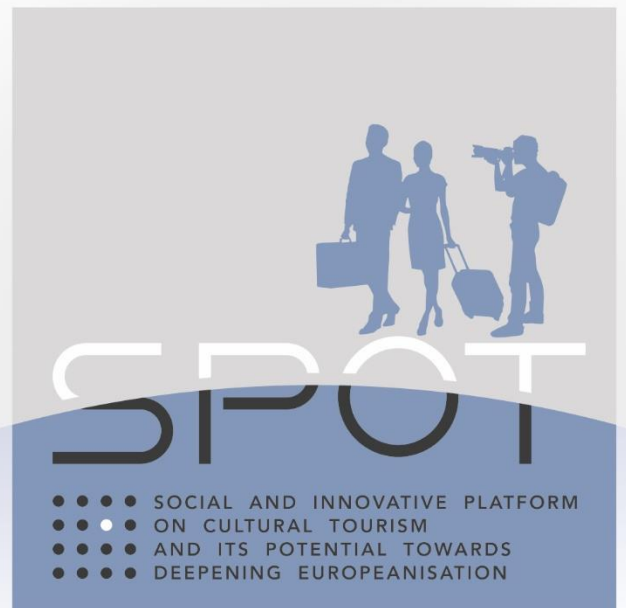


GOOD PRACTICES

Policy BRIEF

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# Cultural tourism and lessons from good practices across case study regions

Policy Brief relevant for EU, national and regional stakeholders

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## *Introduction*

This policy brief discusses lessons learnt from good practices across case study regions in 14 European countries and Israel within the SPOT-project. The SPOT project about cultural tourism studied shifts in culture and in the concepts of cultural tourism, Europeanisation, regional development and local engagement. The good practices are presented in this policy brief on three themes: 1) shifts in culture and broadening of cultural tourism; 2) Europeanisation, sustainability and governance in relation to cultural tourism and 3) regional development and cultural tourism. An inventory of good (and also poor) cultural tourism practices provides transferable relevant knowledge to inspire, learn and innovate in creating good practices elsewhere. General features include the combination of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the importance of cultural transformation and the economic value of tourism activities as compared to mass tourism.



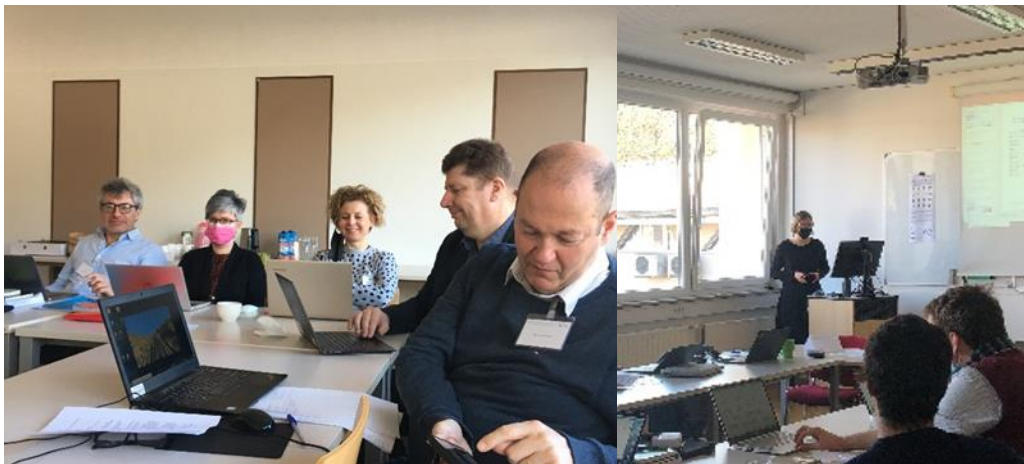
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## 1. Evidence and Analysis

This policy brief is based on a report about lessons from good practices (Pleijte et al., 2022) that identifies, documents and discusses a huge wealth of knowledge about Cultural Tourism as gathered in examples of good practice observed during the SPOT project. Because the project almost entirely coincided with the period of societal restrictions because of COVID-19, little field work could be carried out. Instead, the project used the knowledge, experience and expertise of the consortium partners, as much as possible backed up by contacts with local stakeholders, tourists, residents and entrepreneurs, and by document analysis. The collection of the specific information for this policy brief took place during four workshops in 2022 when the COVID-19 rules had been gradually alleviated. All partners contributed to the knowledge gathered, which is documented in the above mentioned report.



