



Be.CULTOUR



Be.CULTOUR GUIDEBOOK

BEYOND CULTURAL TOURISM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
WHAT YOU WILL LEARN ABOUT CIRCULAR CULTURAL TOURISM?	4
CULTURAL TOURISM. FROM CHALLENGES TO OPPORTUNITIES	5
Be.CULTOUR: BEYOND CULTURAL TOURISM. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION	7
HOW DO THE Be.CULTOUR PILOTS INTERPRET THE TERM „BEYOND“ IN CULTURAL TOURISM AS A STEP TOWARDS CIRCULARITY?	8
FINDING THE DIRECTION. Be.CULTOUR. PROJECT METHODOLOGY	9
DRIVERS OF CHANGE. Be.CULTOUR TRANSVERSAL INNOVATIVE APPROACHES	11
IN SEARCH OF CIRCULAR NOVELTY. Be.CULTOUR- INNOVATION AREAS AND EMERGING TOURISM TRENDS	12
LISTENING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE. BREAKFAST@SUSTAINABILITY. What is ‘circular cultural tourism’ and how can it	13
contribute to sustainable regional development in Europe?	
LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE. 6 INSPIRATIONAL STORIES FROM Be.CULTOUR PILOT HERITAGE SITES	16
ARAGON, SPAIN	17
BASILICATA, ITALY	19
LARNACA, CYPRUS	21
VÄSTRA GÖTALAND	23
VOJVODINA, SERBIA	25
ROMANIA-MOLDOVA CROSS-BORDER REGION	28
FURTHER STORIES AND INSPIRATIONS FOR CIRCULAR CULTURAL TOURISM	31
RECOMMENDATIONS	32
SUMMARY	33
RESOURCES	34
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	35



FOREWORD

At a time when the tourism sector is undergoing profound transformations to become more sustainable and resource efficient, the Be.CULTOUR project shines as a guiding light for research & innovation efforts aimed at looking “beyond cultural tourism” and embracing circular approaches that foster heritage-led regional development. The present guidebook “Beyond Tourism” is a testament to the vision, innovation and the transformative power of this endeavour. Within the pages of this guidebook, you are invited to embark on a journey into the realm of circular cultural tourism. As you delve into the concepts and stories presented, you will explore theoretical frameworks, practical examples, valuable insights and recommendations stemming from the project’s implementation in six pilot regions

across Europe and resulting in Be.CULTOUR Action Plans with innovative steps for the years to come.

The intended audience of the Be.CULTOUR Guidebook includes representatives of local governments, tourism development agencies and local stakeholders from various sectors including business, academia or civil society; thinkers and doers sharing an interest in developing cultural tourism and circular economy strategies, in both rural and urban contexts. Our aspiration is that this guidebook will encourage you to undertake your own collaborative journey, advancing circular cultural tourism models in diverse contexts. We hope it becomes a valuable resource, enriching the global discourse on regenerative tourism as a cornerstone for building sustainable futures.



HORIZON 2020

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)

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN ABOUT CIRCULAR CULTURAL TOURISM?

This guidebook is the result of the three-year Be.CULTOUR project and was co-written with the Pilot Heritage Sites (PHS). Furthermore its narrative was inspired by the discussion with European heritage and tourism experts invited to the Breakfast@Sustainability's event entitled: *What is 'circular cultural tourism' and how can it contribute to sustainable regional development in Europe?* The guidebook promotes circular tourism practices perceived from different perspectives and reflected in stories told by six Be.CULTOUR PHS. The specific exemplifications of practices, ambitions, and dreams co-created with the stakeholders aimed to address recognized local needs mostly in remote areas but can also be replicated elsewhere. As embodied experiences our stories are dedicated to various readers in the tourism sector. To facilitate further implementation of innovative actions fostering a circular cultural tourism movement across Europe, each story was enhanced by specific guiding keywords, lessons learned and various time perspectives (short-term up to 2 years, mid-term 2-5 years, and long-term as part of strategic planning for decades).

In addition to showcasing the unique natural and cultural assets of destinations, the guidebook tells

their stories of historic figures (please be aware - we made up the statements for them through fictional quotes composed by project partners) and introduces current heritage stakeholders. These figures serve as witnesses of the changes, providing valuable insights into the transformation and evolution of the areas. Listen to them and let also your stakeholders and symbolic guides of change speak.

Ultimately, the guidebook, with consultation from the experienced partners from the Be.CULTOUR consortium, aims to inspire other stakeholders of European heritage sites (and beyond) to develop their own Action Plans for circular cultural tourism. It emphasises that the step beyond mainstream cultural tourism is a step towards the future, where circular practices and sustainable approaches shape the tourism industry and contribute to a more resilient and inclusive society. On the next pages you will read about various definitions and concepts on going beyond sustainable tourism. You will get to know the Be.CULTOUR methodology and key assumptions upon which the project was developed. Finally you will find the voices from the local partners, recommendations on how to

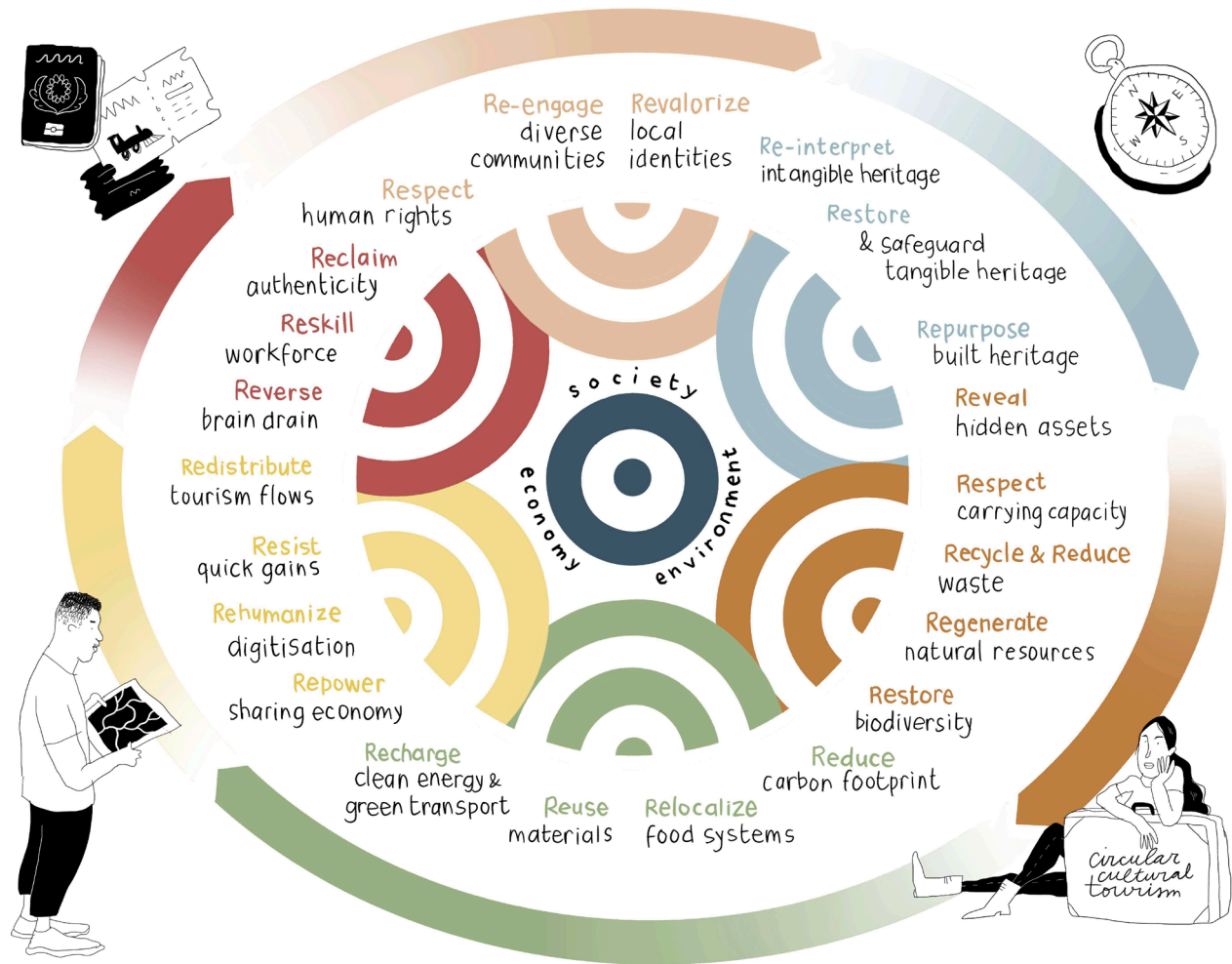


start working on innovative tourism solutions and further examples as well as resources explaining what it means to go circular by being motivated by the unique cultural and natural heritage.

CULTURAL TOURISM. FROM CHALLENGES TO OPPORTUNITIES

Cultural tourism can be both challenging and rewarding. On one hand, it often leads to mass tourism, which can result in overcrowding and strain on local resources. On the other hand, it presents opportunities for promoting cultural and natural heritage, fostering community engagement, and creating unique visitor experiences. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the overdue need to rethink tourism. The pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of communities that rely on tourism as a source of income, the imbalance in access to recovery funds to support the tourism sector during the lockdowns, and the eagerness of travellers to return to their routes as soon as possible. Learning from the experience of lockdowns, we know that future-oriented tourism, as a source of meaningful journeys, needs to embrace ambitions related to sustainability, and awareness of unique cultural assets, thereby strengthening Europeanisation and European identity.

