



Be.CULTOUR:

“Beyond CULTural TOURism: human-centred innovations for sustainable and circular cultural tourism”



HORIZON 2020

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Report on the after-project sustainability of Be.CULTOUR community-led Action Plans for longer-term human sustainable development in pilot and mirror regions

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1. Abstract

After-project sustainability, or the ability of project outcomes to thrive and create impact after the designated end-date, is an important aspect of Be.CULTOUR's activities in its Pilot Heritage Sites and Mirror regions. Even while in the Action Plan co-creation phase, most Pilots had adopted a temporal perspective beyond the project, as well as bringing key local stakeholders into the process and integrating their Action Plans with existing regional programmes. According to the Pilots, these efforts, among others, will lead to longer-term human sustainable development by crafting common long-term goals, increased social cohesion, boosted self-awareness, and a greater sense of community and local pride. Furthermore, positive spillover effects and a renewed broader understanding of cultural tourism as a contributor to human-centred sustainable development are the two further themes identified.

This deliverable aims to provide clear insights on the after-project sustainability and contributions to longer-term human-centred sustainable development of Action Plans in Pilot Heritage Sites, Mirror regions and beyond. It has done so by: giving an overview of Be.CULTOUR's framework and methodology (Section 3), providing a detailed description of Action Plan implementation progress in the Pilots - including their reflections on after-project sustainability, challenges faced, stakeholder engagement, synergies with other projects, initiatives and regional programmes, and contributions to longer-term human-centred sustainable development (Section 4), analysing common themes on after-project sustainability of the Action Plans and how they contribute to longer-term human-centred sustainable development and connecting these themes to projectification literature and some future heritage trends (Section 5), and sharing information on the Action Plan methodology's application in project Mirror regions and beyond (Section 6).

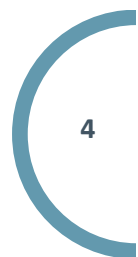
The progress made by both Pilots and Mirror regions within Be.CULTOUR sets a good example for others in the movement to shift away from environmentally and socially extractive tourism models towards regenerative models. This new mode of circular cultural tourism has shown great potential to regenerate natural, social, and cultural capital. Furthermore, the actions taken both within, and certainly beyond, the project lifetime showcase cultural heritage as a cornerstone of local identity and pride, community resilience, and a starting place for generating sustainable futures.

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Acronyms

[ARCHE]	[Alliance for Research on Cultural Heritage in Europe]
[CoI]	[Community of Interest]
[EC]	[European commission]
[EU]	[European Union]
[ESIF]	[European structural and investment funds]
[NGOs]	[Non-governmental organisations]
[NERDA]	[North-East Regional Development Agency. Romania]
[PHS]	[Pilot Heritage Sites]
[SCTM]	[Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities]
[SMEs]	[Small and medium-sized enterprises]
[UNESCO]	[United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization]
[WP]	[Work Package]

2. Introduction

2.1. Description of the project

Be.CULTOUR stands for “Beyond CULTural TOURism: heritage innovation networks as drivers of Europeanisation towards a human-centred and circular tourism economy”. It expresses the goal to move beyond tourism through a longer-term human-centred development perspective, enhancing cultural heritage and landscape values.

Cultural tourism entails opportunities but also risks. Tourism as a whole can be a highly volatile economic sector. If not managed properly, cultural tourism can also easily turn into a “value extractive” industry, generating negative environmental, social and cultural impacts on local communities and ecosystems. This project developed specific strategies to promote an understanding of cultural tourism, which moves away from a “stop-and-go” consumer-oriented approach towards one that puts humans and circular economy models at its centre, paying attention to nature, communities and cultural diversity. “Place”, intended as the genius loci, the ancient spirit of the site expressing its “intrinsic value” and “people” as co-creators of its uniqueness, culture, art, tradition, folklore, productivity, spirituality, as well as its “time space routine”, are the focus of Be.CULTOUR, which realised a longer-term development project for the pilot areas involved.

The overarching goal of Be.CULTOUR was to co-create and test sustainable human-centred innovations for circular cultural tourism¹ through collaborative innovation networks/methodologies and improved investments strategies. Targeting deprived remote, peripheral or deindustrialized areas and cultural landscapes as well as over-exploited areas, local Heritage innovation networks co-developed a long-term heritage-led development project in the areas involved enhancing inclusive economic growth, communities’ wellbeing and resilience, nature regeneration as well as effective cooperation at cross-border, regional and local level.

¹ *Circular cultural tourism* in Be.CULTOUR project defines a sustainable and regenerative cultural tourism model that aims to foster sustainable and equitable regional development implementing a “human-centred” circular economy model through the enhancement of abandoned, underused and less-known cultural and natural resources, enhancement of human capital and human rights, reduction of tourism pressure on over-exploited territories, reduction of wastes and natural resources consumption (energy, water, soil, biodiversity), increase of clean energy and green transport means, recycling and reuse of materials and products, and enhancement of locally based food and craft productions – finally empowering local communities, enhancing ecosystems, enhancing local identity, wellbeing, health and cultural diversity, and enhancing local entrepreneurial innovation ecosystems through cultural tourism.

Wide and diversified partnerships of stakeholders from 18 EU and non-EU regions of Northern-Central and Southern Europe, the Balkans, the Eastern neighbourhood and the Mediterranean were the driving force of the project. A community of 300 innovators (which includes regional authorities and municipalities, clusters and associations, museums and tourist boards, entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, citizens, researchers, practitioners as well as project partners) in 6 pilot regions co-created innovative place-based solutions for human-centred development through sustainable and circular cultural tourism.

Collaborative “Heritage Innovation Networks” were established in 6 European deprived remote, peripheral and deindustrialised areas and cultural landscapes identified as “pilot innovation ecosystems”: committed to the project’s objectives, they defined clear cultural tourism-related challenges requiring innovation that served as the basis for the collaboration with the 16 additional “Mirror innovation ecosystems”. Mutual learning and up-scaling of project methodology were the objectives of the collaboration between Pilot and Mirror ecosystems, building the sustainability of the project's results beyond its lifetime.

By adopting a human-centred quadruple helix approach to co-design, Be.CULTOUR resulted in 6 community-led Action Plans and 18 innovative human-centred solutions which will directly contribute to inclusive economic growth, communities’ wellbeing and resilience, and nature regeneration in pilot and Mirror regions, stimulating effective cooperation at a cross-border, regional and local level. The core partners of the Consortium have progressively built Be.CULTOUR sustainability by broadening the interregional collaboration while anchoring it to relevant EU initiatives and other collaborators in the academic, business and institutional realms.

2.2. Be.CULTOUR specific objectives

The scope of the Be.CULTOUR project was achieved through a set of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-constrained (SMART) specific objectives:

Objective 1 – To assess the impacts and market potential of sustainable and circular cultural tourism at national, regional and local level through multidimensional quantitative and qualitative indicators, innovative statistical methods and advanced smart data management systems;

Objective 2 – To build a Community of Practice of 6 pilot regional ecosystems and a Community of Interest with 16 “Mirror ecosystems” in EU and non-EU countries actively engaged in knowledge-sharing and exploitation of Be.CULTOUR’s approach, methodology, tools, and innovative solutions for sustainable and circular cultural tourism;

Objective 3 – To co-develop 6 Action Plans for sustainable and circular cultural tourism by establishing collaborative “Heritage innovation networks” in 6 pilot regions in Northern-Central and Southern Europe, the Balkans, the Eastern neighbourhood and the Mediterranean;

Objective 4 – To co-develop, prototype and test human-centred and place-specific product, process and service innovations for sustainable and circular cultural tourism in pilot heritage sites;

Objective 5 – To provide policy recommendations for more effective use of European Structural Investment Funds (ESIFs) and other EU funds to support cultural tourism innovation ecosystems in pilot and Mirror regions, and develop a proposal of evolution of ESIFs through synergies with other public funds;

Objective 6 – To contribute to deepening cultural Europeanisation through information and educational activities focused on the European history, identity and culture expressed in tangible and intangible cultural heritage and cultural landscapes, developing European Cultural Routes and European Heritage Labels in pilot heritage sites.

As demonstrated in this deliverable and others, all partners have contributed to developing and testing the Be.CULTOUR proposed approach, methodology and tools, ensuring the effective and time-constrained achievement of all the above-mentioned specific goals.

2.3. Deliverable objectives and structure

The deliverable aims to provide clear insights on the after-project sustainability and contributions to longer-term human-centred sustainable development of Action Plans in Pilot Heritage Sites (PHS), Mirror regions in the Community of Interest (CoI) and beyond. It will do this by first giving an overview of the Be.CULTOUR methodology and various activities which help ensure after-project sustainability of the Action Plans (Section 3). Then, the process of Action Plan implementation monitoring is described, followed by a detailed account of each PHS’ implementation status (Section 4). Next, common themes on after-project sustainability and contributions to longer-term human-centred sustainable development are synthesised and connected to literature on projectification and future heritage trends (Section 5). Finally, the

application of the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan methodology and other associated activities are illustrated for the Mirror regions and beyond (Section 6), before concluding (Section 7).

2.4. A forward on after-project sustainability

In this context, after-project sustainability refers to the ability of the project outcomes and benefits to persist and thrive after the project has officially concluded. A project is concluded, but yet not completed, if it does not set off cascade processes that keep its effects alive in one way or another. In the case of Be.CULTOUR, the PHS will continue implementing their Action Plans, as they were co-created to outlive the project duration. Capacity-building activities enhanced the ability of local authorities to continue Action Plan activities after the project concludes, along with the ability to strategically scout funding opportunities and allocate resources. In this way, the PHS will strengthen the connection created between tourism, heritage, sustainability and local development, partnered with a solid group of people that acquired an integrated perspective during the project. In parallel with the cooperation with local stakeholders, the PHS will persist in finding synergies with other local, regional, and national initiatives and strategies that align with their areas of intervention and goals.

In fact, the aspiration for circular cultural tourism does not only exist among the PHS, but is also shared by several Mirror regions, similarly impacted by the project. Taking that into account, the authors of this deliverable believe that the Be.CULTOUR project's positive impact fundamentally propagates in two directions, temporal and spatial:

- The temporal vector leads to the continuation of the Action Plan implementation in the PHS, fostering a long-term public-private-people collaboration, and multiplying the synergies among initiatives towards shared goals. The capacity built during the project will facilitate the designing of future steps and the access to funds. In this regard, and in the context of the monitoring process, the PHS were required to provide three different reports on Action Plans implementation progress, followed by three separate bilateral calls between ICLEI and each PHS. The purpose of both reports and bilateral calls was to best equip the PHS for success in implementing actions after the project's end.
- The spatial vector favours the uptake and replication of Be.CULTOUR methodology, tools and solutions in numerous geographical areas, not limited to the PHS. On one hand, the peer-learning programme between PHS and Mirror regions created a favourable

environment for the development of local Action Plans by several Mirrors for a sustainable and circular cultural tourism, making the destinations more appealing for future activities and investments. On the other hand, the expertise gained during the project by the project ecosystem has been shared beyond its boundaries through different means: Transfer and co-creation workshops in collaboration with local Chambers of Commerce, a Task Force on “Circular models for cultural heritage adaptive reuse in cities and regions”, cooperation with sister projects, a series of webinars for a comprehensive understanding of circular and sustainable cultural tourism practices with innovative and context-specific exemplification, four thematic Working Groups on LinkedIn, and dissemination events and conferences.

Although the Be.CULTOUR project is running towards its end, and not yet de facto concluded, we considered the additional months of extension granted to the project as a further signal of after-project sustainability, in that the activities can be adaptive and will continue beyond the foreseen deadline. Given the spirit of cultural heritage as both a link to the past and conduit to the future, the ‘story’ of the PHS and Mirror regions until the time of writing, and therefore the contents of this deliverable, should be seen as a snapshot in time and space that is otherwise constantly evolving. The following document aims to capture the essence of the temporal and spatial impact of the project, investigating what has been done within Be.CULTOUR to enable long-lasting benefits and inform future policy implementation.

3. Be.CULTOUR’s framework and methodology to ensure after-project sustainability of Action Plans

3.1. Introduction to the framework

The co-creation and implementation of Be.CULTOUR Action Plans for human-centred, circular cultural tourism in the PHS has built upon the project’s human-centred approach framework and has woven strong links with other project activities. As a result the project has a strengthened potential to promote longer-term human sustainable development in the Pilot and Mirror regions and beyond.

Be.CULTOUR’s *Protocol/Methodology for human-centred innovation in sustainable and circular cultural tourism* (v.1, D3.1 and v.2, D3.2) provided a working guide for project partners and

community members for the various stages of the innovation process, with a particular focus on methods and tools for innovative solution design in the Heritage Innovation Networks. Human-centred innovation is essential for the longevity of each Action Plan's actions and innovative solutions.² As outlined in D3.2, human-centred innovation opposes uncritical and generic technical solutions and centres human qualities like originality, creativity, cooperation, and mission-orientation at the heart of sustainable development. It furthermore places community needs at the centre of the design process such that resulting outcomes boost entrepreneurship and sustainable development in a fair and responsible manner. In each PHS, local stakeholders with knowledge of, and connections to, their region were empowered through a co-design process that embodied this human-centred approach. This included methods such as heritage asset identification, user journey mapping, role-playing, and reflective future-oriented exercises, among others, in order to develop the Be.CULTOUR Action Plans. See Deliverable 3.5, *Action Plans and concept solutions for sustainable cultural tourism in pilot heritage sites*, for detailed accounts of the co-creation process.

By applying this human-centred approach and associated methods, PHS reported that their local stakeholders had regained pride in their heritage assets and intangible traditions and were collaborating with one another more than before. This sense of pride and increased collaboration within the Heritage Innovation Networks increases after-project sustainability because local actors who see direct benefits from and care about the project activities, are more likely to adopt responsibility and become their stewards beyond the project lifetime. This comes hand in hand with the integration of Action Plans into other regional programs, described further in Section 4. Furthermore, after the actions were co-developed, the methodology for Action Plan implementation took on an iterative approach. In other words, action definition and implementation could change according to new circumstances, opportunities, and lessons learned from overcoming challenges. Consequently, the Action Plans remain relevant to the current reality of each PHS. Individual descriptions of Action Plan implementation are found in Section 4.

² While 'actions' refer to concepts developed during local co-creation workshops, 'innovative solutions' refer specifically to product or service innovations that were prototyped and developed through the Be.CULTOUR Hackathon process. In some Action Plans, 'innovative solutions' are also considered as 'actions'. More detail on the 'innovative solutions' is found later in Section 3.

Alongside the Action Plans’ co-creation and implementation, other Be.CULTOUR activities were conducted, which further empower the Action Plans to continue enabling human-centred sustainable development in each PHS, in Mirror regions and even after the project officially concludes. All such project activities are oriented around the project’s four Transversal innovation approaches, and place-specific Innovation areas (see Figure 1). These constitute the core of all project activities and the themes which will continue to drive longer-term sustainable development through circular cultural tourism. The innovation approaches and areas will be referenced throughout this document.

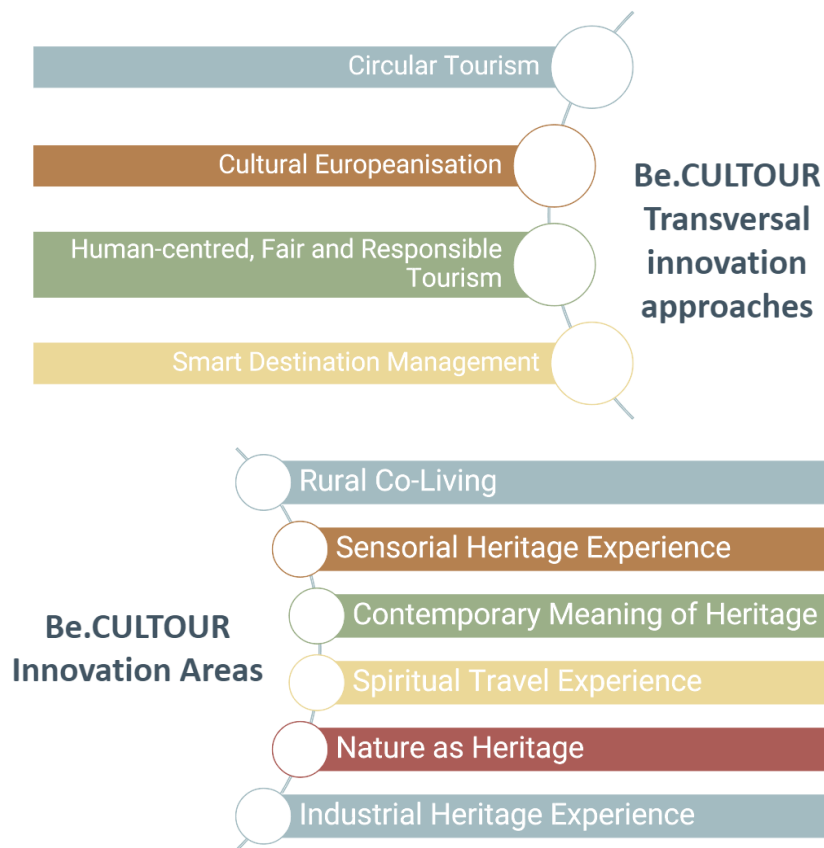


Figure 1 - Be.CULTOUR’s Innovation approaches and areas

This section hones in on Be.CULTOUR activities which have complemented Action Plan implementation in PHS, and highlights how they ensure greater after-project sustainability, including: the scouting of financing sources (WP2), co-development, prototyping and testing of innovative solutions awarded (WP5), realisation of place-branding and destination communication plans (WP5), smart data solutions for tourism flows metabolism assessment and monitoring (WP1), and establishment and engagement of Mirror regions and a CoI (WP4).

In this document, based on the Be.CULTOUR methodology and the progress of the project the following understanding is adapted:

IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS



During the project (ongoing):
from 08.2022 - 06.2024



After the project (post-project sustainability):
from 07.2024

3.2. Scouting of financing sources

In order for Action Plans to be implemented successfully both during and after Be.CULTOUR, PHS need financial resources. Therefore, work has been done within WP2, *Creation of synergies and efficient use of ESIFs and other EU funds for neighbouring regions for sustainable cultural tourism*, to, on one hand, introduce PHS to traditional and innovative financing mechanisms to support sustainable investments in the cultural tourism field, and on the other, to scout and propose financing sources and specific courses of action to finance each PHS' Action Plan. More specifically, PHS have received funding information sessions at an online Community Meetup in June 2023, which covered a variety of topics such as public funding opportunities via EU, National/regional governments and private funding instruments for circular cultural tourism development. Since the Be.CULTOUR project only directly funds a small number of Innovative Solutions, financing needs to come from these other sources. PHS have also had individual support from the project's financial expert partner, Iniziativa Cube, which has been reported as beneficial for their Action Plan implementation.