Photos 1 and 2: Covid-19 influences also SPOT project meetings in March 2022 (Ljubljana)

### 1.1. Cultural tourism and a shift in culture

The following key aspects come forward:

- *Cultural transformation.* Acquainting knowledge of the cultural expressions of an area visited is not a static process. The development of cultural capital is a continuous process influenced by socio-economic characteristics, the exchange of experiences between tourists, the local residents and entrepreneurs, and the evolution of local identity and sense of belonging.
- *Changes and transitions in cultural values.* Cultural tourism is also increasingly seen as a business model, which in itself modifies the tourism offer. Local products are created and marketed in case studies, even where the traditional natural and cultural assets are not all valued and protected.
- *Tangible and intangible cultural heritage.* In many cases tangible and intangible cultural heritage are competing for tourists. Cooperation would definitely foster a more complete tourism offer, linking traditions to monuments and landscapes. The offer in intangible cultural heritage is increasing in many of our case studies by a trend to more sustainable and green tourism, including local and regional cuisine and combining cultural heritage with other public attractions. There is a large demand for transferring knowledge, skills and traditions from generation to generation.
- *Creative and interactive cultural tourism.* The restrictions and new boundary conditions posed by COVID-19 and climate change have led to new prospects and creative thinking. Good practices show that creativity comes into cultural tourism in many ways: a totally new product (i.e. festival) can be



developed, but also existing values can be promoted in different ways, including new actors, social media or shared ownership.

- *Digitalisation.* Portals for digital meetings appear to make it much easier for stakeholders to cooperate; however, there is still often a threshold using them. In the tourism offer, in several cases virtual reality glasses, games and QR codes foster imagination, increasing the attractiveness especially for younger tourists. Pre-booking and contactless payment are forms of digitalisation that were increasingly used during the COVID-19 period, which certainly will continue also after COVID.
- *Social media.* Blogging and vlogging both by professionals (influencers, tourist agencies) and by enthusiasts (fans), appear to be powerful marketing means, reaching out to new communities and cementing existing communities.



Photos 3, 4 and 5: Landscapes and art in Buzău Carpathians and Subcarpathians (Romania)

## 1.2. Europeanisation, sustainability and governance

*Europeanisation.* Positive effects of political Europeanisation are the possibilities of EU funding, of support for acquiring e.g. a World Heritage status, and harmonised quality standards. Other positive effects of cultural Europeanisation are the international cooperation initiatives around mining traditions, festivals, industrial heritage, development of cultural routes.

On the other hand, negative effects of political Europeanisation are dependency on co-financing, inadequate top down control in tourism planning and management and the risk of over-tourism due to marketing by international tourist entrepreneurs. In several case studies also the increasing dominance of a "European/Western" style of consumption is perceived as negative. This includes threats to local identity and heritage, political issue in border regions, too much bureaucracy and a lack of transparency in subvention schemes.

Regarding more specifically COVID-19: Positive effects of Corona were: development of digital skills and awareness of the own cultural offer within the European context. Often a reorganisation of the tourism management was reported, attracting more domestic tourism and improving accessibility. Negative effects



of COVID-19 were: much less international visitors and different rules between different countries. Harmonisation of COVID-19 rules between the different European countries was extremely poor.

