action Plan will be developed for 2023-2027, in which the main focus will be on circular cultural tourism. The development of products and

services specific to circular tourism should be rooted in the local potential. One example is Vânători Neamț Natural Park, which was selected for the Hackathon, having a chance for future development of its potential, and for a future scaling of activities in other nature-protected areas.

The Route of Stephen the Great and Saint (StGS) brings together the main points of interest connected to the life, events and the cultural and military accomplishments of this great mediaeval ruler. During his reign of 47 years, Stephan managed to make Moldavia known throughout Europe, establishing commercial, military, and cultural connections with the most important European powers of that time⁵. With a succession of wars and peace treaties, considered by his contemporary fellow Europeans as a head of state who had managed to hold the reins of the country for 47 years, Stefan was seen by the people as a symbol of stability, consistency, economic development and justice strengthened the position of Moldavia in both the military and cultural fields. Through his connections with King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary, Sultan Mehmed II - the conqueror of Constantinople, King Cazimir IV of Poland, Vlad Țepeș of Wallachia (Dracula) - his cousin or Pope Sixtus the IV of Rome, Stephan entered triumphantly on the European stage. The points of interest identified on the route are valorised and communicated mostly independently, the local community is very attached to the historical figure of Ștefan and there are lots of legends regarding his reign. The most famous points of interest are the mediaeval fortresses, the princely courts and the beautiful churches built during the 47 years of rule. Most of them were conserved in time as the most valuable assets of the region, so the valorisation and communication in an innovative and integrated way is not only possible, but highly expected. All these are arguments that are connecting the history of these places, are connected with the history and culture of Europe, in a broader context.

Meaning and value of local cultural heritage Actions for European history and culture – Republic of Moldova

Overcoming the situation is possible by building a new system for the protection of the built cultural heritage in the Republic of Moldova; by integrating it in the urban development plans of localities (establishing borders, buffer zones, a management plan, etc.), according to the principles set out in documents (books, conventions, resolutions) in the field of the Council of Europe and UNESCO and in accordance with the European best practices.

⁵www.usv.ro; BeCULTOUR internal reports.

By implementing the Strategy, the cultural sector was to become a viable and impactful area in the economy and social life of the entire country. The mission of the Strategy was to provide the cultural sector with a coherent, efficient and pragmatic policy framework, starting from the priorities identified in the document. The strategy took into account the needs of the sector and of human capital in the fields.

By December 31, 2020, the Republic of Moldova would have a consolidated, independent and creative cultural sector, a cultural heritage protected and integrated into the national and regional public policies, including sustainable development activities: educational, social, economic, tourism and the environment.

The modernization of cultural institutions and digitization in the arts and culture sector is one of the objectives of the National Strategy for the Development of Culture of the Republic of Moldova/Culture 2020. It aimed to ensure the real and virtual circulation of cultural products. The basic objective of the Strategy is to make the information system of the cultural sector practical.

Among the priority actions of the Strategy are:

- Digitization of cultural heritage;
- Development of a single information system in the field of culture.

The National Program for the computerization of the cultural sphere for the years 2012-2020 was also approved in 2012. The objective of the program was to digitise, in proportion of 75%, the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Republic of Moldova by 2020. Another document containing provisions related to culture is the National Strategy for the development of the information society “Digital Moldova 2020”.

The national program for computerization of the sphere of culture for the years 2012-2020, also provided for the creation of the infrastructure and information spaces in the field of culture, necessary for the provision of electronic services in the field of culture.

These policies in the field of culture and cultural heritage have not been successful due to lack of financial coverage.

If these policies had been implemented practically, today we would witness an advanced level of development of the cultural sector and the impact on the economy and social life of the whole country. In this context, the governance objectives that could improve the cultural heritage policy are:

- 1) Promoting culture, as a primary factor in preserving and developing the national identity;
- 2) Promoting national cultural values, as a component part of the European cultural heritage.

Discovering the “beyond” in circular cultural tourism in the PHS (how Actions address other economic sectors and residents’ needs)

The challenges addressed by the project in this area are related to the accessibility of remote areas, quality standards for cultural tourism and language barriers and cultural mediation⁶. The focus area features villages with relevant cultural heritage sites that can be valorised for tourism activities. However, these destinations are still unknown and the local economy is underdeveloped, creating the need to assist local communities in their local economic development strategies. Rural areas are affected by migration of young people to western Europe for employment, causing the loss of immaterial heritage in these villages.

The lack of public funding for the promotion of tourism is a challenge, coupled by a lack of qualified human resources in tourism.

The actions proposed in the LAP are not tackling only tourism, but additional sectors and the communities from urban and rural regions. The implementation of the actions is an opportunity and may lead to development of a competitive products and services, the business ideas being like a flag for future similar projects in fields that are core-points in the pilot site: heritage, natural parks and nature reservation, digitalisation, creation of new tourism experiences, improved tourism information services. The Route of Stephan Great and Saint could constitute a complete tourist experience, it is not only a tourist attraction.

Spiritual travel experiences, nature as heritage and the contemporary meaning of heritage were determined to be the niche innovation areas which appear to be most easily related to the local reality in these cases, together with emerging trends: transformative travel, remote working destinations and post-cultural tourism. These innovation areas will engage additional areas and stakeholders.

As well, the project methodology itself is seen as an opportunity, the used tools of co-creation could be adapted for local workshops, in remote communities.

Why will our Action Plan be sustainable? Monitoring and evaluation

The NERDA was in the last decade in the region a coagulation factor and a moderator of the tourism development in NE Romania, embracing the regional challenges: a large territory and a big number of stakeholders.

⁶ Be.CULTOUR internal reports.

In the co-creation process it was stated that NERDA will coordinate as well in the future the Be.CULTOUR community formed through the LAP co-creation process. Like this, not only the sustainability will be optimised, but as well the enlargement of the existing innovation ecosystem.

