

## CULTURAL TOURISM

# POLICY BRIEF

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## How to make cultural tourism more inclusive

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### *Introduction*

Cultural tourism is being developed across Europe as a way of generating economic growth and improving the quality of life and for the European Commission, this is a way of promoting Europeanisation. However, the benefits of cultural tourism are not equally spread across populations either in terms of visitors, businesses or residents. In this Policy Brief, we draw upon a number of deliverables as part of the SPOT Cultural Tourism project to suggest ways in which the appeal of cultural tourism can be broadened, in line with the EU Agenda on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (EUROPE 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth /\* COM/2010/2020)



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## 1. Evidence and Analysis

The SPOT project collected information about 15 case study areas across Europe as well as Israel. It aimed to redefine cultural tourism to include not only traditional attractions such as museums and historic buildings but also cultural landscapes, the contribution of recent histories such as those of communism and the Second World War, industrial heritage and the role of national minorities in some regions. The SPOT project focused mainly on rural and remote places, but it also included several urban case studies, where issues of inclusion were also of key importance but perhaps take different forms. Social inclusion issues are relevant when considering visitors, employees in the industry and residents of the areas where tourism takes place. Here we focus on evidence of the diversity of populations associated with cultural tourism in order to understand who is included and who is excluded along different dimensions. We look at examples of where inclusion has been specifically identified and we suggest policies that could improve the inclusion of diverse groups.

### 1.1. Diversity among cultural tourists (visitors)

The results of the surveys carried out in 15 locations of the SPOT project suggest that the **social profile** of cultural tourists differs by region (see D1.4). In the UK survey carried out in 2022, cultural tourists are predominantly over 60, white and middle class. Middle-class pensioners may not necessarily be high-income earners but they value culture and it could be that some cultural attractions are preferable for older people to access, especially if they are indoors. However, this demographic profile differs by region. In Germany, Slovenia and Slovakia, most visitors were older people. However, in the Czech Republic, Italy and Romania they were more likely to be younger people. This might reflect the relative economic position of older people and pensioners in different parts of Europe.

The SPOT survey results suggest that **most visitors were from the same country** and only in Barcelona, Ljubjana and Kinderdijk was there a substantial number of international visitors. However, we should note that the surveys were carried out mainly in the summer of 2020 and sometimes in 2021 when international travel was severely restricted due to the COVID pandemic regulations. These issues are explored in the special issue of *Tourism Culture and Communication* cited in the list of references. Recent survey results from Scotland after the lifting of COVID restrictions suggest that national and even regional visits are most common. To some extent, this regionalization of tourism may have become a more established pattern as many cultural tourism venues targeted their marketing at people from the region or neighbouring countries.

Table 1: National Origins of Visitors.

Case study area	National (%)	Foreign (%)
AT	96	4
CZ	100	0
DE	97	3
EE	91	9
ES	9	91
GR	75	25
HU/SK	98	2
IL	93	7
IT	83	17
NL	49	51
PL	92	8
RO	98	2
SI	26	74
SK	87	13
UK	-	-

Source: D1.4 Report of the results of surveys for tourists, residents and entrepreneurs in the case studies



On the other hand, the rate of **returning tourists** was quite high in the SPOT survey, suggesting that there was a lot of loyalty to particular cultural venues which could be visited many times.

Table 2: Percentage of returning visitors.

Case study area	Previous visit (%)
AT	64
CZ	60
DE	61
EE	89
ES	41
GR	72
HU/SK	72
IL	88
IT	59
NL	13
PL	55
RO	63
SI	35
SK	95
UK	-

Source: D1.4 Report of the results of surveys for tourists, residents and entrepreneurs in the case studies

Also, the survey suggests that most cultural tourists were **women** (six out of ten) and that cultural tourists were likely to travel as **a couple** without children (51%). Indeed, cultural tourism sites are not generally very interesting for children and in only a few places were there efforts to engage with children and young people. However, three locations did attract younger people: South Moravia, Ljubljana and Nitra (Slovakia).