*Sustainability.* In our observation of good practices in the case studies, a strong demand is reported for integration between cultural tourism and sustainability. However, the discrepancy between expressed intentions and practice is paramount. Generally, stakeholders do hardly think about the relation between cultural tourism and sustainability, perhaps especially not in the hard times of COVID-19 restrictions. Often tourism management is fragmented, with varying interests between economy, environment and culture. It is clear, however, that presenting sustainability issues well, is very much appreciated by increasing numbers of tourists in the cultural sector. Public-private partnership is considered a key to safeguard sustainability in relation to Cultural Tourism. A further issue is education. In many cases it was reported that sustainable (cultural) tourism training and education among (future) tourism professionals could be increased and enhanced.

*Governance.* Governance issues of cultural tourism should properly be discussed, within various contexts, both regarding *multi-level and multi-actor governance*, and addressing *national – regional – local levels*. In many case studies it was noted that there is a lack of understanding of the *multi-level governance of tourism with actors at different levels or governance right up to EU level*.

### 1.3. Regional development

#### Social Capital

*Encouraging democratic engagement with cultural tourism* can be achieved by including tacit voices, by improving participation of local residents in decision making processes, by building trust by including local interests of residents and make topics broader, and by promoting involvement of young people.

*Social cohesion.* Volunteers can help to involve people at a local level in cultural tourism promotion, if professionally instructed. Inclusion of residents can be enhanced by granting free or subsidised access to sites, to increase “ownership”.

#### Cultural Capital

*Cultural development.* Tourism encourages local people to recognise and value aspects of their own culture. Schools are crucial in promoting local culture and heritage, e.g. interviewing older people. Storytelling helps also bridging existing gaps between minorities and majority resident groups.

*Education.* Good practices reported in the case studies are education in other languages (Poland), training for traditional arts such as dry stone building (Greece) or educating youths about local history through industrial museums (Estonia), educating not only visitors, but residents as well.

*Co-design with local stakeholders.* Co-design of tourist attractions between local stakeholders and researchers took place successfully through workshops, forums, symposiums, network events and round tables.

#### Economic development

*Economic development.* In many case study areas it was observed that what is good for tourists is also good for locals thanks to upgrading of public facilities and infrastructure. Development Trusts at a local level would



be a way of pooling funds from private sector, EU, NGOs, state funding, etc., with a model of public/private partnership. These work well e.g. in some parts of Scotland.

*Local and regional development.* It was observed in the case studies that adequate marketing of the local image of the place needs to be undertaken at a regional level in a co-ordinated way. For example, provision at regional level of many small amounts of funding for individual local projects could be very effective. This can enhance a sort of seed corn funding, after which the most successful ones can be upscaled.

*Environmental issues.* It is noted that mass tourism may not be very different from cultural tourism in terms of environmental damage. But the smaller scale of cultural tourism can definitely help to preserve the environment if it is done in a sustainable way. Good examples of how Cultural Tourism policy can make a difference for the environment are banning cruise ships in NL because of unsightliness, and Italian innovations in vineyards involving architectural monuments and festivals. In both cases the local economic development has profited from the changed focus of tourism.



Photos 6, 7 and 8: Monumental buildings in Syros (Greece)

## 2. Policy Implications and Recommendations

The following recommendations can be formulated from the above signals and analysis.

### 2.1. Cultural tourism and shifts in culture

- *Cultural transformation:* Continue to research the development of cultural capital in relation to socio-economic processes in the region, interactions between tourists, residents and local entrepreneurs and the evolution of local identity and meaning formation.
- *Changes and transitions in cultural values:* besides marketing separate tangible and intangible cultural heritage, it can be put down more as an arrangement of tangible and intangible cultural tourism.
- *Tangible and intangible cultural heritage:* Cooperation between tangible and intangible cultural heritage would definitely foster a more complete tourism offer, linking traditions to monuments and landscapes. Focus on transferring knowledge, skills and meaning to younger generations.