- The following monitoring actions are aimed to be implemented:
- Periodic online or onsite meetings, as an exchange of knowledge in the field of circular tourism;
- Quarterly meetings with coordination bodies of innovative ideas and check of the status-quo of all actions;
- Based on the quarterly checks, 1-2 page evaluation reports will be issues, regarding actions performed, challenges, deliverable;
- Revision of the actions after the Hackathon and update of the content;
- Identification of incremental changes or course corrections that are needed;
- Evaluation of success gap (elaboration of Success Gap Action Plan);
- Evaluation of final indicators.



Action Plan: Overview of actions and sub-actions

Action 1. Digital marketing and improved digital presence on the internet, of the territory and of the cultural resources of the Route of Stephan the Great and Saint (StGS), from North-East Romania – Moldova. The online information and promotion should be instructional, relevant and inspirational, connected with tourists/consumers that are responsible with the environment and with the resources of the destination.

The marketing of destinations has changed in the last two decades. The technology is contributing to worldwide access to destinations that are competing not only in the real tourism markets, but in the online world as well. The tourists are pre-testing the tourism experience, by accessing images and information before their trip. Like this, the tourism promotion is shifted from the teasing and attention/interest rising to information and virtual visit of destinations. At the same time, the DMOs are able to assess the right segments of tourism, their interests, and can anticipate their travel behaviour. The action should encompass: (1) the digital promotion (online presence on social media channels, improvement of the quality of the digital presence / pictures/storytelling/presentation); (2) integration of digital marketing research, in profiling the potential visitors and developing appropriate selling messages and channels; (3) digitalization through AI, AR and VR solutions of the heritage and natural resources from the pilot site; (4) increased loyalty and connection in post-consumption stage, through gamification solutions. All these measures are connected with the national tourism strategy, and with regional and local development strategies. As well, the action is a result of the co-creation activities from LWS1 and LWS2, as a response to the challenge “limited existing tools for digital marketing”, “reduced marketing intelligence in order to connect the tourism offer with the tourism needs”.

The cultural heritage assets that will be valorised by the action, encompasses the objectives registered in the Cultural Route of Stephan the Great (StGS), 9 tourist attractions in the Republic of Moldova and 20 tourist attractions in Romania but as well other associated resources, as vernacular architecture, immaterial heritage related to the traditional way of living in the rural area, household occupations, events, and festivals. The area covered by the

route includes activities and resources belonging mainly to the rural areas, but as well to urban settlements, with a coherent and attractive tourism offer. This diversity constitutes an advantage, taking in consideration that could be fulfilled needs for both tourism city and rural experiences.

The timeframe that will be envisaged for the implementation of the action is four years, and the geographical space that will be covered is the cultural route StGS. Some additional spots will be included, as result of the co-creation process developed in the workshops of Be.CULTOUR project.

Sub-action 1.1: Stephen the Great, VR route

Objective 1.1.

An enhanced promotion of StGS Route at EU level, with the support of a VR application that will include 29 virtual tours and will be developed in a timeframe of 4 years (field documentation, digitalization of field resources, film production, platform development and testing).

Sub-action description:

The VR ROUTE will integrate a total of 29 virtual tours, that will encompass 9 tourist attractions in the Republic of Moldova and 20 tourist attractions in Romania, all integrated into an online platform constituted as a 3D map of the pilot heritage site. The platform offers the possibility to identify the tourist routes, the locations of the activities included in the circular tourism solutions, and the natural environment and will attract at least 200 tourists in the 1st year, for each of the objectives presented. A special attention will be accorded to the promotion of the circular tourism initiatives. The impact of this promotion is expected to be high, as more and more members of the virtual community will be targeted. The VR Route aim is as well to increase the interest of new generations and younger generation to traditional and cultural values. It can be a tool for learning (thanks to the scientific and historical data presented in it) and for cultural education.

The VR ROUTE will offer an additional tool for the promotion of the destination, for new tourists, or for the new multimedia-consumers and millennials. Through the platform, and its integrative character in the local and international context, will be achieved the valorization of the pilot heritage site, through interdisciplinary approaches in the local and international

context and the access to digital promotion of less advantaged sub-areas, re-balancing the access to the tourism markets.

The innovative nature of the solution can be the basis for interactive history lessons. The social impact on the area, apart from increasing the number of tourists, could be achieved by involving and mobilising the local community firstly by carrying out the interviews necessary for the tours and secondly by further developing the platform with the help of local professionals. As well, a “participatory” storytelling can be implemented, with the support of translation functions that can be added to the interviews with the locals.

Sub-action activities:

1. Desk documentation
2. Technical research and research tools conceived
3. Documentation and final list of sites characteristics, relevant for visual documentation (filming)
4. Scenario writing
5. Calendar of field work and field documentation (photo shooting, filming, interviews)
6. Pre-montage, montage
7. Quality management and final review
8. Creation of a self-financing mechanism for a self-sustainable platform.

The sub-action proposes the creation of virtual tours of the locations and objectives within the pilot heritage site, integrated into an online platform that facilitates their visualisation in a 3D environment, i.e. with the help of a 3D map of the area served by the pilot heritage site, which is intended to function as an interface between the user and the virtual tours available.

The interactive virtual tour will contain info points with texts/pictures/video/action buttons, information about the sites within the route. It will be bilingual and will interlink images recorded at each objective and then interlink all objectives. To this end, drone footage will be used, interviews and 360 video, with the help of a professional 360 video camera (Insta360 PRO 2). This solution aims to widen access to culture through new media technologies. Thus, the protection, preservation and promotion of the pilot heritage site is done by involving social and cultural elements of each site.

It aims to promote and present circular economy solutions implemented within the local and regional tourism ecosystem.

This solution will be accessible for free, making it possible to interconnect tourists with heritage, as well as accommodation or transport within the pilot heritage site. In addition to virtual tours, documented using historical and academic sources, of the heritage elements, users will also find on the platform information about local producers, accommodation and transport.