Beyond benefits for the PHS, resources have also been offered to a broader community of actors interested in circular cultural tourism. To date, four Special Issue Be.CULTOUR newsletters have shared information on specific funding opportunities to subscribers. A public Be.CULTOUR Webinar on Innovative finance for circular cultural tourism in November 2023 gathered several external experts to present innovative investment models for circular cultural tourism as tools for creating shared value in local ecosystems, supporting social and community-led entrepreneurship through sustainable impact-based finance. In this webinar, the Be.CULTOUR Pledge Fund was also presented as an innovative instrument that responds to the public and private finance gap in the

cultural sector. Iniziativa Cube launched the Be.CULTOUR Pledge Fund in September to support circular cultural tourism, cultural preservation, and creative initiatives in Italy. The fund connects socially-driven startups with conscious investors, offering access to resources, mentorship, and a network for sustainable growth. By joining, startups contribute to a community promoting responsible tourism and cultural richness, aiming for positive impacts on local communities and heritage preservation.³

The tailored and general financial guidance given to PHS and other actors is key to the after-project sustainability of Be.CULTOUR Action Plans and to the empowerment of circular cultural tourism stakeholders pursuing similar goals. Further details on this activity can be found in D2.4, *Scouting of funding alternatives to support sustainable cultural tourism Action Plans in pilot regions* (v1), and D2.5 (v2, forthcoming).

3.3. Co-development, prototyping and testing of innovative solutions

A unique component of the Be.CULTOUR project is the Action Plan's accompaniment by innovative solutions which were developed to shape circular cultural tourism by local entrepreneurs in each PHS. By activating passionate local stakeholders with circular cultural tourism solutions tailored to their regions, the project is more likely to have a lasting impact on long-term sustainable development in these places. As outlined in D3.6, *Report of Be.CULTOUR Hackathon best innovative solutions for sustainable cultural tourism*, 35 applications submitted concept notes for their ideas, which were evaluated by juries in the PHS. 19 innovative circular cultural tourism solutions were then invited to participate in the Be.CULTOUR Hackathon in September 2022, where they further prototyped their solutions. Afterwards these solution teams participated in four idea acceleration workshops between October 2022 and January 2023 and a final pitching session in each PHS. The sites and various juries then selected the most impactful project(s) for the sustainable development of their territories and wellbeing of their communities:

- Forsvik and Rydal Industrial Heritage Sites, Sweden decided to distribute the allocated budget for the acquisition of services from the three groups: Forsviks CHAICE, Prova-Bo long-term rentals, Create, Design & Engage. These consist of developing a prototype contract, an exhibition and an experience.

³ Further description of the Pledge Fund can be found at 1hr15min mark of the Be.CULTOUR Webinar for Innovative finance for circular cultural tourism, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MU_EFoViNbq

- The Cultural Park of The Río Martín, Teruel province in Aragon, Spain allocated the entire available budget for the acquisition of dry stone training services to be provided by AridScape The wide as heritage.
- The Route of Stephan the Great and Saint, the North-East Romania partner, decided to distribute the allocated budget for the acquisition of services from the two groups: Digital Nomads Platform, The Bison Land's Heritage Services consisting of a treasure hunt and a digital platform. While the Moldovan partner of this cross-border heritage area opted for the acquisition of services from the two groups ECoolTour, Stephan's route site update. Services consist of AI development and IT services/digitization of the route.
- Bač, Sremski Karlovci and Irig, Serbia decided to distribute the allocated budget for the acquisition of services from the three groups BAČ BY TOUCH, Cultural overload - Irig road, FRUŠKING 8x4x4 primarily in the ICT field and accompanying areas.
- Vulture-Alto Bradano area in Basilicata, Italy decided to distribute the allocated budget for the acquisition of services from two groups Cammino Lucano in Vulture, Fly On Tour Immersivo for virtual visits and webpage development.
- Larnaca rural cultural landscape, Cyprus decided to distribute the allocated budget for the acquisition of services from the three groups Kalosorisete, Needle Festivals, Sensory Bee Nature Trail services, consist of a festival, website development and tourist signage.

These innovative solutions, which are integrated into each PHS' local Action Plan have either been implemented in 2023 or are set to be implemented in 2024. D5.11, *Business model and business plans of innovative solutions for sustainable cultural tourism*, released in January 2024, will further detail this. However, many will certainly have ripple effects beyond the project lifetime, by creating recurring events, more permanent services and resources that boost cultural heritage-based tourism.

3.4. Placed based branding and destination communication plans

In addition to the financing guidance received by PHS for the implementation of their Action Plans, and the activation of local circular cultural tourism innovators, PHS have been guided by a consulting company, Destination Makers, through a process to create a sustainable branding framework for their sites. Such a branding framework, released in January 2024 (D5.12, *Pilot Heritage Sites Brand Strategy, Analysis, Brand Systems*), is also important for after-project sustainability of the Actions developed within Be.CULTOUR. Destination Makers' branding

approach is based on marginal areas and focused on co-creating sustainable strategies which benefit tourists and local communities. Their work is not purely focused on shaping place perception, but rather connecting the place's unique identity with broader international sustainability goals and ethical values. For a brand strategy to be sustainable in the long term, the territories involved in the project must define their purpose in contributing to global well-being in this way.

Through bilateral meetings, an online workshop in April 2023, and a study visit in Sciacca in September 2023, each PHS developed their brand strategy by: highlighting their strengths and weaknesses; defining their cultural value proposition and the destinations' unique features; and fostering an innovative marketing approach. This indicates a level of self-confidence, and it provides an opportunity for each PHS to showcase itself and its achievements. Furthermore, in May 2023, a public Be.CULTOUR Webinar called *Values-based innovative marketing for less-known cultural tourism destinations* featured presentations on culture and sustainability based tourism promotion and a case study of the Ruhr region in Germany. The final Pilot Heritage Sites Brand Strategy (D5.12) will guide PHS through developing branding that: builds a unique identity coherent with local culture and values, involves local stakeholders in defining these values, has a long-term vision and can adapt to changes, among other items.

This project activity is thus important for after-project sustainability because sustainable branding promotes more cohesive messaging around the topic of circular cultural tourism as a part of the PHS' identity, which should in turn raise both external and local stakeholder interest and give motivation for adoption of similarly aimed Actions into the future. Furthermore, it impacts various stakeholders, the local community is given a tool to build local pride and self-confidence and the visitors are better informed about the unique opportunities offered in each territory.

3.5. Smart data solutions and impacts assessment framework for management and monitoring circular and cultural destinations

Be.CULTOUR also developed an impact assessment framework based on multidimensional criteria and indicators, linked with specific smart data solutions prototypes (Digital Twin of pilot heritage site), to support destination managers, residents and visitors in circular and cultural destinations. A baseline of performance indicators (KPIs) and database on circular cultural tourism was developed and it is in the testing phase in pilot and mirror regions. The indicators,

selected according to the project conceptual and theoretical framework, centre around the extent of advancement in circular cultural tourism ecosystems, the advocacy for equality and social inclusion, taking into account ways to engage and empower minority cultures and marginalised social groups. The project framework also encompasses the recognition of a European cultural identity among residents and visitors through cultural heritage tourism, awareness and acknowledgment of local cultural heritage, sustainable travel choices and behaviour of both tourists and residents, the region's creativity and innovation and the capacity to collaborate in networks, the provision of cultural tourism services, and the adequacy of infrastructures and natural resources management systems, including mobility, energy, water, waste management, materials extraction and production, as well as digital infrastructure. The aim of the impacts assessment framework is to provide local stakeholders with a better understanding of various environmental, socio-cultural and economic tourism impacts and associated flows of tangible and intangible resources: cultural, environmental, economic, social and human resources. Finally, the forthcoming Be.CULTOUR Digital Twin will provide an interactive tool for local stakeholders in PHS to access a smart tourism monitoring system and effectively manage tourism flows and cultural resources in cultural tourism destinations. This is all mapped out in Figure 2, which outlines the analysis flows, from data (and analytical toolbox) to KPIs, which lead to a digital toolbox (or data warehouse). This structured information and knowledge base lays the foundation for a 3D spatial Digital Twin, integrating microdata with an aggregate geographical perspective on the area concerned. Such a Digital Twin is not only an advanced 3D mapping exercise; it can also serve as an interactive decision support system using digital policy support techniques, such as dashboards. This is all represented in the 'umbrella' Figure 2.

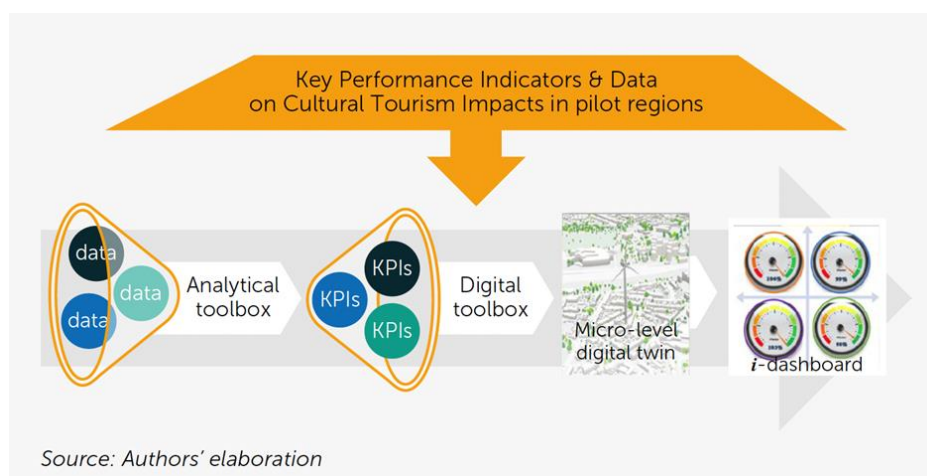


Figure 2 - A cascade of hierarchical data use and monitoring

This figure comprises the main driving forces for assessing a balanced set of local sustainable and cultural assets development to evaluate the relevant KPIs in the tourism-culture nexus, from a local circular city/region perspective. This framework provides the ‘umbrella’ setting for all case studies concerned. It seeks to provide the joint contours for smart data management systems, to be used for tracing sustainable development trajectories at the interface of culture and tourism (using e.g., i-dashboards, digital twins etc.). This approach calls for a co-creation of innovative development strategies including diversity, inclusiveness, and citizen/stakeholder participation in tourist destinations. In this context, an i-dashboard is an advanced performance-based operational navigation tool for decision-makers, stakeholders, and the public at large.

Taken together, the project’s completed and ongoing activities to establish a tourism impacts baseline, evaluation framework and accessible Digital Twin prototype will increase awareness and pave the way for cultural tourism stakeholders to co-create, manage, and assess strategies for circular cultural tourism based on impacts assessment simulation, to make better decisions around how to tailor and implement Actions towards more circular and sustainable cultural tourism. Many activities in this area are scheduled to be completed in 2024. More information can be found in D1.4, *Database of key performance indicators and data on cultural tourism impacts in pilot regions*, and D1.2, *Sustainable cultural tourism impacts assessment framework based on urban metabolism*, and other forthcoming WP1 deliverables.

3.6. Establishment and engagement of Mirror regions and a Community of Interest

The impacts of Be.CULTOUR’s activities on circular cultural tourism go beyond the PHS thanks to the establishment and engagement of the Col, including Mirror regions and project advisors. Thus, the after-project sustainability and legacy is heightened through the spread of its objectives and ideas widely in regions across Europe. Occurring in parallel to the co-creation and implementation of Action Plans in PHS, a Col was developed to engage 16 Be.CULTOUR Mirror ecosystems and three project advisors in peer-learning and adopting the project’s methodology in their regions. As further detailed in D4.4, *Report of Peer-learning Scheme*, the Col took part in five online “Community Conversations”, two online Community Meetups with PHS, nine webinars, three study visits and two Policy Learning Labs. Furthermore, the PHS and Col’s shared challenges and solution areas have helped structure four thematic working groups: ‘Circular economy in cultural tourism: Creative, sustainable, beautiful destinations’, ‘Digitalisation and

smart destination management for circular cultural tourism’, ‘Enhancing the human dimension of circular cultural tourism’, and ‘Entrepreneurial ecosystem, innovative business and financial models for circular cultural tourism’. These working groups, hosted online via LinkedIn Groups, are self-organised spaces for interaction and knowledge exchange during and after the project lifetime. The practices described above build up a demand for the continuation of cultural circular tourism methodologies and policies, creating a greater sense of identity and confidence and thus strengthening the local processes. Section 6 dives into more detail on the application of Be.CULTOUR’s methodology in the Mirror regions and beyond as an important aspect of enhancing after-project sustainability and replications of the innovative approaches.



Figure 3 - The four Be.CULTOUR Working Groups

4. Action Plan implementation in the Pilot Heritage Sites

4.1. Introduction

After co-creating their local Action Plans for circular cultural tourism with a variety of stakeholders (as described in Section 3 and in D3.5, *Action Plans and concept solutions for sustainable cultural tourism in pilot heritage sites*), the Pilot Heritage Sites (PHS) devoted the latter project half to implementation. It would be narrow sighted however, to position Action Plan implementation as a stand-alone process in the PHS. Just as Engwall (2003) argues that ‘no project is an island’, Be.CULTOUR activities are rooted in past local developments and are currently nested within existing and planned regional programmes. Each project analysis such as this must broaden its scope to earlier experiences, simultaneous events and future intentions (Engwall, 2003). Therefore, the following sections aim to bring together the past, present and future of circular, human-centred tourism in the six PHS.

Here we draw from past Be.CULTOUR deliverables, D3.4, *Report on Challenge-driven innovation in Be.CULTOUR regions*, and D3.5, which serve as a baseline, in addition to the outputs of the Action Plan implementation monitoring process. These materials include a series of Action Plan implementation reports and notes from bilateral meetings with PHS upon three occasions: November 2022, May 2023, and November 2023. The reports collected PHS reflections on progress made, challenges, engagement of their Heritage Innovation Networks, synergies with other regional programmes, and other project themes such as human-centred design, circular tourism, the local understanding of going “beyond” tourism and after-project sustainability. Meanwhile the bilateral meetings honed in on specific progress updates, challenges and new changes regarding the Actions. Figure 3, below, exemplifies an action overview table visualising implementation progress. This process was well-suited to follow PHS’ iterative approach to Action Plan implementation. Adopting an iterative perspective, PHS evaluate, adjust and improve their Actions in a flexible way, which improves overall outcomes.



ROMANIA-MOLDOVA	Implementation check 1 (Nov 22)	Implementation check 2 (May 23)	Implementation 3 (Nov 23)
Action 1: Digital marketing and improved digital presence on 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			
	Innovative solution (Ro)		
	Innovative Solution (Md)		
Action 2: Improved tourism information and heritage interpretation along the Route StGS			
Action 3. Upcycling the existing natural and anthropic resources for creation of new tourism products and experiences			

Figure 4 - Sample Action Plan implementation progress overview table

As will become clear in each PHS overview below, all Pilots have planned for actions that will either continue, or even begin, after the Be.CULTOUR project is finalised, which is part of strategy co-decided with the local stakeholders. For example, Figure 4, originally from D3.5, shows the various starting dates of sub-actions within PHS Action Plans. There is a clear recognition that to make change acceptable and for change to be sustained over the long term, progress must be incremental and iterative. Furthermore, it documents the ongoing reflection at the community level on how to structure and pursue change towards circular cultural tourism and embrace the uncertainties arising along the way.

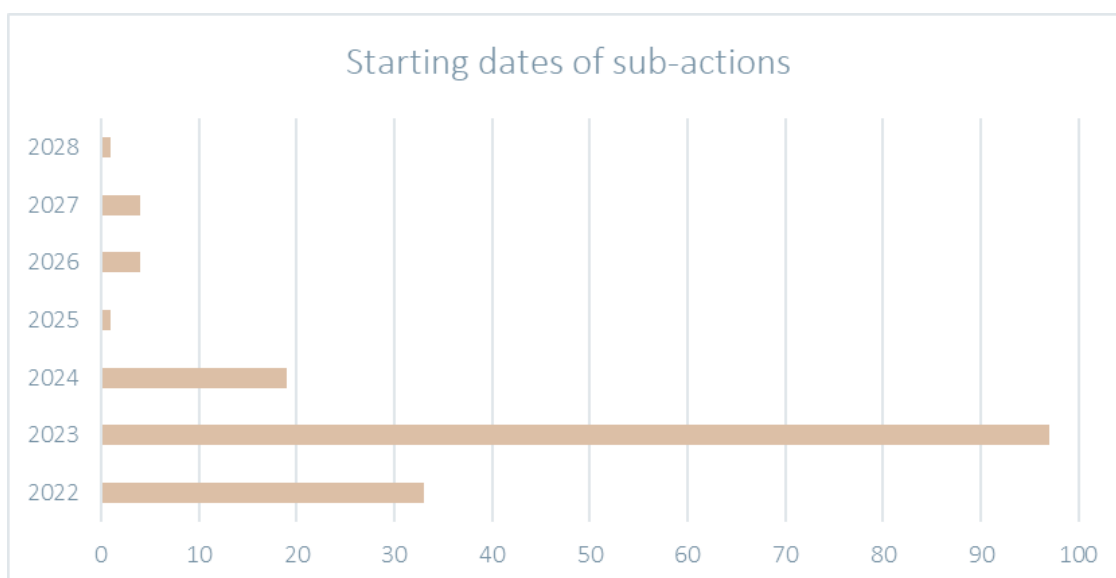


Figure 5 - Anticipated start dates of sub-actions from the PHS' original Action Plans

4.2. The Cultural Park of The Río Martín, Province of Teruel in Aragon, Spain

“ The future looks very positive: the Territorial Innovation Centre will be running, the territorial branding as well since we have done an agreement with the Cultural Park, and the Circular Square too, as it will be run by us.

Laura Gascón Herrero, Territorial Development and European Projects Affairs Office, Provincial Government of Teruel, and Be.CULTOUR PHS coordinator

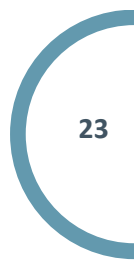
Reflections on after-project sustainability

According to the Aragon PHS coordinator, after-project sustainability of their Action Plan lies in the successful establishment of a positive and creative atmosphere throughout the PHS, resulting in a stable platform for stakeholders to meet and cross-fertilize future ideas. La Plaza Circular (the circular square, so it is called the platform), has mapped approx. one hundred-thirty stakeholders and is now in a process of dynamization that is meant to continue beyond the project end. A sense of self-awareness emerged among the stakeholders about the nature, history, and heritage of the PHS. The in-house recognition of the PHS uniqueness is the cornerstone of its perception as a cultural landscape destination, including its traditional agro-food and nature.

La Plaza Circular, together with an Innovative ecosystem centre and the PHS branding driven by the enhancement of local products, is at the heart of the Aragon Action Plan. In this regard, the emerging feeling of self-awareness pairs nicely with the promotion of local products and the acknowledgment of the surrounding nature as a cultural asset.

