

EUROPEAN INITIATIVE no 5:

Tourism and heritage: promoting sustainable cultural tourism



SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR

Draft version 06/12

WHY? - Objectives

A general objective of the European Year is to "(...) promote sustainable development and tourism (...)"¹ A specific objective of the European Year is to "encourage regional and local development strategies that tap into the potential of cultural heritage, including through the promotion of sustainable tourism"².

As the tourism industry grows at a very fast pace, the European Year presents an opportunity to examine the concept of the sustainability of cultural heritage along with the economic benefits of tourism. The recent Eurobarometer indicated that the majority of respondents (68%) agree the presence of cultural heritage can have an influence on their holiday destination. Thus, the combination of culture and tourism can be a powerful driver of economic activity, but only if managed in a sustainable way so that communities and the actual essence of cultural heritage remains intact.

There is much debate around the concept of 'sustainable tourism'. The word sustainable suggests a state that can be maintained and perhaps even unchanging, whereas tourism implies constant adaptation to consumer demands. This initiative explores the relationship between the cultural heritage and cultural tourism; it examines the concept of the sustainability of cultural heritage along with the economic benefits of tourism. Finally, creating synergies with the European Year of Tourism with China, which happens also in 2018, is an opportunity to deepen discussion on sustainable cultural tourism.

FOR WHOM? - Target groups

Policy makers, cultural heritage professionals, research communities, and tourism organisations.

WHAT? - Content of the initiative

This initiative will have four main components running concurrently

Component 1 – Towards policy recommendations on sustainable cultural tourism

In the framework of the 2014-2019 Work Plan for Culture, the Commission established an ad hoc Open Method of Coordination (OMC) expert group on sustainable cultural tourism (SCT OMC), to

¹ Decision (EU) 2017/864, Art. 2 general objective 1(b)

² Decision (EU) 2017/864, Art. 2 specific objective 2(g)

examine its impact, inter alia, on local communities and the involvement of local communities in development. During 2018 good and poor practices will be identified with a view to mapping methods and tools to make the cultural heritage of Europe accessible to and interoperable with a sustainable system of tourism promotion and marketing. The expert group will present policy recommendations and guidelines for regional and local authorities, that will be submitted for consultation of stakeholders in October. The recommendations will also be presented at a number of events happening in late 2018, including the meeting of the European Capitals of Culture mayors in Florence and a possible conference being organised by the European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN).

Timeline

- February/March 2018 – Fifth meeting of the Sustainable Cultural Tourism OMC expert group
- April/May 2018– Sixth meeting of the Sustainable Cultural Tourism OMC expert group
- September 2018– Seventh and final meeting
- October 2018 – Delivery of policy recommendations and guidelines for regional and local authorities. Launch of the stakeholders' consultation of the policy recommendations.
- Autumn 2018 Presentation of the policy recommendations at the meeting of the European Capitals of Culture mayors in Florence

Component II – Natural heritage and Natura 2000

Sustainable cultural heritage relates also to natural heritage and conservation areas under the European network Natura 2000. The EU Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy³ includes activities to strengthen these links and connect them to the EYCH:

(1) Evaluation of **spatial overlaps** between Natura 2000 and cultural heritage areas and development and dissemination of **good practices and case studies** on integrated management, including opportunities for tapping into natural and cultural heritage in Natura 2000 areas to support sustainable tourism, in the context of the EYCH. The possibility to organise a workshop to present results on overlaps and good practices is being discussed, it will possibly be held in the first part of 2018.

(2) The pan-European **Natura 2000 Awards** recognise excellence in the management of Natura 2000 sites and conservation achievements, showcasing the added value of the network for local economies, and increasing public awareness about Europe's valuable natural heritage. The award ceremony is planned for May 2018 (21st of May has been proclaimed as the Natura 2000 Day) and in 2018 cultural heritage will be taken into account.

(3) Other relevant activities in connection with the EYCH include:

- exploring synergies with the Europa Nostra awards
- the theme of Green Week 2018 will be sustainable cities;
- the role of cultural heritage could be highlighted as part of a high-level conference (details are being discussed).
- the European Green Capitals 2018 also offer opportunities for connecting with the EYCH.