The platform will be accessible from any device with internet connection, will offer the possibility to create their own itineraries, as well as act as a guide for tourists interested in discovering the pilot heritage site on their own. The sub-action objectives are aligned with the following strategic development goals: SDG4 Quality education, SDG5 Gender equality, SDG8 Decent work and economic growth; SDG9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG11 Sustainable cities and communities.

When: start date and end date:	2023-2025 (field work 6-8 months)
Be.CULTOUR innovation area(s):	<p>Sensorial Heritage Experience; Contemporary Meanings of Heritage; Spiritual Travel experience; Nature As Heritage; Industrial Heritage Experience; Transformative travel</p> <p>Sensory heritage experience Starting from the goal of attracting tourists, a virtual tour offers a sensory experience by translating the real environment into the virtual environment, by creating an integrated virtual community, accessible according to the user's preferences.</p> <p>Contemporary meanings of heritage The pilot heritage site currently contains both elements of history and tradition and contemporary aspects of its preservation as well as recent cultural elements that complement the cultural space of the pilot heritage site. Transposing them into the virtual environment using our proposed solution, represents a testimony to the future of the spatial and temporal context of identity and culture in which we find ourselves at the moment. Interviews about the development intentions of the area, and circular tourism are other relevant and innovative elements of the virtual community creation solution.</p> <p>Spiritual travel experience The main aim of the solution is to attract tourists. Watching virtual tours just for information and knowledge can easily turn into a special spiritual experience, given</p>



	<p>the use of modern 360 3D filming technologies and reporting techniques.</p> <p>Nature as heritage 360 3D technology involves recording an object, showing the natural setting in which it is located, and nature becomes an integral part of the site.</p> <p>Industrial heritage experience The platform will present data on the economic activities of the site, especially those with heritage value (e.g. traditional arts, and crafts specific to the area).</p> <p>Transformative journey Whether you choose the virtual tour as a learning experience or to choose a tourist destination, the experience offered is transformative. In the first case, through the accumulation of integrated information and the development of knowledge about European cultural heritage, and in the second case through the novelty of the presentation of the tourist destination.</p>
Identified local challenge(s):	<p>Reduced digital presence in internet of the destination; Low awareness about the tourism potential; Most recent statistics have shown that the younger generation prefers to learn using online applications, virtual environments, and new technologies.</p>
Cultural heritage asset(s):	<p>Locations and objectives within the pilot heritage site, integrated into an online platform that facilitates their visualisation in a 3D environment, i.e. with the help of a 3D map of the area served by the pilot heritage site, which is intended to function as an interface between the user and the virtual tours available.</p>
Target group(s):	<p>Tourists of all ages. Small and less accessible communities that will take advantage from the online promotion; Younger generation of tourists. Scholars/students Multimedia consumers</p>
Responsible stakeholder(s):	<p>The "BÂTCA DOAMNEI" NGO Tourism departments from selected communities; Public authorities Museums The administration of all heritage sites from the Route StGS</p>
Collaborator(s):	<p>Text editor, Project manager, Videographer, VR editor, Actors, Local guides</p>

	Museums Community members
Raw budget estimation:	20.000 EUR
Funding source (European, National, local funds):	Start-Up Nation (RO) Creative Europe (EU) COSME (EU) Regional and local budget of public authorities.
Other resources needed:	Drone Filming equipment Scenario Transportation Accommodation for team members
Indicator(s) for success (also considering circularity, diversity and inclusion):	Number of tours included; Number of tourism attractions; Number of circular businesses included in the presentations; Number of small, remoted communities, interesting for the local heritage; Surface included on the 3D map of heritage maps; Activities included in the circular tourism solutions, and the natural environment. At least 200 tourists in the first year for each of the objectives presented. The impact of this promotion is expected to be high, as more and more members of the virtual community will be targeted.
Hackathon? Yes or no	Candidate, not selected.



Sub-action 1.2: A virtual journey of heritage

Objective 1.2.

An improved quality of the virtual promotion of the StGS Route and a broader international presence of the 29 cultural heritage sites and circular tourism initiatives, through a platform that will integrate Matterport interactive 3D virtual tours, developed in two years, as a full option solution (virtual tours and interactive elements).

The ultimate goal of this project is to create the desire of the website user to "turn" into a physical visitor, who pays and supports culture, but also to provide the opportunity for those who cannot physically travel to explore the cultural sites in

Sub-action description:

The Matterport 3D interactive virtual tour is the main tool for the promotion and preservation of cultural sites. The technology used by us in the realisation of interactive virtual tours is less used in Romania (especially in the cultural field), because it is more expensive and requires much more effort and technical knowledge than the one used for the realisation of classic "virtual tours" - which either use only 360 photos or the "virtual tour" has no interactive elements. Among the main features of the virtual tour offered by the team are: it can be accessed anytime and anywhere from any internet-connected device (laptop, PC, smartphone, tablet), without the need to install another app; the user can explore both inside and outside the museum; it can be navigated using VR (virtual reality) glasses; it digitally preserves heritage assets; the virtual tour cannot be altered, it presents the reality exactly as it is when scanned. In addition to the virtual tour, the page for each cultural site also includes informative text, which helps it to be indexed more appropriately in Google, a set of detail and landscape photos, and information about the programme, contact and geographical location.

The cultural sites will be linked together on a web platform, which will be available in both Romanian and English. Each cultural site will benefit from an Matterport interactive 3D virtual tour made with high-performance equipment, which will be available for two years on the web platform. The virtual tour will also be integrated on Google Street View, Google Maps and Google Earth, with no expiry date. In addition, each museum will also benefit from a set of 15-20 professional interior/exterior detail and landscape photographs. Using the website's interactive interface, the user will be able to view the online page of each cultural object included, read about it and view/explore the 3D virtual tour and photos.

