### Common borders. Common solutions.

## PROMOTING HERITAGE- AND CULTURE-BASED EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM IN THE BLACK SEA BASIN



### **BRIEF PROJECT INFORMATION**

PRO EXTOUR is a project promoting experiential tourism as a sustainable development pathway for tourism business in the BSB by valorising the potential of the indigenous heritage and culture, innovative solutions and cross-border cooperation. The project has been a joint initiative of three higher education institutions with established applied research expertise in tourism - Varna University of Management (Bulgaria), Yerevan State University (Armenia) and Thessaloniki University (Greece), a cultural networking organisation - the Georgian Arts and Culture Centre (Georgia), and regional hospitality cluster - the Culinary Arts and Hospitality Association (Bulgaria).

The project brought about:

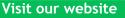
 $\checkmark$  a regional needs assessment report and action plan for encouraging the heritage and culture-based experiential tourism in the BSB,

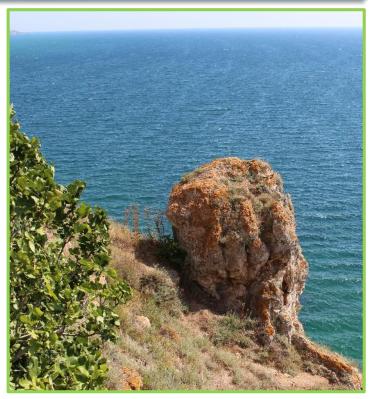
 $\checkmark$  inventories of business models, heritage- and culture-based activities and events,

 $\checkmark$  an on-line repository of resources and tools for experiential tourism,

 $\checkmark$  a cross-border network of Black Sea Hubs on experiential tourism,

 $\checkmark$  international conferences and fair on digital technologies, heritage- and culture-based experiential tourism in the BSB.





The transnational cooperation has had a high added value since it mobilises the capacity of the regional actors and leads to tailor-made solutions, economic and social viability in tourism and hospitality.

PRO EXTOUR was implemented between 1.06.2020 and 31.01.2023 with the support of the ENI CBC Black Sea Basin Programme 2014-2020.

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ROSS BORDER

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#### PRO EXTOUR Heritage- and Culture-based Experiential Tourism (HCBET) Definition

PRO EXTOUR has focused on heritage and culture as experiencedrivers in tourism and hospitality. That is why it was fundamental to start work by defining what we understand by experiential tourism and how it relates to heritage and culture. Defining the concept was the first main achievement of PRO EXTOUR research and expert team:

Heritageand Culture-based Experiential Tourism (HCBET) is a socially and environmentally responsible set of travel activities and services that offer а memorable experience and interpretation of heritage and cultures that lead travellers to selfdiscovery, new insights, and inspiration.

HCBET promotes an understanding of history, people and culture among travellers, but also generates appreciation among the local people for their cultural values. Therefore, it contributes to the preservation of heritage and living culture, the sustainable use of resources. has regional added benefits value, and the host community.

Heritageand Culture-based Experiential tourism (HCBET) is a concept of co-creation and coorganization of tourism activities based on one of the main principles of sustainable tourism -"to respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities,

#### The Concept

conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to intercultural understanding and tolerance".

Experiential tourism is an approach, based on establishing connection on

an emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual level between the visitors and the place they are visiting. It engages tourists in a series of memorable travel that activities are inherently personal, sensual, meaningful and transformative.

Our activities we designed so as to:

✓ feature the sustainability value of experiential tourism for the Black Sea Basin (BSB)

✓ outline business perspectives based in the authentic natural and cultural heritage

✓ support for the diffusion of innovations in tourism - both technological and organisational - as main drivers for modernisation.

#### **PRO EXTOUR Approach**

resource efficiency and value-chain networking;

 $\checkmark$  bring together research, business and interest group organisations to devise policy-improvement as well as interdisciplinary solutions and support for the mentorship elaboration and market launch of experiential activities that valorise the BSB natural and cultural heritage.

Our teams worked in Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia and Greece but our geographical scope expanded to the countries in whole Black Sea Basin.





Project funded by **EUROPEAN UNION** 





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#### **PRO EXTOUR in Armenia**

#### **Responsible partner: Yerevan State University**

Founded in 1919 Yerevan State University is the first Armenian University and is ranked among the top higher education institution in the South Caucasus. YSU strives to provide high-quality education and facilitate research through innovative initiatives and policies. YSU is the leader of university educational reforms in Armenia, including reforms in administration, management, curriculum development, having introduced QA system comparable with ENQA standards.