By moving away from outdated patterns of mobility and standardised visitor offers often lacking authenticity, destinations can develop more circular, human as well as life-centred and resilient tourism models that prioritise the preservation of cultural and natural heritage, recognizing them as the reasons for conscious visits.



One opportunity to go beyond old patterns is **circular tourism**. It aims to minimise waste, promote resource efficiency, and foster sustainable practices. By embracing these principles, it is possible to create tourism experiences that are not only environmentally friendly but also socially responsible and economically viable. The use of local resources, promotion of sustainable consumption and production, and the minimization of negative impacts on cultural and natural heritage are priorities.

But what is circular cultural tourism? Culture, with its rich tapestry of stories, beliefs, local practices, crafts, and interpretation of the past restores the broken relationship between humanity and the planet, infusing “sustainable practices” with meaning and grounding them in the embodied experiences of people. This authentic connection with culture encourages inhabitants and visitors to embrace a harmonious relationship with nature, contributing to the understanding of ecosystems and its preservation. “Culture” at the heart of tourism makes the political and economic decisions and guidelines like the Transition pathway for tourism published 2022 by the European Commission more powerful by highlighting intrinsic values, empowering those in need, giving hope and building relationships.

Circular cultural tourism in the Be.CULTOUR project aimed to establish a sustainable and regenerative model for cultural tourism. This model focused on abandoned, underused, and lesser-known cultural and natural resources, with the goal of fostering sustainable and equitable regional development. It embraced a “human-centred” circular economy approach, which included enhancing human capital and human rights, reducing tourism pressure on overexploited areas, minimising waste and resource consumption, promoting clean energy and green transportation, and encouraging the recycling and reuse of materials and goods.

There is no single recipe for how to become a circular cultural tourism destination. Our main advice however, is to actively listen and understand the needs of the diverse communities, facilitate innovative solutions of service designers and to wear the shoes of the tourists to anticipate their wishes by taking the diverse cultural and natural assets into account. Trust, open communication, and equity forms the basis for circular change. You will read in this guidebook how in various ways circular cultural tourism takes advantage of synergies, cooperation, and dialogues. How it benefits from the exchange of meanings and experiences among different stakeholders to create innovative solutions for all.

Be.CULTOUR: BEYOND CULTURAL TOURISM. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

How can we collaboratively devise place-based solutions that put people, cultural heritage, and the circular economy at the heart of regional development? What innovative methods, tools and practices can accelerate a paradigm shift to regenerative models of cultural tourism?

“Be.CULTOUR” was a research and innovation project funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 programme. Led by the Italian National Research Council (CNR), it was developed and implemented between 2020 and 2024 by an international consortium of 15 partners ranging from research institutions to local governments, civil society organisations and SMEs.

Be.CULTOUR aimed to co-create and test human-centred innovations for circular cultural tourism through collaborative networks. Even before the world grappled with the disruptive force of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project’s initiators were already ahead of the curve, anticipating the emerging trends that would reshape the tourism landscape both during and after the global crisis.

The project focused on new methodologies, tools and practices that can steer cultural tourism


“beyond” unsustainable, extractive paradigms, placing people and circular economy principles in the spotlight. With this vision, the protection of natural resources, the empowerment of communities, the revelation of cultural and natural assets take centre stage. The “genius loci” of each place still guides its people as co-creators of and owners of actions.

Six European regions stepped forward as pilot heritage sites, engaging local stakeholders to explore, ideate and prototype solutions and strategies. These regions served as on-the-ground innovation hubs to address sustainability challenges unique to each context. Through a series of research activities, workshops and a hackathon at the ICHEC Brussels Management School in Brussels, each pilot region established a heritage innovation network and cultivated local strategic alliances.

The culmination of their efforts was the co-creation of Action Plans for circular cultural tourism encompassing an array of innovative solutions. The six pilot regions formed a dynamic Community of Practice which fostered capacity building, peer-learning and translocal collaboration. At the

same time, they interacted with an international Community of Interest made of 16 additional “mirror regions” to maximise knowledge exchange and upscale project results at the EU level. The project also sought to support food and craft production, empower communities, celebrate local identity, promote wellbeing, health, and cultural diversity, and strengthen entrepreneurship through cultural tourism innovations.

Be.CULTOUR: BEYOND CULTURAL TOURISM. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION
HOW DO THE Be.CULTOUR PILOTS INTERPRET THE TERM "BEYOND"
IN CULTURAL TOURISM AS A STEP TOWARDS CIRCULARITY?



ARAGON - "In the context of cultural tourism "beyond" refers to listening to and supporting local communities, helping them understand the available options, maintaining their interest in the activity, and being there for them. The idea is to create a local network or community where decisions are made with great respect and collaboration. As the saying goes, „You can go quicker if you go alone, but farther if you go together.“

BASILICATA - It means seeking the integration of different activities from various stakeholders and assessing the overall impact of funding programs in terms of social, cultural, environmental, and economic sustainability.

LARNACA - "Beyond means promoting circular cultural tourism with the goal of securing our cultural heritage, protecting our ecosystem, and safeguarding the quality of life for locals. It refers to the outcomes we should expect by promoting circular cultural tourism instead of other forms of tourist products. What do we stand to gain from

the promotion of cultural tourism? What are the consequences of tourism on our land, heritage, and people?"

MOLDOVA - "It refers to the hidden places and activities that embody authentic regional values are preserved and showcased to the world, marking an advanced stage in sustainable tourism with active community engagement.

ROMANIA - A step forward, marking an advanced stage in sustainable tourism, with the involvement of communities.

VOJVODINA - "Beyond" refers to the long-term efficiency of material and immaterial heritage resource usage for it is crucial to promote cultural and natural diversity and impact the development and so the future of communities.

VAS: Beyond- The aim of going beyond is to foster a deep connection between the community and its natural surroundings, promoting environmental stewardship and enhancing well-being.

Be.CULTOUR project methodology aimed to promote sustainable and circular cultural tourism in remote heritage sites. It focused on moving beyond a consumer-oriented approach and placing humans and circular economy models at the centre of cultural tourism in regions affected by various challenges such as depopulation and lack of modern infrastructure. However, these areas have more in common. They are rich in unique heritage assets that can help restore the feeling of belonging and pride, reconnect with nature, and take advantage of being far away from urban noise and over tourism in popular hotspots.

The project involved diversified partnerships of stakeholders from various European regions, with the goal of co-creating innovative solutions for circular cultural tourism. The project aimed to establish collaborative „Heritage Innovation Networks“ in Pilot Heritage Sites, which served as

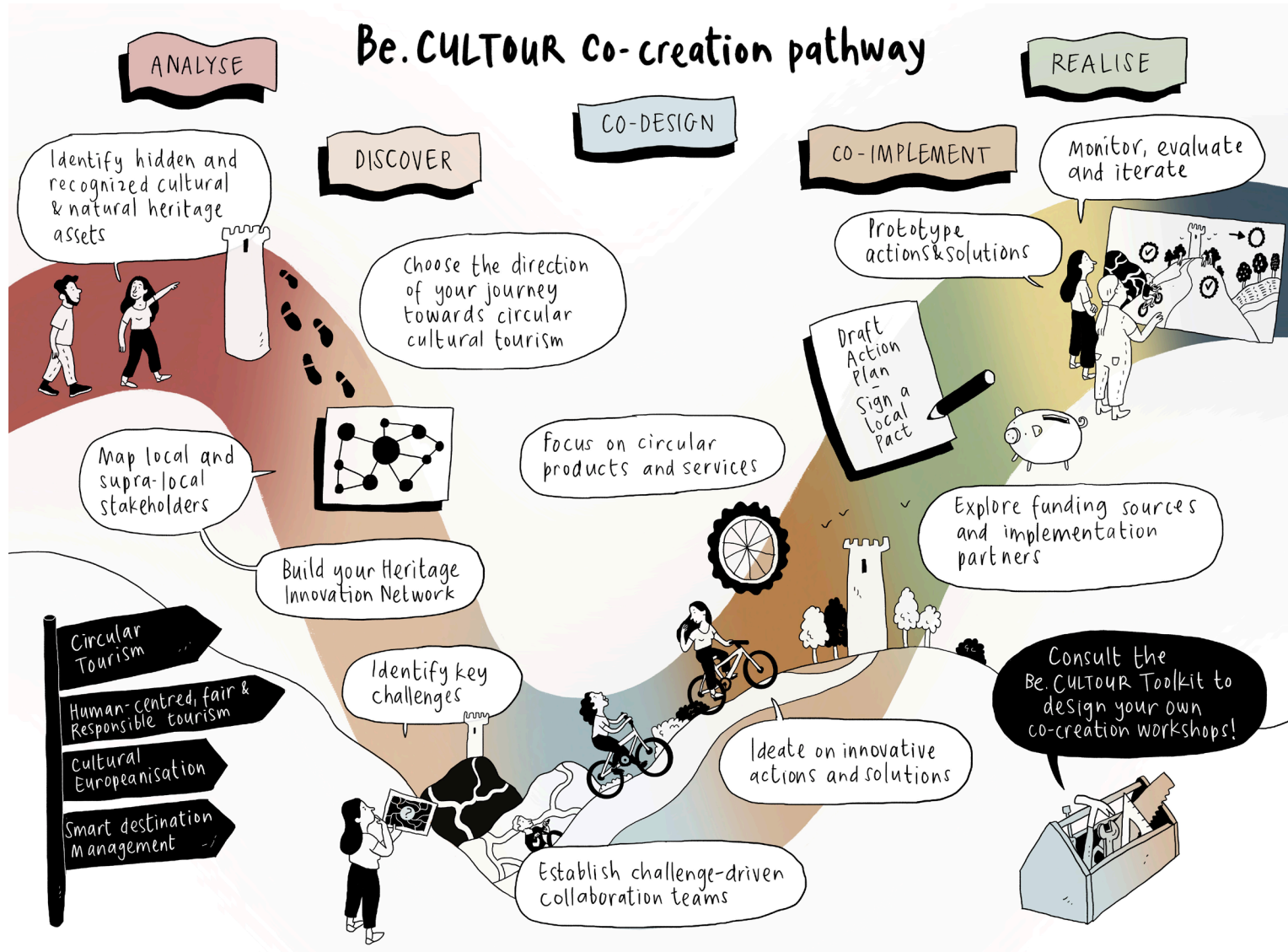
the basis for collaboration with additional „Mirror Innovation Ecosystems.“ The particular steps included exploration of local potentials, co-design of Action Plans, co-development of ideas, and final deployment.

