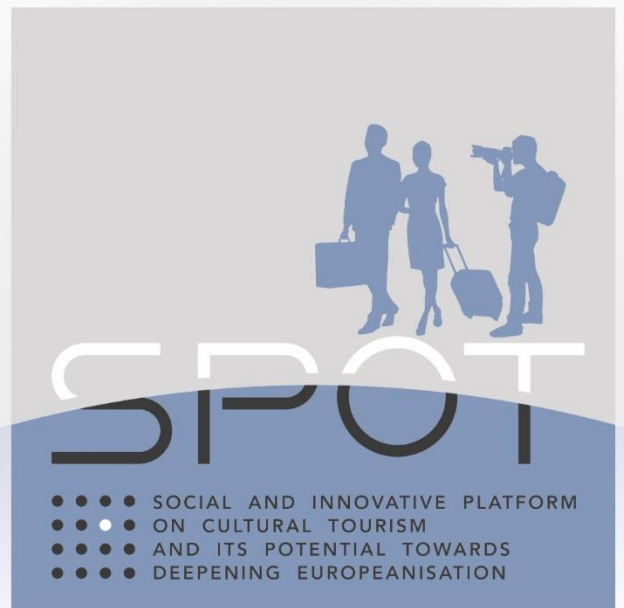


POLAND

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Cultural Tourist Route – Valley of Palaces and Gardens

For local policymakers For local stakeholders in cultural tourism development

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Introduction

The Valley of Palaces and Gardens is a Lower Silesian cultural route, located in the Western Sudetes in the Jeleniogórska Basin, and within the surrounding mountain ranges. Its distinctive feature is the combination of a rich and multicultural material heritage with a naturally varied mountain landscape. Here one can find knightly and noble residences of numerous kinds, ranging from medieval residential towers, castles, and Renaissance mansions, Baroque palaces to 19th-century palace and park complexes. This is the largest European complex of palaces and castles after the Rhineland castles. Eleven historic buildings along with park complexes, due to their superior artistic level and historical value, were recognized by the President of the Republic of Poland in 2011 as a Monument of History and inscribed on this prestigious list of tangible heritage under the name: *Palaces and Landscape Parks of the Jeleniogórska Valley*.

The area of research conducted within the framework of the international research project SPOT (*Social and innovative Platform on Cultural Tourism and its potential towards deepening Europeanization*) was limited to the territory of two municipalities: Mysłakowice and Janowice Wielkie. A total of twelve historic residences from the route of the Valley of Palaces and Gardens are located on their area, including as many as seven recognized as the Monuments of History. In addition to palace and park complexes, other cultural assets are located in the study area, including, among others, secular and sacred buildings, as well as technical and industrial facilities, and numerous commemoration sites.

The SPOT project, which is being implemented from 2020 to 2022 and funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 program, aims to develop a new approach to understanding and shaping cultural tourism, including promoting the development of socioeconomically disadvantaged areas.



The Grand Palace in Łomnica



The Wojanów Palace



There are a number of local community benefits associated with the development of cultural tourism:

- 1) stimulation of entrepreneurship and increased income levels in the local economy,
- 2) creation of new jobs,
- 3) increased income of municipalities from taxes on tourism and tourism-related businesses,
- 4) increased diversification of the local economy allowing to reduce vulnerability to economic volatility,
- 5) the possibility of all-year-round operation of tourist economy entities, as opposed to areas dominated by recreational values, characterized by a strong seasonality of tourist traffic,
- 6) improvement of the external image of the tourist area,
- 7) increased knowledge of tangible and intangible heritage among the local community,,
- 8) increased awareness of the cultural identity of the local community,
- 9) development of activities related to the protection and preservation of regional cultures and cultural assets (tangible and intangible),
- 10) strengthening the integration of the local community through joint activities.

As part of the SPOT project, the following scientific activities were carried out:

- field research aimed at identifying and assessing cultural assets in terms of their of their significance for the development of cultural tourism;
- identification and assessment of other determinants of the development of cultural tourism;
- surveys of tourists visiting the case study area;
- surveys of inhabitants of the communes: Mysłakowice and Janowice Wielkie;
- surveys of entrepreneurs conducting tourist and / or cultural activity in the case study area;
- individual in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in the development of cultural tourism at the local and regional level.