Cultural tourists are likely to have **a high level of education and to hold or have held middle-class jobs** (professionals, managers etc.). Hence, 57% of tourists had 16 years of education or more and 44% were professionals or managers (D1.4). This perhaps reflects the fact that a certain amount of cultural capital is necessary to appreciate cultural offerings, and this can only be acquired with time and education.

Since many of the areas were rural locations, owning or renting a car was a requirement for getting there, which tends to select towards **more affluent visitors**.

Clearly, cultural tourism appeals to the growing group of middle-class and educated people in Europe.

In most locations covered in the SPOT project, there was little consideration given to access for **disabled people**, such as those in wheelchairs or with hearing and sight restrictions. This was only really the case where there were brand new buildings, which are required to take into account disabled access. Cultural tourism offerings are often in the form of historic monuments and ruins, where it is difficult to incorporate these kinds of conveniences. Awareness of the needs of **neurodivergent people** (e.g. autism etc.) is only just beginning to be taken into account internationally, so there were not many examples in our study either. Finally, whilst **sexual minorities** were seen as possible tourist markets (e.g. LGBT tourism) in some areas, again there was little awareness of their needs and issues in terms of cultural tourism destinations.

The growing importance of **digital communications** in informing visitors and making bookings tends to favour high digital density households with many devices, especially portable handheld ones. This would tend to favour more affluent and digitally informed visitors.

### 1.1.1. Diversity in employment in cultural tourism destinations

Social inclusion can also be studied in terms of employment. The 15 case studies highlighted the importance of the availability of a **seasonal workforce** (D2.3). Many of these were low-paid and casualized labour. In many places, these tended to be immigrant workers from North Africa or Eastern Europe, which were “invisible” to visitors. In some countries such as Greece, Spain and Italy, many are working in the informal economy without employment protection or social security and not paying taxes to the national authorities. Perhaps because of the COVID limitations on travel, there might have been fewer of these workers than in the past. In the UK this was also due to the consequences of Brexit whereby many European workers, who had previously staffed the hospitality industries, returned home. However, our case studies indicated that there was generally a labour shortage, especially following the lifting of lockdown restrictions.

Some of these gaps in the labour market were filled by **female workers**, whose family situations as carers for children or other family members, might mean that they are more available locally for casual and occasional employment. For example, in Greece, many tourism businesses depend upon family labour in which the work of women and children might be hidden and undeclared. The social and political conservatism of many European rural areas puts women into more traditional roles. The predominance of family businesses in many of the rural tourist locations, also means that the contribution of women and children is a hidden labour resource.

However, the labour shortages in 2022 and onwards, might be meant that there is a rise in wages for these workers or that businesses are simply not able to attract them. There were general shortages of workers in restaurants and cleaning services, with many businesses not able to re-open after the lockdowns due to staff shortages. Paradoxically, the labour market support offered by governments during the COVID-19 pandemic may have postponed this effect. This has been termed the “Great Resignation” whereby many workers did not return to their old jobs and many businesses were forced to close or never re-opened.

The effect of this is that wages rose and hospitality services in many areas became more expensive. It may in the long run lead to the re-skilling and re-evaluation of tourist industry workers.

Developments in cultural tourism highlighting the importance of individualized and personalized approaches using **digital communications and social media** might lead to a demand for more skilled and trained workers in the tourism industry in future, although it was not clear that local educational institutions were either able or willing to meet this need.

### 1.1.2. Diversity in resident populations

For many of the cultural tourism destinations, **local folklore, costumes and music** were an important part of the attraction. This means that particular traditions would need to be preserved and showcased. The same goes for gastronomy and wine, which were important aspects of cultural tourism highlighted by the SPOT project. Therefore, engaging with local traditions and residents was an important reason why people visited our case study areas.



Figure 1: Folklore dances and customs in Komárno/Komarom.

Many rural areas have been depopulated as younger people have moved to towns for employment or education (or a better social life). This tends to leave **older people and retirees** in rural areas and as repositories for local information and traditions. Recognising this intangible heritage is an important aspect of cultural tourism and for this reason, older people can also be an important resource.

