

WORKGROUP ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

FINAL DOCUMENT

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1. Introduction

The thematic Workgroup on Sustainable Tourism was coordinated, second year in a row, by Croatia and Albania – Croatian Chamber of Economy and Durres Chamber of Economy and Industry. The moderator of the Workgroup was president of the Šibenik County Chamber, Ivan Soža, who welcomed the participants alongside the President of Durres Chamber, Andrea Xhavara, with a short introductory speech.

The topic of the 17th Edition of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce - Workgroup on Sustainable Tourism was **Intercultural dialogue through sustainable tourism**. Throughout the presentations of 11 experts, participants were presented with interesting projects and experiences and also concrete conclusions and actions were agreed. Furthermore, it is important to state, the Workgroup had a sub-session focused on the upcoming year, 2018, which the UN World Tourism Organisation will proclaim as The European Year for Cultural heritage and The EU China Tourism Year.

2. Strategic outlines

Keynote speech was presented by Andrea Di Girolamo, Adriatic Ionian Euroregion, who presented BlueTourMed, the horizontal project aiming at building the community of projects of Interreg Med Programme associated with sustainable tourism. In local tourism planning, tourism and culture are two features around which tourist systems develop and Italian reform of Chambers of Commerce revolve new functions about tourism and culture. Adriatic and Ionian countries are rich in cultural and environmental attractors but there is a lack in their valorisation due to the absence of effective connections between them, leaving the single attractors each to their own market. It is necessary to establish the relationship between the attractions (historical, cultural and natural heritage) to create a Local Attraction System. Connection of all stakeholders with these projects means enhancing the activities that are traditionally carried out by the Chambers of Commerce: businesses, infrastructure, human capital, digitalisation, craftsmanship etc. All these activities can support better positioning of companies within Local Attraction Systems.

During the sub-session, focused on the project proposal by 4 EUSAIR countries (Albania, Croatia, Greece and Italy) and the UNWTO, Western Silk Roads, which should be presented in 2018, the year which is to be proclaimed by the UNWTO as The EU China Tourism Year, speeches were given by experts Joanna Moliou, Georgios Drakopoulos and Maria Poulouktsi.

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Joanna Moliou, European Commission, pointed out that 2018 will be marked by two major events: The European Year for Cultural Heritage EYCH 2018 and The EU China Tourism Year ECTY 2018.

It will be necessary within EU China Tourism Year to establish a network of stakeholders and there is a plan to conceptualize itineraries with wide range of activities, projects and events that will take place in Europe but will be promoted in other countries as well. During this part of sub-session, an active participation of all three Fora was asked, chambers, universities and cities. Furthermore, European Commission will ask of 4 EUSAIR countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia) to join the project with a letter of intent and by appointing a contact point from Ministries of Tourism and Culture. Also, European Commission asks the Fora to mobilise their network and reply to the call of the European Commission with a list of Chamber of Commerce, Universities and Cities which are interested in joining the project on voluntary basis and supporting the organisation of the B2B event.

Joanna Moliou also required from the Fora, in the name of the European Commission, to appoint two participants per each Fora representative (chambers, cities and universities), a total of six persons, which will create a network of beneficiaries and organise important events focusing on the topic in question. The list of names and contact persons should be sent to the EC by Fora by the 23rd of June.

Georgios Drakopoulos, Tourism Generis, additionally presented Western Silk Roads project within the framework of EU China 2018 Year of Tourism. Western Silk Road project offers numerous opportunities to European macro regions to promote themselves to the Chinese outbound market, where familiar name, like the Silk road, creates a unique brand awareness advantage. The challenge in the near future for the macro regions will be to align policies and provide basic training to the tourism entrepreneurs and professionals.

Maria Poulouktsi, Thessaloniki Tourism Organisation, presented her organisation and new opportunities for sustainable tourism along the Silk road.

At the end of the sub-session, a concrete task was asked from all participants of the Workgroup, an agreement that Western Silk Road project is to represent EUSAIR for the upcoming EU China Tourism Year 2018. All participants gave their agreement unanimously.