Overview of current Action Plan implementation progress in the province of Teruel, Aragon

As a matter of fact, the Action Plan of the Cultural Park site covers the above-mentioned topics (see D3.5 for the detailed plan) with relevant improvements visible in all areas. The current status and future outlook of actions is summarised in Table 1, below:



Actions	Implementation status
<p>Action 1: Innovative ecosystem centre</p>	<p>The duration of this action has been extended given the fact that it has been embedded in a national program for the development of multiple innovative centres.</p> <p>The centre acts as an experimental hub for eco-tourism practices. Initially focussing on the promotion of eco-glamping activities, in the last phase of the project it found an important ally in the national State and expanded its original scope.</p> <p>The outputs of this action (stakeholder mapping, need assessments, workshops, ideas generation...) will be incorporated on a national program to tackle depopulation funded with an additional 1.500.000€ over the next 4 years.</p>
<p>Action 2: Enhancement of local products</p>	<p>All activities within this action have been completed.</p> <p>After a mapping phase to trace local producers and shops, a label for local products of the Cultural Park has been created. It gathers together 24 products and 10 shops in the PHS, involving as a start 20 brand ambassadors.</p> <p>After the launch of the label, the producers suggested creating an association to continue the promotion of the local products and the stories behind them. The Cultural Park intends to support them and continue the labelling after the end of the project.</p> <p>Also included in this action was the launch of a contest for students for creating a marketing campaign for the Cultural Park. 16 pupils in a weekend, in Hackathon format, created 4 communication plans, as a prize they received guided tour, spa treatment and baskets of local products, reinforcing the idea of the territory as a gift.</p>
<p>Action 3: "La Plaza Circular"</p>	<p>All activities within this action have been completed or are well-underway.</p> <p>Within this action approximately 130 stakeholders were mapped. Despite the platform not being autonomous yet, it is an important asset for the implementation of the three hackathon solutions and, beyond the extension of Be.CULTOUR, for the enforcement of future projects.</p>

Table 1 - Aragon Action Plan implementation progress

Summary of challenges faced by the region and in Action Plan implementation

An early assessment of the major challenges faced by the Aragon heritage site (see D3.4 and D3.5) highlighted the depopulation and brain-drain in favour of cities, the lack of awareness of the region's potential, and the lack of cooperation between stakeholders. All these three challenges persisted throughout the project, however a lot has been done. While reversing the depopulation trends is a long-term effort and the project's effects will be only seen indirectly and in years, the lack of awareness and cooperation has been directly tackled by the Action Plan. In fact, it is possible to observe how during three distinct bilateral calls the concerns of the PHS coordinator have changed and mitigated. Below are how the challenges has been formulated so far:

- At first, a major challenge was described as the absence of a communication flow among stakeholders of different towns and villages. Also, during the local ecosystem's meetings the participation was lower than expected. A limited access to funds was listed among the challenges.
- In a second phase, the focus shifts towards the implementation of actions. For example, the stakeholders were motivated to implement two of the three actions foreseen, leaving one behind as an "unreachable dream". There was not much energy put into the eco-glamping project, and this was partially explained with a lack of fundings and of short-term results. Other sub-actions were perceived at risk due to a lack of capacity or funds. In this phase, another identified challenge was the instability of the PHS coordinator's contract, forcing a slowdown in the Action Plan implementation.
- In the last call, it appears that all the activities have been implemented or will be implemented during the six-month extension of the project. New partnership and funds made possible the solid progress of almost all action. The eco-glamping innovative action requires funds that are not available yet, but the scoping is on-going. The concerns are now about the autonomy of the stakeholder platform once the project is completed, however the extension of the project allows for a gradual and organised exit phase.

In conclusion, it appears that the stakeholder engagement has been growing phase by phase, and that the self-awareness has, as seen in the previous section, grew steadily. This was due also to the use of subcontracting mechanism, onboarding experts able to dynamize the group and the activities, and to the crucial synergy established with the central governments.


Heritage Innovation Network engagement

One of the continuous efforts of the Aragon PHS coordinator was setting up and maintaining the Heritage Innovation Network all along the project. To not overburn the stakeholders' capacities, meetings were organised where necessary, often in relation to new phases of implementation in the Action Plan, which require updates and a renewed engagement. At the beginning the innovators felt unable to keep up with the level of involvement required, especially when distributed over multiple actions and sub-actions, or perceived as a top-up to the Action Plan, as in the case of the Innovative Actions originated during the Hackathon phase. It resulted in the sub-contracting of an external company responsible for animating the network and activate the stakeholders. The attempt has been successful also because the company initiated the actions to later onboard the stakeholders, once that the first outputs materialised. An important engagement factor was the development of a public procurement on local products with related involvement of stakeholders in the process. The transfer of action's ownership from the company to the innovators is in some cases still in progress but expected to be finalised in parallel with the end of the project once the platform "La Plaza Circular " will be fully operating. Now it has a database with 130 people working in the territory and 20 people actively uploading information in the online communication platform, Discord.

The PHS coordinator also recognised some stakeholder blind spots in the Action Plan implementation, in particular referring to youth, business and enterprises, and academia. However, some targeted initiatives took place, such as the organisation of a weekend with university students and vocational schools to co-create a marketing campaign. Moreover, the agro-food label for territorial products onboarded fifty-five local businesses. The network activated so far will be invited to a final event in June 2024 to celebrate the tangible results achieved so far and set the bar for the next after-project phase.

Synergies with other projects, initiatives and regional programmes

The synergy with the central government is probably the most important collaboration made by the Cultural Park of Río Martín in terms of after-project sustainability, given its four years-length and additional 1.500.000€ fund to continue and extend the work of the Innovation Centre. However, it is not the only one:

- 
- The PHS strengthened the relationship with the office in charge of the territorial strategy for Just Transition, a member of which was part of the Jury of Innovators. They received funds under the EC banner to maximise the social gains of the ecological transformation.
 - The PHS also cooperated with the Rural Bioeconomy Innovation centre Aragon, particularly involved in the actions linked to the agro-food and forestry sector, with an ongoing exchange of knowledge and innovative solutions to facilitate the ecological, digital transition, and to move towards a circular bioeconomy in the province of Teruel. They are also supporting the Circular square platform and sharing with their stakeholders.
 - In general, the links among the Cultural Park, the Province of Teruel, and the government of Aragon, are tighter at the end of the project than how they were before, and this is meant to last.
 - Other contacts have been created, namely with Euromontana, European association of mountain areas, interested in dissemination activities, dissemination was also done with the Chamber of Commerce in Granada and with SmartCulTour in the EU Parliament in Madrid.
 - In a late phase of the project, the PHS coordinator identified a plan for sustainable tourism in Andorra County, which opened valuable opportunities of future collaboration to awareness-raise activities to include sustainability in the Provincial strategies and policies.
 - Finally, the PHS will continue and expand its activities within the upcoming TRACE project, funded like Be.CULTOUR by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 program.

Action Plans as contributors to longer-term human-centred sustainable development

The materialisation of the Action Plan in the Cultural Park of Río Martín managed to raise awareness of its valuable heritage in terms of culture, food, handcraft, and nature. It is not only a matter of outwards territorial branding, but a self-recognition and pride emerging among the local actors. The circular cooperation among them has been recognised as added value to the territorial brand. While at the beginning of the project the stakeholders were keener to seek short-term results, the Action Plan managed to point to a common long-term goal that overcame

the initial frictions and resistance to work together. Currently, the territorial promotion has created a nice working team that involves 24 producers and 10 shops, as well as 20 brand ambassadors, immersed in a positive and creative atmosphere.

As observed by the PHS coordinator: “you can go quicker if you go alone, but further if you go together”. Somehow, this sentence sums up both the human-centred perspective and the long-term dimension adopted by the Aragon PHS. In this light, the final stage of the project does not represent an end but a starting point: some of the stakeholders proposed to create a formal association, to formalise the commitment of the group and encourage the involvement of more actors. In line with this attempt, a local pact may be signed towards the end of the project, or even after it, to strengthen the ties among public and private stakeholders.

To conclude, when asked about what will stay in the local memory after Be.CULTOUR concludes, the PHS Coordinator of Aragon highlighted:

The training in dry stone in Alcaine, as 44 people in 2 weekends have restored walls and floors together. And the Innovation Territorial Centre will keep on working as it is now funded by the State. We will use the strategies in the territory as the Territorial innovation centre, Just transition funds and EU projects to continue with the actions.

”

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4.3.Vulture-Alto Bradano area in Basilicata, Italy

“

After-project sustainability of Action Plan could be achieved by increasing the [investments and triggering positive feedback in the] tourism sector.

Amodio Parmentola, collaborator of the Territorial Promotion Agency of Basilicata, and part of the PHS coordination team

Reflections on after-project sustainability

The positive impact of the Action Plan in Basilicata will be maintained over time if it proves its effectiveness in promoting the tourist sector in the region, particularly in the Area of Vulture-Alto Bradano. Despite the positive trends in the sector, its true impact can only be observed some years hence. However, the project proved to be an effective tool in the PHS reaching most of the targeted results in the regional plan for tourism (see Table 2 below). Broadening the scope, expectations emerged for a positive spillover in the region, with a higher attention at policy level to circular economy practices related to tourism.

The Action Plan coordinator in Basilicata was able to establish solid partnerships and now holds a strong position to conclude what has been foreseen for the near future, up to 2026, with funds already secured. Furthermore, the aim is to implement further actions beyond the project plan, towards an integrated and circular cultural tourism in the Basilicata region.

Overview of current Action Plan implementation progress in Basilicata

The innovation areas for circular cultural tourism explored in the PHS includes: contemporary meanings of heritage, remote working destination, sensorial heritage experience, nature as heritage, and proximity travel. An overview of the current progress made in these and other areas is presented in the table below (for a more detailed presentation of the PHS Action Plan please refer to the deliverable D3.5):

Action	Implementation status
Action 1: Hidden treasures of Vulture-Alto Bradano (tangible & intangible)	<p>All activities under the first action are proceeding well and about to be concluded.</p> <p>The connection of the PHS with more developed heritage sites in Basilicata is ongoing with well-defined responsables, actors, and timeframe (by 2026). Presentation of the upcoming tasks has been done in different cities in Basilicata.</p> <p>The digital centre for creative storytelling is seeing the finalisation of the website and two promotional videos. Despite the cooperation with one of the partners, it did not go as smoothly as hoped but the action will anyway be concluded by the end of the</p>



	<p>project. With regards to the digital immersive experience, especially when targeting young people, a video game set in the PHS was scheduled to be launched in January 2024.</p> <p>Finally, to harmonise the activities under this action, a lot of awareness has been raised in towns and villages about intangible heritage promotion, receiving a very positive response.</p>
<p>Action 2: European dimension of cultural heritage</p>	<p>The spotlight of the European dimension of the site’s cultural heritage is the action that encounters more difficulties.</p> <p>While the promotion of routes and micro-routes linked to Federico II heritage will be concluded as planned in the very next months, with only a small delay in the creation of a European Heritage Label for the “places of Federico II), the promotion of Venosa and Horace’s places faces bigger obstacles. The interest among stakeholders is lower and the chances to conclude this sub-action under the project umbrella are now limited. The hope is for it to be implemented on a later stage, thanks to external contributions.</p> <p>On the other hand, much was done to make the heritage more accessible for national and international visitors. This fact might bring more interest among stakeholders in the future.</p>
<p>Action 3: Human capital and entrepreneurial innovation ecosystem</p>	<p>This action and its group of sub-actions are proceeding as planned, with no delay or obstacles.</p> <p>To begin with, artistic intervention, including digital arts and street arts, particularly through street theatres and performances, have been implemented in the heritage sites.</p> <p>A capacity building programme for tourism operators has been set up and will continue in the future. Moreover, this task, as well as the entrepreneurial education, for young people will be further developed within the project TRACE, that is taking on it the Be.CULTOUR mandate.</p>
<p>Action 4: Circular destination</p>	<p>Under this action, the results are polarised: from one hand a lot has been done and prepared for green certifications and sustainable mobility, on the other hand only little steps have been made in the direction of renewable energy use and waste management strategies.</p>





	<p>To be more specific, funds were invested in the creation of green certifications for tourist enterprises (but also for agricultural enterprises etc.) and in the use of electric vehicles, with more actions planned for the future within established partnerships.</p> <p>On the other hand, the process to create energy communities appeared arduous from the beginning, and it proved to be very time-consuming. Something is moving in this direction, but as we will see more in detail in the next session the implementation phase may last several more years. Finally, following the implementation of waste and recycling strategies, the results are expected to be measured indirectly (more certification, more green tourism, more responsible use of resources, less waste) but within the network there are no stakeholders who can directly affect these issues.</p>
<p>Action 5: Nature as heritage</p>	<p>All activities within this action proceeded very well, and some - obstacles initially encountered had been then passed.</p> <p>The astro-tourism was intensely promoted and now also listed in the marketing plan of the region. It will therefore be further advertised under the “tourism of passion” campaign. Under the same campaign the local biodiversity is going to be further valorised under the label of archeo-tourism. The valorisation of Monticchio Lake’s paths is creating hype among the stakeholders and the activities are funded and will be concluded as scheduled within the next three years, by the municipality of Rionero. Finally, spiritual tourism experiences have been promoted via educational press and television.</p> <p>Even if the activities are concluded for the year 2023 they will be repeated on a regular basis, through different rounds of communication campaigns.</p>

Table 2 - Basilicata Action Plan implementation progress

Summary of challenges faced by the region and in Action Plan implementation

Generally speaking, the PHS area and the whole Basilicata region face challenges linked to its isolation and sparse population, encapsulated in the phenomenon of “brain drain” and depopulation. These issues are exacerbated by a delay in its infrastructure (transport, accommodation, smart co-working spaces), and in a lack of qualified tourism professionals and active social and entrepreneurial networks. In response, the PHS coordinator acted as a reference

point for the circulation of information, multiplier of knowledge, and fertiliser for the network. However, the commitment for some action at the community level, especially in the most innovative and thus more pioneering areas, has not always been as strong as hoped. Two sub-actions encountered the biggest challenges:

- The biodiversity valorisation that goes beyond the eco-tourism (Action 5.3) needed to merge the economic sustainability together with the environmental sustainability. Stakeholders' commitment was lacking at the beginning of the process, but an access to success has been found in the Lavender fields, catalyst for botanical tourism as part of the tourism of passions, promoted in other well-going actions. The discovery of an entry point and the integration with another action are the first two key aspects of the final success of this action. A third aspect, equally if not more important, was the reached full-operationality of the Regional Park of Vulture's board, whose executive power was on hold for a while, due to internal dynamics.
- The second sub-action to encounter difficulties, still present, is the creation of energy communities using renewable energy in tourism activities (action 4.3). Since the beginning this action was indicated as at risk, mainly because its implementation falls outside the capacity and the mandate of the PHS coordinator. An inter-institutional dialogue with the authorities in charge of energy policies is in place, but it is time-consuming, as well as the establishment of an energy community process. At the current moment, communication from the Basilicata region to the citizens has started, with scoping purposes, and a regional Public Notice offers contributions to support in the establishment of Renewable Energy Communities. Nevertheless, the implementation will last for the next four or five years, falling outside the project reach.

Heritage Innovation Network engagement

The PHS in Basilicata based its Heritage Innovation Network on existing regional networks, setting a vision, and acting as a coordinator and reference point. Those existing networks include circuits of tour operators in the area, trade associations, and non-profit organisations. Those stakeholders have been informed mainly via email, but periodically invited to relevant events and called for interest in being involved in any of the project actions. By the end of the project a general summit to present the new Regional Tourist Plan will be organised and will see the participation of all the stakeholders of the tourism sector.

In addition, some efforts were made to reach other potentially interested parts: a successful attempt was made with youth and academia: awareness-raising meetings on the circular economy dedicated to first- and second-degree students of the Basilicata region were organised under the hashtag #riusiAmoilpianeta. In this frame, six meetings (in Potenza, Matera, Policoro, Melfi, Moliterno, and Rotonda) presented regional good practices on waste management and environmental sustainability. Despite the attempt to reach other secluded groups of possible stakeholders, i.e., students, the PHS coordinator recognised the absence of some hard-to-reach groups, above all migrants.

Synergies with other projects, initiatives and regional programmes

In the Basilicata region, the Be.CULTOUR project was able to connect efficiently and effectively with several other programmes and initiatives, enlarging the network, improving the engagement, and securing more funds, in summary strengthening the PHS Action Plan implementation. The most important synergies have been built with:

- The Strategic Marketing Tourism Plan, organised around the theme of passion(s) and collecting topics such as nature as heritage, stargazing, biodiversity and botanics, self-care and well-being, spirituality, and more.
- Ambiente Basilicata programme, an environmental-focussed regional programme
- PARTI Basilicata programme: an action plan for the restart of Basilicata tourism
- Basilicata Four Seasons, a recently launched fund for the promotion of the deseasonalisation of Basilica's destinations.
- TRACE project: the PHS coordinator in Basilicata is partner of the EU-funded project TRACE, which aims to provide services as sustainable strategies, training activities and tools for tourism SMEs willing to innovate their business models and enhance their performance from a sustainability and circularity perspective.

In conclusion, Basilicata PHS is a well accomplished example of how a cooperative process can be the key for a project's success, as well as a project can be the initial step and a positive trigger for a long-lasting change.

Action Plans as contributors to longer-term human-centred sustainable development

While writing the Action Plan for the Be.CULTOUR project, the team in the Basilicata region already kept an eye beyond the lifetime of the project. In fact, nearly all actions and sub-actions have a scheduled timeline up to 2027, with most of them expected to be completed between 2025 and 2026. At the same time, thanks mainly to the strong partnerships and synergies that the team was able to build across the years, these actions rely on extra funds other than those from Be.CULTOUR, reinforcing this very project with other programmes at regional and national levels. Regional programmes, as seen above, include: the Strategic Marketing Tourism Plan, the Ambiente Basilicata programme, the PARTI Basilicata programme, and the Basilicata Four Seasons fund, while at (inter)national level the region will mainly use funds from the NextGenerationEU to enforce a sustainable and local-rooted way to tourism. Moreover, the PHS will benefit from an extra international experience taking part in the EU-funded TRACE project building on the experience gained in Be.CULTOUR. This way, the considerable effort of strategically programming activities seems to prove its effectiveness, likely granting, at least to some extent, a long-lasting impact.

Frankly speaking, an assumption lies under the confidence in a long-lasting impact. This is an increase in the tourism sector revenues in the next few years, so as to pay back the investments. The current trends are positive, seeing a steadily growing phase for tourism in the post-pandemic time, with higher figures than 2019, the year in which Matera was elected Capital of Culture, an incredible showcase for the whole Basilicata region and its cultural assets. Investments in infrastructures are seen as crucial to provide time-proof benefits. What is new, is the willingness of steering these growth's drivers in a very specific direction: the promotion of sustainable ways of tourism that can bring real well-being to the territory and the people who live in it. Within Be.CULTOUR investments have been done towards the valorisation of tangible and intangible heritage, in the involvement of young people and local communities, in the deseasonalisation of the destinations and digitalisation of the offer, ie. exploiting international gaming platforms such as Roblox and Minecraft, and ultimately towards the creation of new immersive and sustainable tourism offers.