1. Evidence and Analysis

All surveyed groups of respondents unanimously assessed **the attractiveness of the case study area** for cultural tourism as being high. It consists of the values of material culture presented in the Introduction, as well as attractive landscape values and the low level of urbanization of the municipalities, "peace and tranquility" that allows combining recreation with visiting cultural attractions.

A gradual change in the mentality of the local community, which, unlike the first displaced persons of the post-war period, no longer disavows the German past of this area and is beginning to recognize **the value of the entire cultural heritage**, shaped in this region also in the period before World War II. This fosters the emergence of a number of interesting initiatives among the local community, strengthening the basis for the development of cultural tourism. These include the development of traditional regional products, as well as the organization of cultural events and tourist ventures relating to the region's history.



Important attributes of the area also include attention to traditions and the celebration of Polish customs characteristic of the rural population, which take place thanks to, among other things, the thriving activities of local housewives' clubs, the local action group and other local associations, as well as the activities of local governments.

The development of **agritourism** in the study area allows for a much-needed expansion of the accommodation offer, aimed mainly at the individual, less affluent tourist.

According to the surveyed residents and entrepreneurs in the tourism services sector, as well as all the interviewed stakeholders, there is still **a large and untapped potential of the area** for the development of cultural tourism, with which, at the same time, the respondents associate a number of benefits for the socio-economic development of the entire region, as well as the residents themselves. In their opinion: "Cultural tourism is one such form that brings more benefits than negative effects".

However, the current level of cultural tourism development in the study area compared to other regions of Poland can be described as relatively low. This is related to the existing **number of barriers**. In the course of the conducted research, factors limiting the development of cultural tourism, occurring in the study area, were identified, which include, among others:

- lack of well-developed tourist and paratourist infrastructure, including, in particular: hiking and bicycle trails, diversified accommodation and catering facilities, adapted to the needs of different groups of tourists, lack of a tourist information point and appropriate information-educational materials along tourist trails and at cultural attractions, underdevelopment of accompanying facilities: toilets, parking lots, sidewalks, etc;
- poor accessibility of individual destinations by public transportation;
- poor accessibility of individual destinations by public transport;
- the presence of decapitated monuments; the low degree of care for existing monuments, as well as the ineffective system of their protection, an example of which is the acquiescence in the destruction of the historic linen industry plant "Orzeł" in Mysłakowice by the new owner;
- lack of well-developed tourist infrastructure and lack of recognition of the potential of the analyzed area in planning and strategic documents of the supra-local level; the main emphasis in them is placed on the neighbouring Karkonosze Mountains, while forgetting about the municipalities lying in their vicinity;
- underdeveloped cooperation in the field of cultural tourism between local authorities, tourism entrepreneurs and NGOs, resulting in, among other things, very few joint promotional activities of the entire study area and the lack of creation of common comprehensive tourism products.



2. Policy Implications and Recommendations

In order to further advance cultural tourism in the study area, a number of measures need to be taken. The current document will propose only one solution, the necessity of which is dictated both by the results of surveys of all groups of respondents, the results of interviews with key stakeholders, and is also the result of an in-depth analysis of existing conditions in the study area. Its primary objective is **the sustainable development of cultural tourism** in the study area, raising the level of socio-economic development in the region and benefiting the local community first and foremost. However, the proposed measure will require the involvement of all stakeholders in the development of this form of tourism activity and their development of long-term cooperation.

The action recommended by us in the case study area is

INFORMATION INTEGRATION OF THE CULTURAL ROUTE OF THE VALLEY OF PALACES AND GARDENS

An ideal solution would be to cover the entire route of the Valley of Palaces and Gardens with information integration, but due to the large area where the key tourist attractions are located and the high number of stakeholders, this may be a difficult task. Therefore, we recommend starting the implementation of this action from the areas of the two neighbouring rural communes of Mysłakowice and Janowice Wielkie.

