

INTERREG IVC project CHARTS press release No.2

**PRESS RELEASE – July 2014**

## **CHARTS INTERREG IVC project enhances cultural tourism development in ten EU regions**

**Project CHARTS, within the EU INTERREG IVC Programme of interregional cooperation, has successfully completed exchange of experience on good practices related to cultural and heritage tourism development and promotion. This has been achieved through a training seminar, thematic Workshops and related study visits, a dedicated Study Tour and staff exchanges, including capitalisation of results from previous projects and initiatives and in accordance with EU policies and communications related to tourism sustainability. A contest for the first ever 'Award for cultural tourism destinations' across Europe has also been launched by the CHARTS project partnership.**

The interregional events started with a Joint Training Seminar, on theme of **"Heritage, Cultural Policies and Strategies for Sustainable Tourism Promotion and Development in European Regions"**, in June 2012 in Barcelona, Spain. It was hosted by IBERTUR-Network of Heritage, Tourism and sustainable development/University of Barcelona, with participation of the senior representative from the UNESCO cultural tourism programme. CHARTS Project partners had an opportunity to involve elected representatives, experts and senior staff to exchange knowledge and experience in the selected good practice topics and they acquired knowledge on culture and heritage inputs to tourism sustainability and regional policies.

This event was followed by series of interregional thematic Workshops on the selected 12 good practices.

The first interregional thematic Workshop related to **'Climate Change'** was organised by 'CADW', the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Department in September 2012 in Conwy, North Wales (UK). Methods of protecting historic buildings from the effects of climate change were presented, analysed and exchanged. The impacts of climate change on heritage sites were demonstrated at Conwy castle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A good practice dedicated study visit followed on railway heritage. This study visit to the 'Great Little Trains of North Wales', the narrow gauge heritage railways of Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland, was of great interest to project partners from South Pelion (Greece) and Vidzeme (Latvia), partner regions that have similar old narrow gauge heritage railways and wish to transfer the good practice on their preservation and promotion as a cultural and creative tourism product from Wales.

Good practice on historic sites protection from climate change impacts has been transferred to Västra Götaland Region (Sweden), with support of a Staff Exchange programme between Västra Götaland Region and CADW Welsh Government's Historic Environment Department (UK).

The second thematic Workshop on **'Accessibility to Heritage'** took place in Tullamore, Midland Region (Ireland) in November 2012. Hosted by Midland Region Authority, partners had an opportunity to discuss several aspects related to physical and intellectual accessibility to heritage, including access for people with disabilities. The Workshop was supported by technical visits to sights, where accessibility to heritage was demonstrated on the ground. This important issue of accessible tourism was the main feature at the European Tourism Day event in December 2013 in Brussels and the annual European Award for Accessible Cities.

Västra Götaland Region (Sweden) presented the 'TD Database' method, which has since been transferred to Veneto Region (Italy) and was supported by a staff exchange within this practice between Vastra Götaland Region and Veneto Region during June 2013 in Veneto Region's Department of Tourism.

The third Workshop theme was on **'Effective Partnerships'**, held in Burgas (Bulgaria) in December 2012, and organised by partner USERLA – Union of South-East Region Local Authorities (Bulgaria), a partnership of four cities (Burgas, Stara Zagora, Sliven and Yambol). It covered issues of partnerships between the culture and tourism sectors, local government authorities and between the public and private sectors, involving all stakeholders as well as the voluntary sector, in order to encourage visitors to stay longer and engage with local culture. The key partnership models of Pafos Regional Board of Tourism (Cyprus) and Vidzeme Tourism Association (Latvia) were presented and discussed, including partnerships between regional airports and tourism actors. The international partnership of destinations was also included, through the participation of ECTN (European Cultural Tourism Network), an international association based in Brussels and a partner in the CHARTS project. Discussions continued during a 'partnenariat' event with the participation of local business owners and public sector representatives from Greece, Sweden, Cyprus, Latvia and Bulgaria. A study visit in Nessebar (ancient Greek city of Mesimvria), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was included to demonstrate the relevant achievements at the local level.

As a result, this good practice is being transferred to Lead Partner region South Pelion Municipality (Greece) from the South-East region in Bulgaria concerning local authorities, Vidzeme Region (Latvia) and Pafos Region (Cyprus) concerning tourism and cultural sectors, supported by a successful Staff Exchange programme between South Pelion Municipality (Greece) and Pafos Regional Board of Tourism (Cyprus) in February 2013 and between Vidzeme and South Pelion in June 2013.