In synthesis, what the project has done to support a long-term human-centred sustainable development, was to turn the spotlight at policy level of the necessity of a new thinking in tourism, seeking for the integration of different activities of different stakeholders, and looking

at the overall impact of funding programmes in terms of social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability. Be.CULTOUR worked and is working as trigger and visibility for this new integrated tourism that goes beyond the usual connotation of cultural tourism, principally in the area of Vulture-Alto Bradano and vicariously in the whole region.

When asked what will stay in the local memory after Be.CULTOUR concludes, the PHS team pointed to:

Increased attention at Policy level to circular economy practices related to the tourism sector.



4.4. The Rural Cultural Landscape of Larnaca, Cyprus



[After project sustainability of our Action Plan entails] a continuous process of interaction and synergies with local stakeholders. Working together to continue what we started and to go a step beyond.

Dr. Eudokia Balamou, Larnaca and Famagusta Districts Development Agency and PHS Coordinator

Reflections on after-project sustainability

The Rural Cultural Landscape of Larnaca team is committed to achieving a high level of Action Plan implementation within the project and to continue to collaborate with different stakeholders after Be.CULTOUR ends. In order for this to happen, they find it important to showcase how their sustainable cultural heritage actions have positively impacted the area. In the future, they would like to include more stakeholders to broaden the spectrum of collaboration to cover all quadruple helix. The PHS leaders also want to see more action in digitalization and innovation of cultural heritage, especially the intangible heritage. These after-project ambitions demonstrate an interesting evolution of Larnaca's focus on Rural Co-living (promotion of authentic rural experiences in traditional cultural landscapes) as a Be.CULTOUR innovation area.

Moving forward, they seek to continue the work through participation in EU projects and/or from the local development strategy of their Local Action Group. Especially, now with the approval of the two new funding strategies for the rural and fisheries area of an amount of 7 million euros

they can start working to upgrade their Action Plan with new actions more focus on sustainability, circular economy and promotion and preservation of cultural heritage, particularly considering students and youth engagement, since they are the ambassadors of tomorrow.

Overview of current Action Plan implementation progress in Larnaca

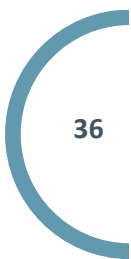
Larnaca’s PHS coordinators are satisfied with the implementation of their Actions, as originally laid out in D3.5. They attribute this success to several factors: 1) combining funding from different sources, 2) engaging stakeholders, 3) identification of challenges and needs, 4) sharing experiences, knowledge, and solutions, 5) having a clear vision, objectives and outcome, 5) defining KPIs for monitoring the achievement, 6) promotion and dissemination of the work.

Through data collected during bilateral calls, the current status and future outlook of actions for The Rural Cultural Landscape of Larnaca is summarised in Table 3, below:

Actions	Implementation status
<p>Action 1: Create a green circular community program</p>	<p>This action has been completed, including the creation of a consumeless label and data collection for the creation of a sustainable indicators system for measuring the sustainability of the destination.</p> <p>The label is ready for use and now the first 15 tourist companies (5 cafes and restaurants, 4 food and handicrafts shops and 6 tourism accommodations) have started the self-audit with the help of the label manager. The companies identified existing management activities that aim to reduce waste production, to increase separate collection, to reduce water and energy consumption (mandatory criteria) and quantifying current waste production and water and energy consumption (voluntary criteria.). The process has been finalised by 6 touristic companies which now are in the process to define their actions for the future for sustaining the label and improving their environmental performance.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the indicators system consists of 30 indicators that are categorised to economic, environmental, social, and cultural and global indicators. The collection of the relevant data for the pilot area has started and work will continue into 2024.</p>



<p>Action 2: Creation of Authentic Experiences based on the Rich Cultural Heritage of Rural Larnaca</p>	<p>All activities within this action have been completed or are well-underway.</p> <p>The Larnaca Renaissance Festival was held in Pyrga on the 21st of October 2023 with more than 2000 participants. The Needle Festival concept is evolving to synergise with the Municipality of Larnaca’s candidacy to become a Capital of Culture in 2030, such that the Festival gains publicity and greater potential to establish a Needle Residence for Creation.</p> <p>The sensory bee nature trail design and construction details are complete and construction work shall begin in the first months of 2024.</p> <p>The Tours with Locals educational platform is available online and the open call for local guides has been launched. Applications have come in and the educational component for tour providers has begun.</p>
<p>Action 3: Create a Living Lab for Rural Larnaca</p>	<p>All sub-actions have begun and are ongoing.</p> <p>A Tourism Living Lab for Rural Larnaca has been established and stakeholders meet monthly to implement the Action Plan and other topics around tourism development.</p> <p>A Technical and Financial Assistance Office for private and public entities has been created and is providing technical guidance and help to private SMEs related to tourism and local authorities. So far, it assisted 12 local authorities to apply under the grant scheme «Revitalization of Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas through the Creation of Authentic Experiences to Enrich and Upgrade the Tourism Product " that was launched by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism. All applications were successful and now the office is assisting with their implementation.</p>
<p>Action 4: Innovative methods for revolutionising interest in archaeological sites</p>	<p>The activities in this Action are in various states of progress.</p> <p>An augmented reality application which could recognize and offer real-time information about historical sites via phone camera, experienced setbacks after the PHS coordinator lost touch with the technical experts who proposed it. However, now a Serbian start-up company is developing the application alongside a similar one for Serbia. The PHS team is looking into funding, which may come from their upcoming Local Action Group strategy.</p>





	<p>Meanwhile, the online experience booking platform (a Be.CULTOUR innovative solution) is estimated to go online by the beginning of 2024. And finally the interactive map of Larnaca is complete and online.</p>
<p>Action 5: Design of touristic packages to promote Rural Larnaca</p>	<p>The sub-actions in this Action are complete or under way and more progress is expected in 2024.</p> <p>Efforts to create a multidisciplinary museum have so far resulted in a decision to host the museum in the village of Melini, in a specific building - which, however, still needs permission for the renovation. Architectural designs are under way and the PHS team is in contact with a Museum Lab that is dedicated to the interdisciplinary exploration of emerging technologies to develop 3D augmented reality projections inside the spaces of the museum and develop a game application (treasure hunt type) using innovative digital technologies including augmented reality technology.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the other sub-action, to design thematic touristic packages and promotional campaign for rural Larnaca has been completed. This includes promotion of the Rural Larnaca Honey Villages and the thematic packages of the Beautiful villages of Cyprus, funded under a cooperation project from Larnaca’s Rural Development Program 2014-2020, under the Leader funding scheme.</p>



Table 3 - Larnaca Action Plan implementation progress

Summary of challenges faced by the region and in Action Plan implementation

As is first laid out in D3.4, and elaborated upon in D3.5 after co-definition in local co-creation workshops, the Rural Cultural Landscape of Larnaca faces several challenges, which are directly or indirectly addressed in the above Actions. Briefly summarised, the PHS Larnaca faces challenges such as seasonal fluctuations, excessive exploitation of tourist attractions leading to environmental issues like visual clutter and air pollution. Additionally, the overuse of resources like water and electricity, particularly due to all-inclusive luxury hotels, is straining both the environment and local communities, eroding the region's unique character. Meanwhile, rural areas are not fully utilised and are difficult to access. The region's potential for digital communication is hindered by a lack of skills, experience, and technical knowledge. The Actions above, including more circular cultural tourism businesses, packaging and promoting authentic

experiences, and designing innovative augmented reality heritage technologies and digital maps, among others, are positive steps towards addressing such challenges. However, the PHS coordinators have expressed the following difficulties in implementing their Action Plan thus far:

- Securing funding and private investments for actions is an ongoing process, since only a few of the Actions are directly funded through Be.CULTOUR
- Contact with experts in augmented reality tools has been a challenge, which delayed progress on one action
- Stakeholder engagement has required significant effort for the PHS coordinators since it requires proper preparation and execution (see next section). This has reportedly not always been easy.
- Political change in local governments may affect enthusiasm for some Actions, and pose a challenge to future Action Plan implementation, but it is too early to assess, and there remain many interested stakeholders.

Despite these challenges, the Larnaca PHS has successfully implemented or progressed on most planned actions and have a renewed outlook on the future of circular cultural tourism in their region.

Heritage Innovation Network engagement

Engagement of local stakeholders in a Heritage Innovation Network is essential for Action Plan implementation during and after the project lifetime. In the Rural Cultural Landscape of Larnaca, the coordinating team started identifying relevant stakeholders very early on, with the belief that the sooner they get involved the more engaged they become during the process. This early engagement included giving space to hear opinions and note conflicts. The coordinators emphasised the importance of really listening to and considering their ideas, hesitations and visions. To the Larnaca team, the Heritage Innovation Network has many meaningful relationships that are based on trust - which they consider important for the fulfilment of responsibilities to each other and the Be.CULTOUR project.

To keep the Network actively informed and engaged in Action Plan implementation, they have 1) Established clear and accessible communication channels to keep network members informed about updates, progress, and implementation plans such as email newsletters, online forums,

social media groups. 2) Organised regular meetings, either in person or virtually, to discuss progress, challenges, and next steps. These meetings involved presentations and interactive discussions. 3) Encouraged collaborative projects among network members, where they can work together on specific initiatives related to heritage innovation. 4) Organised workshops, info days events and participated in events organised by other areas of Cyprus for knowledge exchange.

Importantly, Larnaca's PHS team believes that the best form of engagement is to make local stakeholders feel more responsibility for their Actions in the Plan. This involves: bringing them into the decision making process, clearly communicating the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder within the network, collaboratively setting realistic and achievable goals and targets that align with the Heritage Innovation Network's vision and mission, and even getting stakeholders to participate in small tasks and preparation of deliverables making them a part of the PHS team under the supervision of their Project Manager.

Looking forward, the team in Larnaca recognises a need to engage more stakeholders covering the entire quadruple helix model. Especially from: civil society, such as youth, migrants, volunteers, environmental and cultural associations, other NGOs, and more local SMEs from beyond the tourism sector. Finally, the team aims to involve Cyprus' Centres of Excellence that handle digitization of cultural heritage and the environment. The PHS is now starting a new mapping process for these stakeholders and have conducted some initial meetings. By the end of Be.CULTOUR, the following events will occur and boost stakeholder engagement: Organization of a final event for the project and presenting the process and work that has been achieved so far (February 2024), Organization of the Needle festival under Larnaca 2030 Capital of Culture (May 2024), and Participation with 8 stakeholders and with the Deputy Ministry of Tourism to the conference ENERDECA II - Enhancement of European Rural Development Capabilities in Pella-Greece (end of October 2023) to present creative tourism actions.

Synergies with other projects, initiatives and regional programmes

Synergies with other projects and networks is seen as crucial by the Larnaca PHS team for the current and future implementation of their Action Plan. These synergies include: making use of diverse financing programs, encouraging local government and NGO involvement, participation in local festivals, taking part in follow-up projects with similar themes, and getting in touch with various sustainability and heritage focused tourism initiatives. The PHS' efforts, above, are part

of a bigger picture for Cyprus to become a circular cultural tourism destination, with Be.CULTOUR representing an important step forward.

Regarding diverse financing programs, all Actions already initiated have been financed by either other EU funded or EU co-funded projects, such as the Leader, Intereg Med, or privately funded. Regarding local authorities, they have been involved in all actions so they can formally support them. In addition, the PHS team is collaborating with local NGOs such as Laona Foundation, Women Association of Rural Larnaca, Phoenix Foundation, the Cyprus University of Technology, as well as the Larnaca Tourism Board and the Deputy Ministry of Tourism among other governmental authorities. Another way of tapping into local networks is participating in festivals, which in 2023 included: Larnaca Renaissance Festival, World Bee Day and Bee Festival, Honey & Beekeeping Festival and Honey Children's Festival. Additionally, the work done in Be.CULTOUR will be taken forward in follow-up projects such as the TRACE project (See Section 5), which will specifically carry forward the 'Consumeless label' Action.

Finally, the Larnaca PHS team has identified and gotten in touch with several tourism initiatives related to sustainability and heritage. These initiatives include: The [Cyprus Breakfast](#) brand for promoting local gastronomic culture and heritage especially through local communities and small producers, the [Plastic Free Beach](#) project which certifies beaches that meet criteria around facilitating plastic waste avoidance, the [Bring Your Cup](#) project which will create an App to gamify and encourage youth to use reusable cups, the Othello Tower project which will develop an educational game about the history of the walled city of Famagusta, and the [ReInHerit a museum](#) initiative which uses interactive technology to improve visitor experience of museums and archaeological sites. Two organisations are responsible for many of these initiatives, above, the Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative and the Research and Innovation Center of Excellence in Cyprus. Larnaca's PHS coordinators have already worked closely with the Initiative, and now their new collaboration with the Center represents a step towards integrating heritage and new technological tools like virtual and augmented reality.

Action Plans as contributors to longer-term human-centred sustainable development

Larnaca's PHS coordinators believe that their Action Plans will continue to create better conditions for social cohesion, for regenerating heritage, for resource reduction and reuse beyond the project lifetime, in large part thanks to the new partnerships and synergies listed

above. Continuous interaction with different stakeholders in Cyprus and the EU will enable the implementation of current Be.CULTOUR Actions and generate new projects. This interaction includes: actively researching, identifying and connecting with other initiatives that align with the objectives and focus areas of their action implementation, seeking partnerships with organisations or initiatives that have complementary goals or resources, and participating in conferences, seminars, or workshops related to their action implementation.

Each current Action is linked with stakeholders and systems to ensure its sustainability in the future. For example, all Festivals will include fee-paying private entities, volunteers, and location on community-owned land. Other actions will be continued thanks to small certification fees (Consumeless label), small entrance fees and support from the PHS coordinators' organisation, the Larnaca and Famagusta Development Agency. Some financial mechanisms that will be used to secure priority Actions include The Local strategy of the Rural Areas for 2023-2027 (3.5 million euros), The Local strategy of the Fisheries Areas for 2021-2027 (2.5 million), National Calls from the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, The EU Recovery and Resilience Fund for 2021-2026, The Operational Programme Thalia for 2021-202, and different EU projects that align with the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan focus areas.

Beyond ensuring that the current Be.CULTOUR Action Plan is sustainably implemented after the project ends, the Larnaca PHS team is eager to start interactive educational activities to engage the younger generations, use new technologies to re-invigorate heritage sites, launch hackathons and competitions to get ideas and new solutions, and hopefully create a hub for circular cultural tourism and adaptation/ mitigation to climate changes. These ambitions will continue to create better conditions for social cohesion, regenerating heritage, resource reduction and reuse in Larnaca well into the future.

In the end, the Larnaca team raised three Be.CULTOUR legacies that will particularly stay in the local memory:

Hackathon process and innovative solutions, Continuous collaboration and networking and Site visits and seeing what others are doing in practice

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



[After project sustainability of our Action Plan entails] a regional network of sustainable tourism operators, that possess the skills, information and capabilities to valorise the touristic potential of the region, in a circular and low-impact manner.

Alexandra Albu, North-East Regional Development Agency, and PHS Coordinator

[After-project sustainability means that] the Action Plan reflects what can be seen through stakeholders' eyes from both countries.

Anatolie Risina, Green is Moldova (Verde e Moldova) NGO, and PHS Coordinator

Reflections on after-project sustainability

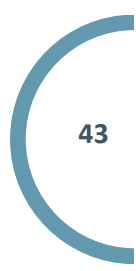
For the Romania-Moldova Pilot Heritage Site coordinators, after-project sustainability of their Action Plan is enhanced through the success experienced during the project, which lays the foundation for future activities. The PHS aimed to set the foundation for a human-centred development perspective, while valuing the cultural heritage and the natural assets of the local communities. By developing the joint Action Plan for the Romania-Moldova cross-border region, they have identified a series of challenges, opportunities, and specific actions that they have begun addressing to reach their goals and objectives. It is in this Action Plan that they synthesised the outcomes and directions envisioned for their region. The transboundary collaboration has importantly become an engine that provides not just local impacts but also new ideas and actions for regional and international cultural heritage. Along the Stephan the Great route, increased valorization of tangible and intangible heritage sites, particularly religious ones, has fulfilled the PHS' 'Spiritual travel experience' Be.CULTOUR innovation area. Furthermore, people in the cross-border region have a strengthened sense of common history and culture - a great example of increased cultural Europeanisation.

The PHS coordinators believe that the common Actions and objectives of their Action Plan are the basis for long-term collaboration in the cross-border region. Additionally, the enthusiastic

community that was established during the project, including new interest from the Moldovan Agency of Investments, Ministry of Culture and the newly established National Office for Tourism, is committed to continue working together. The North-East Regional Development Agency (NERDA) will coordinate cooperation within this cross-border community and monitor Action Plan implementation beyond the Be.CULTOUR lifetime through periodic online and onsite meetings for knowledge sharing, quarterly meetings with local innovators, and short evaluation reports based on action implementation progress. Finally, several Be.CULTOUR innovative solution creators in this PHS will be present in the new TRACE project for circular tourism entrepreneurship, which ensures continuity as well.

Overview of current Action Plan implementation progress in North-East Romania – Moldova Cross-Border Area

Action	Implementation status
<p>Action 1: Digital marketing and improved digital presence of the territory and of the cultural resources of the Route of Stephan the Great and Saint, from North-East Romania – Moldova.</p>	<p>All three sub-actions within this Action have been almost completed and are either already publicly released or will be shortly.</p> <p>Specifically: The Virtual Reality route has been completed for all sites along the Route and was officially launched at NERDA’s tourism gala in December 2023. The promotional video for the Route’s cultural heritage sites is in the final stages of refinement. Finally, the Stephan the Great website was finalised, with collaboration from the Moldovan Investment Agency.</p>
<p>Action 2: Improved tourism information and heritage interpretation along the Route</p>	<p>The two sub-actions contributing towards improved information and interpretation are either well underway or complete.</p> <p>The planned near-zero energy Tourism Information Center in Botosani is in progress. While it has been delayed due to lack of funds, it is currently included in the development plan for the Mayor's office of Botosani County, Romania. Currently, financing is being researched within several sources, such as cross-border programs; ROP 2021-2027; local budget and other sources of funding. The forecasted completion date is in 2025. Meanwhile, the other sub-action, to include sites</p>



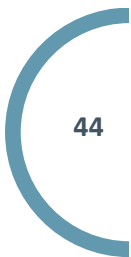
	from North-East Romania have been included in an interactive Route map, alongside their Moldovan counterparts.
Action 3: Upcycling the existing natural and anthropic resources for creation of new tourism products and experiences	After struggling to obtain funding for this Action’s aim to create a network of heritage centres for interpretation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, an NGO in Suceava County, Romania, has given it new hope. This NGO, who participated in the Action Plan co-creation process, currently focuses on architectural heritage by saving traditional houses. They have now included the heritage centre ambitions into their overall plans.
Action 4: Bison Land Heritage. Creation of new tourism activities that will enhance the experience of nature in the destination.	The two initiatives within this Action, the Bison’s Land Heritage and the Digital Nomads Platform, have both received financial support through Be.CULTOUR and are on track to be implemented within the first part of 2024.