General session on EUSAIR Sustainable Tourism was opened by the presentation of Cinzia de Marzo, EU legal advisor and expert on macro regional strategies, who has identified common priorities and possible activities concerning the EUSAIR Action plan and has concluded that it is necessary to make quality strategies by applying the so called bottom up approach, that includes all stakeholders in all segments of strategy developing.

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Also, De Marzo presented the main outcomes of the study/report on the national tourism strategies of the 8 EUSAIR countries done under the contract with the European Commission – DG REGIO, which resulted in a basket of joint proposals or actions divided into 8 topics which can be split in several actions:

1. Promotional activities
2. Measuring and monitoring sustainable tourism
3. Skills and vocational training
4. Governance and capacity building
5. Cultural tourism and local identity
6. Innovation, ICT and digital agenda
7. Link between cultural and creative industries
8. Access to financing

Michele De Vita, AIC Forum, spoke on innovative valorisation of Adriatic-Ionian macro region tourist destination through perspective of the Italian reform of Chambers of Commerce. De Vita stated there is a need for new innovative approach to education, digitalization and control of companies. In accordance to it, he proposes the development of an observatory to recognize the needs created in the real sector and to develop solutions with an innovative approach.

Flavia Maria Coccia, Isnart Scpa, emphasized that Chambers of Commerce are institutions that should have a role of a platform that connects the companies. It is necessary to define profiles of companies and their general status, itineraries of our agencies and similar, and to explore possibilities of implementing this kind of platform within EU available tools.

Marco Cocciarini, Globe Inside srl/Expirit Srl, presented the Expirit project that helps local communities and stakeholders in developing a slow tourism concept in small rural realities that have to find their value in global tourism sector, by emphasizing their unique status as tourist destination, focusing on authenticity, sustainability and experience.

Paolo Dal Buono, Ferrara Provincial Office, Assonautica Italiana, spoke on promotion of nautical tourism through sailboats that provide visual identity with high sustainability considering drive based on sails.

3. Conclusions

During presentations of the Workgroup for Sustainable Tourism, common priorities and possible actions, in perspective of EUSAIR Action plans, were presented. It was also emphasized that it is necessary to develop quality strategies using, the so called, bottom up approach that involves all stakeholders in all segments of creating a strategy, which is more acceptable than hiring external experts.

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Furthermore, innovative valorisations of Adriatic-Ionian destinations were elaborated through perspective of Italian reform of Chambers of Commerce, such as innovative approach to education, digitalisation and control of companies. In accordance to it, development of observatory to recognize the needs created in real sector and to develop solutions with innovative approach was suggested.

From all the presentations, we can conclude that it is necessary to define the role of Chambers of Commerce as an institution that analyses, observes and connects all stakeholders in tourism with the aim to coordinate all actions in achieving common goals. The role of Chambers as a platform enables companies to be connected and in that regard, the possibility of implementing this kind of platform within the EU available tools arises.

This year's Workgroup on sustainable tourism ended with a concrete task to representatives of all three Fora; they were invited to include their activities in the project Western Silk Roads, and to appoint two representatives each, who will work on the promotion of the project in question.

4. Action agreed

- Workgroup for Sustainable tourism agrees on the project Western Silk Roads being the key EUSAIR project for The EU China Tourism Year ECTY 2018;
- 2 representatives will be appointed by each Forum by the 23rd of June (6 in total) which will promote project Western Silk Roads with their actions;
- When making strategies, it is recommended to use the bottom up approach which includes all stakeholders since creating strategy is a process impossible to complete with external experts;
- Through new Italian reform of Chambers of Commerce conduct innovative valorisations of Adriatic-Ionian destinations through education, digitalisation and control of companies which will be organised to recognize the needs created by the real sector;
- Chambers of Commerce are institutions that provide companies with the possibility to connect - the task remains to explore the possibilities of implementing this kind of platform within EU available tools.