

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Issue One – February 2021

Project summary

What is the problem/issue being addressed?

The SPOT project provides a new approach to cultural tourism that should reflect patterns of travel in the 21st century. It brings together partners from across the European Union and beyond analyses the varieties of cultural tourism and how they can benefit host communities and regional economies. An important and innovative aspect of the project is that stakeholders are integrated into the project design. The output will include an innovation tool for analysing the potential for cultural tourism and how it could be developed.

Why is it important for society?

The project contributes to enhancing social cohesion through cultural tourism in EU regions and assist the European Commission to engage national/regional governance actors to better anticipate and respond to the social and cultural challenges presented by globalisation and Europeanization processes. Also, SPOT contributes to the formulation of national/regional development strategies responding to social challenges. Lessons are drawn from the research with tourists in particular EU regions for the development of strategies to improve and make it more attractive for the tourist groups and respond to the negative consequences of tourism (including damage caused by cultural tourism but considering also impact of COVID-19).

What are the overall objectives of the project?

SPOT covers seven project-specific objectives:

1. Expansion of the concept of cultural tourism and enrichment of scientific evidence base by developing an integrated analysis of the many diverse forms of cultural tourism across different regions of Europe.
2. Determine and promote good practices in the cultural heritage field including cultural, environmental and social development responses to the challenges of new flows of tourism through the assembly of a database of good practice examples.
3. Provide new insights into the inclusive, innovative and reflective challenges for society by understanding the role of cultural tourism in creating place-based identities and how these link to broader processes of regional and European culture.
4. Show ways in which cultural tourism can be used to develop social and economic cohesion regarding minorities, women and young people.
5. Understanding the role of local stakeholders, their ownership and participation in cultural tourism as well as their interrelationship with visitors.

6. Develop a greater understanding of the different challenges facing contrasting types of cultural tourism in European countries including both peripheral, cross border and de-industrialised areas. SPOT will also include an analysis of under-touristed as well as over-touristed ones where tourist flows need to be managed. It will consider which policy mechanisms work best in each case.
7. Develop an innovation tool for cultural tourism (Social Platform On cultural Tourism Innovation Tool = SPOT-IT) within a Web-based Resource Centre to facilitate the development of cultural tourism. This will advance the formulation and implementation of relevant policies and practices in Europe.

Work done so far

All 15 teams in the SPOT consortium have accomplished the whole program for the first year of project implementation. Few project outcomes (such as survey reports) have been re-scheduled due to the limitations exposed by COVID-related restrictions and the impossibility to implement the fieldwork at a full-scale. The changes have been agreed upon with the Project Officer and will not affect the implementation of the whole research program by the end of the project in December 2023.

Project's outcomes and achievement by the end of 2020

WP1:

- Survey tools (questionnaires for different target groups, sampling requirements, survey manuals) and templates for data collections.
- Drafted outline of the common report on cultural tourism in Europe, which will be shaped in a form of a publishable article in a peer-review journal alongside a standard deliverable report.

WP2:

- The first review-report on policies on cultural tourism in 15 countries participating in the SPOT study.

WP3:

- A prototype tool based on the project case study in Israel was designed and uploaded to the web for further development and testing. The related technical report, specifications and design guidelines have been elaborated as well.

WP4:

- Multi-functional project website that includes information and communication tools, file depository, project-chat, subscription services and many other features, including Social media presence (Twitter and Facebook).
- Electronic Newsletter (First Issue).
- SPOT project leaflet in partner's languages, as well as project poster, banners, stationery.
- Summarizing Dissemination Report (First Issue).

In addition to these reports and tools, we have produced a detailed Data Management Plan and implemented all eight Ethical Requirements for social studies under H2020.

Progress beyond the state of the art

The proposed research progresses beyond the current state of the art by undertaking an integrated analysis of distinct tourist flows. In particular:

- Generate new data to fill some of the current gaps in the evidence base relating to international and transnational tourism mobilities, which has not yet been adequately recorded in official statistics.
- Develop a greater understanding of the histories, pathways, motivations and intentions of cultural tourism tourists by conducting interviews with key informants.
- Explore the impacts of tourism on local communities and minorities and identify the key social challenges posed by tourism for cultural development.
- Understand how local communities, stakeholders and policymakers can develop a stake in cultural tourism and cultural heritage.
- Conduct digital NET-nography and online analysis to understand the interactions between visitors, local communities and cultural tourist attractions.

Results and deliverables that will be produced by the end of the project

- Report of the consolidated interviews and good practices in case study areas
- Common Report of cultural tourism as developed in the project and on the information and statistical data
- Summary Report on stakeholder involvement, impact evaluations of cultural tourism on target areas for types of cultural tourism
- Summary Report on the role of cultural tourism for the development of place identities and appreciation of “otherness” and impacts on minorities
- Policy Guidelines and Briefings
- SPOT-IT tool (Beta-version for testing and final version)
- Electronic newsletter II, III and Establishing Web-based Resource Centre

The following impacts for communities and society are being created:

- Better understanding and therefore acceptance of tourists by local communities, drawing on lessons from other regions and examples of good practice.
- Improved identification of tourism’s impacts of cultural tourism and enhanced development of strategies for addressing these issues.
- Development of strategies for encouraging tourists to return to the less attractive/visible regions, especially in Central and Eastern Europe.
- Improved strategies for managing population decline (by involving women, ethnic minorities and young people) in disadvantaged regions, including actions to address pressures on the sustainability of service provision and the consequences of demographic concentration. This will draw on lessons from other regions and examples of good practice.
- Promotion of development strategies aimed at improving gender equality.