Sub-action activities:

1. Stakeholders meetings and content negotiation
2. Desk documentation
3. Field research and data collection (3D Scanning)
4. Data processing
5. Sending the data draft to the beneficiaries for content approval
6. Creation of the platform that will aggregated with all tourism services (one stop shop version)
7. Monitoring and quality control over first year implementation stage

When: start date and end date:	2023-2025
Be.CULTOUR innovation area(s):	Contemporary Meanings of Heritage; Spiritual Travel Experience; Industrial Heritage Experience; Transformative Travel.
Identified local challenge(s):	<p>The state of emergency of the last two years and the pandemic have accentuated the need for a more interactive and up-to-date online presence of cultural institutions. Major museums and art galleries around the world have responded to this need by creating interactive virtual tours, with information points and videos integrated into the virtual tour. question. Matterport interactive 3D virtual tours will increase the visibility of cultural objects and attract more physical visitors.</p> <p>Although virtual tours are not a completely new technology, over the last few years they have seen a rapid rise, with the introduction of innovative elements that have significantly improved user interactivity. Thus, the project defines new valences and expressive approaches in the cultural-artistic field, the starting point being a set of problems and needs that the target audience feels acutely at this time</p>
Cultural heritage asset(s):	<p>THE ROUTE OF STEPHAN THE GREAT AND SAINT, NORTH-EAST ROMANIA – MOLDOVA CROSS-BORDER AREA includes churches, fortified fortresses, over 500-year-old royal cellars and museums - buildings of major cultural importance.</p> <p>Scanning them using high-performance equipment and creating Matterport interactive 3D virtual tours leads to the preservation of the heritage in the most complete</p>

	form and at the same time promotes the route to a wide audience.
Target group(s):	<p>The virtual tour and the photographs will attract not only mature audiences - 35-50 years old, but also (and especially) younger audiences - under 18 and 18-34 years old. It is well known that young people have much higher technological expectations and in order to be convinced to visit a cultural site or museum, it is necessary for the cultural institution to have a very good relationship with the new technological wave - to be visible on social media, to have high quality photos, to show clarity and to offer interactivity and uniqueness. At the same time, the project also addresses people with disabilities for whom a visit to the museum can be difficult, especially in rural areas. The project will attract new physical visitors to the cultural venues on the route and increase revenue for them. The project will become an important resource for the educational environment - pupils, students and teachers can make online visits to the sites and museums in question when physical visits cannot be made for financial or other reasons.</p> <p>The experience of visiting a virtual cultural object is greatly enhanced, taking place at the user's pace, without being in any way constrained by other visitors who would have been simultaneously physically in the same place. Focusing on the user, the project aims to combine learning with leisure time in a balanced way. Furthermore, the cultural objectives targeted by the project will be able to use the virtual tour provided as a form of training for new employees or to preview the location when planning events.</p> <p>The web platform and virtual tours have the potential to support a permanent dialogue between the public and the museum institution. The interactive Matterport 3D virtual tours will preserve the cultural heritage for an indefinite period of time. With online exposure, the audience for cultural objectives will be much more diverse and developed.</p>
Responsible stakeholder(s):	Real Tour RO Local authorities
Collaborator(s):	Tourism departments at regional and local level TICs Museums administrator Cultural site curators Tourism business sector

Raw budget estimation:	45.000 EUR (1500 EUR/objective)
Funding source (European, National, local funds):	Start-Up Nation (RO) Creative Europe (EU) COSME (EU) Regional and local budget of public authorities.
Other resources needed:	Informational resources Human resources: videographer, copywriter, 3D Scanning Operator, Photographer. Materport technology and equipment
Indicator(s) for success (also considering circularity, diversity and inclusion):	Number of tourism attractions; Number of circular businesses included in the presentations; Number of small, remote communities, interesting for the local heritage; Activities included in the circular tourism solutions, and the natural environment. At least 200 visitors in the first year for each of the objectives presented.
Hackathon? Yes or no	Candidate, not selected.

Sub-action 1.3: Update of the website dedicated to the Stephen the Great Route

When: start date and end date	September 2022 - December 2023
Be.CULTOUR innovation areas:	Circularity, Human-centred approach, Europeanization
Identified local challenge (s):	Certification of destinations, Insufficient media coverage of objectives and promotion of tourism products
The objective / objectives of cultural heritage:	The patrimony objectives from the North-East area of Romania

Target group:	Travel agencies, tour operators, associations / organisations for tourism promotion, public authorities
Responsible Stakeholders:	“Moldova Moldova” Investment Agency, Central Authorities of the Republic of Moldova and Romania, Local Public Authorities, NGOs, Tourism Promotion Associations
Collaborators:	Investment Agency team
Gross budget estimate:	30 thousand euros per project (30% of the amount will be taken over by the Investment Agency)
Sources of funding (European, national, local)	European Union Project Be.CULTOUR, State Budget of the Republic of Moldova
Other required resources:	Development partners
Performance indicators (taking into account aspects of circularity, diversity and inclusion)	The inclusion of the tourist objectives from the North-East of Romania in the interactive map within the site
Hackathon? Yes/No	Yes



Action 2: Improved tourism information and heritage interpretation along the Route StGS

The field research undertaken in May and June 2022 in the StGS destination, showed that the interpretation and promotion of the tourism objectives included in the route should be improved. There are disparities in terms of tourism signposting, tourism interpretation and information systems existing on the spot. The tourism experience should be enhanced by a combination of both physical and digital communication instruments, harmonically combined to respond to the requirements of different target groups, taking in consideration the specific needs related to age and accessibility⁷. The design and layout of the information systems should be in line with the requirements of circular principles, in terms of materials, construction techniques but as well in the messages formulated for the visitors. The integration of the route to the European network of cultural routes could be facilitated by a multi-lingual (at least bi-lingual) information, and with references in the digital displays related to the distance to the main European cultural routes nearby. The action is sustained by the strategic actions from PRACT Nord-Est and regional tourism strategies. More than that, the layout for the physical displays is assured by the Moldova Investment Agency, that has proposed the format and the structure for the information. As a time frame, we are estimating a 2-year implementation period, with the support of stakeholders from Romania and Republic of Moldova.