The fourth workshop, on **'Engaging Host Communities & Responsible Tourism'**, took place in Sibiu, Romania (a successful case of European Capital of Culture – EcoC - in 2007) in March 2013. It was organised by the Romanian partner, the National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism (NIRDT), with participation of a representative from the INTERREG IVC project CERTESS (a Sibiu County Tourism Association CERTESS partner). Partners had an opportunity to discuss how to engage host communities within the framework of responsible tourism. This event highlighted related good practices of three European Capitals of Culture: the experience of Sibiu in 2007 with its rich legacy, Pafos being already selected for 2017 and its plans, the candidature of Burgas for 2019. The event also called attention to the 'Eco-museum' as an instrument of local development. It was supplemented by study visits to the Eco-Museum in Mosna community and UNESCO World Heritage Site of fortified churches in Biertan.

This good practice on Host Communities involvement for responsible tourism, and in particular the European Capitals of Culture, has been transferred to Burgas in its bid for European Capital of Culture in 2019 and to Pafos in its preparations for ECoC in 2017.

The topic of the fifth thematic workshop was '**Quality Criteria**', and it took place in Gothenburg (Sweden) in April 2013 with participation of a Policy Officer from the European Commission, DG Enterprise & Industry, Tourism Policy Unit. This event was hosted by Västra Götaland Region. Partners had an opportunity to exchange experience on developing quality criteria in destinations in order to measure performance in terms of tourism sustainability, thus contributing to the 'European Tourism Quality Label' initiative of the European Commission, and testing the 'European Tourism Indicator System ETIS' for sustainable destination management, as well as pilot implementation of 'European Heritage Label' proposals. The event was concluded with the commitment of relevant project partners to start pilot quality criteria implementation schemes for cultural tourism, based on the good practice experience of the quality assurance system in Sweden and the initiative of the European Commission Tourism Policy Unit. The Workshop was supplemented by study visits to Goteborg Opera, and the Herring and Watercolor museums, all proven quality attractions for cultural tourism in Västra Götaland Region, Sweden.

The good practice of Västra Götaland Region is now being transferred to North Wales (Caernavon Castle) and to Rhodes island, Greece by partner 'Greek National Tourism Organisation' (GNTO). This transfer was supported by staff exchanges between Västra Götaland Region and CADW Welsh Government's Historic Environment Department in January and December 2013 in Wales, UK. ECTN member EKPOL Social & Cultural Council of Thessalia Region Authority in Greece, currently holding the presidency of ECTN, will also be testing the ETIS scheme for the Mount Pelion destination.

The next event was a dedicated '**Study Tour**' held in May 2013, organised by Veneto Region (Italy). This event offered an opportunity to both partners' staff and elected representatives to experience first-hand highly important cultural tourism attractions (cycling tour, guided technical visits at a thermal wellness centre, the Waterway along the Riviera del Brenta, Palladio's architecture, Villa Contarini, Villa Giustinian, Villa Pisani, Villa Widmann, Villa Foscari, UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Venice, Vicenza, Verona). Participants were familiarised with the issues on cultural tourism development and promotion linked to ten good practices on the ground.

During this event a mid-term review was undertaken in order to monitor the project's progress and results for partners' regional policies 17 months after the project started. Policy implications of the project achievements were distilled into a statement, the 'Citadella Declaration for Sustainable Cultural Tourism', prepared by Veneto Region and the host Municipality of Citadella.

The next interregional event took place in June 2013 in South Pelion (Greece), on three good practice topics - '**Local Products and Gastronomy**', '**Traditional Skills and Trades**' and '**Railway Heritage**'. Workshops were supported by relevant study visits. This included the 'Little Train of Pelion', a narrow-gauge heritage railway celebrating 110 years since opening in July 1903 and potential candidate for the new 'European Heritage Label'. The local gastronomy of seafood dishes and traditional culinary heritage based on olive oil was supported with a visit to the Pelion Olive and Oil Museum, whilst equestrian - related activities (horse

shoeing, saddle making) were used as examples of the preservation of traditional skills.

The event was hosted by CHARTS project Lead Partner, South Pelion Municipality. Participants had an opportunity to demonstrate their experience on developing a common cultural identity in their regions based on day to day activities related to the topics, as well as exploiting unique region features, such as railway heritage for cultural tourism (from North Wales, UK), gastronomy for inclusion in the UNESCO intangible heritage list (input from Ibertur Network - University of Barcelona, Spain) and traditional maritime skills (presented by ECTN member Zeeland County, Netherlands).

The method of culinary heritage safeguarding project by IBERTUR/Barcelona University has been transferred from Catalonia (Spain) to South Pelion (Greece) in order to protect and promote Pelion traditional cuisine. South Pelion is looking forward to applying for the inclusion of Pelion Cuisine in the List of UNESCO Immaterial Cultural Heritage, following 'Cucina Catalana' experience. Good practice on railway heritage has been transferred from North Wales, UK to South Pelion region and also to Vidzeme region in Latvia (Banitis railway Gulbene-Aluksne, also celebrating 110 years 1903-2013).

