



Be.CULTOUR
Beyond cultural tourism

Romania-Moldova, Cross-Border Region

Action Plan Summary for The
Route Of Stephan The Great And
Saint



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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 Moldova) 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 Moldova. 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

Cultural heritage – a starting point for co-creation, innovation, sustainable and circular cultural tourism

Discovering hidden treasures: cultural heritage as driver of attractiveness in less-known and remote areas

The cross-border region of North East Romania and Moldova has shared history, languages, cultures, and traditions. The emerging Route of Stephen the Great stretches between the countries and symbolises this connection. The cross-border region hosts many UNESCO-listed monasteries and churches, as well as notable practices such as wine making. Particularly in Moldova, touristic wine routes also exist. The modest tourism sector is centred on interest in history, religion, pilgrimage and outdoor activities.

Tangible cultural heritage

- Voroneţ Monastery (1488) and Pătrăuți Monastery (1487) (Holy Cross Church)
- Monastic villages (Văratec, Agapia, Neamț)
- Capriana Monastery
- Archeological Complex Old Orhei
- Soroca Fortress
- Tighina Fortress
- Mereni Village

Intangible cultural heritage

- Stories, books, legends, movies, knowledge, crafts and traditions, linked to the great Prince of Old Moldavia
- Men's group Carol (Christmas time ritual)
- Traditional carpet making and blouse weaving
- Martisor cultural practice

Natural heritage

- Bison Land and the linked cultural heritage area (Vânători Neamț Natural Park) including four protected natural areas: Silver Forest, Silver Oaks, Reservation of Bison Dumbrav
- Wine region Stefan Voda (Stephan the Prince)
- Biosphere reserve Lower Prut



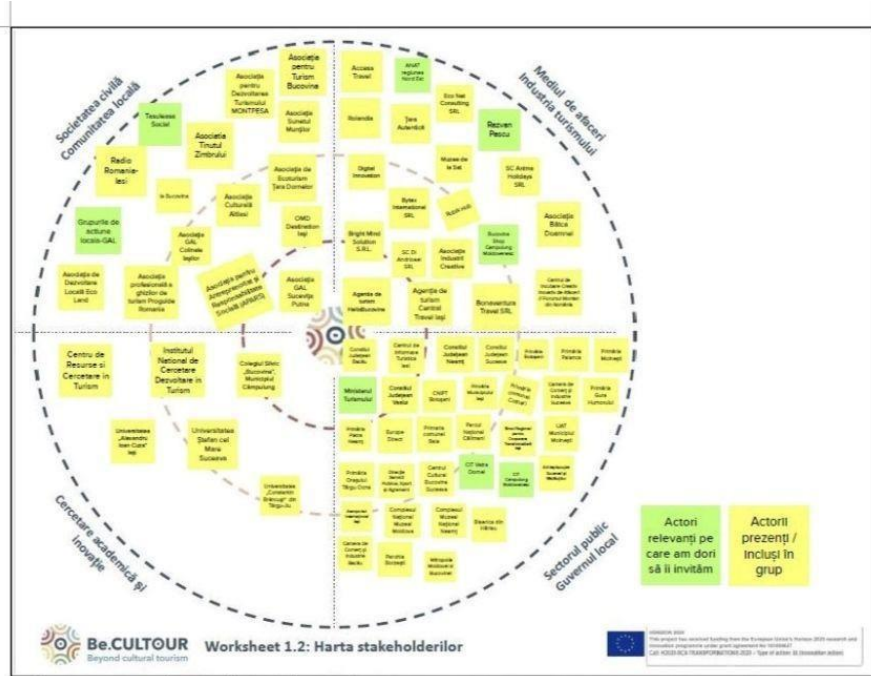
Suceava Fortress, Romania

Challenges

Physical inaccessibility of historical sites, along with limited international visibility, insufficient accommodation and lack of skilled labour force pose challenges to the region's cultural tourism potential. Such a labour force is difficult to find due to depopulation from emigration out of the region. Fake imported 'local' products and unplanned rural construction pose problems as well. Additional challenges identified during workshops include: lack of local partnerships and cooperation and internet presence.

Stakeholders of ecosystems around cultural heritage

Romania-Moldova's stakeholder ecosystem represents various areas, including tourism industry, public administration, civil society, cultural institutions and other stakeholders from NERDA Romania and Republic of Moldova. The private sector was under-represented in workshops compared to the public sector.



Sample stakeholder mapping exercise for the Pilot Site

Local community benefiting from the heritage-led local action

Efforts to address the challenges above have clear benefits to local communities. For example, addressing limited accessibility of heritage sites will improve transport infrastructure (e.g. bike routes along the cultural route Stephen the Great and Saint) for all. Efforts to increase visibility like a centralised events platform, as another example, have clear benefits to local communities as well.

Summary of Main Actions

For full Action and Sub-Action descriptions, see: <https://becultour.eu/pilot/romania-moldova-cross-border-region>

This Action Plan is a living document and therefore its contents are subject to change.

Action 1: Digital marketing and improved digital presence on the internet, of the territory and of the cultural resources of the Route of Stephen the Great and Saint (StGS), from North-East Romania – Moldova.

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 Stephen 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
- Sub-action 1.2: A virtual journey of heritage (improved virtual promotion)
- Sub-action 1.3: Update of the website dedicated to the Stephen the Great Route



Statue of Stephen the Great

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

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). 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, based on re-circulation, re-location, re-invention, re-discovering, re-connection

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

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 package of slow experiences
- Sub-action 4.2: Digital Nomads Platform



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