Table 4 - North-East Romania – Moldova Cross-Border Area Action Plan implementation progress

Summary of challenges faced by the region and in Action Plan implementation

As synthesised in D3.5, the Romanian-Moldovan cross border region PHS previously identified challenges related to tourism and development. These include historical site inaccessibility, low international visibility, inadequate tourist facilities, skilled labour shortage due to emigration, counterfeit local products, unplanned rural development, limited local partnerships and cooperation, and internet presence issues. As can be seen in the PHS’ Action Plan implementation progress, several of these challenges, such as visibility, facilities, local cooperation and internet presence, have been addressed.

There have also been a few difficulties in addressing these challenges through Action Plan implementation. These include: Financial, unexpected global events, and the procurement and engagement with Be.CULTOUR innovative solutions. Regarding finances, for sub-Actions not funded through the project it was more difficult to find funding. Thus, the PHS team had to resourcefully make use of other budgets, such as the 2024 National Budget for Moldova, and integrate Actions into the activities of local municipalities and organisations. Regarding global events, Russia’s invasion of the Ukraine in February 2022 and resulting energy crisis caused instability and necessitated a solidarity response, thus temporarily delaying some Action Plan



implementation efforts. In light of this, the Romania-Moldova example of cross-border cooperation in Be.CULTOUR is highly symbolic of the necessity and value of unity and support beyond borders. Finally, the engagement and procurement processes associated with the PHS' innovative solutions were challenging due to administrative requirements and heterogeneous needs and schedules of the innovators. Through tailored assistance from Be.CULTOUR partner, Iniziativa Cube the challenges around procurement processes were resolved such that the solutions can be implemented in 2024 before the end of the project.

Heritage Innovation Network engagement

A strong and active Heritage Innovation Network is essential for implementing actions on circular cultural tourism. To inform and engage this network, the PHS coordinators set up WhatsApp and Facebook groups and actively disseminated information related to project activities and other initiatives/ financing opportunities/ events of interest. They also maintain communication with the innovative solutions teams as well as national and local public authorities. During Action Plan co-creation, they established focus groups (composed of different stakeholder types e.g. women, youth, religious people) and during implementation, the PHS feels that their resulting stakeholder network has become quite heterogeneous, with a diverse representation from youths, seniors, disadvantaged groups (such as members of remote rural communities), academia and other public and private stakeholders that ensure a comprehensive perspective on the tackled issues.

Moving forward, the Romanian-Moldovan PHS coordinators' goal is to preserve this inclusive network by involving their stakeholders in future projects, activities and actions based on themes of interest for the different groups, thus further maximising the impact of the Be.CULTOUR project and generate long-term benefits for the overall region and the local communities. Verde e Moldova's recent project to reduce plastic consumption along the route of Stephan the Great, along with their November 2023 Moldova National Conference on Circular Economy, are examples of this further network engagement.

Synergies with other projects, initiatives and regional programmes

A central aspect in after-project sustainability, the Romania-Moldova PHS is fostering new synergies between Action Plan items and ongoing external projects, initiatives, policies and programmes. From the Romanian side, the main synergy of the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan is with

the Discover North-East initiative, a longstanding project that comprises industry and networking events, the promotion of the regional cultural, historical, and natural heritage, as well as the exchange of best practices with regional, national, and international partners. Additionally, the Bison Land's Heritage innovative solution, nicely intersects with the Strategy of the Vanatori-Neamt Natural Park and another sub-action, which entails the inclusion of the objectives from the North-East Region of Romania in the interactive map, displays synergies with the 3D virtual rural museum tour initiative of Muzee de la sat.ro. In Moldova, an important example of synergy is the inclusion of a few Be.CULTOUR Action Plan actions in the Moldovan Ministry of Culture's own Action Plan for 2023, and the national government's Investment Agency is including Be.CULTOUR's Action Plan actions into their own plan of activities. Other synergies such as those with local NGOs and municipalities are featured in Table 4, above. Additional interesting examples include: NERDA's connection with Hai La Saivan Bio Retreat & Farm in Suceava County, which they consider a best practice in circular cultural tourism, and who was a laureate at NERDA's past Tourism Gala, and Verde e Moldova's network of circular economy initiatives arising from its recent National Circular Economy Conference. The PHS coordinators have identified several other circular cultural tourism best practice examples which could spark additional synergies after Be.CULTOUR concludes.

Action Plans as contributors to longer-term human-centred sustainable development

The Romania-Moldova PHS coordinators are proud of their work and see the Be.CULTOUR project as something that pushed them forward, especially concerning strong cross-border collaboration and regional development.

Several innovative solutions, as represented as sub-actions in the Action Plan, were especially highlighted as ways to create better conditions for social cohesion, for regenerating heritage, and for resource reduction and reuse beyond the project lifetime. Firstly, the sub-action, Bison Land's Heritage, 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 represents the necessary steps towards sustainable development. The solution will promote cooperation and encourage added-value creation by highlighting the unique traits of the locals who will learn that it is always better to cooperate, thus improving the social life of the community. Secondly, the Digital Nomads Platform sub-action, will gamify the user's experience, facilitating early social integration in the

region by taking over roles (personas) from the local heritage, while offering a complete work-in/live-in package. 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). In the long run, the solution can be easily scaled and adapted to other regions, matching the characters to local history. Thirdly, the sub-action which revamps the Stephan the Great Route website enhances cooperation between visitors, residents and other stakeholders in Romania and Moldova. The initiative promotes a circular economy, eco-friendly businesses, sustainable choices, and ecological education, especially in schools. By also successfully engaging local communities, the project encourages responsible choices and fosters environmental responsibility. It also addresses the impact on the tourism industry by promoting sustainability practices for cleaner and more appealing destinations.

The PHS team believes that embracing the principles of human-centred circular tourism has the potential to initiate a sustainable and contemporary evolution of tourism in the destination. Through tapping into various funding streams and through reliable communication with the site's Heritage innovation network, this shift aims to benefit both tourists and host communities, with the proposed actions serving as the initial steps in a comprehensive transformation towards longer-term human-centred sustainable development.

In conclusion, the PHS Coordinators have several examples of what will remain in the local memory after Be.CULTOUR concludes, including:

Circular tourism as key practice for local development, Cooperation as innovation driver, The legendary figure of Stephan the Great as a unifying element, and The power of a touristic route to engage a complex stakeholder network and revive a territory, in terms of being a tourism destination (Romania).

The heart of the actions, The central people delivering innovations, The network of enthusiastic people and friends (Moldova).

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4.6. Forsvik And Rydal Industrial Heritage Sites, Västra Götaland, Sweden



It is important that we lay the foundation for continued dialogue and cooperation between various actors in Rydal and Forsvik. From the start of the project, civil society, the entrepreneurs, the municipality and the regional level have worked together to create an Action Plan. This cross organisational dialogue is of great importance and will hopefully continue after the project and act as a prerequisite for further cooperation.

Ulrika Lindh, Västra Götaland Cultural Development Administration and PHS Coordinator

Reflections on after-project sustainability

For the Västra Götaland PHS coordinators, their aspirations for after-project sustainability include a stable network of actors working together to promote and develop the local communities through cultural activities, exchange, and entrepreneurship. As highlighted in [Västra Götaland's Action Plan](#) for sustainable cultural tourism, heritage, sustainability and a bottom-up perspective are important for regional development, which both fulfils local needs and is attractive to visitors. Consequently, these priorities are reflected in the PHS' focus on Be.CULTOUR's Industrial Heritage Experience and Nature as Heritage innovation areas.

Västra Götaland's Action Plan was created in collaboration between the local municipalities and other local actors based on previous regional strategies, thus ensuring that Be.CULTOUR outcomes are linked to long-term plans. The PHS intends to revise the Action Plan annually and use it as a basis for the involved organisations' annual planning.

Overview of current action plan implementation progress in Västra Götaland

Since this Action Plan is seen as a living document, the PHS coordinators have slightly adapted the original version's contents (as presented in D3.5) according to ongoing local discussions, yet the core themes and most sub-actions remain the same. Through data collected during bilateral

calls, the current status and future outlook of actions for Forsvik and Rydal Industrial Heritage Sites is summarised in Table 5, below:

Action	Implementation status
<p>Action 1: Offer nature and cultural experiences in a unique cultural environment all year round</p>	<p>Many sub-actions have either been completed (e.g. restrooms for tourists, and creating nature-based experiences along the river Viskan and jointly developing a cultural program in the mill area or they are well under way (e.g. the Heritage Innovation Center in Forsvik, which is also a Be.CULTOUR innovative solution has plans for using the allocated funds by the end of the project).</p> <p>Some larger infrastructure projects like a more attractive and safer thoroughfare are on hold due to lack of funding, though they remain on the list of sub-actions to consider from 2024 onward.</p> <p>There is high will to conduct several activities, such as developing new winter experiences and offering year-round heritage activities for young people, however these are not yet the focus of local actors during Be.CULTOUR’s implementation period, partially due to lack of funding. Meanwhile other sub-actions, like improving access to Forsvik’s mill area year round are slotted to start in 2024.</p>
<p>Action 2: Create exciting and attractive living environments for visitors and residents</p>	<p>Several ambitions within this Action, like attracting new residents to Forsvik via an interpretation campaign where recently-new residents share their nice experiences with others, have gone well. Rydal has particularly seen much progress in Action 2 overall, including undertaking an inventory of existing accommodation options and locations for new or remodelled guest accommodation, along with commencing to build new housing within the existing local plan.</p> <p>Other activities in Forsvik, like planning and building houses and inventorying empty houses have slowed down due to increased cost of building homes and lower interest from key stakeholders. The concept for floating homes has also paused, but it is foreseen to be developed with schools in the future. Although stuck for now, the timelines for these sub-actions last into 2024 and beyond.</p> <p>Looking forward to 2024 and 2025, respectively, Rydal and Forsvik are actively planning for additional activities in the near future. In Rydal this includes: adapting the town’s residential housing plan</p>





	<p>and working with local entrepreneurs to develop 'Prova bo', a web-based platform for connecting landlords and tenants.</p>
<p>Action 3: Create opportunities to visit and live without owning a car</p>	<p>Several activities within this Action are progressing more slowly than hoped, particularly due to several barriers. For example, increased bus connections in Rydal are currently seen as infeasible due to too few inhabitants. A car pool service was also investigated, but there is a lack of local interest to involve visitors in the service, although it is currently running informally among residents.</p> <p>However, many activities have a longer-term outlook and are planned for the future. Rydal aims to establish rental bicycles by 2025 and build a bike and pedestrian path by 2026. Meanwhile entrepreneurs in Forsvik plan to establish a taxi boat service by 2026 and the Industrial Heritage Association is developing a bus to theatre events.</p>
<p>Action 4: Strengthen the community by enabling more sustainable and creative companies</p>	<p>There has been good progress on most Action 4 tasks, such as a craft cooperative that will be set up in Forsvik's mill by a Residents' Association within the Be.CULTOUR project lifetime and the mill owner is working on bringing more creative companies into the mill within 2023 and establishing a business park in the old mill area by 2028. Finally, the region has already completed a mapping of existing commercial premises and matched them to new companies, both in Forsvik and Rydal. There has even been new employment within the project for this sub-action.</p> <p>Due to changes in regional policies however, Forsvik's idea to create a coworking space at the mill is no longer permitted, and in Rydal, plans to establish an unmanned grocery store have been set aside due to lack of personnel able to work on it.</p>
<p>Action 5: Together we develop in the long term</p>	<p>This action has been successful overall, and the PHS coordinators state that the new cooperation and collaborative organisation coming out of Be.CULTOUR has been recognised as very helpful.</p> <p>In Forsvik, a common development forum has been created, roles and responsibilities for mill area development have been clarified, and an estate owner network has been created. The region is also in the process of creating a local development plan that complements the conservation plan. In Rydal, the municipality has now established a long-term site development organisation, a digital platform called 'VisitRydal' has been created, and there is</p>

	strengthened marketing around the 'Beautiful Rydal' campaign. In 2024 the PHS coordinators plan to further anchor Rydal's target image with residents and decision-makers.
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Table 5 - Västra Götaland Action Plan implementation progress

Summary of challenges faced by the region and in Action Plan implementation

As is first laid out in D3.4 and elaborated upon in D3.5 after co-definition in local co-creation workshops, the Forsvik and Rydal Industrial Heritage Sites face several challenges and opportunities, which are directly or indirectly addressed in the above Actions. Briefly summarised, the PHS confronts shortages of skilled workers and an expanding socio-economic divide. Additionally, the local population is ageing, yet there is a notable pattern of young individuals relocating to rural areas in pursuit of cost-effective housing and improved living conditions. The Actions above, including the enhancement of nature and cultural offerings, facilitating car-free transportation, diversifying accommodation choices, and fostering closer collaboration among local organisations, among others, are positive steps towards addressing such challenges. However, the PHS coordinators have expressed the following difficulties in implementing their Action Plan thus far:

- Several of the proposed actions in the Action Plan are complex and large-scale issues (e.g., transportation), thus the project itself cannot resolve them, and it requires more time to work on these matters. This is an important learning outcome in itself.
- The Action Plan relies on local stakeholders who are responsible for Actions but are not necessarily financed through the Be.CULTOUR project. Therefore, they have limited time to implement their ideas in addition to their other duties, despite their desire and interest.
- It takes a long time to write funding applications, and there are long response times, making it difficult to develop parts of the Action Plan within the project timeline.

However, despite these limitations, the Västra Götaland PHS believes that a lot of work has been done according to the Action Plan to address key issues facing the region. The PHS coordinators feel that there is an uptick in local engagement and dedication to its implementation.

Heritage Innovation Network engagement

Engagement of local stakeholders in a Heritage Innovation Network is essential for Action Plan implementation during and after the project lifetime. In Forsvik and Rydal Industrial Heritage Sites, local project leaders in each village are responsible for daily communication with stakeholders, and various groups and networks have been established to facilitate continuous dialogue. Other events, such as energy saving workshops for cultural heritage buildings, and workshops run by the Be.CULTOUR innovator team 'Create, Design and Engage' in 2023, are also sources of engagement. The hope is that participants recognise the importance of regular communication and continue even after the project concludes.

The PHS coordinators are aware that most actions lack explicit connection to minority groups but are reassured that the municipalities are tasked with continuously working with minority and marginalised groups and involving them in activities and democratic processes. Some engagement in this regard includes bus tours for those from vulnerable areas in nearby towns to visit Rydal, and a labour market project for unemployed workers in Forsvik to build a wooden vessel named Nordevall II.

When it comes to further engagement of the Heritage Innovation Network with Action Plan implementation, the Västra Götaland team believes the key is to ensure that the participants understand the benefits that can be achieved through effective collaboration and close communication. By fostering a sense of shared purpose and emphasising the value of ongoing dialogue, the network can stay informed and actively contribute in the future. A final conference in both Rydal and Forsvik in February and March 2024 aims to achieve this.

Synergies with other projects, initiatives and regional programmes

The PHS coordinators have fostered several synergies with other projects and regional programmes in order to strengthen their Action Plan implementation. For first steps to securing further funding, the Action Plan for Rydal and Forsvik has been presented for opportunities such as the Leader program. This is an EU-funded initiative for rural development administered by the Swedish Board of Agriculture. Some applications have been submitted for specific components of the Action Plans, and funding has also been sought from the regional cultural council. There have been other projects that have received funding, such as the Nycirkusfestivalen (New Circus

Festival) in Rydal and the 'Visit Rydal' communication project, from the regional cultural council and by Leader, respectively, however, no other grants have been awarded so far.

Meanwhile the team has identified and connected with two good practices on circular cultural tourism in the region: KomlLand and Hållbarhetsklivet. In the KomlLand project, various mobility solutions are tested in three smaller communities. The mobility solutions can be, for example, public transport, carpooling, carpooling or cargo bike rental booked via an app. If the concept of combined mobility in rural areas proves to work well, experiences can be spread nationally and internationally and lead to positive effects for mobility innovations in rural areas. Although not possible for Rydal or Forsvik to be part of KomlLand, the PHS team has had frequent contact with a staff member at the Region Skaraborg from KomlLand, who was also part of the reference group for the Be.CULTOUR team in Region Västra Götaland. Hållbarhetsklivet is West Sweden's collective initiative for a sustainable hospitality industry. The sustainability club is run by the West Sweden Tourist Board, with which PHS coordinators have frequent contact. As referenced in D3.4, the West Sweden Tourism Board is trying to create a new season for tourists in autumn and spring, which aligns well with the PHS' ambition to 'Offer nature and cultural experiences in a unique cultural environment all year round'.

Finally, the Västra Götaland region similarly implemented a Local Action Plan for the circular adaptive reuse of cultural heritage under the Horizon 2020 CLIC project (2017-2021), identifying specific strategies to apply the circular economy model to the cultural heritage sector. The region still draws from this knowledge and partnerships in the implementation of the Be.CULTOUR.

Action Plans as contributors to longer-term human-centred sustainable development

The Västra Götaland site coordinators see their actions as a way to create better conditions for social cohesion, heritage regeneration, resource reduction and reuse beyond the project lifetime. Firstly, planning and working together in the new networks increases social cohesion at each site. Within the project, together the actors have been able to demonstrate the strengths and uniqueness of the site. This heightened visibility has created pride and a community that PHS coordinators hope will live on and fertilise future collaboration. Secondly, the in-progress strategic heritage development plan, linked with Action four and five, fosters a better understanding of local heritage and makes it easier for the estate managers to see the

opportunities and value of old buildings. Also the upcoming creation of an estate owner network/ club will help the managers to develop their estates in a circular and sustainable manner.

However, the Action Plans are only able to contribute to longer-term human-centred sustainable development when properly resourced. The Västra Götaland PHS has identified several financial mechanisms to secure their priority Actions after the project ends. As previously mentioned, they will continue to apply for funding from the Leader program, which has around 1.7 billion SEK from 2023-2027 to strengthen the competitiveness and development of Sweden's rural areas. They are additionally looking into funding from the Swedish Postcode Lottery Foundation, which provides NGOs with funding for projects related to people's living conditions, nature and environment, culture, and sports. Furthermore, the PHS will make use of a new service at the subregional level that provides assistance with EU applications. Finally, key actors in the Västra Götaland PHS have connections with the European Commission's Culture and Creativity Knowledge and Innovation Community, which boosts entrepreneurial cultural projects with its 95.5 billion euro 2021-2027 funding scheme.

Finally, when asked about the future in the PHS, the Coordinator answered:

A sense of pride, belonging and the great opportunities that are created when working together towards a common goal in the local community.

”

4.7. Bač, Sremski Karlovci and Irig in Vojvodina, Serbia

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Be.CULTOUR will be remembered after the end of the project as significant expert support for local community participation and local development of cultural tourism in their PHS municipalities.