Sub-action 2.1: Know the history, know yourself. Pilot Tourism Information Centre, with nZEB standards, fully digitised

Objective 2.1.

Improved information services and information infrastructure for the visitors of the Route StGS Romania-Moldova, by building a pilot Tourism Information Centre (TIC) in Botosani, as a near-zero-energy building (nZeb standard), with a surface of 100 square metres, fully digitised, within a timeframe of 12 months.

Additional benefits:

- preserving the intangible spirit of the mediaeval era through digital and interactive methods that make full use of renewable energy and the circular economy;

⁷ Here is relevant the research note from 2020, written by Zillinger M (Lund University, Sweden), “Hybrid tourist information search German tourists combination of digital and analogue information channels” (Tourism and Hospitality Research, 2020, vol. 20 (4), pp. 510-515, that is pointing out that “the tourism research is indication the importance of analogue and digital information sources in parallel”.

- testing the use of nature-friendly construction materials and building a new sustainable building;
- promoting a touristic important areal that will lead to the growth of the local economy that is deeply in need;
- support for the tourism SMEs from the city centre of Botosani, that has an impetuous need of financial infusion;
- Integration of the vulnerable Roma community that lives in the city centre.

Sub-action description:

The innovative element of the project consists in the construction of an nZEB fully digitised tourist centre, green construction according to Regulation (EU) 2020/852 on taxonomy, equipped with digital screens and hologram, with the option to access the information in both, Romanian and English, in order to assure the international promotion and the Europeanization of the cultural assets from the cultural route.

Tourists and groups of children will be guided by its promotion through a digital totem placed at the Saint Nicolae Monastery of Popauti, part of The Route of Stephan the Great and Saint, North-East Romania – Moldova cross-border area centre will also be promoted online through a web page dedicated to this action, which will have access both options, Romanian and English. It is proposed to preserve the intangible spirit of the mediaeval era through digital and interactive methods that use renewable energy.

The connection with the circular economy will be given by the solutions that will be implemented: promoting the touristic centre through a digital totem that will be placed at the Saint Nicolae Monastery Popauti. using the site already known to redirect tourists, and a website dedicated to this new nZEB TIC. These activities do not require energy consumption and contribute to the circular tourism development. Moreover, containers for selective recycling will be placed near the tourist information centre.

Sub-action activities:

1. TIC project development
2. Establishing the interpretation concept
3. Detailed inventory of digitalization resources (informational, technical)
4. Project for digital totem
5. implementation of construction works
6. Data collection and data base conception for the tourism spots that will be promoted

7. Promotion and integration of the TIC in the route information network
8. Official launch and pilot testing

When: start date and end date:	2023-2025
Be.CULTOUR innovation area(s):	Spiritual Travel Experience
Identified local challenge(s):	Reduced attractiveness of some cultural objectives included in the Route StGS, due a lack of information or due out-dated promotion messages and tools. Lack of interactive interpretation infrastructure.
Cultural heritage asset(s)	Saint Nicolae Monastery of Popauti, part of The Route of Stephan the Great and Saint, North-East Romania – Moldova cross-border area.
Target group(s):	Tourists and groups of children will be guided by its promotion through a digital totem placed at the Saint Nicolae Monastery of Popauti, part of The Route of Stephan the Great and Saint, North-East Romania – Moldova cross-border area. The centre will also be promoted online through a web page dedicated to this action, which will have access to both options, Romanian and English. It is proposed to preserve the intangible spirit of the mediaeval era through digital and interactive methods that use renewable energy.
Responsible stakeholder(s):	Botosani Local Authority
Collaborator(s):	Local tourism ecosystem Project team: Manager, European Legislation, Local tourism development / manager, Chief Architect of the Botosani City Hall, Architect, Eu project management, Manager
Raw budget estimation:	150000 EUR
Funding source (European, National, local funds):	Local budget

	PNRR funding (PNRR/2022/C5/2/B.2.1/1)
Other resources needed:	Human resources specialised in nZeb constructions. Equipment for the digital promotion solutions. Tourism experts specialised in cultural heritage interpretation.
Indicator(s) for success (also considering circularity, diversity and inclusion):	Number of tourists that have visited the TIC; Number of tourists that have accessed the web site of the TIC;
Hackathon? Yes or no	Candidate, not selected.

Sub-action 2.2: Inclusion of the objectives from North-East Romania in the interactive map

When: start date and end date	September 2022 - December 2023
Be.CULTOUR innovation areas:	Circularity, Human-centred approach, Europeanization
Identified local challenge (s):	Certification of destinations, Insufficient media coverage of objectives and promotion of tourism products
The objective / objectives of cultural heritage:	The patrimony objectives from the North-East area of Romania
Target group:	Travel agencies, tour operators, associations / organisations for tourism promotion, public authorities
Responsible Stakeholders:	“Moldova Moldova” Investment Agency, Central Authorities of the Republic of Moldova and Romania,

	Local Public Authorities, NGOs, Tourism Promotion Associations
Collaborators:	Investment Agency team
Gross budget estimate:	30 thousand euros per project (30% of the amount will be taken over by the Investment Agency)
Sources of funding (European, national, local)	European Union Project Be.CULTOUR, State Budget of the Republic of Moldova
Other required resources:	Development partners
Performance indicators (taking into account aspects of circularity, diversity and inclusion)	The inclusion of the tourist objectives from the North-East of Romania in the interactive map within the site
Hackathon? Yes/No	Yes



Action 3. Upcycling the existing natural and anthropic resources for creation of new tourism products and experiences

Tourism industry is a resource-intensive-consumer sector. As well, the footprint of tourism on the environment is significant, not only due to the tourists movement, but also due the impact that tourism infrastructure (accommodation, transportation a.o) has on nature and local authentic culture. We should focus in the future to identify modalities for the re-use of the resources, to prolong the life-cycle of the raw resources and materials in tourism services, to shorten the path from the producer-to end consumer. In the co-generation process implemented in LWS1, LWS2 and LWS3, these topics were discussed, in search for future business models that will fulfil these goals. The present action 3, is responding to the strategic direction “How can European cities and regions relaunch and implement sustainable tourism based on CH attractiveness? How to make full use of the geographical diversity economies, green innovation, and actions taken towards a green new deal?” (ESPON, 2020)⁸. For the moment only 1 sub-action was detailed and developed, but some other ideas were discussed and will be added to the strategic action plan of NERDA region.