The project resulted in community-led strategies and prototypes of circular cultural tourism integrated into services and products. The stakeholders proposed a total of 148 actions reflecting their understanding of circular cultural tourism in heritage areas. The project also aimed to create novel methods for assessing tourism flows and identifying funding alternatives for implementation and long-term sustainability. Additionally, it developed policy recommendations for the effective use of European Structural Investment Funds and for circular cultural tourism. It furthermore launched innovative financial tools like Be.CULTOUR pledge

funds to support local start-ups in the cultural tourism sector.

In conclusion, Be.CULTOUR was a collaborative project that successfully fostered sustainable and circular cultural tourism by engaging stakeholders, developing innovative solutions, and promoting inclusive economic growth while respecting people, their heritage, and nature. On the next page, you can find an overview of the methodological approach focused on the co-creation pathway. This is where the stories in this guidebook began. It is visually reflected by the artist Menah Wellen to facilitate the implementation of particular steps and help you plan and conduct co-creation workshops. Further Be.CULTOUR project results, such as the co-creation toolkit, and the six pilots' Action Plans on the Be.CULTOUR website:

www.becultour.eu



Transversal innovative approaches in travel, listed below, allow us to integrate key pillars of change in the tourism sector. The Be.CULTOUR project explored circular economy but also circularity of ideas and solutions, human-centred perspective enhanced by the recognition of life, cultural Europeanisation as ambition to create shared values and smart management approaches that take advantage of the technical development to deepen sustainability and accessibility of destinations.

Circular tourism aims to reduce waste and resource consumption, promote green transportation, and prioritise recycling and local products. It also seeks to alleviate tourism pressure on popular destinations, overcome seasonality and mass tourism, and diversify local economies.

Human-centred, fair and responsible tourism fosters services and products designed to meet the real needs of people and communities, offering tailor-made experiences and promoting inclusive tourism. This approach empowers local

communities, enhances human capital, and encourages fair and responsible tourism behaviour.

Cultural Europeanisation promotes travel experience and activities in Europe focusing on European identity, culture, history, and values, as well as the development of European Cultural Routes and valorization of assets via European Heritage Label. Cultural Europeanisation is based on a shared sense of belonging through the common history and cultures expressed in European cultural heritage and landscapes. It also acknowledges the diversity and multiculturalism as part of the European spirit.

Smart destination management uses ICT, AI, 5G, and IoT systems to manage tourism flows, enhance accessibility and safety, and foster evidence-based policies. Digital tools empower visitors and residents to actively participate in local sustainable development, beyond tourism, by expressing their preferences and needs. This approach explores possible ways of the future of tourism.

Be.CULTOUR: BEYOND CULTURAL TOURISM. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION IN SEARCH OF CIRCULAR NOVELTY. Be.CULTOUR - INNOVATION AREAS AND EMERGING TOURISM TRENDS

Innovation areas in Be.CULTOUR feature immersive experiences inspired by the unique cultural and natural heritage and answers to the challenges of the modern world.

Rural co-living promotes authentic rural experiences in traditional cultural landscapes through hospitality in villages, fostering participation in activities like agriculture and crafts. Explored by the pilot in Larnaca, Cyprus.

Sensorial Heritage Experience offers immersive experiences that combine learning about heritage, such as gastronomy, music, language, and skills, with a deeper connection to the culture through the five senses. Explored by the pilot in Vojvodina, Serbia.

Contemporary meanings of Heritage interprets cultural heritage sites through artistic creation, bridging past and future, and generating emotional experiences like gamification, virtual travel, and AR. Explored by the pilot in Basilicata, Italy.

Spiritual Travel Experience combines religious heritage appreciation with nature enjoyment, promoting well-being. This includes pilgrimage routes, spiritual retreats, and community engagement. Explored by pilot in Romania-Moldova, Cross-Border Region.

Nature as Heritage explores the cultural meanings and values of natural areas, including astro-tourism experiences and the cultural identity associated with local biodiversity and geologic sites. It promotes eco-tourism. Explored by the pilot in Teruel, Spain.

Industrial Heritage Experience creates an audience for industrial sites as iconic places telling the history of manufacturing in Europe. It recognizes the impact of industry and stimulates entrepreneurship. Explored by the pilot in Västra Götaland, Sweden.

Furthermore, Be.CULTOUR explored four emerging trends in tourism that guided the communities towards circular tourism innovations.

Transformative travel focuses on educational experiences, self-reflection, and mindfulness.

Remote working destinations have become popular as more people seek flexible work arrangements.

Proximity travel, or staycations, allows individuals to rediscover local cultural and natural sites.

Post-cultural tourism explores authentic and unconventional places, promoting integration into daily life and engaging storytelling.

LISTENING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE. BREAKFAST@SUSTAINABILITY.¹

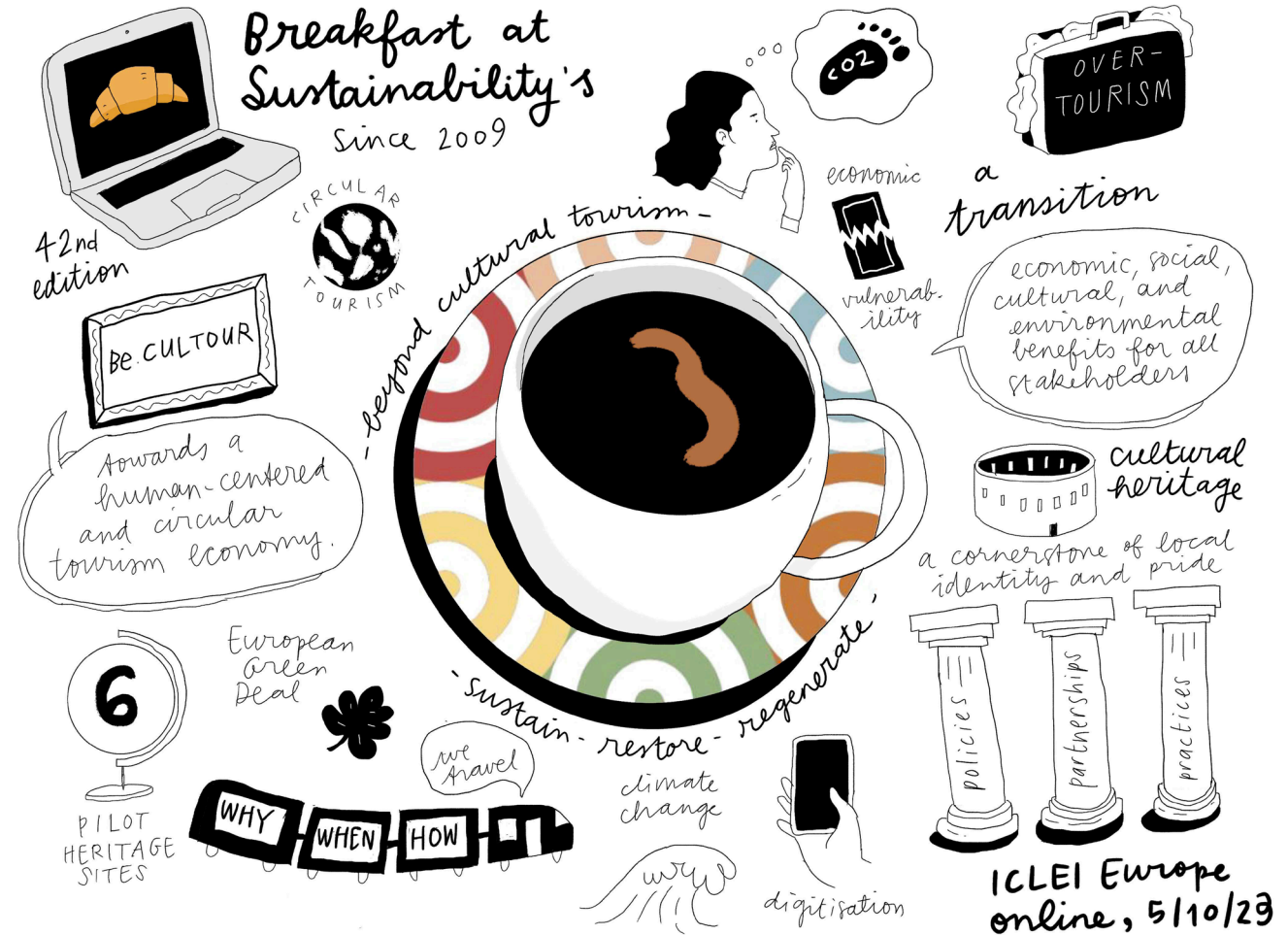
What is 'circular cultural tourism' and how can it contribute to sustainable regional development in Europe?