The aim of **the first stage of information integration** is to create a virtual platform (website) that will present the following content:

- 1) **A map** with all cultural attractions and the most important natural assets located in the area; the map should also present the location of the entire tourist infrastructure, including point objects (e.g., accommodation facilities) and linear objects (e.g., hiking and bicycle trails), as well as the locations of other services important to the tourist (e.g., a post office, ATM, a health center); we strongly recommend creating a map of an interactive nature, allowing the user to obtain (by clicking on an icon on the map) more detailed information about a given object or service;
- 2) **Information about the geographical environment**, both its natural and socio-economic elements; it is recommended to enrich this part with maps, charts, diagrams and, above all, infographics, which will present the most important content in a professional, but at the same time understandable and visually attractive way; it is worth including links to websites presenting the issues in a more comprehensive way (e.g. addresses of sites: Lower Silesian Association of Landscape Parks, Central Register of Forms of Nature Conservation, Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection in Wrocław, etc.);
- 3) **Information on the history of the area**, which should be accompanied by historical maps and numerous archival photographs;
- 4) **Information** presenting the history and current functions **of all cultural assets**, attractive to tourists with various interests and backgrounds; the information should be presented in an easy-to-understand manner and enriched with illustrative material, if possible both historical and contemporary; it is also important to provide practical information on the availability of the object and possible costs associated with visiting it; it is worth including links to websites related to the cultural attraction;



- 5) **Presentation of all cultural events**, as well as (secondarily) events of a different nature, such as recreational or sports; with a clear indication of cyclicity, the nature of the event, the place and time of the event, the cost of participation in the event and a link to the organizer's website;
- 6) **Information on accommodation facilities and services**; the subpage should contain information about the services offered (type, standard, number of rooms and beds), address details, reference to the map, contact details of the owners / managers of the facility (including links to websites that allow you to book online or by phone); it is also recommended to present information that proves that services are being provided in accordance with the principles of sustainable development;
- 7) **Information on catering facilities and services**; the subpage should contain a short description of each facility, including data on the type of services (all-year-round, seasonal), the type of cuisine and dishes served, the number of places in the premises; as well as address (together with a link to an interactive map) and contact details; it is also recommended to present information that proves the implementation of services in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, including information on cooperation with local food producers (and which ones - promotion of local producers), whether its offer includes regional cuisine;
- 8) **Information on external accessibility**, presenting the possibilities of accessing the tourist area by various means of transport;
- 9) **Information on internal accessibility**, presenting the possibilities of moving by various means of transport between cultural attractions and other tourist facilities inside the tourist area, including information about MZK Jelenia Góra (local public transport), transport services of private entrepreneurs, but also about the possibilities of moving in the most environmentally friendly way, i.e. on foot and by bike;
- 10) **Information on guide services**, presenting profiles of licensed tour guides and their contact details;
- 11) **Information on other facilities and services** important for both a one-day visitor and a tourist wishing to spend more days in the area, e.g. data on retail outlets, including grocery stores, shops offering the regional products, souvenirs, maps and guides, tourist equipment, etc., the location of tourist information points, the location of public toilets, etc.;
- 12) Information about the current weather, with particular emphasis on the current rainfall situation and meteorological threats; it would be advisable to install at several points cameras - presenting the scenic values of the area and transmitting live video.

Other recommendations for the creation and operation of a site integrating the Valley of Palaces and Gardens Route:

- 1) continuous, ongoing updating of the content on the route's website, thanks to the uploading of information from each local entity (not necessarily business) operating in the tourism and tourism-related industries;
- 2) adaptation of the website to mobile devices (smartphones, tablets);
- 3) preparing language versions of the site other than Polish, first in English, then in German and Czech;



- 4) inclusion of links to websites and/or social media accounts of local service providers and producers, as well as public and social sector entities relevant to the cultural tourist;

The second stage of information integration of the Valley of Palaces and Gardens route involves the development and annual publication of an updated version of a guidebook dedicated to it. This publication should contain the most important information about the history of the route itself and the cultural attractions located along it, as well as information about the facilities and services provided in the tourist area, relevant for visiting tourists. An important part of the study would be a map showing the location of the above-mentioned objects.

Ideally, an electronic version of the guide would be published annually (a PDF file, available through a virtual platform dedicated to the route), as well as a free printed version. In the case that it would be impossible to create a free version, it is recommended that the guide book be prepared only in a printed version - for a fee. It should be available for sale both in bookstores and tourist information points in the Jelenia Góra subregion, as well as in other Polish cities, and through the route's virtual platform (or other online bookstores). Purchasing the guidebook in hard copy should also be possible at key cultural sites, tourist attractions and tourist infrastructure facilities located on and near the route.



The ruins of Bolczów Castle



The park around the Bukowiec Palace



Project Identity

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| Project name | Social and innovative Platform on Cultural Tourism and its potential towards deepening Europeanisation (SPOT) |
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