- *Creative and interactive cultural tourism*: Check whether new products can be developed based on new values, check whether existing values can be brought in new ways also for new players. Many combinations are possible: New wine in new bottles for a new audience. But also: old wine in old bottles for a new audience.
- *Digitalisation*: offer digital portals for stakeholders, see whether virtual reality glasses, games and QR codes can foster imagination, increasing the attractiveness especially for younger tourists.
- *Social media*: Find out what's happening in blogging and vlogging both by professionals (influencers, tourist agencies) and by enthusiasts (fans). If this can increase further: make this a conscious marketing strategy for cultural tourism.

## 2.2. Europeanisation, sustainability and governance

The following recommendations can be formulated regarding Europeanisation, sustainability and governance.

### Europeanisation

- Making links between different countries can benefit each of them in the sense of “unity in diversity”, showing: this culture is European Culture (e.g. dry stone walling, wine or cheese making, cultural routes).
- Tourist passe-partouts per city can be extended to other cities in Europe.
- Acknowledgement of different types of culture, such as vernacular culture, folk culture, ancient culture, etc., would improve the consciousness of cultural diversity and identity across Europe.
- Educational exchange within Europe between different countries that experience similar challenges and opportunities for Cultural Tourism, could greatly benefit unity in diversity as well.

### Sustainability

- A European Guideline for Sustainable Tourist Development could be of great help.
- Sustainable (cultural) tourism training and education among (future) tourism professionals could be increased and enhanced.

### Governance

Vertical communication up and down between national – regional and local levels but also horizontal communication between them and other actors in different countries would substantially improve harmonised and targeted tourism policies and incentives for sustainable tourism. Various forms of overlapping organisation can be found which, with some capacity building, could achieve a more international standing (e.g. travel areas, networks for gastronomy etc.).

Moreover we observe a need to connect tourism with imaginative ideas of storytelling, movies, literature etc.

All levels can play a role for cultural tourism:

- EU guidance helps with clear harmonisation policies, e.g. in digitalisation and quality labelling, but also in subsidising new promising developments;
- National authorities can play a role in marketing on national level with regulatory instruments to safeguard cultural values, in a sort of positive censorship;
- Regional and local governance are crucial to create an open and transparent climate for tourism entrepreneurship, improving accessibility and promoting local identity and products.

The following recommendations can be made:

At the EU level an EU *Cultural Tourism TripAdvisor* could be launched, to keep a better eye in tourism development and sustainability criteria, rather than leaving that to private companies. Also an EU YouTube channel could be dedicated to cultural tourism marketing.

In this context, many stakeholders noted the need for a *European level database or platform* where relevant information on cultural tourism issues could be stored and accessed by travellers. This would need to be done at an EU level and thus in different languages and could be fed by the channels mentioned above.

There is a need to create *international cross-border cultural routes*, links between activities and festivals (e.g. food, wine, beer, folklore, music, etc.). Examples are the many already existing pilgrim routes as a way to connect places for religious reasons, but could also be based on similar architecture, music, etc., or on links between the many minorities in Europe.

*In many countries better integration of tourism and culture policies is needed to overcome an inadequate dominance of the economic interests over the heritage protection ones. This also needs to be reflected in education about tourism (which is largely economically oriented). Universities could play an important role as repositories of cultural expertise, together with museums and cultural organisations.*



*Photos 9 and 10: regional food and wine*





## 2.3. Recommendations for regional development

The following recommendations were given for social capital, cultural capital and economic development.

### Social Capital

*Encouraging democratic engagement with cultural tourism.* Make proactive efforts to also hear from people who do not make themselves heard, give local residents opportunities to participate in decision-making, build trust by recognizing residents' interests in an early stage, broaden certain topics so that they become more attractive for residents to discuss them and involve younger people.