Speakers:

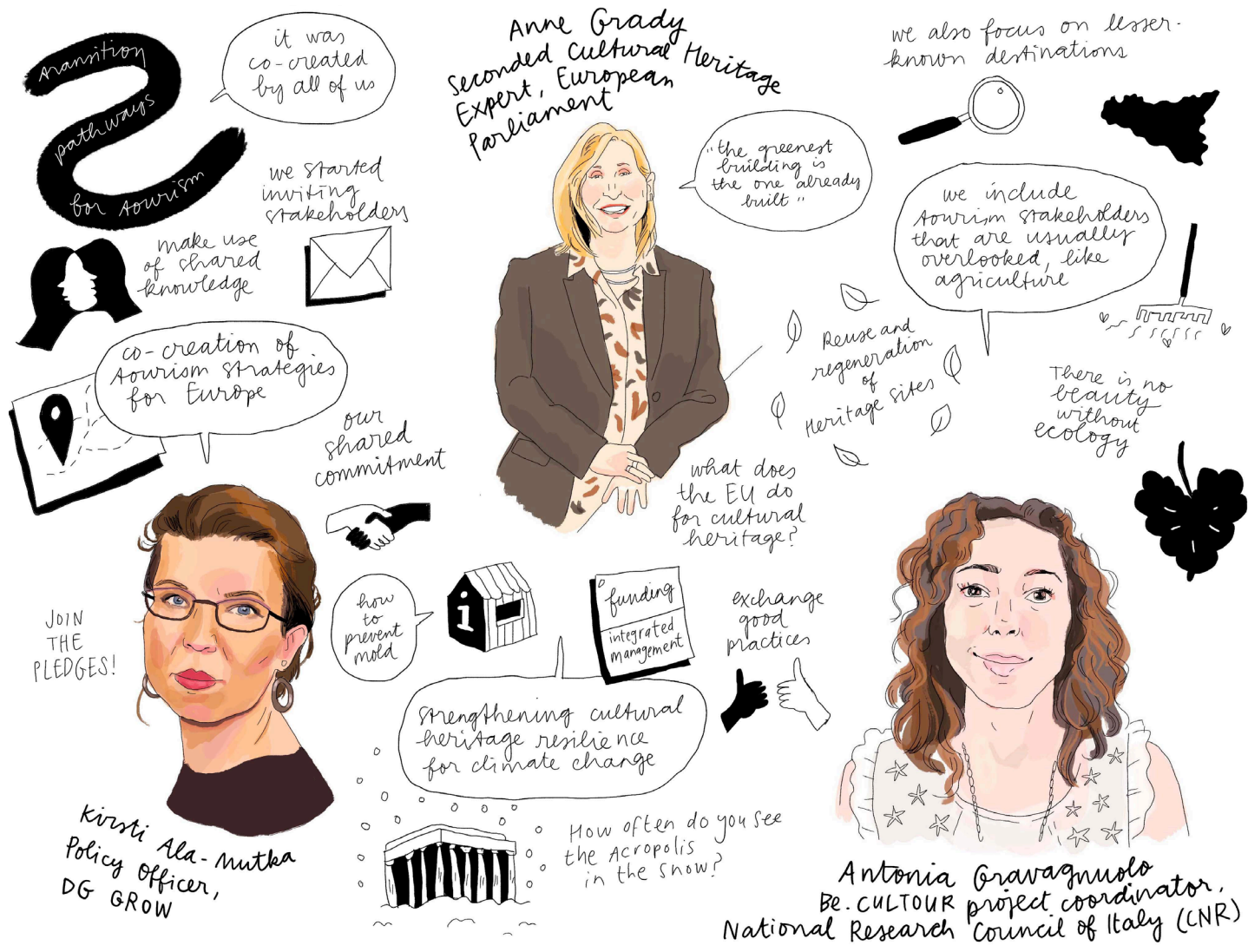
Kirsti Ala-Mutka (DG GROW), Anne Grady (European Parliament), Gianluca Saba (Comune di Genova, representative of the UAEU Sustainable Tourism Partnership), Antonia Gravagnuolo (National Research Council of Italy), Maria Kapari (Joy of Culture), Minna Takala (Visit Häme)

Moderator:

Stephania Xydia (ICLEI Europe)



¹ B@S occurs several times throughout the year and centres around ongoing discussions on urban sustainability in Europe. With participants and speakers predominantly engaged from Brussels, B@S stands out as one of ICLEI's most environmentally conscious and impactful [event series](#).



Transition pathways for Tourism

it was co-created by all of us

we started inviting stakeholders

make use of shared knowledge

co-creation of Tourism strategies for Europe

our shared commitment

what does the EU do for cultural heritage?

Reuse and regeneration of Heritage sites

we also focus on lesser-known destinations

"the greenest building is the one already built"

we include Tourism stakeholders that are usually overlooked, like agriculture

There is no beauty without ecology

JOIN THE PLEDGES!

how to prevent mold

Strengthening cultural heritage resilience for climate change

How often do you see the Acropolis in the snow?

exchange good practices

funding integrated management

Anne Grady
Seconded Cultural Heritage Expert, European Parliament

Kirsti Ala-Nutka
Policy Officer, DG GROW

Antonia Gravagnuolo
Be.CULTOUR project coordinator, National Research Council of Italy (CNR)

Maria Kapari
co-founder, Joy of Culture
(Cyprus)



a digital platform



Ecological reconstruction



bicycle rides
through old
arboreta

Benchmarking-
Encouragement
for Action

open data
in development
of sustainable
navel

Gianluca
Saba



Head of International
Relations office,
Comune
di Genova,
representative
of the UAEU
Sustainable
Tourism
Partnership



create work
opportunities
for young people
to return to their
homeland

a bridge
between those
who know heritage
and those who
wish to experience
it



Häme:
the heartland
of
happiness



The first urban
network dedicated
to sustainable
tourism

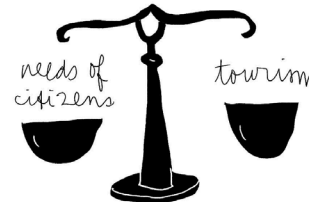
Multi-level
partnerships:
member states,
provinces,
etc.

better
knowledge



like making
Halloumi
cheese!

Minna Takala
Senior Advisor at the Regional
Council of Häme
(Finland)



LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE. 6 INSPIRATIONAL STORIES FROM Be.CULTOUR PILOT HERITAGE SITES



LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE
ARAGON, SPAIN

From Rocks to Plates: the territorial brand of the Río Martín Cultural Park in Teruel fuses culture, landscape and local flavours.

Nestled in the heart of Aragon, a hidden gem in Spain, the territory of Teruel holds the prestigious UNESCO’s World Heritage designation for its renowned “Rock Art of the Mediterranean Basin”. The Río Martín Cultural Park offers one of the most important concentrations of rock-shelters with prehistoric art in Spain, integrated into a landscape of great ecological diversity. A hiking network guides visitors through canyons, ravines, archaeological and paleontological sites and picturesque villages, offering a captivating journey through 300 million years of history. Fossils of plants, reptiles, dinosaurs, with their footprints marked on the rocks, serve as relics of a bygone era, and fossils of marine animal ancestors whisper tales about the seas that once covered this remarkable region.

Local authorities are steering efforts to safeguard this unique cultural heritage as a pivotal element in the local rural development strategy, „Wellbeing and Quality of Life“. However, daunting demographic and territorial challenges threaten this rich legacy, compounded by Teruel’s role in the coal mining transition. In this context, the cultural tourism sector and the hospitality industry emerge as a linchpin for the province’s socioeconomic development.



“The creation of the territorial brand marks a significant stride in refining our tourism offerings. It fosters improved communication with producers and local shops, enabling our visitors to elevate their experience and, consequently, amplifying our positive social and economic impact, all the while fortifying our local identity.”

Pepe Royo, General Manager of the Cultural Park Rio Martin

Image: The Cultural Park Of The Río Martín



Guiding ambitions: Holistic experience of tourism, Marketing strategy for circular ambitions, Focus on products reflecting local spirit.

How to trigger regenerative change towards circular cultural tourism: try to integrate circularity with the sensorial perception and the transformative experience that cultural and natural heritage offers residents and visitors.

Once the assets are recognized you can implement similar actions in a **short-term** perspective.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE ARAGON, SPAIN

Geographical borders and natural edges often create real limitations, fostering a sense of separation and isolation among rural villages and communities. Therefore, Be.CULTOUR actions in this Pilot Heritage Site aimed primarily at dissolving these mental barriers, enhancing networking and triggering collaborative work across economic sectors and social groups. The co-creation process united the territory behind a shared goal: to support the circular economy through agrifood innovation, establishing a territorial brand for Martín’s river. The logo of the 25th anniversary of the Cultural Park was used to promote identification of local products and the cultural landscape, enhanced by the slogan “product of this land”.

Now visitors can not only walk, breathe and admire the cultural park but also savour it! The territorial brand encompasses excellent products, handcrafts, and guides, weaving together the landscape, tangible and intangible heritage, local products, and a way of life.

This voluntary label opens up new avenues for producers, enriching the array of products available in groceries, hotels, and markets—a mutually beneficial solution. The process was initiated with the mapping of relevant local producers including farmers cultivating local varieties of olive and nuts, craftspeople specialising in ceramics, as well as butchers and bakers who are reviving



and reinventing ancient recipes for delectable sausages and pies.