Igor Pucarević, Advisor at the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) and PHS Coordinator

Reflections on after-project sustainability

The overall aspiration of the Vojvodina Be.CULTOUR team was to raise capacities in the three PHS municipalities addressing both public staff and local communities. In all three PHS municipalities significant progress has been made and each of them now has its own vision, objectives and Action Plan as well as the expertise to reach and implement them. Currently, despite limited financial resources, the number of interested parties is larger than before and so is the cooperation network in Vojvodina's region. The core of this cooperation is a co-created sustainable cultural tourism as a means of local development. A cultural tourism that is innovative and therefore future-oriented in nature: it broadens the concept of heritage to include nature, sensorial experiences, and spiritual experiences.

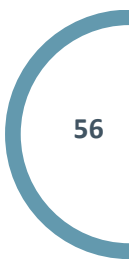
The Action Plan itself was conceived to outlive the project duration, with actions' implementation foreseen up to 2028. The project aimed at raising capacity among communities and decision-makers to enable them to progress beyond its own time-limit. With this in mind, the year 2027 has been indicated as a crucial moment for several milestones: to increase the number of visits to tourism organisation's websites by 20%, the number of physical visitors by 15%, the number of overnight stays by 15%, the contribution of tourism in local GDP by 5%, and to fund at least 10 new projects originated from the original Action Plan (see deliverable 3.5). To sum up, the Action Plan has been created to be a trigger of local and national development and generate benefits well beyond the project timeframe.

Overview of current Action Plan implementation progress in Vojvodina

The Serbian case, due to its extension across three distinct heritage sites in Vojvodina region - Bač, Sremski Karlovci, Irig - presents a high level of complexity, translated into a very high number of activities. These activities were hence organised along three different levels: 54 sub-actions lifted under 13 actions, in turn encapsulated in three broader objectives. As to not exceed the scope of this document, the current status and future perspectives of the Action Plan are analysed in Table 6 through the lens of overarching objectives. More details are found in deliverable D3.5, which presents the Serbian Action Plan. It is worth mentioning that many activities started and progressed well, however some will not be concluded by the end of the project and have been extended in time.



Action	Implementation status
<p>Objective 1: Introduction of Innovative Destination Management of the Pilot Heritage Site</p>	<p>All actions under this objective are generally progressing well, they are either concluded or started in due time.</p> <p>In particular, innovative mechanisms of sustainable cultural tourism management have commenced for centres in Bač, S. Karlovci and Irig- Fruška Gora. The Community Centre and Business Competence Centre in Bač and the new Tourist Centre in Sremski Karlovci are progressing with their planned activities.</p> <p>Despite its complexity, the rebranding of the PHS towards a sustainable, human-centred, circular and European destination is thoroughly and carefully shaping-up, with an annual stakeholder communication plan and high-quality visual materials for territorial promotion currently under implementation.</p> <p>The promotion of the PHS via internet and electronic media, with the creation of a Site digital map and mobile phone applications had a slow start, not being among the initial top priorities. Despite it, these actions are planned for the years 2024-2028 and beyond, thus not creating any particular alarm.</p> <p>Finally, the integration of the Sustainable Cultural Tourism Action Plan into municipal development plans and spatial plans in the three PHS municipalities are applied accordingly, while the proposals for diffuse accommodation in rural areas and host education are proceeding well and expected to operate from 2025.</p>
<p>Objective 2: Development of New and Improvement of the Existing Value Chains in the Circular Tourism Context</p>	<p>The actions under objective n.2 are generally proceeding well, with a few of them not totally immune from being stuck or delayed. Specifically:</p> <p>The rehabilitation of selected localities in the PHS into sustainable cultural tourism landmarks is proceeding at good pace in Irig and S. Karlovci. In Bač two sites have been considered, for now the efforts focussed on the Bač Fortress, while the Hamam site will be addressed on a later stage. However, the deadline for this specific sub-action is 2026 and the</p>





municipality still has plenty of time to implement it beyond the project lifetime.

In the context of heritage reinterpretation and creation of new sustainable and human-centred contents, important steps were made in the preservation of old crafts through development of experiential workshops guided by the principle of learning by doing. Similarly, progress is visible in mapping the archaeological point of interests in the three PHS and, in some cases, providing them with a contemporary meaning and innovative reuse. Under this action, only the recreation and contemporary interpretation of female heritage in the PHS has not been implemented as a unique joint action, yet it is incorporated and promoted within all other accompanying actions and in appropriate events (workshops, exhibitions etc.), due to the prioritisation of other action. However, as before, the implementation of this action has been foreseen up to 2025.

Another group of actions and sub-actions explored the sensory experience that visitors can experience, with excellent results: the redesign of wine tourism with a focus on the five senses, the development of gastronomic offer and the monastery production. All this has been partially integrated to develop a total-wellness tourism, which will be further developed in the next few years.

Moving on to the natural aspects addressed in this objective, there are two sub-actions planned between 2022 and 2028. While the preparation of the eco-experience of flora and fauna is progressing well, that cannot be said for the promotion of eco-experience of water resources and hidden sides of the Danube river. If this action will be implemented it is too early to say, but in the future new funding opportunities will be investigated.

The action most at risk for the objective n.2 is the emerging of better conditions for rural co-living in Fruška Gora and Bač surroundings. The creation of a diffuse rural museum, the involvement of youth in the rural co-living and the exploitation of digital means for its development have been delayed so far and the rural co-living plan is only partially ready. The current lack of development for these actions correspond to a lack of funds.



	<p>Finally, better results were achieved with the innovative suggestions of business solutions designed during the Hackathon phase. All of them have advanced and progressed.</p> <p>Overall, the majority of actions are currently on-going and proceed at a good pace. While from one side the magnitude of the Action Plan cannot disregard the risk of delayed actions, on the other side its extension in time allows room for postponed and revised actions to take place later on, beyond the end of the project.</p>
<p>Objective 3: Integration of the Pilot Heritage Site Bač - S. Karlovci - Irig into European Tourism Space</p>	<p>The actions collected under the third objective refers to the integration of the three PHS towards the Europeanisation of the destination(s), to be understood not as a levelling of internal diversity but rather emphasising them, in harmony with the European value of unity in the diversity. Three actions and several sub-actions cover the domain of cultural, religious and natural diversity. Unfortunately, this group of actions is the one that encountered most of the difficulties in its implementation.</p> <p>With regards to the promotion of cultural diversity, the main result is the reuse of ethnic house, Didina kuća, in Bač for the initiative for old craft revitalization and dissemination. Other sub-actions, like the visibility and accessibility of culturally and ethnically diverse assets, as well as its rethink in human-centred perspective, have been delayed and not funded as wanted. Particularly affected is the promotion of German cultural and historical heritage in Sremski Karlovci and Bač. However, most of these actions, started in 2023, have not a hard deadline and will be continuously promoted in the years to come.</p> <p>The promotion of spiritual diversity has encountered similar obstacles, but with a more severe impact. The creation of digital routes for spiritual journey experience as well as the launch of an e-Calendar of religious events, holidays, and cultural events or exhibitions in a religious site setting are delayed, as well as the Action Plan for opening and improving the use of PHS religious sites for visitors.</p> <p>The protection and promotion of natural diversity foreseen by the year 2028 the realisation of interactive maps to explore the natural heritage and instructions for environmental protection. This action will start in 2024 as planned. On the contrary, the development of a Plan for Use and Protection of Natural</p>



	Reservation Sites and its alignment with higher policy standards will need extra support and funds.
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Table 6 - Vojvodina Action Plan implementation progress

Summary of challenges faced by the region and in Action Plan implementation

As emerged in previous reports (in particular, see D3.4 and D3.5) the main general challenge faced in Vojvodina in the project refers to the lack of funds, limited tourist infrastructure and poorly distributed accommodation. At the same time, cultural tourism is not perceived yet as a vector of sustainable economic growth and thus attracts limited state budgets for the promotion and modernisation of museums and cultural institutions and events. To confront the lack of preparation on these several fronts, the Action Plan for the PHS municipalities has been broken in a high number of actions and sub-actions, each focussing on different needs and aspects. Having in mind this multitude of actions, some of which planned for up to 6 years ahead, the Action Plan came along with several specific challenges, identified along the years and clustered as follows:

- Prioritisation of actions and sub-actions required a careful evaluation, especially when deciding on how much budget direct to what actions. More the action, the more fragmented the funds. Smaller sums, harder to maintain the long-run commitment needed for the implementation.
- A follow up challenge regarded the identification of the responsible entity for those actions that received more or fewer funds, whether they should be municipalities, CSOs, public institutions or SME and other businesses.
- Generally speaking, a lack of funds often implies a lack of active engagement. At the same time, the fact that the three PHS municipalities must raise funds themselves decreases their supervisory authority.
- High level of complexity in keeping the balance among all actions while properly covering all relevant Be.CULTOUR aspects: innovative destination management, circularity and sustainability, Europeanisation of the PHS.

Despite these challenges, the adopted “Yearly Plans and Budgets” of PHS Municipalities for the year 2023 properly considered the Action Plan allowing progress in many areas, as analysed in the section above. Moreover, as an additional support to Action Plan implementation, all three

PHS municipalities' staff received mentoring and have participated in two training rounds of project proposal writing, and after several mentoring sessions with experts three project concepts have been produced.

Heritage Innovation Network engagement

The Heritage Innovation Network in Vojvodina was born as an informal network, as there was no time to make adequate institutional prerequisites and formalisation of interested communities and stakeholders in all three municipalities, but it has been more and more institutionalised throughout the project. The network has been kept informed and involved via several means: a project contact list to share key news and project events, the Be.CULTOUR e-newsletter (in English) was distributed to interested parties, as well as financial opportunities and WP2 deliverables on available financial instruments. Regular events regarding cultural heritage and tourism, such as fairs and festivals, have been timely advertised within the Network and publicly, so as to open the network and create opportunities for all to share knowledge and experiences. Finally, the municipalities were obliged to make public hearings of budget adopting processes to all interested parties, including Heritage Innovation Network members. Transparency is expected to increase trustiness among stakeholders and enable a strong and long-lasting collaboration.

Approaching the end of the project, the PHS coordinator envisaged at least three events, one in each of the three PHS municipalities to celebrate the local community engagement and participation, and to further promote the project proposals writing phase, financial opportunities and public calls, hackathon solutions etc. In particular, the first event was in September 2023 in Bač, as a side-activity of 20th European Heritage Days - Days of Culture in Bač (on community participation, joint project proposal writing and diffuse hotels). Second event will be organised in Irig - Fruška Gora in February or March of 2024 to highlight the three Serbian hackathon solutions, inviting the Network and a broader audience: local community, regional and national institution representatives, potential donors, and commercial sector (IT companies, entrepreneurs etc.). These final events are intended to represent a moment to review progress, celebrate the results, and prepare for new phases: actions are planned until - at least - year 2028.

To conclude, the PHS coordinator recognised that, despite engaging a broader audience and reaching new stakeholders, including cultural and religious minorities among others, a few groups, such as public cultural institutions, remain hard to activate, so more funds in the future

should be envisaged to always include more members of all groups in the local community participation process.

Synergies with other projects, initiatives and regional programmes

Likewise, the other PHS, also for the Vojvodina region, create outwards synergies has been of great help. Several actions, when not directly funded by the municipalities, were already programmed to be financially supported by regional, national and/or international financial instruments. In addition, the Plan in Vojvodina focussed on extra support provided to the three municipalities by SCTM team and external consultants to scope financial opportunities, find synergies and start new initiatives. If from one side the project team used its network to reach associated, state, and provincial donors, possible partners at all levels, on the other hand specific examples of synergies for circular cultural tourism can be listed:

- Bač Cultural Landscape Foundation invited the project team to join its strategic and action development.
- Bee Clinic from Bač invited the project team to join their local community engagement efforts, action and events.
- Bač municipality hosted UNESCO representatives for a field evaluation, as it is included in the UNESCO Tentative List for Cultural Landscape.
- The municipality of Bač was offered to join a consortium to continue with the Be.CULTOUR project ideas.
- Diffuse hotels based on local community engagement emerged in south of Serbia, contact has been established to some extent, and the idea promoted in the northern region.
- The project team cooperated in the promotion and organisation of circular cultural tourism activities initiated by the Creative Europe Desk in Serbia, in contact with its highest representatives.
- The Hackathon solutions have been presented to the Ministry of Culture and Provincial Secretariat for Commerce and Tourism and both offered to cooperate with the project team. The cooperation is still ongoing and most probably will continue beyond the lifetime of the project.



Finally, in addition to seasonal and periodic events in the region, the project team exploited the European Cultural Heritage Days as a key event in September to promote its activities, pillars, Action Plans, hackathon solutions and lessons learned.

Action Plans as contributors to longer-term human-centred sustainable development

The Be.CULTOUR project is about to finish, but that is not the end of the journey for the circular human-centred cultural tourism in Vojvodina region. To begin with, the project team envisioned actions to be implemented by 2028, exceeding by far the duration of the project. Some of the core activities are financed or will have secured funds for its basic functioning. The main funders at the moment are the three PHS municipalities, but other sources of funding are under investigation, at various levels: local, regional (calls from the Provincial Government and its Secretariat for local development, minorities, innovation, etc.), national (calls from the ministries in charge of local development, culture, tourism, commerce/entrepreneurship, agriculture etc.), and international (cross-border cooperation, bilateral aid, EU and UNESCO funds). All these financial mechanisms will secure the implementation of actions up to 2028.

In addition to the original Action Plan, three project proposals have been produced, one for each PHS municipality, for implementation of certain parts of the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan in their communities. In terms of sustainability of the Be.CULTOUR project and its Action Plan, having a clear direction with structured steps is vastly beneficial in the search of funds, both in terms of prioritisation and credibility. The financial mechanism mentioned above will be explored in this context too, and added to the funds that the municipalities will redirect towards these projects year by year, during the respective “Yearly Plans and Budgets”.

The long-term sustainability of the project seems hence secured. What about human-centred sustainable development? These aspects have been chased throughout the project thanks to the offer of not only consultancy services, but of a real capacity building programme dedicated to the public servants, and to a certain extent the communities, enabling them to undertake initiatives and programs, find synergies and funding opportunities, and develop new skills, an example of which is the ability to efficiently write a complete project proposal. At the same time, team efforts in the training programme aimed to the openness of the trained staff for a constant re-thinking, re-living and re-evaluating of ideas, values, experiences, knowledge, concepts and constructs integrated in culture, in order to promote the cultural and natural diversity strongly present in

the territory, seeking for a better involvement and large participation of members of different communities. In this way, the promotion of circular cultural tourism and the valorisation of material and immaterial heritage can be the trigger for social cohesion and local development beyond the project lifetime.

In conclusion, the PHS Coordinator reflects on several things that will remain in the local memory after the Be.CULTOUR project ends:

Impartial expert support, inspiration, good practice examples, team and community spirit and relevant information for efficiency and progress.



5. After-project sustainability of the Action Plans and how they contribute to longer-term human-centred sustainable development

Drawing patterns from each Pilot Heritage Site's Action Plan implementation progress, above, this section summarises important themes on after-project sustainability and contributions to longer-term human-centred sustainable development. First we answer, "How will Action Plans and their results be sustained in the PHS after the project?". Followed by, "How are Action Plans (consequently) able to contribute to longer-term human-centred sustainable development?". Next, we dive into literature on projectification and research on future heritage trends, and illustrate how Be.CULTOUR activities are able to address many critiques and align with the trends, therefore positioning the Action Plans as valuable contributors to human-centred sustainable development in the six PHS.

5.1. How Action Plans and their results will be sustained after the project

As gathered through the Action Plan monitoring process, there are several key ways in which Action Plans and their results will be sustained after Be.CULTOUR itself has concluded. Firstly, the conception of most Action Plans was such that the actions were planned in collaboration with local municipalities and other local actors based on previous regional strategies, and they were

planned to outlive the project duration. As a result, the PHS coordinators were already having an eye beyond the future of the project by designing their Action Plans in a way that links **Be.CULTOUR outcomes with long-term regional plans**. For example, the Västra Götaland coordinators attributed their Action Plans' after-project sustainability to its co-creation with local municipalities and other important stakeholders, and Vojvodina and Basilicata coordinators highlighted action timelines up until 2027 and 2028.

Secondly, aside from after-project sustainability being baked into the Action Plan creation process, many Pilots indicated that they will **continue to liaise with other levels of government and find synergies with other relevant initiatives, local development strategies at various levels**. The coordinator team in Larnaca, for example, will continue to integrate the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan with the pre-existing local development strategy of their Local Action Group. They will also actively research, identify and connect with other initiatives that align with the objectives and focus areas of their action implementation, seek partnerships with organisations or initiatives that have complementary goals or resources, and participate in relevant conferences, seminars, or workshops. Meanwhile in Basilicata they state that their Action Plan will continue to be implemented after the project thanks in part to the strong partnerships that have been built over a long time span, thus providing additional funding sources for actions and reinforcing the project outcomes at the regional and national level.

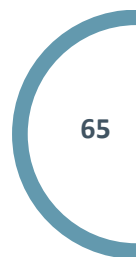
Thirdly, building off of synergies listed above, **all PHS will continue to strategically locate and obtain funding for future Be.CULTOUR Action Plan implementation**. Without such funding, after-project Action Plan sustainability will not be possible. Some funding options highlighted by the PHS include: the LEADER Program, various EU Horizon projects, European Commission's Culture and Creativity Knowledge and Innovation Community, NextGenerationEU funds, along with other national and regional funds for rural areas, tourism, and circular economy, as well as private foundations. Notably, four of the six PHS are official partners in the new TRACE project for circular tourism entrepreneurship. This will bring forward the experience gained in Be.CULTOUR and ensure continuity after it ends.

An important fourth theme is the claim that **capacity-building activities within Be.CULTOUR have increased the ability of local authorities to carry on Action Plan activities after the project ends** because they have encouraged understanding and enabled them to develop their skills. Notably, in Vojvodina's three focal areas, Bač, Sremski Karlovci and Irig, a capacity building program

addressed both local staff and other community members and the PHS coordinators feel that each municipality now has its own vision, objectives and Action Plan as well as the expertise to reach and implement them.

The fifth after-project sustainability theme comes from the resounding appreciation of all PHS coordinators for their local stakeholders. After Be.CULTOUR has concluded, Action Plans will continue to be implemented largely due to **stable networks of people who work together to promote and develop their communities through cultural activities, exchange and entrepreneurship**. Local businesses, institutions, such as universities, or tourism and community-based organisations represent a valuable source of knowledge and additional resources to public administration. Furthermore, these networks can be a good starting point for developing mutual capacity and stronger relations of trust between governments and civil society. Showcasing how their sustainable cultural heritage actions have positively impacted the region is key here, according to Larnaca PHS coordinators. In Aragon, for example, PHS coordinators are confident that they have successfully established a positive and creative atmosphere in their site, thus resulting in a stable platform for stakeholders to meet and cross-fertilize future ideas for sustainable cultural development. Their 'La Plaza Circular' action will continue connecting stakeholders beyond the project. Meanwhile the unique case of the Romania-Moldova PHS has demonstrated the value of transboundary collaboration for cultural Europeanisation and cross-border commitment to continued future endeavours. The North-East Regional Development Agency (NERDA) will coordinate cooperation within this cross-border community and monitor Action Plan implementation beyond the Be.CULTOUR lifetime. Even the fact that some activities have been delayed proves the increase in capacity and involvement of stakeholders who critically and constructively analyse the processes related to the project and its results.