Timeline:

- 21 May 2018- Natura 2000 Day International Day for Biodiversity// Natura 2000 Award Ceremony
- May 2018 -Green Week - sustainable tourism around cultural heritage to be one of the themes
- June 2018 -World Environment Day
- June 2018 -European Green Capital and European Green Leaf Awards Ceremony

Component III – Promoting Europe's Cultural Routes

³ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/action_plan/index_en.htm - Action 14

There are different types of sustainable cultural routes that will be receive a new boost in 2018 with the aim of a long term outreach

(1) Cultural routes with the Council of Europe

In 2017, we count 31 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, with very different themes that illustrate European memory, history and heritage and contribute to an interpretation of the diversity of present-day Europe. The Year will be the opportunity to give a boost to the routes and to reflect on the way they can develop in the future, bearing in mind the sustainability aspects.

(2) UNESCO World Heritage Journeys in the EU

The project - implemented by Commission's tourism department in cooperation with UNESCO aims at developing trans-European Cultural Routes around World Heritage sites. The Routes will have a clear European dimension and will comprise one anchor place and several under-exploited sites in order to disperse cultural tourism to less-known sites. Some of the thematic Routes will be Royal Europe, Romantic Europe, Ancient Europe and Underground Europe. The project foresees additional funding for 2018 for communication and visibility and a public event focusing on how to use tourism for cultural heritage preservation will be hosted. National Geographic is also involved and will provide high-quality and copyright-cleared images that can also be used in the frame of the Year.

(3) The Balkans itineraries

In the context of the EYCH, the European External Action Service will implement the “Balkans Heritage Route” project that will consist in promoting a sustainable network between various heritage sites in the Western Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. Coinciding with the incoming EU presidencies of 2018, heritage sites in Bulgaria and Austria will be added to the network. Slovenia, Croatia and Greece have also shown interest.

The events will be developed by EU Delegations in the region in cooperation with other parties such as Europa Nostra and EUNIC. Possible synergies with other EU projects in the region will be sought. Events would address mainly civil society and could be of different forms: e.g. music and theatre shows inspired by heritage, free admission to sites or museums offered by the EU, with guides highlighting the intercultural content of the site, projects concerning languages as immaterial heritage, literary prizes for schools on the subject of heritage, photography competitions, initiation training to archaeology, film festivals, training of tourist guides, workshops on heritage topics and exhibitions of contemporary art intended as future heritage.

Timeline

- January - mapping of the cultural heritage related activities in the Western Balkans (Balkans itineraries)
- Throughout 2018 – valorisation of cultural routes in the EU
- 27 September 2018 World Tourism day

Component IV – Awarding excellence - European Destination of Excellence Award

The 2017/2018 edition of **the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN)** focuses on Cultural Tourism. EDEN is a European Commission initiative that awards and promotes sustainable tourism development models across the EU. 18 destinations will be awarded during a European Award Ceremony on 22 March 2018 (Brussels). Around 110 participants are expected.

The initiative is based on national competitions that result in the selection of a tourist 'destination of excellence' for each participating country under a specific annual theme, such as rural tourism, local intangible heritage, protected areas, aquatic tourism, regeneration of physical sites, accessible tourism

and local gastronomy. A total of 140 destinations from 27 participating countries were awarded the EDEN prize since 2007. The recipients of the award are emerging, little-known destinations located in the EU Member States and Candidate Countries. The key feature of the selected destinations is their commitment to social, cultural and environmental sustainability of tourism. 18 countries are participating in the current edition on Cultural Tourism. Each country has selected 1 winning destination which has developed a specific tourism offer based on its local tangible cultural assets (i.e. cultural-historical heritage or contemporary culture).

Timeline

22 March - EDEN Award Ceremony (Brussels)
 Throughout 2018 – valorisation of awarded sites

WHEN? - Key Events

22 March 2018	European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) Awards, Brussels
19 April 2018	Network of European Regions for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism (NECSTouR) Conference in Barcelona
21 May 2018	Natura 2000 Day International Day for Biodiversity
21 May 2018	Green Week - exploring possible areas of cooperation for example heritage in transition and sustainable tourism around cultural heritage
June 2018	World Environment Day
June 2018	European Green Capital and European Green Leaf Awards Ceremony
June 2018	Museum week
27 September 2018	World Tourism day
Autumn 2018	conference organised by the European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN) TBC and meeting of the European Capitals of Culture mayors in Florence

PARTNERS:

- Within the Commission, services dealing with tourism, environment and culture will be involved in this initiative. The EEAS will lead one of the actions (the Balkans itineraries).
- UNESCO
- Council of Europe Cultural Routes
- European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN)
- Network of European Regions for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism (NECSTouR)