Subsequently, sellers were targeted and bilateral agreements were formulated and signed. The products are now being showcased on dedicated shelves, adorned with the “Parque Cultural Río Martín” logo and promoted through various co-created channels: product fairs in emblematic landmarks of the area such as the Albalate del Arzobispo castle; matchmaking and storytelling sessions devoted to the unique varieties and techniques promoted by local producers; a dedicated brochure and website featuring exclusive products and points of sale.

The territorial brand enriches the visitor’s experience while strengthening collaboration between local actors: it creates a holistic encounter where products, landscapes and stories engage in a cooperative cycle of production, conservation and enjoyment.

Images: Maribel Aguilar / Diputación de Teruel



Local partner:
Provincial Government
of Teruel

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

BASILICATA, ITALY

Ancient communication routes, connecting territories and historical periods. Digital itineraries and solutions for a journey through space and time.

The captivating Vulture-Alto Bradano area is located in Basilicata, southern Italy. Mount Vulture is a volcano that ceased activity in the Pleistocene era, standing tall at 1326 metres, and the guardian of naturalistic and environmental specificities that make it one of the richest areas of biodiversity in this part of southern Italy. Resting on tuffaceous and clayey rocks, the slopes of Vulture cradle the enchanting Monticchio lakes within its ancient craters.

Among the cultural historical emergencies of the area is the city of Venosa, birthplace of the renowned Latin poet Horace. Rich in traces of Roman history, Venosa proudly showcases its important archaeological heritage. In the area are evident traces of the reign of one of the most important historical figures of Europe, the emperor Frederick II of Swabia, who from here ruled his empire and erected magnificent fortresses and castles, including Melfi and Castel Lagopesole, which now serve as important archaeological museums.

Adding to the area's allure is the illustrious city of Acerenza, famed for its magnificent Romanesque cathedral. This mediaeval treasure holds a prominent place in the history of southern Italy

and proudly belongs to the network of the most beautiful villages of the Italian Peninsula.

Today, the area is a dynamic hotspot in the region, rich in natural resources that become a development tool. In the same region, there are springs of mineral water among the most important in Italy, vineyards cultivated for the production of Aglianico DOC wine, as well as olive groves for the production of PDO extra virgin olive

oil, cereal crops for the production of wheat and, in general, quality agri-food products. On the industrial level, for over 20 years the area has hosted one of the most important automobile plants in Europe, the FIAT - now Stellantis - of San Nicola di Melfi.

As an answer to challenges like low youth employment, efforts are being made to promote sustainable tourism development, to recognize



Guiding ambitions: Local history to reinvent tourism, Ancient routes for slow and green mobility, Discovering local gems for youth pride and digitalisation, Circular tourism as immersion.

How to trigger regenerative change towards circular cultural tourism: Integrate augmented reality, mobile apps, and other technologies in your sustainability plans to bring cultural heritage to life. This enhances the visitor experience, fosters the feeling of belonging, and creates employment opportunities in the digital tourism sector.

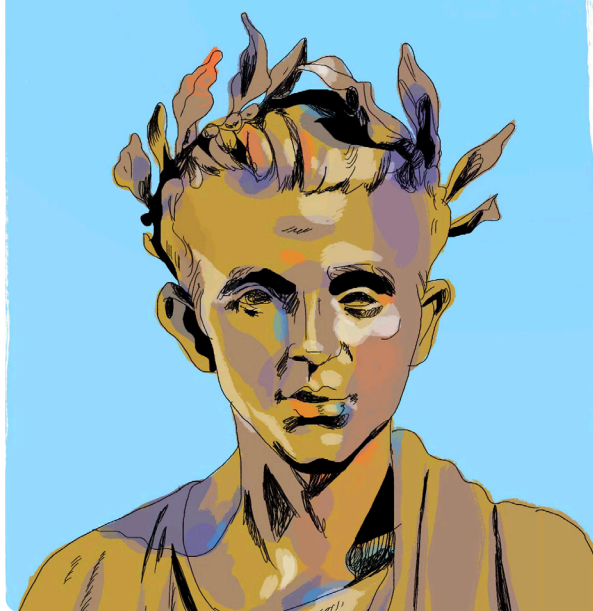
Digital solutions can be implemented in the **mid-term** perspective allowing their proper technical development.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE BASILICATA, ITALY

and meet the needs of younger generations. This aims to rebuild a cultural relationship with the region in multiple ways. The Touristic Promotion Plan takes centre stage, supported by investments from the Next Generation EU funds. The plan focuses on enhancing the region's natural and cultural heritage to create new sustainable and responsible tourism offerings. It aligns with the principles of circularity and draws inspiration from the innovative approaches of the Be.CULTOUR project, as included in the local Action Plan co-created with diverse stakeholders.

The activity of enhancing the area and its historical values and environmental landscape, was undertaken by the APT Basilicata (regional partner of the Be.CULTOUR project) with a view to promoting the innovation of communication and fruition. For example, to promote outdoor tourism in Basilicata, the App „Basilicata Free to Move“ has been developed as part of the Strategic Plan of Tourism Marketing of Basilicata 2022-2026. The goal is to increase the visibility and charm of the area, showcasing its unique cultural heritage and promoting sustainable tourism practices, in this particular case, cycling tourism.

As part of the Be.CULTOUR project, immersive tour platforms have been developed for some of the area's historic emergencies, and gaming environments in the world's most popular gaming platforms, Minecraft and Roblox, with



graphic adventures based on real-world historical elements (see pictures).

Digital and physical landscapes are intertwined, supporting various modes of mobility in the region, including virtual movement and promoting real „conscious“ travel, as, starting from historical factors and real aspects of the territory, the virtual games address issues such as environmental sustainability and gender equality.

Returning to the ground, the region's rich history offers further inspiration on how to explore the local attractions as residents and visitors. The Via Appia and Via Herculea routes have been identified as ancient paths with great potential for connecting different places. The focus now lies on „slow“ mobility and environmentally friendly transportation, including walking paths, cycling routes, and horse trails.

*Oh Vulture, where circular tourism takes flight,
Rediscovering cultural and natural delight, day and night.
Virtual and physical traditions intertwine,
Preserving the past, connecting green leisure and wine.*

*Augmented reality unveils stories untold,
Guiding youth on quests, treasures unfold.
Mobile apps lead to artisans and local fare,
Living heritage cherished, with love and mindful care.*

*Tradition meets innovation, blending with grace,
Inspiring stewardship, a love that won't erase.
Together we celebrate, young minds ignite,
Vulture's heritage shines, a guiding light.*

*Witnessing these changes, proud I stand,
Transformation crafted, by skilled hand.
Circular tourism's wondrous flight,
Vulture's culture blooms, a radiant sight.*

**Horace (and the Be.CULTOUR consortium),
Ode to Circular cultural tourism in
Be.CULTOUR Pilot Heritage Site**



LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE LARNACA, CYPRUS

A Renaissance journey through the enchanting villages of rural Larnaca, Cyprus.

Resting in the upland rural expanse of Larnaca, Cyprus, lies a mosaic of 18 small villages, each a living testament to the island's rich cultural heritage. Populated by around 8,000 residents, these villages, perched at altitudes up to 700 metres, beckon with tales of Neolithic settlements, religious monuments, and the intricate artistry of Lefkaritika, the most famous lace-making in Cyprus, pottery and filigree work in silver. Agriculture, though a part-time pursuit, weaves its way through the fabric of life here, shaping the character of a region that offers numerous alternative agritourism experiences: beekeeping, wine tasting, but also discovering local recipes such as Ttavvas- goat or lamb stew slowly cooked in a clay pot - or Loukoumi from Athienou, a delicacy served at weddings.

Despite the allure of these villages, a challenge looms large. Local families are leaving, seeking opportunities elsewhere as jobs dwindle and amenities remain limited. Empty houses and closed bank branches stand witness to the rural exodus, and the need for medical services requires journeys to nearby cities. The challenge is clear: how to retain the younger locals, breathe life and pride into the villages with new employment opportunities and adequate facilities, and, in doing so, attract visitors to cherish the local treasures?

As one response to this challenge, the project partners in collaboration with the local communities conceived a Renaissance Fair, a pioneering venture in Cyprus, transporting visitors to the bygone eras of the 14th and 15th centuries. Hosted in the village of Pyrga, the fair aimed not only to showcase historical monuments but to rekindle local pride in intangible heritage, providing an inventive multisensory experience:

visual, auditory, taste and intellectual stimulation for adults, alongside captivating games and stories for children. The event spotlighted local churches as the backdrop for traditional dances, music, and storytelling. Villagers, together with historical performers from Italy, transported attendees to a lesser-known historical era of period costumes, mediaeval music, and culinary delights reminiscent of the era of the last Queen



Image: Eleni Panayiotou

Guiding ambitions: Empowering female entrepreneurs, Circularity as revival of traditions, Defining the concept of proximity travel in many ways, including time travel to discover tangible and intangible heritage.

How to trigger regenerative change towards circular cultural tourism: Use the concept of the festival as a cyclical event that fosters a local understanding of time shared by the community and emphasises the benefits of reusing available resources. Additionally, define the concept of proximity travel in various ways, including time travel, to explore and discover both tangible and intangible heritage.