Sub-action 3.1. REVE Heritage. Network of heritage centres for interpretation of material and immaterial patrimony.

Objective 3.1.

The project will contribute directly to the preservation of the cultural landscape, part of the tourism product, through at least 4 workshops organised yearly, starting with 2023, using the support infrastructure that will be built in at least one village of the route StGS, using recycled wood. The REVE project will increase the understanding of the local communities and visitors regarding the build landscape of PHS.

Sub-action description

The visitors will relate to the cultural heritage values, with the support of a network of interpretation centres, built in respect with nature and the principles of circular tourism. The REVE Heritage centres will serve as workshop and training centres in heritage, offering the chance to the tourists to “test” and “exercise” the old construction techniques, associated with vernacular architecture from the rural communities situated along the cultural route StGS.

⁸ ESPON 2020. Synergetic relations between Cultural Heritage and Tourism as driver for territorial development: EPON evidence, October 2020.

With the support of storytelling and with members of rural communities, they will discover the handicrafts and will reconnect with nature and heritage. The action is related to the Putna Monastery in principle, where a Heritage Interpretation Centre was initiated with the support of the local community. Within a 2-year-timeframe, another centre will be functional in Cacica and in Bilca. The circular principles are respected, all the buildings being made from recuperated / upcycled wood, old houses being relocated and refunctioned to serve the heritage centres. The Reve Heritage will respect the diversity in terms of gender and age, will involve elderly workers, specialists in traditional construction techniques. They will be mentors for the tourists. As well, the centres will host and accommodate tourists that will act as volunteers and will be involved in current work.

The principles and main values of REVE Heritage are: re-circulation, re-location, re-invention, re-discovering, re-connection. We would like to engage resources for recirculation of the old traditional houses that, through re-location will become new valuable assets for the community. The wood is recirculated and reintroduced in the consumption flow. The locals will rediscover the value of the wooden houses, and the community will re-learn to respect the traditional and vernacular heritage. (1) Circular Economy Aspects: REVE will reinclude in circulations stories, houses, traditions. From Circular economy point of view, the REVE activities will reuse the old buildings and old materials; (2) Human-centred, fair and responsible tourism aspects: all the activities will involved the local communities, that will become co-authors of the activities (tours, workshops a.o.); the workshops will educate the members of the local communities in old and forgotten construction techniques; the resources and materials will be nature-friendly, non-polluting (clay, stroh, local food a.o.); (3) Cultural Europeanisation: the vernacular cultural heritage is part of the European culture; the best-practices can be extrapolated to other EU areas

Link to cultural Europeanisation will be assured by the involvement of international volu-tourists and volunteers, and through the international dissemination of the workshops and activities that will be organised in the REVE centres.

The actions is related with the European Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century 2017 (Council of Europe), the New European Agenda for Culture 2018, the European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage 2019 (European Commission), European Union Urban Agenda: cluster Culture and Cultural Heritage (orientation paper), Territorial Agenda 2030, PRACT Nord-Est 2021-2027.

Sub-action activities.

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1. Guidelines for building with recuperated wood
2. Scaling the plans for heritage centres
3. Construction works for extension of the centre in Putna (with the support of volunteers)
4. Handicrafts catalogue and mapping of human resources (trainers & mentors)
5. Catalogue with programs and tourism offers
6. Training of local guides in heritage interpretation (members of local community)
7. Seminars in circular tourism and circular economy for different target groups for the community.

When: start date and end date:	2023-2025
Be.CULTOUR innovation area(s):	(1) Rural co-living: the tourists will share their space with a rural community selected for activities; (2) Sensorial Heritage Experience: the village and rural life will be experienced and interpreted with the support of the tourism guides; (3) Contemporary Meanings of Heritage: the archaic handicrafts is reinterpreted; (4) Spiritual Training experience and Nature as Heritage will be tackled in the tours and packages what will be developed;
Identified local challenge(s):	The business will contribute to the rescue and recirculation of traditional houses that are in present intensively demolished and destroyed, in a large number of villages.
Cultural heritage asset(s):	Vernacular architecture of the villages along the route StGS; Cultural landscape of the rural communities.
Target group(s):	<p>Voluntourists (volunteer-tourists) Member of communities; Handcrafters;</p> <p>The role of the tourists will be changed from a CONSUMER-USER to a VALUE-PRODUCER. The tourists will contribute to cultural activities, will interact with the community. The business has as well a strong social support side, the people involved as lectures for the handicrafts workshops, are elderly people. Similar, the interpretation activities will be developed with the support of young people, that will act as community supporters, story tellers. The gastronomy workshops will promote local food, local consumption, in respect to a wise use all resources. The upcycling of old houses will</p>



	lead to the reduction of new wood and new resources, with deep impact on the entire production chain.
Responsible stakeholder(s):	iaBucovina Association ADER Association Association for Local Development Punta
Collaborator(s):	Local communities City Hall Putna
Raw budget estimation:	50.000 EUR
Funding source (European, National, local funds):	Leader Founding Crowdfunding
Other resources needed:	Experts in restauration Experts in web site design for volunteer-tourism
Indicator(s) for success (also considering circularity, diversity and inclusion):	Number of participants to the trainings. Number of relocated houses Number of visitors to the heritage centres
Hackathon? Yes or no	Yes. Attended, but not selected



Action 4: Bison Land Heritage. Creation of new tourism activities that will enhance the experience of nature in the destination. Holistic approach to natural and cultural heritage // Using the natural and cultural heritage to enhance the tourist experience

According to Plong, a tourism destination is a place worth visiting, as long as the tourists have the impression that they can do a lot of activities within the destination. The visitors should have the chance and the resources and pretext to “experience” the destination and to discover its beauty. An important asset of the Route StGS is the nature and its beauty. Extrapolating the goals of UNWT (<https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>) we could affirm that a “key element in tourism development should be connected with the optimal use of environmental resources” and with “essential ecological processes” for conservation of natural heritage and biodiversity. One of the most important sub-action is connected to the natural parc Vanatori-Neamt and with the activities that could be an example about how the interaction people-destination could be developed.