#### **YSU** website

## YSU Facebook

#### Research and training

YEREVAN

UNIVERSITY

STATE

A Regional Needs Assessment Report for the development of experiential tourism in Armenia

By its nature, this tourism is considered a transforming or improving innovation in the RA (Republic of Armenia), as it gave a new breath to cultural values and came up with new tourism offers in the market, based mainly on Armenian cuisine and crafts and arts. According to market prevalence, it is considered a local innovation in the RA, as the products have not yet gained wide international recognition and distribution. In Armenia, in terms of economic innovations, HCBET belongs to the types of experience and shared economy innovations (the offered products can leave unforgettable impressions, and enterprises follow the philosophy of shared economy), but it can also be presented as a social innovation (as there are enterprises that carry out social entrepreneurship). In any case, it should be noted that we must be more than careful with innovations in this field, because we are dealing with a culture where traditional values are of paramount importance.



A Regional Action Plan for encouraging the heritage and culture-based experiential tourism in Armenia

HCBET can be considered as one of the strategic directions for the development of tourism with innovative approaches for Armenia. On the basis of its sustainable development, it will be possible to ensure the balanced territorial development of tourism in particular.







## Common borders. Common solutions.

At present, the steps of key strategic importance for the development of HCBET in the RA should be aimed at:

- ✓ Developing and clarifying HCBET state policy,
- ✓ Organizing activities to promote cooperation between HCBET stakeholders,
- ✓ Sustainable use and preservation of Armenian cultural values included in HCBET,
- ✓ Regional and international cooperation and implementation of investment programs within the framework of HCBET,
- ✓ Developing relevant professional qualities of the stakeholders involved in HCBET,
- ✓ Establishing a systematized educational and scientific basis for HCBET.
- An Inventory of Business Models for experiential tourism combining blueprints and case studies of HCBETorganisations from Armenia - 15 good practices defined with their aims, activities, thematic areas, marketing approach, finance, key success factors and challenges and development potential



- Black Sea Hub on Experiential Tourism in Armenia (BS HUB AR) hosted by the Yerevan State University
- Pilot Demonstration Projects of the Black Sea Hubs on Experiential Tourism showcasing the result of training and mentoring activities in BS HUB AR

22.06.2022 Yerevan State University on-site 41 participants The event was designed to present the results from the training and mentoring activities performed by the PRO EXTOUR Hub on Experiential tourism in Armenia and particularly the work of the hub's trainees. The focus was placed on presentation of the young entrepreneurs' projects for experiential tourism activities in Armenia.



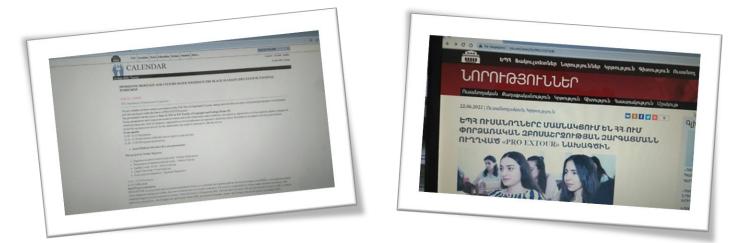
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#### Soint Entrepreneurial Camp for Experiential Tourism in Armenia

29-31.08.2022 Yerevan State University 15 young entrepreneurs and students form Armenia, Bulgaria Georgia The team worked together under the motto Immanuel Kana's motto "Experience without theory is blind, but theory without experience is mere intellectual play" to devise ideas for their experiential ventures. The practicebased seminars focused on problems and perspectives on tourism destination management based on the case of Armenia, experiential tourism as an innovation in sustainable tourism, experiential tourism in Armenia, creation and assessment methodology of experiential tourism products.









#### Common borders. Common solutions.

#### Practice

Pilot Inventories of heritage and culture activities and events tourism combining business model analyses and description of HCBET-activities from Armenia









Find them here









#### Networking

International business conference on experiential tourism -Yerevan, Armenia

01.10.2021 Yerevan State University on-site and on-line 79 participants on-site



The International Business Conference on Experiential Tourism was a targeted event aimed to present research and practice along the new trends in tourism and hospitality in view of the quest for sustainability, regional development



and adaptation to the new standards in travel and leisure industry ensuing the recent pandemic and security challenges. The Conference presented and promoted the needs assessment reports, regional action plans and inventory of business models elaborated within PRO EXTOUR. It brought together researchers, practitioners, authority representatives and students that eager to co-create solutions for tackling the sector-specific challenges and identify new opportunities in the changed business and political environment after 2020. The key topics of the Conference covered: Experiential Tourism globally and in the Black Sea Basin; Culture and Heritage as Experience-drivers; Sustainability Aspects of Experiential Tourism; Business Models and Innovations Showcasing good entrepreneurial practices from the Black Sea Basin.