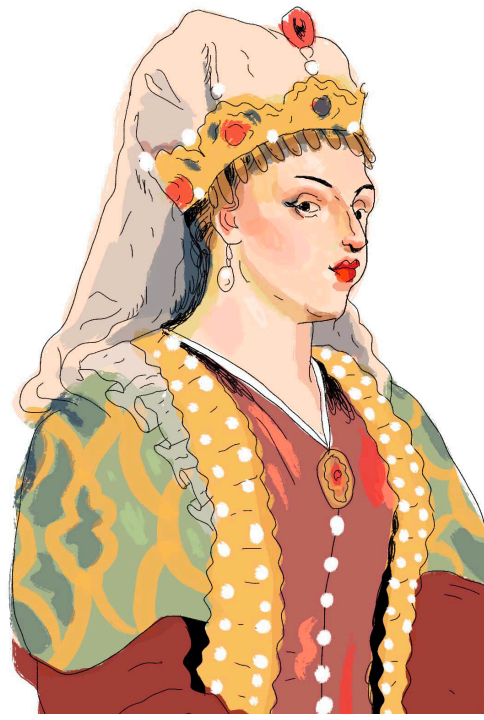
Cultural events like festivals, can be organised with a **short term perspective**, and still have a benefit, such as the synergy created with arts managers and NGOs in the regions.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE LARNACA, CYPRUS

of Cyprus. Swordsmanship, archery, mediaeval instruments and crafts were revived as part of an extensive interdisciplinary research and community engagement effort across the villages of rural Larnaca.

The circular concept embraced the revival of ancient traditions — ranging from traditional songs sung by a younger generation to revived recipes valorising local products. Costumes and decorations were crafted from repurposed materials; pottery cups replaced disposable ones, paper printing was minimised, echoing the sustainability ethos of the organisers. Notably, local schools actively participated, with teachers and pupils becoming enthusiastic contributors beyond their designated performances.

The Renaissance Fair was more than an event; it was a catalyst for community pride and a renewed appreciation for local heritage and its European dimensions. Envisioned as a recurring, annual festival, the Renaissance Fair shall serve as a platform to highlight local cultural assets, showcase local talent and inspire new products and services fostering circular cultural tourism in the region. Rooted in tradition yet embracing innovation, this venture serves as a beacon for culture-led rural regeneration, illuminating a path towards a sustainable and vibrant future for rural Larnaca.



“As I return to my island 530 years after my exile in Asolo imposed by the Venetians, I find myself once again in the Larnaca region, near my summer palace. It’s a joy to meet the descendants of my loyal subjects and witness the endurance of many villages and landmark buildings from my era. I am delighted to see endeavours dedicated to revitalising and showcasing traditions and experiences from my time in a fresh context. Notably, I observe key roles now being embraced by women, adding a new and vibrant dimension to the legacy of my reign.”

**Caterina Cornaro, last Queen of Cyprus
(from 1474 to 1489)**



Local partners:
Laona Foundation
ANETEL Larnaca & Famagusta
Districts Development Agency

Including postindustrial sites in the circle of creativity: preserving heritage, inspiring cultures.

Västra Götaland, with its vibrant population around Gothenburg against a backdrop of sparsely populated areas in the east and north, boasts a rich industrial history along its watercourses. Villages like Rydal and Forsvik, once vital industrial hubs, confront challenges with the shifting industrial landscape and diminishing job opportunities, despite their significant national cultural and historical value. The project's objective was to repurpose these areas, recognising their cultural heritage as preserved heritage. Attracting businesses that respect cultural-historical values not only generates employment but also facilitates year-round residency, fostering resilient communities. Such places in Sweden encounter obstacles like a brief tourist season (June-August), a small population, limited public transportation, tenant difficulties, and a scarcity of restaurants and hotels. The substantial costs associated with maintaining large buildings and implementing major renovations are further constrained by the commitment to preserve cultural-historical values. Housing shortages and economic challenges complicate new construction and hinder in-migration to these communities.

To address these challenges, Rydal and Forsvik have developed an Action Plan. The goal is to

create cultural and nature experiences within a historical setting, making these locations appealing to visitors due to their beautiful surroundings, rich history, cultural offerings, and

proximity to nature. Throughout the project, local stakeholders, working closely together, have significantly expanded cultural activities. The Be.CULTOUR project has established new



Guiding ambitions: Integration of post-industrial heritage with the natural landscape to establish diverse tourism portfolio, Mobile accommodations for visitors, Planning cultural events beyond typical seasons.

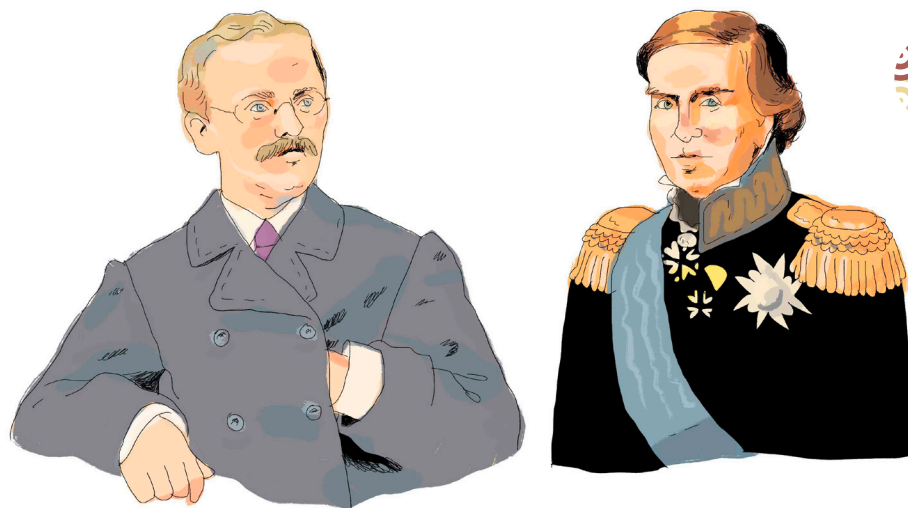
How to trigger regenerative change towards circular cultural tourism: The circular cultural tourism could benefit from the transformation of the industrial production sites into hotspots for cultural activities such as theatre, music, art exhibitions, and artistic performances. Consistent with genius loci and history, European post-industrial heritage can still act as a driver of entrepreneurship in a new, sustainable, and creative way.

Testing innovative concepts can occur in the **short term** and later evolve into long-term commitments based on proven ideas.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE VÄSTRA GÖTALAND

networks and revitalised existing ones in the local community, fostering engagement and confidence. Coordinated activities within these networks, including the renovation of nature trails, launching of websites, initiation of arts and crafts workshops, provision of music and theatre events, establishment of a 24/7 self-service store for tourists and residents, and the development strategy for properties, have all together enriched the region.

To tackle housing shortages, a concept named 'Prova Bo' allows individuals to 'try living' in the countryside for a few months. Additionally, camper van sites have been introduced to accommodate more tourists, alleviating public transportation challenges. An unforeseen positive outcome has been a significant reduction in boat engine thefts, attributed to the heightened residential presence contributing to a more secure environment. This collaborative effort among residents, businesses, entrepreneurs, NGOs, and municipal officers not only enhances cultural and natural experiences in Rydal and Forsvik but also nurtures a more vibrant community, paving the way for a sustainable future. These villages, deeply rooted in heritage, exemplify the delicate balance between leveraging cultural heritage and supporting local livelihoods.



“During our revisit to Rydal and Forsvik’s industrial mills in Västra Götaland, Gustav af Geijerstam and I were amazed by the captivating scenes. A theatre performance showcased the transformation of the site into a vibrant cultural landscape, symbolising the shift from goods production to a thriving hub of activity. The play evoked the lively past of people working and living together, leaving us grateful for the transformative change ahead—a vibrant circular future rooted in old buildings and fueled by creative entrepreneurship.”

Baltzar von Platen 1766-1829 (Swedish naval officer and statesman)



Image: Per Christiansen

Image: Magnus Larsson

Local partners:
The Department of cultural development at Region Västra Götaland and the Business unit at Karlsborg municipality and Rydals museum at Mark municipality.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

VOJVODINA, SERBIA

A triptych of natural and cultural wonders in the northernmost part of Serbia.

The Vojvodina region goes beyond the techno beats of the famous EXIT festival and the cultural crescendo of Novi Sad, Serbia's first European Capital of Culture 2022. In the northern province of Serbia, natural beauty, cultural diversity and spiritual tradition echo with the whispers of history. Bač, Sremski Karlovci, and Irig-Fruška Gora are not just places on the map; they are portals to breathtaking landscapes and tales of ancient civilizations that once graced these lands. Be.CULTOUR weaved a unifying thread through these municipalities — a commitment to preserving, celebrating, and sharing their diverse treasures. Featuring prehistoric, roman and mediaeval remains, to a mosaic of churches and monasteries, this region is a mirror of its inhabitants' cultural and spiritual past and present.

In these three municipalities teeming with cultural tourism treasures, a pressing narrative unfolds. Depopulation casts its shadow, accommodation capacities strain under demand, and infrastructure issues prevail. The challenge extends to forging meaningful connections with local communities and securing funds for substantial projects and opportunities. The wealth of heritage, diverse and inspiring, branches into various realms of interest. However, active participation demands a nuanced

strategy — requiring heightened involvement, collaborative efforts, and increased financial support from local governments. The hitch? These administrations find themselves hampered by a shortage of the skilled human resources needed to navigate the complexities, while stringent protocols stifle the region's creativity and untapped potential.

In response to these challenges, the Heritage Innovation Network established in the framework

of Be.CULTOUR spearheaded 53 activities in the local Action Plan. These are captured in tailor-made itineraries for visitors spending various durations in the region. Each itinerary is intricately linked to a portfolio of thematic experiences, services and products. The highlighted actions below underscore the prioritisation of community empowerment and capacity building for the local skill force, re-interpretation of tourist information and gamification of the visitors' immersive experiences.



“When you are deep in the forest, you get in touch with the primordial and reconnect with yourself. You cannot be a guest in nature anymore, you are part of it. By turning your map to the east, you return to your true self.”

