

”The EUHeritage-Tour” - Network for European Cultural Heritage Tourism

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Keywords.

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Premise.

The proponents of this paper are currently the members of the “Consortium for the European Network for Cultural Heritage Tourism”, coordinated by X23 Ltd., co-financed by the European Union, DG Industry&Enterprise — 44/G/ENT/PPA/12/6460. The initiative is achieving a considerable success, given its particular combination of cultural aspects, development of the principles of European “Unity” and “Identity”, the efficient business modelling, a strong use of local resources and capabilities, the acute “short-clustering” capabilities through areas heretofore uncorrelated, the extension of a consistent Network of networks, and the use of disruptive technological innovation. The Steering Committee is composed of members of ICOMOS (prof. M. Ioannides, membership number CYP 6853), UNWTO and UNESCO.

Brief paper.

Cultural Heritage is widely recognised as a vehicle for **cultural identity**. Europe’s cultural legacy is one of the world’s most diverse. It is a beacon that draws millions every year to our churches and monuments, to our museums and libraries, as well as to concert halls and festivals. It is both the accumulation of past artistic achievements and the expression of continuing tradition and creativity. It is also a very dynamic trigger of economic activities and jobs, reinforcing social and territorial cohesion of EU.

Culture is playing a growing role towards Europe’s integration. Indeed, the attempt to bring together the peoples of the continent with their different habits, traditions and languages has clearly a cultural dimension.

This increased recognition of the cultural dimension culminated with the adoption of the **European agenda for culture** that was approved by the Council of Ministers in 2007. This agenda is articulated into:

- (a) promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue,
- (b) promoting culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs,
- and (c) promoting culture as a vital element in EU external relations.

EU supported more than 200 cultural Heritage (CH) projects for both intangible and tangible CH assets forming **the Digital CH (DCH) era**.

Today, **transnationalism** is the key to reinforce **intercultural dialogue** through the **exchange of international experiences**. With this specific aim, **The EUHeritage-Tour** project will create a transnational route about the UNESCO Cultural Heritage sites in Europe, contributing to the **Unitarity of the European cultures**.

“**Distinctions**” and “**Commonalities**” of national/regional/local peculiarities, all summarised by the various UNESCO sites, are **gathered throughout Europe** by the mechanism of **The EUHeritage-Tour**.

It is just by adopting the harmonic “assimilate-differentiate mechanism”, and the promotion of shared CH peculiarities, that social cohesion arise, both at local level and at inter-regional melted one, stimulating at the same time a **strong local-collective pride as well as a greater sense of European identity**.

In the first details, the project fulcrum is the collection / selection and analysis of local / international “**good practices**” on **European Cultural Heritage Tourism**, enabling the improvement of the **local tourist stakeholders’ management skills** through specific **e-learning courses**.

The **knowledge capitalisation**, the **sharing of good practices**, the **intercultural exchange**, and the **merging into a single brand / policies framework** will turn into a ground-base for building the offering of a transna-

tional tourism product, deeply bound to the European sense of “Unitarity” and “Cohesion” — under the crucial key of **Sustainability**.

The first 5 participant countries [Italy (Co-ordinator), Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Portugal — meaning multiple regions/cities/provinces, and small communities], will determine a **strong cross-border cooperation**, thus facilitating intercultural dialogue under a unique touristic brand, enhancing **the beauty of multiplicity**. By involving added partners from nearby countries, **The EUHeritage-Tour** will ensure a **networked multiplier effect/benefit for each local community involved**.

A **touristic multi-itinerary-route will be created**: attractive to young tourists, based on the principles of sustainable tourism, and competitive in times of the economic crisis.

Thanks to the **pro-active involvement of the local SMEs and the huge systemic participation of the local residents located nearby the UNESCO sites**, **The EUHeritage-Tour will enable a community-based and a glocal touristic-living network**.

Its framework will provide ad-hoc services, regional-peculiar amenities and facilities, built on **broad participatory criteria**:

- #. *local calls* for new services / ideas for improvement;
- #. *Km0 supply-chain* and local peculiarities exploitation (ie. for guides, accommodation, catering, etc.);
- #. *active participation of the residents in the value-chain*, and raising awareness on the value of its own CH;
- #. *living labs/workshops, called "CultLabs,"* drawing the local peculiar traditions, and cultural themes selected for the route.

The direct impact is to provide added value to the multiple CH sites within a newborn **Network of networks**, exploiting them from a cultural touristic point of view; thus, producing positive effect on the community in terms of **social and economic growth**.

Such a **new touristic participative framework** is especially needed for the tourism management of European UNESCO world CH sites. In this respect, a few progressive strategies, initiatives and policies are existent in Europe, but this existing knowledge is not being capitalized to its full potential yet, due to a *lack* of exchange platforms, distribute framework, inherent self-adapting mechanism, discussion board, glocality and ubiquity of an *unique* melting-brand, and due to a noticeable distance from the UNESCO entity to local strict peculiarities, and a poor involvement of public+private tourism stakeholders partnerships (PPP) and co-operation.

Seven main project's objectives and activities	
1	to strengthen the management skills of public and private stakeholders in charge of the promotion and conservation of European UNESCO cultural WH sites, through an e-learning course , and resulting in the exchange of “good practices” — #1. transnational approach; #2. cross-border cooperation; #3. creation of a network of skilled tourism stakeholders; #4. inclusion of participative, local and volunteer stakeholders for service / hospitality / influence / enrichment of the network; #5. setting of a “Network of networks” in a “glocal” scale
2	to increase the competitiveness of the SMEs [both local and inter-regional networked] active in the tourism and cultural sector, by including them in the definition, promotion and offer of the tourism product (positive indirect impact on the community: #1. jobs creation; #2. increase in employability rates; #3. innovative services provided by startups, #4. exploitation of local, invisible, and marginalised peculiarities)
3	to facilitate and enhance Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) by fostering and preparing the transfer of “good practices” locally and providing a Global Discussion Forum on the digital platform developed focusing on the management, conservation and promotion of cultural heritage sites (sharing of knowledge and improving competences)
4	to involve additional Associated Partners to create a coherent and continuous route (multiplier effect, bridging the gap in the geographical coverage, scaling up)
5	to escalate the use of cutting edge technologies , such as: #1. “fluid” Virtual Maps; #2. dynamic “Cluster-Linked touristic areas; #3. “multi-routes selection” on the basis of different key-focus interests, appropriate for young tourists, families, expert scouts (also in terms of travel expense, nearby commodities, entertainment, etc.); #4. augmented reality tour; #5. “applications Suite” (for mobiles and tablets) for education, creative reuse, social networking
6	to set a framework for progressive tiled education, from the “informal-learning” stage (DIY tiled education, discovery-knowledge, autonomous deepening of information, self-assessment modules – following the “instructional scaffolding” — provided through an original light courseware / test and certification), to a structured education provided in partnership with ACADs and HEIs organisations
7	to involve sponsors to support the project activities as well as to financially sustain the project after the funded period

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