In accordance with the work plan, the next interregional event took place in Vidzeme region (Latvia), and was dedicated to two good practices: '**Visitor Information**' and '**Cycling for Tourists**' in September 2013. It involved the participation of a representative from the European Cultural Capital "Foundation Riga 2014", and was hosted by CHARTS project partner Vidzeme Tourism Association (VTA), Latvia. During two days participants had the opportunity to demonstrate their experience on event topics, to exchange knowledge and discuss issues and opportunities. Both topics were supplemented by a number of study visits to information centres, including the Bike museum in Saulkrasti and UNESCO Site Vecriga (old Riga). The approach of the Vidzeme Tourism Association on 'visitor information' has been transferred to Mallorca (Spain), and the approach in 'Cyclotourism' of the Vidzeme Tourism Association and Veneto Region is being transferred to Pafos Region (Cyprus) and the South-East Region in Bulgaria. Good practice 'cycling for tourists' was supported by a staff exchange between project partner USERLA and Veneto Region during December 2012, in Veneto, Italy.

The next event took place in Pafos (Cyprus) in October 2013 and was dedicated to good practice on '**Place Marketing**' as related to tourism marketing, hosted by the Pafos Regional Board of Tourism. Partners and experts had an opportunity to discuss place marketing for heritage destinations and cultural tourism development, based on the previous INTERREG IIIC operation **CultMark** with a presentation by the University of Thessaly (Greece), and was also highlighted by strategic investments and the role of place marketing. This was linked to the '**Experience Economy**' initiative under consultation by the EC DG Enterprise SMEs Unit. In this framework, the 2nd day was devoted to the theme of 'Cultural tourism in the experience economy', co-organised by CHARTS partner ECTN. Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner responsible for Culture, sent a video message to the delegates of the conference. She emphasized that cultural tourism has huge potential for developing an experience economy and stimulating regional growth, as it creates crucial connections between cultural and creative industries, cultural heritage and tourism, and promotes innovative business models. A special session on 'European Capitals of Culture' (ECoC) was held. This included representatives from Romania regarding the successful experience of Sibiu 2007, from Cyprus regarding the winning experience

and preparations for Pafos 2017, and from Bulgaria regarding the Burgas 2019 candidature. They presented and exchanged their experiences with the ECoC at various stages: ex-post evaluation, ex-ante in preparation and in the bidding process. All these presentations were in line with EC Communication COM (2012) 537 'Promoting cultural and creative sectors for growth and jobs in the EU', which states that, 'in particular, festivals and European Capitals of Culture produce important economic benefits, with sometimes more than ten times leverage for each euro invested.' The event was concluded with study visits to UNESCO World Heritage sites in Pafos.

The good practice of Pafos Region regarding place marketing and tourism marketing is being transferred to Mallorca (Spain).

The last interregional event took place in Mallorca (Spain) in November 2013. It was related to '**Cultural Routes**', and hosted by partner Consell de Mallorca according to certification of cultural routes by the Council of Europe, creation, development and promotional strategies of routes, impacts on cultural dialogues, creativity, innovation and competitiveness, as well as supporting transnational tourism products with discussions. The two-day event was supplemented by a technical visit to Dry Stone Route GR221 which, as a good practice, is being transferred to Västra Götaland Region, Sweden.

During the extended **Staff Exchange programme** (October 2012 – December 2013) 23 staff members were involved on 9 out of the 12 targeted good practice topics. The Staff exchange programme was undertaken by partners' staff members with expertise working in another partner's premises on a variety of topics and at various levels.

The CHARTS Partnership launched an '**Award contest for Cultural Tourism Destinations**' across Europe for cultural and heritage tourism development and promotion in November 2013 at the World Travel Market tourism fair in London. The CHARTS project had an exhibition stand there with partner GNTO and officially supported WTM **World Responsible Tourism Day** 2013.

The Award contest has been open to all tourism destinations across Europe and more information is available at the CHARTS project website: [www.charts-interreg4c.eu](http://www.charts-interreg4c.eu). Applicants had to demonstrate achievements in cultural tourism development and promotion involving at least 3 of the 12 good practice topics of CHARTS project. Some 30 applications have been received and will be assessed by the panel of judges consisting of senior elected representatives from the CHARTS partner regions.

The Award ceremony will be on 12 September 2014.