Avakum Kvas, leader and author of the Frušking game

Guiding ambitions: Gamification of heritage, Local “mysteries” as triggers of innovations, Gastronomy, spa and spirit.

How to trigger regenerative change towards circular cultural tourism: Taking into account the cultural and natural heritage helps to navigate the complexity and find solutions resulting from the specificity of the region, taking into account its diversity and authenticity.

Introducing the circular cultural tourism approach in a region might require a multidimensional tactic. Planning a **long term** strategy can include smaller and bigger steps and have a holistic nature to address complex needs.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE VOJVODINA, SERBIA



Bač

Explore the UNESCO Biosphere „Bačko Podunavlje,“ aptly named the European Amazon and included in UNESCO’s Cultural Landscape Tentative List. Immerse yourself in the rich multicultural tapestry and vibrant festivities of Bač at the mediaeval fortress, a proud Grand Prix winner of the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage-Europa Nostra Award 2018. Embark on a spiritual journey at the Orthodox Bođani Monastery, where unique frescoes vividly depict Old Testament tales, and don’t miss the Franciscan Monastery—a Crusaders’ „last frontier“ base with acoustics that resonate through historical layers, accompanied by the harmonious melodies of organs and choirs. While there may be no spa in the remnants of the Ottoman-conquered Hammam, bask in the sun and rejuvenate at Provala Lake, offering a serene escape surrounded by nature’s beauty.

Uplifting community spirit and collaboration in Bač

The upcoming Community Center in Bač is set to become a unifying hub for diverse groups, including youth, women, entrepreneurs, national and ethnic minorities, farmers, schools, NGOs, cultural and sport associations, and tourist promoters. Housed in the historical building that once served as the first orphanage in Vojvodina and later transformed into youth, cultural, and sports centres, the selected site takes on a new purpose after restoration, renovation, and reuse aligning with circular principles.

This multifaceted space will play a central role in local sustainable development, serving as a collaborative hub for capacity-building, experience exchange, and community engagement. It will feature an exhibition area, a welcoming café, a souvenir shop featuring local crafts and products, a terrace, yard, offices, and a versatile venue for concerts, performances, workshops and training sessions. From children’s music workshops to multicultural events, and from hospitality to entrepreneurship mentoring, the Centre aims to address a wide spectrum of interests. It aspires to become an incubator of innovative ideas and an accelerator of strategic partnerships to promote the region’s cultural diversity and rich heritage, steeped in a long history, expansive nature and a multi-faith community.



Sremski Karlovci

Stroll through a town adorned with baroque and 18th-century architecture, where public buildings, summer palaces, the Royal Botanical Garden, and historic villas stand as testaments to a bygone era. Explore 200-year-old underground tunnels and wine cellars, each telling a story of the town’s rich history. Find tranquillity by the Danube River, surrounded by the natural wonders of the National Park Fruška Gora and the Special Natural Reserve Koviljsko-Petrovaradinski Rit. Seek solace in the sacred halls of Orthodox and Roman Catholic cathedrals, churches, and monasteries, where history and spirituality converge. Embark on a delightful journey of degustation along the Wine Route, indulge your palate with the special dessert delicacy, kuglof, and savour the unique „Bermet“ wine—rumoured to have graced the tables of the Titanic.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE
VOJVODINA, SERBIA

Re-interpreting tangible and intangible heritage of Sremski Karlovci

The new Tourist Information Center in Sremski Karlovci will mark a contemporary hub tailored to the preferences and expectations of today’s visitors. Designed to enhance the enjoyment of cultural and spiritual heritage within a distinctive historical and architectural backdrop, the new centre will boast cutting-edge ICT info-totems. These totems shall provide round-the-clock updates and directions catering to diverse tourist profiles, aligning with hospitality standards. The Centre will also offer an array of information packages highlighting local highlights and attractions, in addition to dedicated space for souvenirs showcasing renowned local and monastery products, particularly celebrated among wine and gastronomy connoisseurs.

The Centre’s offerings will include unique tour guides, with pupils from the renowned Karlovci Gymnasium leading visitors on a captivating journey through the town’s history. The tour will unveil the paths of freedom, love and beauty, where statesmen, high priests, generals and romantic poets once triumphed. Another special guide will be theology students, providing insights into the Patriarchal Court and Treasury. They will share stories of spiritual peace and serenity found amidst works of art and worship, serving as a beacon of wisdom, education and enlightenment.



Irig - Fruška Gora

Known as the Holy Mountain or Serbian Athos with 17 living monasteries, Fruška Gora unfolds a tapestry adorned with monasterial places of worship, extending an invitation for spiritual serenity in nature. Amidst rich vineyards, set up by Roman Emperor’s order, visitors are welcomed by the homemade wines, spirits and beers, honey, jams and other products handcrafted by local farmers and monks. Embark on an adventure through numerous (ultra-)marathon, hiking, and biking forest routes, or cast a line into the serene lakes within Serbia’s oldest national park. Alternatively, surrender to pure indulgence at the country’s largest and newest exclusive spa resort.

“Frušk-ing” playfully through the wonders of Fruška Gora and Irig

FRUŠKING 8x4x4 is a card game born from the creative energy of the Be.CULTOUR Hackathon for innovative solutions. This captivating game,

available in both digital and physical formats, is essentially a “mystery box” containing 32 stories on places, historical figures and vines celebrating Fruška Gora and its rich heritage.

Each card in this imaginative deck holds a QR code acting as a key to unlock a learning quest through history, culture, nature and spirituality, attractions and the delightful realms of local food and wine. The game invites players to embrace a “make your own adventure” mindset, guided by luck or intention, encouraging them to unveil hidden treasures and extend their stay in the region.

Along the way it introduces them to personalities, tales and events that have woven the fabric of local history and identity. The game promises a comprehensive “Frušking” experience guiding visitors through the forests, lakes and monasteries of Fruška Gora. Beware: Each quest carries the risk of concluding in a historic cellar, where a fine selection of autochthonous wine varieties awaits, adding a delightful twist to the adventure.

Local partners:
SCTM Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, National Association of Local Authorities in Serbia

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

ROMANIA-MOLDOVA CROSS-BORDER REGION

Rewild your senses in the Bison Land, the cross-border region of North-East Romania and Moldova.

Time to visit undiscovered corners of Eastern Europe! Look at the captivating destination, a realm steeped in historical figures, ancient customs and breathtaking landscapes: the cross-border region of North-East Romania and Moldova, home of the unfolding Route of Stephen the Great. Reveal the longstanding monastic tradition and religious heritage of the region, where the charm lies in the simplicity of its churches and monasteries. Treat your taste buds to the delights of local cuisine and top it off with a glass of exquisite wine. Take a breath of fresh air and trek the mountain paths or explore the diverse local flora and fauna that defines dreamlike landscapes. In the heart of the North-East Region of Romania, the traveller yearning for a deep connection with the wilderness of nature will discover a place where legends and bisons roam free: Bison Land.

Remote landscapes hold their own allure, but they come with their own challenges. Steep mountain peaks and secluded villages present challenges in terms of accessibility, aggravated by a scarcity of skilled labour. The migration from rural to urban settings is an ongoing trend, resulting in the abandonment of once-prosperous communities. While some areas grapple with the impacts of mass tourism, others struggle to attract visitors,

despite their abundant offerings. How can circular tourism better support local communities living among bison, bears and wolves?

The Be.CULTOUR Pilot Heritage Site in the cross-border region of North-East Romania and Moldova

focused on establishing an ecotourism destination that encompasses the Vânători Neamţ Nature Park, the town of Târgu Neamţ, and the communes of Agapia, Bălăteşti, Crăcăoani and Vânători Neamţ, the sole location in Europe where the bison live in freedom, semi-freedom and captivity at the



Image: Bison Land Association

Guiding ambitions: Natural and cultural heritage, Life-centred approach, Recognition of biodiversity, Cross-boarded synergy, Inspirations from the cultural history.

How to trigger regenerative change towards circular cultural tourism:

Search for local authenticity helps to discover unique cultural and natural heritage assets inscribed in the experiences of people and triggers creativity. Combined with the protection of wildlife and biodiversity, it can build a basis for diversified circular tourism.

In the **mid term** perspective, you can establish pan-regional ideas aiming at rediscovering the local assets and using the local stories as narratives for regenerative change.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

ROMANIA-MOLDOVA CROSS-BORDER REGION

same time. This majestic animal has been revered by both Romanians and Moldovans for centuries, symbolising power, independence, and pride. You will find it adorning the flag of Moldova and as a recurring pattern in Romanian folklore tradition. Today, the reintroduction of this highly beneficial wild graser, a result of years-long conservation efforts, is contributing to the restoration of trophic cascades that support the development of self-regulating, biodiverse ecosystems. At the same time, it opens up new pathways for sustainable local development, shaping a destination for high-quality tourism.

The Bison Land Heritage initiative is set to bring together the cultural, natural and spiritual aspects of the cross-border region in a network of

pathways supported by both physical and digital infrastructure, as well as thematic events. New trails enhanced with wooden benches and informative panels are inviting adventurers to experience the benefits of “forest bathing”: to allow stress to melt away and the mindful connection with the environment bring about serenity, peace of mind, and profound self-discovery. For the most adventurous, Bison Land Heritage introduces an innovative mobile app for visitors to embark on a treasure hunt experience. The app combines outdoor fun and holistic environmental education for young and old, taking visitors through paths, stories and landscapes hiding surprising treasures.