Finally, the sixth theme pertaining to how Be.CULTOUR Action Plans will live on after the project is the dedication of several PHS to **reflect on and evolve their aspirations for circular cultural tourism over time**. The Action Plans were designed as living documents which morph and take on new shapes as time progresses. Larnaca's PHS coordinators, for example, envision an after-Be.CULTOUR future as one in which they continuously update their Action Plan to focus more on digitalization and innovation of cultural heritage, especially the intangible heritage, as well as new actions and unusual solutions on sustainability, circular economy and promotion and preservation of cultural as well natural heritage amongst students and youth, since they are the ambassadors



of tomorrow. By keeping Action Plans current and aspirational, they will live on and deliver value for local communities in the PHS.

5.2. How Action Plans (consequently) are able to contribute to longer-term human-centred sustainable development

It is not enough, however, for the Action Plans to continue existing after Be.CULTOUR concludes. It is clear from the previous section and from the PHS profiles in Section 4, that this will be the case. After-project sustainability must be paired with delivering further value in the form of longer-term human-centred sustainable development in heritage areas. Each PHS was asked how their Action Plan will contribute to such development. Specifically, they were asked how their actions create better conditions for social cohesion, for regenerating heritage, for resource reduction and reuse beyond the project lifetime. Their variety of replies are inspiring.

From a practical perspective, some PHS, including Basilicata, indicated that **patience is needed to see the longer-term impact of their Action Plans**. While they see positive trends in the tourism sector, the PHS notes that true project impact can only be observed a few years down the line. Such discussions of long-term impact were held within the Be.CULTOUR project as well. In Aragon for example, stakeholders were keener to see short-term results, or ‘quick wins’, from the project, but the Action Plan co-creation process overcame frictions and some resistance against collaboration and managed to point towards a **common long-term goal** for the Cultural Park site. Generally, the Action Plans serve as a uniting force within many PHS. Firstly, by co-creating common long-term goals, as stated, and additionally by giving a space for stakeholders to plan and work together in old and new networks. Västra Götaland PHS stated that the new collaboration brought about by Be.CULTOUR **increased social cohesion** at their sites. The feelings of inclusion and cooperation for the common good are very important for longer-term human-centred sustainable development. A factor which contributes to social cohesion in the PHS is **increased self-awareness, sense of community and pride** that is enjoyed by most PHS. Also, informal links between individuals have formed the groundwork for more formal and long-term relationships. Through creating Action Plans in Be.CULTOUR, local communities have better grasped the strengths and uniqueness of their site, especially the value of their local heritage in all its forms. Boosted local pride in their nature, history and culture will be a source of motivation for future sustainable-development actions in the years to come.





Two other exciting connections between Action Plans and this type of development are further ripple effects, or positive spillovers, and a renewed definition of cultural tourism for local development. Most PHS referred to **positive developmental benefits beyond what was expected of the Action Plan implementation**. In Basilicata, for example, they intend to implement further actions beyond the project plan, towards more circular cultural tourism in the region, and in Larnaca, the PHS team is eager to start interactive educational activities to engage the younger generations, use new technologies to re-invigorate heritage sites, launch hackathons and competitions to get ideas and new solutions, and possibly create a hub for sustainable tourism and adaptation/mitigation to climate changes. Meanwhile, the Romanian-Moldovan PHS coordinators particularly see their Be.CULTOUR innovative solutions as providing positive spillover effects such as promoting cooperation, highlighting unique local traits and thus improving the community's social life. The potential for these small entrepreneurs to upscale their ideas was also seen as a valuable ripple effect contributing to development. Furthermore, the Be.CULTOUR project contributed towards capacity building for local actors, including these innovators, municipalities and beyond. The capacity building program in Vojvodina, for example, will provide many co-benefits for the PHS in the years to come. Specifically, because municipality staff have now been trained for a constant re-thinking and re-evaluating of cultural ideas, values, experiences, and knowledge, in order to promote the cultural and natural diversity strongly present in the territory, seeking for a better involvement and large participation of members of different communities.

Furthermore, the positive ripple effects radiating outwards from Action Plan co-creation and implementation reach even wider than the six PHS themselves. Almost all PHS are working with public authorities beyond their site, at the regional and national level. The Be.CULTOUR Action Plans have thus provided impetus for a **renewed broader definition of cultural tourism as one that contributes to human-centred sustainable development**. In the Basilicata PHS, the project has been credited with bringing a higher level of attention to circular economy tourism practices at a policy level. The coordinators have observed a new willingness to harness post-covid tourism growth towards more sustainable ways, which also bring territorial well-being. There, cultural tourism investments within Be.CULTOUR have focused on valorisation of tangible and intangible heritage, involvement of young people and local communities, deseasonalization of destinations and digitalisation. The Romanian-Moldovan PHS similarly conceive their proposed Actions as initial steps in a comprehensive transformation towards longer-term human-centred sustainable development in their cross-border area. The PHS team believes that embracing the principles of

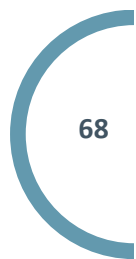
human-centred circular tourism has the potential to initiate a sustainable and contemporary evolution of tourism in the destination and beyond. Lastly, the Vojvodina PHS now sees cultural tourism as being innovative and future-oriented in nature, by embracing digitalisation, and importantly, broadening the common understanding of heritage to include nature, sensorial experiences, and spiritual experiences.

Put briefly, common long-term goals, increased social cohesion, self-awareness, sense of community and local pride are all themes that PHS have highlighted regarding their Action Plans' contribution to longer-term human-centred sustainable development. Positive spillover effects and a renewed broader understanding of cultural tourism as a contributor to human-centred sustainable development are the two further themes identified by PHS. In the long run it is clear that new solutions and approaches need room to develop. There must be a climate of self-confidence within the PHS and beyond so that new ideas are not perceived as a threat to 'usual way of doing things' but are perceived as exciting alternatives, even if challenging.

5.3. Connection to projectification literature and future heritage trends

The findings on PHS Action Plans' after-project sustainability and contributions to human-centred sustainable development can be connected to a body of literature on projectification and to some current trends in future-oriented heritage approaches. By tracing thematic threads outside of Be.CULTOUR project results, we can see them in relation to broader trends and discussions.

We choose to draw connections to projectification literature here in an effort to critically view its risks for after-project sustainability and identify how the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan implementation process has mitigated them. Projectification refers to the management of activities as projects and positions the project as a focal point around which contexts are adapted to fit its necessary work (Escobar, Montes and Hajj, 2023). The European Union has been described as a significant site of projectification, whereby 60% of its budget is handled through various project funding systems (Büttner and Leopold, 2016). While project-based action, such as the EU-funded Be.CULTOUR project, often has a positive connotation for its innovation potential and efficiency, its so-called 'dark side' also exists (Velasco and Wald, 2022). For example, Bredin and Söderlund (2011) point out projects' risk of failure to integrate projects into programmes or portfolios, their limited time for knowledge development, and lack of trust and social continuity. Yeow (2014) similarly finds that projects are designed for time-bound frames and linked with a



suppressed sense of temporal connection, or past-present-future connection. Furthermore, project-related plans are often made in political decision processes with little input from project managers and workers (Cimil and Hodgson, 2006), and in project management discourse, failures and deviations from plans are suppressed (Cimil, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2016). These are a few examples of the challenges faced by project-based activities, which provide reason to be critical of its abilities to secure after-project sustainability of results. Importantly, while the projectification of sustainable development is seen by many as valuable, it presents problems as well, such as temporal discrepancy between short-term projects and long-term (intergenerational and even infinite) sustainable development, as well as risk of greenwashing and stymieing transformative change (Cerne and Jansson, 2019).

With these critiques of project-based work in mind, Table 7, below, illustrates various elements of the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan implementation process which address the challenges posed in the literature.

Critique from projectification literature	Be.CULTOUR activity identified by PHS as factors contributing to the after-project sustainability of their Action Plans
Projects are designed for specific time-bound frames and are linked with a suppressed sense of temporal connection, or past-present-future connection (Yeow, 2014).	Looking beyond the project while in the Action Plan co-creation phase. Most PHS adopted a temporal perspective beyond the project.
Plans are often made in political decision processes with little input from project managers and workers (Cimil and Hodgson, 2006). Risk of failure to integrate projects into programmes or portfolios (Bredin and Söderlund, 2011)	Co-creating key strategies with local actors and integrating them in other long-term plans. All PHS created synergies with other relevant initiatives and strategies outside of the project, including in political processes.
Limited time for knowledge development (Bredin and Söderlund, 2011)	Creating capacity building opportunities and networking opportunities for local actors and authorities so they can continue after the project ends.
Lack of trust and social continuity (Bredin and Söderlund, 2011)	Building and engaging a stable actor network and the feeling of ownership in Action co-creation and implementation.

<p>In project management discourse, failures and deviations from plans are suppressed (Cicmil, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2016)</p>	<p>Reflecting upon and updating aspirations for Action Plans and evolving definitions of circular cultural tourism over time.</p>
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Table 7 - How Be.CULTOUR activities address critiques from projectification literature

As seen in Table 7, the themes which PHS identify as contributing to after-project sustainability, also counteract many of the critiques posed by projectification literature. Consequently, there is a good chance that Be.CULTOUR Action Plans for circular cultural tourism will contribute to longer-term human-centred sustainable development. As stated by Engwall (2003), in his paper, ‘No project is an island’, when observing project process and impacts, we should broaden our perspective to include successive projects to better understand long-term change. The upcoming TRACE project involving many PHS, for example, could present such an opportunity. In reference to the literature on project management, Be.CULTOUR, as a project directly devoted to the effects of the climate crisis, can additionally be considered an innovative example of bold action. Unlike most project managers, as argued by Pasian (2017), local managers of projects and individual actions, talk about the climate crisis directly, recognizing the threat and looking for mitigation strategies. They do care and have in mind the unique role of heritage in answering the challenges of the crises.

Amongst such discussions on long-term thinking and planning, it is also interesting to briefly connect Be.CULTOUR themes with current trends in future-oriented heritage approaches. Notably, the 2022 Alliance for Research on Cultural Heritage in Europe (ARCHE) Foresight study identified societal, technological, environmental, economic and political factors that may have implications for heritage in the future, including:

Social:

- Skills gaps in arts and crafts
- Shifted focus towards intangible, future-oriented heritage
- Use of heritage spaces for intercultural dialogue and learning

Technological:

- Digital AI and VR tools
- Digital training and upskilling to fill a digital skills gap
- Increasing digitised content



Environmental:

- Heritage becomes a record of lost biodiversity and landscapes
- Increasing recognition of different knowledge systems' contribution to climate change response
- Environmental impact reporting in heritage industry

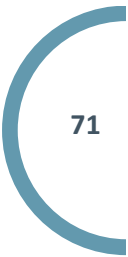
Economic:

- Reduced public funding streams for heritage
- Increased emphasis on heritage's wellbeing impacts
- Heritage business model innovation to deliver social impact

Political:

- Heritage becomes more contentious and impacted by conflicts
- Cultural rights of marginalised groups may diminish
- Heritage may become politicised for divisive and polarising purposes

All efforts towards human-centred longer-term sustainable development, such as those in Be.CULTOUR's six PHS, should factor in possible mid to longer-term future possibilities. As described in Section 4, the Be.CULTOUR Action Plans do, in fact, address many of these future possibilities identified in the ARCHE study. For example, 44 people were trained in the traditional art of dry-stone walling in the Cultural Park of Río Martín, Aragon, which perfectly aligns with the symbolic 2023 European Year of Skills. Furthermore, many PHS focused on digitalisation, such as Basilicata's digital centre for creative storytelling, and of course on environmental topics as well, such as Larnaca's sustainable destination indicators system. For economic and political future possibilities, PHS have certainly focused on business model innovation for social impact, such as Västra Götaland's efforts to bring more creative companies into its historical mill space, and on employing heritage as a tool for political unity rather than division, as is the case with the cross-border collaboration between Romania and Moldova. In summary, cultural heritage-based tourism can be seen as having much potential for shaping social, technological, environmental, economic, and political futures. The Be.CULTOUR Action Plans' implementation, with their high-potential for after project sustainability, overcoming many pitfalls of projectification, and linkages to future heritage trends, are precious drivers towards desirable human-centred sustainable development in the six PHS.



6. Broadening after-project sustainability through application of Action Plan methodology in Mirrors and beyond

As illustrated in Section 4, and further analysed in Section 5, the Be.CULTOUR methodology for creating and implementing community-led Action Plans for longer-term sustainable development through circular cultural tourism has been successfully applied by the 6 PHS. However, this methodology has also been shared with, and inspired action in, the Be.CULTOUR Mirror regions and beyond. While Section 3 references the activities involved in the establishment and engagement of the project's Col (which are more fully described in D4.4, *Report of Peer-learning Scheme*), this Section specifically explains: firstly, how the co-creative Action Plan methodology has been applied in the Mirror regions, secondly, how the methodology has inspired actors beyond the Mirror regions during 'Transfer and co-creation workshops' with various Chambers of Commerce (under task 5.6), and thirdly, several other instances of ongoing synergies with actors in the circular cultural tourism scene.

The Be.CULTOUR local Action Plan co-creation methodology takes cultural heritage as a starting point for innovation and circular cultural tourism, and employs an array of creative methods rooted in the human-centred approach (See Section 3 for more on the Human centred approach). In brief, as thoroughly described in D3.5, *Action Plans and concept solutions for sustainable cultural tourism in pilot heritage sites*, the Action Plan co-creation methodology comprises three Local Workshops guided by 1) Problem exploration, 2) Problem definition, and 3) Problem solving. The first Local Workshop is designed to define local problems and identify local strengths from heritage assets. Methods involved include: interactive stakeholder introductions, innovation ecosystem mapping and user journey mapping with personas, among others. The second Local Workshop encourages participants to focus closely on their path towards circular cultural tourism based on pairing heritage assets and stakeholders with problems in challenge-driven teams. Methods involved include: a serious game for community and idea building, 'How might we...' worksheet for boosting collaboration and the 'Future newspaper' method for identifying future development paths, among others. The third Local Workshop rounds up the set by finalising Action Plans which determine activities and responsible stakeholders to address identified problems in relation to the area's unique cultural heritage. Methods include: the 'Walt Disney' method for creatively assessing the feasibility of plans, and various plenary discussions and reflection moments. The overall approach is rooted in well-known design thinking methodology

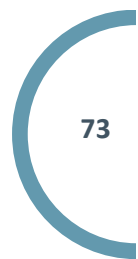


and allows various modifications, depending on the local needs. Thus also the Be.CULTOUR methodology can be perceived as a general guideline that can be adapted, adjusted and modified.

6.1. Action Plan methodology application and other associated activities in the Mirror regions

While the above methodology was initially developed for PHS, it has also been creatively re-packaged for use in Mirror regions for their creation of plans for sustainable cultural tourism. [‘The Ultimate Guide for Sustainable Explorers: Postcards from the Three Local Workshops’](#) (See Figure 5, below) is an online resource from Be.CULTOUR which guides users through the three foci and corresponding methods.

As a result, several Mirrors and other actors applied parts of this methodology and even created their own plans for circular cultural tourism as a way to increase long-term cultural-heritage-oriented sustainable development. It is important to note, however, that the Mirror regions were not allocated project budget to implement the methodology. Therefore, rather than strictly replicating the methodology, Mirrors’ diverse activities were more loosely based on its key components in ways which were feasible and desirable in their contexts. On the other hand, the Mirror model provided a comparatively risk-free framework where single approaches could be observed and assessed first, instead of adopting the ‘entire methodology’ at once. Beyond testing out project methods, Mirror regions took part in a wide variety of activities, which are summarised in D4.4, *Report of peer-learning scheme with pilot and mirror regions*.



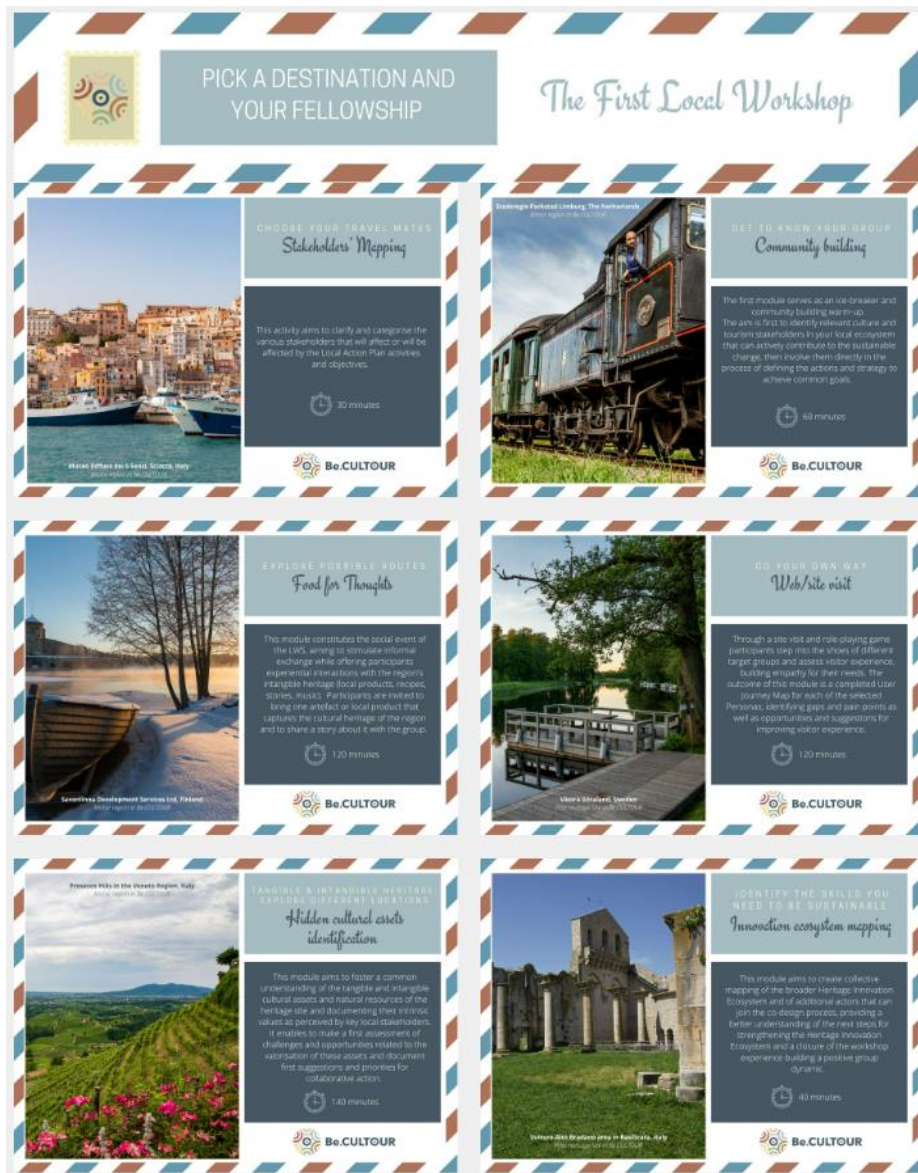


Figure 6 - The Be.CULTOUR Action Plan co-creation methodology, re-packaged for broader distribution in Mirror regions and beyond (Examples from the first Local Workshop cards)

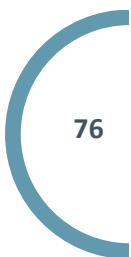
Table 8, below, summarises the application of Be.CULTOUR’s co-creative Action Plan methodology and other associated activities in the Mirror regions.