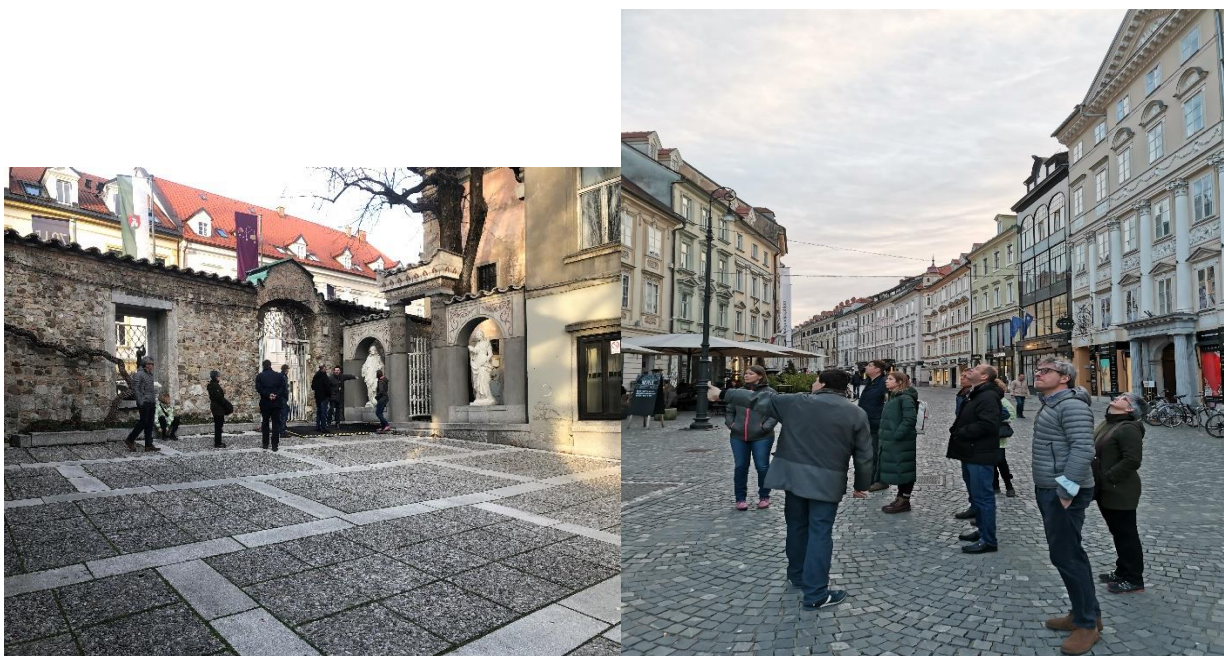
*Social cohesion.* Use volunteers to consciously involve more residents at a local level in cultural tourism. Offer free or subsidised access to residents for promotion of different forms of cultural tourism.

### Cultural capital

*Cultural development.* Involve the local people much more in local tourism to experience the values of their own culture. In schools, also focus on storytelling through the elderly and minorities. Learn that the same cultural objects and activities can and should be experienced differently by residents and tourists.

*Education.* Invest in education in other languages, provide training in traditional arts and crafts and involve the youth and not only tourists, but also residents.

*Co-design with local stakeholders.* As researchers, focus on co-design with stakeholders. Organize interaction through workshops, forums, symposiums, network meetings and round tables.



Photos 11 and 12: Education by a guide in Ljubljana





**Economic Development**

*Economic Development:* Set up Development Trusts at a local level. They can help with upgrading of public facilities and infrastructure. This would be a way of pooling funds from private sector, EU, NGOs, state funding etc with a model of public/private partnership.

*Local and regional development:* Ensure regional management of cultural tourism development. Reward multiple individual local initiatives and see if successful initiatives still need help to scale further.

*Environmental issues:* Link developments of (smaller scale) cultural tourism always to sustainability for people (social and cultural), planet and profit. Cultural tourism must be synonymous with sustainable tourism.



# Project Identity

<b>Project name</b>	Social and innovative Platform on Cultural Tourism and its potential towards deepening Europeanisation (SPOT)
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<b>Website and social networks</b>	<a href="http://www.SPOTprojectH2020.eu">www.SPOTprojectH2020.eu</a> fb: @SPOTprojectH2020 twitter: @H2020Spo
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