On the other side of the Romanian-Moldovan border, rooted in the shared essence of culture,



“Our heritage is part of our identity and allowing it to falter means losing ourselves. Let us treasure it, care for it and pass it on to future generations just as it was passed down to us.”

**Stephen the Great,
prince of Moldavia (1457–1504)**



Image: Bison Land Association

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

ROMANIA-MOLDOVA CROSS-BORDER REGION

history and traditions, the Lower Prut Biosphere reserve unfolds as “the land of migratory birds”, a unique sanctuary where nature gracefully intertwines the human spirit.

Ensuring a viable future for this unique mosaic of water, meadow and forest ecosystems depends on the restoration of natural hydrological, biogeochemical, and ecological functions intrinsic to wetlands. These functions form the bedrock for revitalising the rich biodiversity, and natural habitats specific to the region, safeguarding endangered species and ensuring existential natural resources for the local population. It’s said that to truly immerse yourself in authentic folklore, one must journey south, where a community cherishes dance steps, ancient songs, and customs passed down through generations. Indeed,

venturing into this region unveils encounters with captivating individuals — traditional house dwellers from the south, skilled carpenters, woodworkers, and dedicated weavers. Men and women alike stand as the custodians of age-old traditions and folklore, but also as active co-creators of a collaborative endeavour to promote and develop innovative environmental solutions in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. Catering to diverse age groups and geographical communities, the reserve fosters activities in formal, non-formal, and informal education, creating resources tailored to all stages of life, from cradle to golden years, and providing landscape-specific materials aligned with the unique needs of the area.

The authentic blend of culture, history, spirituality and tradition emerging in the cross-border region

of Romania and Moldova is centred around the local communities and their inhabitants. Shifting the approach from mass tourism to slow touristic experiences, both initiatives in the Bison Land and the Lower Prut Biosphere strive to build a unitary identity for an enchanting cross-cultural area, ensuring both domestic and foreign visitors eagerly anticipate their return.

Image: Anatolie Risina



Image: Alexandra Albu



Local partners:
North-East Regional Development Agency of Romania
Association Verde e Moldova

FURTHER STORIES AND INSPIRATIONS FOR CIRCULAR CULTURAL TOURISM

During the process of developing innovative solutions to implement cultural tourism, the pilots diligently observed other ongoing processes in the region. As a result, they have identified several trends that help to bring the circular ambitions forward. The following examples document the great diversity in exploring change and testing new avenues for tourism.

ARAGON: The region demonstrates a strong dedication to astro-tourism and preserving dark skies, as evidenced by the Starlight certification. Counties such as Gúdar-Javalambre and Cuencas Mineras have embraced this form of sustainable tourism. This commitment is facilitated by the province's clear skies and minimal light pollution, a positive effect of the depopulation. By fostering clean, regulated, and economically viable tourism, the region promotes responsible tourism activities that are in harmony with the preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage.

BASILICATA: There is a tendency to organise awareness-raising meetings on the circular economy in the region. For example #riusiAmoilpianeta meetings are specifically targeting university students. The meetings in six places, Potenza, Matera, Policoro, Melfi, Moliterno, and Rotonda, are focused on showcasing regional best practices in waste management and highlighting the natural beauty of specific locations within the Lucan territory.

LARNACA: In Cyprus there is an established format to promote the hotel industry, focusing on the local gastronomic culture and heritage as a core differentiating factor in sustainable ambitions. The "Cyprus Breakfast" brand aims to ensure a competitive advantage for the hotel industry in the international travel market. Additionally, it highlights the industry's social role by supporting local communities and small producers.

VÄSTRA GÖTALAND: If you don't know where to sleep during your travel and you are interested in sustainable eco-adventures, you might consider staying at a floating igloo raft. This one-of-a-kind experience is offered near Rydal and allows visitors to spend a couple of nights surrounded by the serene beauty of nature.

VOJVODINA: Civic participation and locals' cooperation created a need for capacity building programmes (training, workshops, mentorships) and reactivating their community centres, so all interested parties could often and regularly meet, exchange ideas, make projects and partnerships. This trend contributes to sustainable tourism practices and economic development in Serbia, giving or making jobs and boosting micro entrepreneurship (like developing diffuse hotel concepts etc.).

ROMANIA-MOLDOVA: In the cross border region there is a strong focus on networking and knowledge sharing. One example is the Discover North-East initiative, a longstanding project that offers a wide range of industry and networking events, promotes the rich cultural and natural heritage of the region, and facilitates the exchange of best practices with diverse partners. This initiative provides a valuable platform for discovering the unique offerings of the North-East region and fostering collaboration for sustainable tourism development.

The Be.CULTOUR partners in four pilot regions (North-East Romania Development Agency, Larnaca and Famagusta Districts Development Agency, APT Basilicata Territorial Promotion Agency, Provincial Government of Teruel) are also involved in the **TRACE - SMEs TRAnsition for a European Circular tourism Ecosystem** project (2023-2025, funded by European Commission). This project focuses on enhancing and monitoring the sustainability performance of SMEs in the tourism sector, specifically addressing the unique needs of the tourism industry. The aim is to raise awareness and build the capacity of SMEs to incorporate innovative sustainable practices into their business operations, ultimately supporting 100 European SMEs in becoming sustainability leaders aligned with the principles of the circular economy.

www.ispc.cnr.it/en/2023/02/21/trace

RECOMMENDATIONS



SUMMARY

Circular cultural tourism in the Be.CULTOUR project aimed to establish sustainable and transformative models of cooperation with various stakeholders. It focused on underused cultural and natural resources for equitable development. The approach included enhancing human capital, highlighting heritage to build a feeling of belonging, reducing tourism pressure, minimising waste, promoting clean energy, and encouraging recycling and reuse.

Lessons learned are captured in this guidebook with specific recommendations summarised visually on the previous page. They showcase how identified innovation areas and emerging trends in tourism were translated into responses to place specific, local challenges. The stories are still evolving, and the results of Be.CULTOUR will contribute to regional regenerations in the coming years, assisting communities in implementing their ideas and Action Plans.

To achieve a shared vision of circular cultural tourism, it is essential to engage and cooperate with stakeholders at various levels. Collaboration with communities, cultural institutions, tourism organisations, and government agencies is crucial to establish a sense of ownership and collective responsibility. By involving stakeholders in the decision-making process and empowering them

to contribute their ambitions and expertise, a truly inclusive and sustainable cultural tourism model can be realised.

To make complex strategies - like changing established tourism habits - more feasible, this guidebook uses three time perspectives to encourage various replicators. No matter how much resources, experience and political influence they have, there are different steps to move beyond tourism. **In the short term**, it is recommended to conduct awareness campaigns about the potential of heritage and the unique assets and capacity-building programs for local communities and tourism practitioners. This will help create a common understanding of circular cultural tourism principles and practices and foster a sense of pride and commitment towards the regeneration of cultural and natural resources. Furthermore the cultural aspect will spark creativity in strategising and brainstorming.

In the mid-term, it is important to develop partnerships with local businesses, artisans, and farmers to promote regional production, accommodation and attractions. This can be achieved through initiatives such as farmers' markets, craft fairs, sharing of resources, and cross-border cooperation that highlight the unique skills and traditions of the region. Additionally, efforts

should be made to enhance the accessibility and sustainability of transportation options, including promoting the use of electric vehicles, bicycles, and public transportation. And don't forget the immersive experience of walking in historic areas! Combined with new technologies, enhancing the WOW effect they could attract new stakeholders as local tourist providers and visitors.

In the long term, the focus should be on strengthening cultural identity and heritage of the region while also nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship. This can be done by supporting cultural and creative industries, providing training and mentorship programs for local artists and entrepreneurs, and creating platforms for cultural exchange and collaboration as part of political agenda. With the development of strategies related to smart tourism and modern technology, circular cultural tourism could benefit from gamification, information sharing, multimodal digital mobility services and many other emerging technologies.

By working collaboratively with stakeholders, letting them co-create and co-implement innovative actions we can create a future of tourism that celebrates the richness and diversity of European heritage, promotes sustainable development, and enhances the overall well-being of people and ecosystems.

RESOURCES

[UAEU Sustainable Tourism Partnership](#)

[Sustainable Tourism Orientation Paper](#)

[Policy Recommendations by Horizon2020 Sustainable Cultural Tourism Projects](#)

[Build new connections and collaborations by joining Be.CULTOUR Working Groups on LinkedIn](#)

[Be.CULTOUR Webinars](#)

[Strengthening cultural heritage resilience for climate change](#)

[Transition pathway for tourism policy report in 22 languages](#)

[Collection form of stakeholder pledges and commitments \(Transition Pathway for Tourism\)](#)

[Published pledges and commitments for the transition of EU tourism](#)

[Tourism transition pathway co-creation summary](#)

[Guide on EU funding for tourism](#)

[EU Tourism Dashboard](#)

[Council conclusions on EU Agenda for Tourism](#)

[Communication on Common European Tourism Data Space](#)

[Unbalanced tourism growth at destination level](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Be.CULTOUR GUIDEBOOK BEYOND CULTURAL TOURISM

Concept: Małgorzata Ćwikła,
Stephania Xydia (ICLEI Europe)

Contribution: Partners from Be.CULTOUR Pilot
Heritage Sites in Aragon, Basilicata, Larnaca,
Västra Götaland, Vojvodina, North-East Romania
– Moldova Cross-Border Area

Review: Cristina Garzillo, Sophia Silvertson
(ICLEI Europe)

Visuals: Menah Wellen (www.menah.nl)

Cover image: Unsplash / Jamie Street

Design: Stephan Köhler (ICLEI Europe)

January 2024

www.becultour.eu



Project partners