The Action “Enhanced Nature Experience” will make optimal use of environmental resources, embedded with the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, with conservation of the built and living cultural heritage and will contribute to the income sources and social benefits to all community members. The action “Digital Nomads” will develop a new target group of visitors, that could contribute as well to destination visibility but as well, could increase the quality of tourism experience within the destination.

All the resources used will be nature-friendly and will be procured according to the principles of circular tourism. The length of the implementation of the activities-package will be about 24 months, and are part of the plan of accreditation of the park as a Green Destination (www.greendestination.org), but as well, is subordinated to the strategy of Neamt County and to the PRACT Neamt. The Europeanisation will be assured by the exchange of good practices with other important destinations, part of GreenDestination Network.

Sub-action 4.1: The Bison’s Land Heritage //

Objective 4.1.:

Creation of a unique package of slow experiences that will permit the consumers to

have a high quality stay, through a diversity of activities that will be developed until ready-to-use solutions in a timeframe of 20 months. This solution will allow surrounding communities to interact more with the area's natural, cultural and spiritual heritage, obtain benefits from their proper valorization and thus contribute to the area's sustainable development. The specific characteristics of our area allow us to integrate in our proposal the common approach of natural, cultural and spiritual features. This will generate a win-win situation regarding nature protection, communities' wellbeing and spiritual aspects.

Sub-action description:

The Bison's Land Heritage will cover the territory of Vanatori Neamt nature reserve, which, according to the co-creation process will be included in the thematic trail StGS. The list of activities described in this action are already planned by park management, and the goal is to enhance tourists' experience and to increase the length of the stays in the destination.

The solution's main aim is to offer a unique experience for the Bison Land's tourists, trying to combine in a holistic way certain natural, cultural and spiritual features of the area. Bison Land consists of Vânători-Neamț Nature Park (NP VN) and the surrounding areas.

Due to the great number of monasteries and monastic settlements, the area is known as the "Romanian Athos". The natural heritage is represented by huge forested areas, 3,000 species of plants and animals, including the large carnivores of the Carpathians and the iconic European bison, reintroduced 10 years ago.

Nowadays, tourists are mainly interested in monasteries, neglecting the natural heritage and traditional aspects of the area. This can be transformed into a huge opportunity, which will allow enhancing the local identity, the wellbeing of the communities, the local entrepreneurs and will help protect the species and ecosystems.

Considering the spiritual interest of the tourists, they will be encouraged to spend their spare time connecting to nature, creating new trails or networking, taking part in events and experiencing serenity, peace of mind and heart. Small infrastructures such as "forest bathing", rest benches, panels displaying a proper presentation of nature attractions as a timeless witness of history and as God's creation. In addition to what we mentioned above, the local rangers will provide guided tours for wild fauna observing, especially for tracking or watching the bison. Treasure hunt experiences will be launched by using a mobile app., which allows visitors to discover the Bison Land area by themselves.

Culinary events, based on local traditional recipes and products, will be organised emphasising the natural settings or the human heritage. The events will include workshops

with folk craftsmen, selling exhibitions of local products, and various artistic moments with local performers.

This modern holistic approach will attract more people in our area and on the Route of the Ruler Stephen the Great, helping to achieve common progress and further development. Last but not least, due to the changed behaviour of the tourists, spending more time in the area, using local products and services will enhance not only the local businesses, but it will also have a great contribution to the preservation of the cultural, spiritual and natural heritage of the area. Emphasising the traditional values, the cultural and spiritual aspects of nature represent the necessary steps in the attempt to provide a sustainable development of the area.

Highlighting the passion and talent of the members of the community will promote them and help them raise their income thanks to their favourite activities (crafts, handmade products, traditional dances and gastronomy).

Promoting the local culture will raise the local pride and authenticity of the community, triggering the need to pass on these values and make good use of them. We must keep in mind that everyday worries can lead, over time, to the risk of losing the precious local values that give colour and charm.

The promoted events will have a low impact on the environment. Local products, materials, ingredients will be used, with a low emission of CO₂. Also, we will promote reusable materials, and at the same time will avoid plastics and potentially harming materials. For example, we will use our own cups and cutlery.

The proposal allows the reduction of tourism pressure in crowded areas, engaging certain benefits regarding waste reduction. Walking the trails accompanied by a local guide will ensure the environmental education necessary for habitat and species preservation.

The main idea around which the project revolves is to prepare locals to take on some of the positions in the organising team and to be paid for these activities. Also this would be a way to raise not only their income, but also their motivation. The local agriculture is a subsistence one, using traditional methods, oriented to provide products at local level.

For this reason, gastronomic events, using only local products, are an example of a circular economy. The resources are managed in an environmentally friendly way, the products are made by using sustainable methods and materials, where no packaging is involved, with a minimum organic waste. In case of trails and dedicated small infrastructure, local raw materials such as stone, gravel or wood that are found in the proximity will be used. Walking, biking or treasure hunting involve a minimum use of raw materials. Having an event calendar that will promote the low season activities will make it easier for the tourists to plan their visits in the

area.