In some cases, **national minorities** are an important element of cultural tourism. For example, in the Danube area of Hungary, the town of Komárom on the Hungarian side and the adjacent border town of Komarno on the Slovak side attracted tourists to the region. By contrast, the hostile border between Narva (Estonia) and Ivangorod (Russia) made the potential communication between these two border towns difficult if not currently impossible to explore through tourism. However, as the majority of Narva's population (up to 97%) is Russophone, it makes the town interesting to both domestic and foreign tourists from elsewhere in Europe. In the Cyclades Islands, the harmonious co-existence of Orthodox and Catholic communities is a factor in the attractiveness of the Islands for visitors. Therefore, national minorities played an important role in cultural tourism, but their impact was variable between case studies.

In other areas, such as Israel, the settlement patterns of Be'it Sheba meant that many of the local minority cultures felt little attachment to the area and were not part of the cultural heritage. These were recently settled people with a sense of grievance. Hence, they **felt alienated** from the cultural visitors and disassociated themselves from the cultural sites. This sense of alienation was also echoed elsewhere, where visitors were from a different social class, age group or country to the resident population. Cultural venues might be too expensive for local people to access.

Furthermore, in some of the SPOT areas, it was the **"vanished" minorities** that were of interest. The interest in former Jewish settlements, cemeteries and synagogues in Eastern Europe (often by Jewish visitors) is a source of cultural tourism and cultural revival. Also, there is a growing interest in the role of former German minorities displaced after the Second World War from Poland and the Czech Republic as German visitors have helped to stimulate the restoration of buildings and the revival of regional cuisine (D2.4).

Altogether then, the diversity of local populations can form an important element in cultural tourism. However, as the survey at the Great Tapestry of Scotland illustrated, local people, can also feel alienated from cultural tourism and see the local sites as something for visitors and not for them. This was also the case in other case study areas.

One positive example, however, was that of the emergence of female winemakers in the Italian case study, making a contribution to a generally male-dominated sector.



## 2. Policy Implications and Recommendations

The findings of the SPOT cultural tourism project suggest a number of policy recommendations:

- Better training and upskilling of workers in cultural tourism are needed. This could include the training of tour guides, as well as training in digital communications and social media. Engaging with local colleges and Universities might offer one way forward for this. This might help to attract young people back to rural areas following the “Great Resignation” after the COVID pandemic lockdowns
- There needs to be monitoring of migrant workers and ensuring their social integration into the national cultures and social security systems
- There needs to be monitoring of women’s employment as well as other family members, especially in family businesses. Offering training and career enhancement to rural women could help to improve the cultural offering as well as improve the situation of rural women.
- There needs to be better development of cultural tourism attractions throughout the year, including winter, to ensure better employment prospects for residents and economic benefits for regions
- There is an urgent need for the development of access for disabled and neurodivergent visitors as well as raising awareness of these issues. The cultural industries also need to develop activities for these visitors to engage with
- Cultural tourism sites need to develop activities for children and young people, for example through gamification, edutainment, and virtual reality constructions
- Local authorities need to create better public transport and cycling links for rural areas both for environmental reasons and also to widen the attraction of cultural sites for visitors other than car drivers
- There needs to be good digital communications for rural areas, which are often poorly served, in line with the EU policies on digital inclusion. (<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-inclusion>)
- Offering discounts to local people to visit cultural tourist sites could help to mitigate the alienation felt by some local people. Another important aspect was involving local populations in the process of creating local tourism agendas and activities to give them a sense of ownership

### Sources from which this information is drawn:

SPOT Reports and Deliverables (available from the SPOTprojectH2020 website)

Graphs and Tables are taken from D1.4 *Report of the results of surveys for tourists, residents and entrepreneurs in the case studies*

D1.3 *Report on statistical data SPOT*

D1.5 *Cultural Tourism and Good Practices across case study regions*

D2.1 *Policies, Practices and Strategies. Framework Paper*

D2.2 *Summary Report on Stakeholder Involvement*

D2.3 *Summary Report of impact of evaluations of cultural tourism on target areas for types of cultural tourism*

D2.4 *Summary Report on the role of cultural tourism for the development of place identities, the appreciation of “otherness” and the impact on minorities*



# Project Identity

<b>Project name</b>	Social and innovative Platform on Cultural Tourism and its potential towards deepening Europeanisation (SPOT)
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