Mirror region	Activities guided by/related to the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan methodology
Veneto region, Italy	<p>A charter for sustainable tourism (Charter of Cison di Valmarino) was co-created in 2022, led by the local chamber of commerce and the Mirabilia European Network of UNESCO Sites.</p> <p>The Charter promotes preserving cultural integrity and essential ecological processes as a key element for competitiveness in cultural tourism. Central themes of the Charter include defining the local tourism product, managing natural and cultural resources, local enterprises and economic growth, sustainable transportation infrastructure, digital transition, social inclusion and governance.</p> <p>A permanent Coordination Table will be set up between the Region, tourism organisations, and UNESCO site management bodies to discuss sustainability issues and actions to be implemented. In December 2023, the Mirror region organised a Mirabilia event, which produced the Padua Charter on Sustainable future: a vision for territorial growth - largely focusing on themes of tourism and water as a connector of nature, culture, tradition and innovation.</p> <p>More details are found in D4.4, Section 4.2.1 and Annex 1.</p>
Sviluppumbria, Italy	<p>A co-creation workshop in 2023, led by the Mirabilia Network and Destination Makers, contributed towards the strategic cultural tourism development initiative of 'The Cultural Route of St Francis'. Diverse stakeholders filled out two canvases to identify important elements of historical and religious heritage, critical issues and needs, and paths forward. They emphasised a desire to make the region a human-centred destination which has strong bottom-up involvement of locals.</p> <p>Also, during the workshop, opportunities to implement sustainability strategies for SMEs were presented by a TRACE project representative, resulting in one Umbria tourism enterprise to apply for and be awarded a grant for training and expert support towards a circular business model.</p> <p>The co-creation workshop results will feed into a shared strategic document of actions towards sustainable and circular cultural tourism along the Route, strengthening local collaboration and enhancing its visibility at national and international level.</p>



	<p>More details are found in D4.4, Section 4.2.2 and Annex 2.</p>
<p>Saltaire Inspired, UK</p>	<p>A study visit and local workshop was held in 2023 to stimulate exchange and new connections between Be.CULTOUR PHS and Mirrors who work on similar tourism areas, including: industrial heritage reuse, traditional crafts and community engagement. Notably, this Mirror has a strong relationship with the Västra Götaland PHS, from shared artist networks that were enhanced through Be.CULTOUR.</p> <p>In alignment with the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan methodology components, several living lab sessions covered common challenges, good practices (e.g. sharing experiences between previous Capitals of Culture, Leeuwarden and Matera, with Bradford’s upcoming UK City of Culture 2025 designation), and collaboration opportunities for the future.</p> <p>Next steps for the Mirror include digesting the workshop results, scheduling future conversations and partnership building meetings, deliberating a new project following up from Be.CULTOUR, and building a network of arts-led regenerative cultural tourism initiatives across Europe.</p> <p>More details are found in D4.4, Section 3.4.2.</p>
<p>Museo Diffuso dei 5 Sensi Sciacca Cooperativa di Comunità Identità e Bellezza, Italy</p>	<p>A place-branding workshop in Sciacca in 2023 gathered Be.CULTOUR PHS and Mirrors to co-create design strategies for future tourism destinations. This entailed identifying local needs and desires, collective visioning of strategic directions, challenges, and user profiles. An accompanying study visit enabled good practice sharing of the Widespread Museum’s community-led tourism ecosystem which is rooted in both tangible and intangible heritage experiences. Finally, round table discussions contributed towards the co-creation of inputs for Be.CULTOUR’s circular tourism policy recommendations, on the topics of: circular economy, digitalisation, human-dimension, and entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Additionally, the Mirror in Sciacca is testing the data collection methods and indicators developed in WP1 to evaluate the impact of circular cultural tourism in Sciacca and in other cases within the region. These methods and indicators will likely become an ongoing impact assessment tool for the Cooperative. They will also be used to revise their existing strategic plan in order to enhance circularity aspects.</p>



More details are found in D4.4, Section 4.2.3, and D5.12, <i>Pilot Heritage Sites Brand Strategy, Analysis, Brand Systems</i> .

Table 8 - Activities guided by/related to the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan methodology

Ranging from the creation of charters and strategic documents similar to Be.CULTOUR Action Plans, to employing similar co-creative methods to those in the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan methodology, many of the Mirrors have benefited from the knowledge gained from this project. Beyond the examples above, other Mirrors are enthusiastically engaged with the project and are starting new endeavours which will carry on Be.CULTOUR's spirit. For example, the City of Nicosia, which is represented as a Be.CULTOUR Mirror by the Nicosia Tourism Board, has recently become designated as a Regional Hub within the new EU-funded [European Heritage Hub pilot project](#). The Nicosia Regional Hub will link contemporary and heritage-based culture, which strongly aligns with Be.CULTOUR's 'contemporary meanings of heritage' innovation area. The Heritage Hub's 'green-digital-social' transformation focus similarly embodies the Be.CULTOUR transversal innovation approaches.

Furthermore, there is ambition to continue Mirror engagement after the project ends. One possibility is to synergize with upcoming projects, such as the European Heritage Hub or the new [TRACE project](#) for circular tourism SMEs. To integrate the existing Be.CULTOUR Community of Interest into these new projects would be a beneficial way of creating a longer-lasting group of interested actors which do not disappear after individual projects finish. Another possibility is to host a brainstorming session with Mirrors at the Be.CULTOUR final conference to discuss potential future projects, collaborations and general next steps.

In conclusion, by using Be.CULTOUR as an impulse for boosting their existing regional tourism programmes, and bringing in concepts like circularity, human-centred design, smart destination management and cultural Europeanisation, the Mirrors are contributing towards their sustainable, human-centred development in the longer term. Furthermore, the dissemination of Be.CULTOUR's Action Plan methodology and facilitating collaboration in Mirror regions enables the project outcomes and thematic priorities to continue circulating and creating impact beyond the PHS and beyond the project lifetime.

6.2. Action Plan methodology application and other associated activities beyond the Mirror regions

The replication of the Be.CULTOUR methodology to co-create Action Plans for circular and human-centred cultural tourism does not stop at the PHS and Mirror regions, but rather extends to other sites and actors via various means. Networking with other cultural landscapes both within and across countries creates a spirit of cooperation that can help buy up authorities engaged in implementing circular cultural tourism - processes that may sometimes be slow and characterised by challenges rather than successes. One successful way was the organisation of “Transfer and co-creation workshops” in collaboration with local Chambers of Commerce. These workshops took place in the cities of Perugia - Italy, Dugopolje - Croatia, Granada - Spain, Glasgow - UK, and more are expected to happen in Greece, Bulgaria and France. Following human-centred design thinking, the workshops analysed the territorial current features and future perspectives to become a circular and human-centred tourist destination. Each workshop was tailored on the specific strengths or ambitions of the local context, for example pilgrimage routes in Perugia, on multi-level sustainable cultural tourism in Dugopolje, and a tourism of excellence, digitalisation, and sustainability in Granada. The workshops were meant to bring together a variety of stakeholders to build a common vision and included SMEs linked to the tourism industry, (travel agencies, hotel managers, destination managers, food producers...) development agencies, representatives of public authorities, academia, and in the same cases creative hubs and media. Each workshop was organised independently but in general the participants were divided into groups and reflected on strengths, needs and criticalities of the territory, in order to identify the main challenges in tourism development and generate solutions in terms of environmental sustainability, economic circularity, and attention to people. Usually, five consecutive steps were identified to reach the desired solutions, keeping into account what could hinder and what could support the roadmap implementation. Concretely, the results of the “Transfer and co-creation workshops” under the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan methodology are well exemplified by the cases of Perugia in Italy and Dugopolje in Croatia:

- **Perugia, Italy:** The work undertaken indicated a good understanding among participants of the valuable elements of the territory for creating a welcoming destination, with a general consensus on the historical and religious heritage, well-maintained villages (borghi) together with their natural environment, and intangible values such as gastronomic traditions and literary heritage. However, there is still limited awareness

regarding sustainability and circular economy themes. Challenges include trail maintenance, signage, and fragmented communication. Stakeholders express a general willingness to actively collaborate to enhance destination quality and visibility, presenting an integrated image externally. There was agreement on the importance of starting with people to enhance the tourist destination through information, training, co-design and coordination. Emphasis is placed on human relationships between travellers and local community, considered the heart of any human-centred destination. Identified needs involve specific services for travellers like public bathrooms, water fountains, luggage transport, laundry, and electric bike facilities. In addition, participants discussed the potential to highlight additional paths, such as the Via del Sale and the Cammino Dantesco. Ultimately, according to the participants the most important steps to conduct in the near future are: cooperation and creation of a stable network among private and public sectors, education of tourism operators, and development of an adequate communication strategy.



Figure 7 - Speakers at the workshop on “Religious pilgrimage in Umbria” in Perugia, Italy

- **Dugopolje, Croatia:** The central theme of the workshop was the definition of an action plan for circular and human-centred cultural tourism in Split-Dalmatia County. The workshop covered three topics with a multi-level perspective: 1. sustainable cultural tourism on the islands of Split-Dalmatia County, 2. sustainable cultural tourism in Dalmatian hinterland, 3. sustainable cultural tourism in Split Riviera. What emerged is that the county possesses valuable but underutilised natural, historical, and cultural resources. Despite the potential, these resources are not adequately tailored for tourism, resulting in untapped opportunities. Inadequate transport links within the county and between islands and the coast hinder the integration of attractive tourism offers. Consequently, the tourism industry in Split-Dalmatia County falls short of its possibilities. In order to achieve better results, the participants agreed on the importance of a regulatory framework for future tourist development that merged the perspectives of private and public sectors for future development. Tourism is recognised as a catalyst for economic growth, and the drafted plan aims to elevate the quality of life for the local population by developing a sustainable tourism offer. This includes defining strategic directions to preserve and promote culture and traditions of the local population. An obstacle in this direction is identified with the unawareness of the majority of actors involved, with a special concern over the threat to high-value natural spaces and biodiversity loss. Awareness raising activities are therefore perceived as crucial, also as a remarkable opportunity to spread enthusiasm.

Općina Dugopolje – izazovi i perspektive razvoja održivog turizma

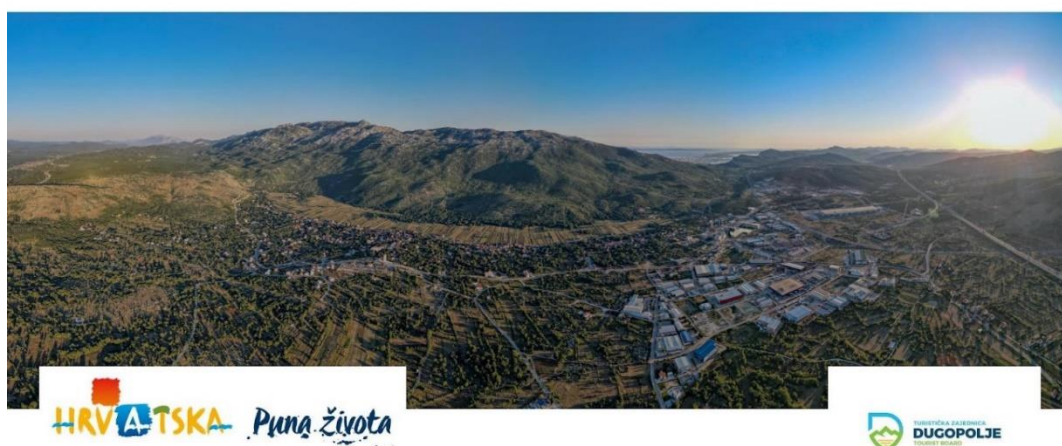



Figure 8 - Banner of the workshop on “Challenges and Perspectives of Sustainable Tourism Development” in Dugopolje, Croatia

Perugia and Dugopolje are only two examples, but more is in the making to continue the project activities. The finalisation of workshops in Spain and Scotland are currently ongoing, while project partners, Mirror regions and Chambres of Commerce are preparing further workshops in Greece, Bulgaria, and France, to be held in March 2024. This broader adoption of the Be.Cultour project's co-creation and collaborative innovation methodology has facilitated the dissemination of this methodology across various regions, planting seeds for future development. The increasing interest in circular cultural tourism practices in Europe aligns with the project's objectives and the workshops served to replicate the Be.Cultour project methodology, while still being tailored to fit local contexts. The intended outcome is that this approach will not only create a long-lasting impact in the PHS and Mirror regions, but also foster sustainability beyond them, resulting in an after-project sustainability that goes beyond both time and spatial time boundaries of the project.

The high interest in the topic of circular cultural tourism was furthermore visible during the Breakfast@Sustainability event facilitated by ICLEI Europe on the 5th of October 2023. The meeting in webinar format under the title 42nd Breakfast at Sustainability's: Cultural Heritage as a driver of Circular Tourism attracted numerous participants and led to vivid discussions. The results of the Breakfast@Sustainability are included in Be.CULTOUR Guidebook: it features local stories from the six PHS that go beyond cultural tourism, as inspiration and invitation to implement and to experiment with the circular approach in areas rich in cultural and natural heritage.

Another effort set to increase Be.CULTOUR's contribution to human-centred sustainable development in the long run, is exemplified by the Task Force on investments of pledge fund. The Task Force works on "Circular models for cultural heritage adaptive reuse in cities and regions" and was kicked off with the [CLIC project](#), funded by the EU Horizon2020 programme and concluded in 2020. Its legacy has been embedded and further implemented under the Be.CULTOUR project. Incidentally, just another example of how a project can influence another one and indirectly live through it. The aim was to engage a broader community of innovators in cultural heritage and establish a collaborative network of research and practitioners dedicated to cultural heritage adaptive reuse as a strategy for implementing the circular economy in cities and regions. The Task Force integrates three core elements - the circular economy approach, the circular city model, and the adaptive reuse of cultural heritage - in a mutually interdependent triangle. The result is a multi-participation investment model called the "Pledge Fund"



Be.CULTOUR, as first described in Section 3. It is a pilot initiative which is not strictly a pledge fund but draws inspiration from some of its characteristic elements, simplifying them. This pilot initiative has a clear future-oriented cut and aims to support equity stakes for initial financing interventions in innovative start-ups and socially oriented start-ups, with circular investments in the tourism, cultural, creative, and cultural heritage sectors. Essentially, the "Pledge Fund" Be.CULTOUR is specifically designed to promote the sustainable development of cultural tourism. In addition to the transfer and co-creation workshops and Task Force mentioned above, Be.CULTOUR partners have shared the Action Plan co-creation methodology and other key project outcomes with its five sister projects and have ambitions for future joint publications. Be.CULTOUR's sister projects under the TRANSFORMATIONS-04-2019-2020 call include: [INCULTUM](#), [TExTOUR](#), [IMPACTOUR](#), [SmartCulTour](#), and [SPOT](#). In June 2023, the six sister projects and the European Research Executive Agency co-organised the 'International Conference on Cultural Tourism Advances' in Brussels. Beyond sharing Be.CULTOUR's general lessons learnt, and hosting deep discussions on key themes aligning with the project's transversal innovation areas, the Be.CULTOUR stakeholder engagement processes for co-creation of strategic Action Plans for circular and human-centred cultural tourism in European heritage sites was presented. Contributions such as this and others will be synthesised in a Springer scientific book publication on the Conference, which will consequently further increase availability of the Be.CULTOUR methodology to diverse actors.

7. Conclusions

This deliverable aimed to provide clear insights on the after-project sustainability and contributions to longer-term human-centred sustainable development of Action Plans in PHS, Mirror regions and beyond. It has done so by: giving an overview of Be.CULTOUR's framework and methodology (Section 3), providing a detailed description of Action Plan implementation progress in the PHS - including their reflections on after-project sustainability, challenges faced, stakeholder engagement, synergies with other projects, initiatives and regional programmes, and contributions to longer-term human-centred sustainable development (Section 4), analysing common themes on after-project sustainability of the Action Plans and how they contribute to longer-term human-centred sustainable development and connecting these themes to projectification literature and some future heritage trends (Section 5), and sharing information on the Action Plan methodology's application in project Mirror regions and beyond (Section 6).

Importantly, PHS feel that many factors contribute to after-project sustainability of their Action Plans, such as: co-creating key strategies with local actors and integrating them into other long-term plans, creating synergies with other relevant initiatives and strategies outside of the project, building a stable actor network, and constantly reflecting on circular cultural tourism ambitions. Furthermore, common long-term goals, increased social cohesion, self-awareness, sense of community and local pride, positive spillover effects and a renewed broader understanding of cultural tourism are all themes that PHS have highlighted regarding their Action Plans' contribution to longer-term human-centred sustainable development. This document has demonstrated, furthermore, that after-project sustainability extends in multiple dimensions: forward in time and outward in space, both in PHS, Mirror regions and beyond.

These achievements have been supported by Be.CULTOUR project's framework for human-centred innovation, and activities which have complemented Action Plan implementation in PHS and replication in Mirrors, including: the scouting of financing sources (WP2), co-development, prototyping and testing of innovative solutions awarded (WP5), realisation of place-branding and destination communication plans (WP5), smart data solutions for tourism flows metabolism assessment and monitoring (WP1), and establishment and engagement of Mirror regions and a CoI (WP4).

The progress made by both PHS and Mirror regions within Be.CULTOUR sets a good example for others in the movement to shift away from environmentally and socially extractive tourism models towards regenerative models. This new mode of circular cultural tourism has shown great potential to regenerate natural, social, and cultural capital. Furthermore, the actions taken both within, and certainly beyond, the project lifetime showcase cultural heritage as a cornerstone of local identity and pride, community resilience, and a starting place for generating sustainable futures.

8. Resources

Be.CULTOUR Action Plans for circular cultural tourism:

[Aragon, Spain](#)

[Basilicata, Italy](#)

[Larnaca, Cyprus](#)

[North-East Romania – Moldova Cross-Border Area](#)

[Västra Götaland, Sweden](#)

[Vojvodina, Serbia](#)

Be.CULTOUR Thematic Working Groups:

[WG 1. Circular economy in cultural tourism: Creative, Sustainable, Beautiful destinations](#)

[WG 2. Digitalisation & Smart Destination Management for Circular Cultural Tourism](#)

[WG 3. Enhancing the Human Dimension of Circular Cultural Tourism](#)

[WG 4. Entrepreneurial ecosystem, Innovative Business and Financial Models for Circular Cultural Tourism](#)

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