Sub-action activities:

All the events will be included, promoted through a calendar of events, with an unique identity. As well, a long list of activities are discussed in order to prolong the stay of destinations and to assure a slow experience in the destination:

- Identification of the locations
- Developing walking and cycling trails and other elements relevant for the infrastructure
- Developing a treasure hunt through a mobile app
- Promoting the local culture and products
- Albergo Diffuso concept implementation in the surrounding villages (rehabilitation of some traditional houses in order to arrange authentic accommodation structures)
- Creating an event calendar
- Encouraging local producers and small manufacturers to learn using specialised platforms to sell their products

When: start date and end date:	2023-2026 (24-36 months)
Be.CULTOUR innovation area(s):	<p>The innovation areas that our solution addresses are the “Sensorial Heritage Experience” (food, music, dance, crafts), “Spiritual Travel experience” (walking and cycling in a spiritual area, with a lot of monastic tourist attractions, benefiting by a proper guiding), “Nature As Heritage” (forests, wild fauna, the landscapes as an effect of interaction between traditional communities and nature etc).</p> <p>The cooperation at the local level and the involvement of different categories of stakeholders, based on the experience of the team’s members regarding the cooperation with the community, will allow to successfully intermingle the 3 innovation areas, also as an innovative approach.</p>
Identified local challenge(s):	Due to the actual orientation of tourists the natural heritage and local traditions are underused. In particular,

	<p>the presence of European bison (in captivity, in semi-freedom and in wilderness) is not capitalised at its true value, taking into consideration that an European bison hunting is related to the founding of the mediaeval state of Moldavia. Our proposal will facilitate the reduction of tourism pressure on the crowded areas, with certain benefits regarding the reduction of wastes. Travelling by foot or bike riding and using local products will decrease the overall pollution.</p> <p>Current problems, for this area but for others in the cross-border destination are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass tourism, seasonality, religious tourism with short stays; Depopulation of rural areas • Loss of authenticity • Short-stay accommodation in the target area • (Reducing) the pressure of over tourism in nearby areas • Poor offer of tourist activities in the area • Poor data collection regarding the tourist profile • Endangered species and ecosystems. • We will focus our activities in a mainly rural area. <p>Through our solution, we will promote cooperation and encourage creating added value, by highlighting the unique traits of the locals, who will learn that it is always better to cooperate. This will also improve the social life of the community.</p>
<p>Cultural heritage asset(s):</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bison Land, Vânători Neamț and surrounding villages (Agapia, Filioara, Crăcăoani, Ghindăoani, and Bălățești) • The monasteries from Neamț County • Neamț Fortress • Intangible heritage assets: folklore, crafts, local gastronomy.
<p>Target group(s):</p>	<p>Bison Land is focused on preserving the local authenticity, biodiversity, to provide the wellbeing of the local community; Tourists of all ages.</p>



Responsible stakeholder(s):	Bison Land Ecotourism Association Vanatori Neamt Park Administration Rangers and administrators of tourism objectives
Collaborator(s):	Local authorities from the aimed territory Tourism SMEs and tourism organisations Local producers
Raw budget estimation:	200.000 EUR
Funding source (European, National, local funds):	RAF National sponsors
Other resources needed:	IT specialists Interpretation specialists
Indicator(s) for success (also considering circularity, diversity and inclusion):	Length and number of interpretation trails Number of visitors Length of stay Number of events Application treasure – hunt defined
Hackathon? Yes or no	Yes. Candidate.



Sub-action 4.2: Digital Nomads Platform

Objective 4.2. To strengthen the region as a remote working destination for highly skilled people - digital nomads, by a specifically curated experience with local tourism actors, focused on a transformative & spiritual travel experience, unlike mass-market solutions that are easier to outsource.

Local communities will highly benefit from highly skilled and well paid people joining them for a 6 month period.

Sub-action description:

The visitors will be part of the community in a sustainable way for at least 6 months, filling a skill gap for SMEs within the region. All the experience will be supported by a digital platform, that will act as an attraction (for people looking for a remote destination), a guide (for orienting in-person experiences) and as a marketing tool for the region (collecting feedback and attracting other remote working visitors - digital nomads) from their organisations.

The experiences will be designed as sustainable as possible, with one of the personas being the green hero. By focusing on longer stays the solution will help reduce carbon footprint from airplane / car travel for digital nomads, since most platforms encourage spending a week or two in the same destination. We will include a carbon calculator in the platform counting the savings for the period spent in the region.

The Digital Nomads platform - Hero's Journeys in North East Romania is based on the common template of stories that involve a hero who goes on an adventure, is victorious in a decisive crisis, and comes home changed or transformed. In the highly volatile today's work environment, the team aims to develop a one-stop-shop solution for highly skilled digital workers (individuals and their families), to choose the region as a work - live - explore destination for up to 6 months.

The platform will explore each individual's unique needs and skill set through a hero lens that will match their profile with a recommended journey as a digital recipe (from local accommodation to tourism experiences to freelance local jobs). Each journey will be connected to history bits from the Stephanian route.

Sub-action activities:

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The digital nomads access an authentic experience co-created by local actors and carefully curated in our Digital Nomad platform.

The project is unique due to the gamifying the user's experience, facilitating early immersion in the region by taking over roles (personas) from the local heritage, while offering a complete work-in/live-in package.

The solution can be easily scaled and adapted to other regions, adapting the characters to local history.

When: start date and end date:	2022-2024
Be.CULTOUR innovation area(s):	Spiritual Travel experience; Transformative travel; Remote Working Destination
Identified local challenge(s):	Lack of services of experiences interesting for new target groups (in this case the digital nomads)
Cultural heritage asset(s):	All the objectives of the route
Target group(s):	Your employees for urban areas, millennials, DINK (double income no kids), empty nesters
Responsible stakeholder(s):	The company in charge with IT solution Travel agency that will develop the digital platform
Collaborator(s):	Small tour operators Other accommodation units Local authorities
Raw budget estimation:	50.000
Funding source (European, National, local funds):	PNRR, Creative EUROPE



Other resources needed:	NA
Indicator(s) for success (also considering circularity, diversity and inclusion):	Number of visitors Number of program registered beneficiaries