The CHARTS project was represented at relevant events of the European Union in Brussels, including the '**Open Days – European Week of Cities and Regions**' at the Committee of the Regions in October 2013, the **European Tourism Day 2013 on Accessible Tourism**, the **Europa Nostra** 50th anniversary closing event, and the **NECSTouR** Eurometing in December 2013. Furthermore, CHARTS partners participated in relevant Tourism fairs where the project results were disseminated in: Thessaloniki, Greece (Lead Partner South Pelion Municipality, Philoxenia, November 2012); Riga, Latvia (partner VTA, BaltTour, February 2014); Milano, Italy (partners Veneto Region and ECTN); as well as in Berlin, Germany (partners GNTO, South Pelion Municipality, Veneto Region and Pafos Regional Board of Tourism). Links have been established with the European Commission DG Enterprise Tourism Policy Unit

and Tourism and Cultural Instruments Unit, with UNWTO, Europa Nostra and NECSTouR.

During the next months in the second half of 2014, in the last stage of CHARTS project, the CHARTS Partnership will continue to work together as planned, in order to capitalise and exploit outputs, methods, results, policies and strategies based on the completed interregional events, in the field of culture, heritage and sustainable tourism development.

The CHARTS project outputs are in the form of '**Web based toolkits**' on the specific good practice topics for cultural tourism destinations, comprising a 'Good Practice Guide', an overall presentation supporting the Guide, a Leaflet summarising the key findings and a Video clip documentary highlighting the Good Practice topic and results.

Based on partners' exchanged experience in all interregional events and the project outputs, 10 **Implementation Plans** (one for each geographical partner region) will be produced at the end of the CHARTS project (December 2014). They will specify planned future actions in regional policy for submission to local managing authority in their local language, and to develop tourism sustainability with culture and heritage strategies. Each Implementation Plan will create opportunities for employment in the Cultural and Tourism industries, protect and preserve culture and heritage at local, regional, state and EU levels, and may form a basis to apply for future funding in the 2014-2020 programming period, according to the Europe 2020 Strategy.

All produced outputs are available on the project website for any interested party to download and use for the benefit of destinations and visitors.

A **closing Conference** will be held in Greece on **10-15 September** on the theme of '**Engaging Culture & Heritage for Sustainable Tourism Development**', starting with a pre-Conference study visit in Athens Acropolis and the new Acropolis museum, main Conference on 11-12 September in Agria, Volos, Magnesia regional unit, as well as post-Conference study visits in the city of Volos, South Pelion and Thessalia region. At the Conference a '**CHARTS Charter**' will be discussed and adopted, encompassing all previous relevant Declarations and Resolutions regarding the future development and promotion of sustainable and cultural tourism in Europe. The CHARTS project will conclude with the **Charter launch in Brussels on 9 October 2014**, as a side event during 'Open Days - European Week of Cities & Regions'.

For further information about CHARTS visit [www.charts-interreg4c.eu](http://www.charts-interreg4c.eu)

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## Notes to Editors:

1. The CHARTS project started in January 2012. It is a Regional Initiative focusing on the role of culture and heritage in the formulation and delivery of added value to regional strategies for sustainable tourism development and integration into local, regional, national and EU policies. Partners share experience on how improved management of cultural tourism destinations contribute to protection and enhancement of cultural heritage & landscape, as well as sustainable development policies, especially in relation to challenges of climate change and the economic crisis.
2. CHARTS project is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and made possible by the INTERREG IVC programme.
3. **Newsletter Issue 1** – December 2012 - <http://www.charts-interreg4c.eu/downloads/newsletters/>
4. **Newsletter Issue 2** – June 2013 - <http://www.charts-interreg4c.eu/downloads/newsletters/>
5. **Newsletter Issue 3** – December 2013 - <http://www.charts-interreg4c.eu/downloads/newsletters/>
6. **Press Release No.1** - <http://www.charts-interreg4c.eu/downloads/press-releases/>
7. **CHARTS Award 2014** for tourism destinations - <http://www.charts-interreg4c.eu/events/closing-conference/>
8. History of the CHARTS project proposal – 12 Good Practices are analysed and exchanged, drawn from two previous networks: the European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN), legacy of INTERREG IIIC operation, and CHIRON (Cultural, Heritage promotion of Identity of Regions Observatory and Networking for cultural tourism) IIIB CADSES, with Place Marketing delivered by the IIIC CultMark operation and other Initiatives including Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.
9. INTERREG IVC Programme – The Interregional Cooperation Programme INTERREG IVC, financed by the European Union's Regional Development Fund, helps Regions of Europe work together to share experience and good practice in the areas of **innovation, the knowledge economy, the environment and risk prevention**. EUR 302 million is available for project funding but, more than that, a wealth of knowledge and potential solutions are also on hand for regional policy-makers. More information: [www.interreg4c.eu](http://www.interreg4c.eu).