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#### **PRO EXTOUR in Bulgaria**

#### Responsible partners: Culinary Arts and Hospitality Association

"Culinary Arts and Hospitality" Association is a culinary and hospitality sector cluster for Northeaster Bulgaria with over 30 members. It started operating at the end of 2011 and is based in Dobrich, Bulgaria. The organization`s main objective is to contribute to the development of comprehensive high valueadded tourist products in its region of operation and to build a lasting and strong relationship between education and business in support of regional economic development and social cohesion.

### **CAHA** website

CAHA Facebook



#### and Varna University of Management

VUM is an established business school specialised in social sciences and offering study programs in management, marketing, administration, tourism, information studies and pedagogy. It also provides innovative education in culinary arts, food technologies and hospitality as well as in software engineering. Research areas of its faculty include also education management, sustainable development, service automation, social economy, cross-cultural studies, organizational behaviour, leadership and others.

**VUM** website

VUM Facebook

#### Research and training

M Regional Needs Assessment Report for the development of experiential tourism in Bulgaria

The needs assessment confirms that the culture - and heritage based experiential tourism has high potential for future development. Bulgaria, in particular, can take advantage of its abundant tourist resources, cultural, and historical sites, artefacts, preserved traditions, folklore and unique cuisine to promote HCBET on the global and domestic market. Both demand and supply sides are ready to welcome and support HCBET development in the country. Seeking new and meaningful activities, tourists confirm readiness to sacrifice convenience and comfort and to pay more in order to gain insightful and transformative experiences. The tourism stakeholders regard HCBET as promising, high-yield and a potential remedy for the global crisis. They believe that the country has







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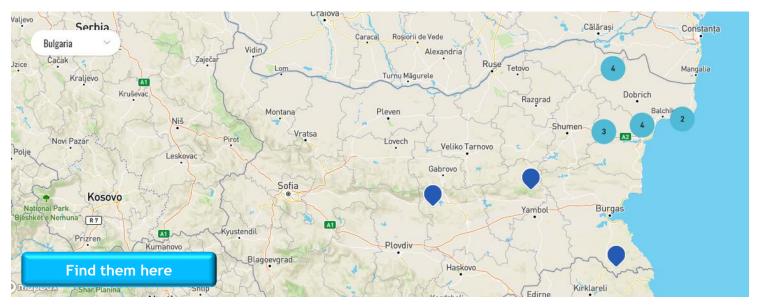
an underutilized potential for HCBET which should be given a priority in the policy and decision making of the government and private sectors. In that success however could be achieved only by coordinated efforts and partnership.

Regional Action Plan for encouraging the heritage and culture-based experiential tourism in Bulgaria

Bulgaria has huge potential for future development and should be considered as a priority in the policy-making on local, regional and national level. A roadmap of actions or a strategic policy framework towards more sustainable, niche tourist offering has to be elaborated by the relevant institutions in collaboration with the tourism providers and the local communities. Emphasis needs to be placed inter alia on positioning the country Bulgaria as an attractive and recognizable HCBET destination, increased offering of special interest tourism products, preserving, protecting and enhancing cultural heritage, including valorisation of the tourism resources, intense usage of smart and technological solutions such as virtual tours, digitalization of the products for promotion and distribution.



An Inventory of Business Models for experiential tourism combining blueprints and case studies of HCBETorganisations from Bulgaria - 15 good practices defined with their aims, activities, thematic areas, marketing approach, finance, key success factors and challenges and development potential







### Common borders. Common solutions.

- Black Sea Hub on Experiential Tourism in Bulgaria (BS HUB BG) the contact point in Dobrich is hosted by the Culinary Arts and Hospitality Association
- Pilot Demonstration Projects of the Black Sea Hubs on Experiential Tourism showcasing the result of training and mentoring activities in BG HUB BG

12.04.2022 Varna University of Management on-site and on-line 25 participants in total



3-5.08.2022 Varna University of Management 15 young entrepreneurs and students form Armenia, Bulgaria Georgia and Greece



The event was designed to present the result form the training and mentoring activities performed by the PRO EXTOUR Hub on Experiential tourism in Bulgaria and particularly the work of the hub's trainees who were selected via an open public contest. The focus was placed on *Karia Cultural Marathon* - a model experiential activity elaborated by the young entrepreneurs within the Hub. The event was attended by representative of business organizations, organizations that support youth entrepreneurship and act as accelerators, Varna municipality, Varna District Administration, Bulgarian National TV and other stakeholders.



Soint Entrepreneurial Camp for Experiential Tourism in Bulgaria

The camp in Bulgaria was focused on event management, experiencing culture in urban settings, valorising modern culture and community festivities as unique visiting attraction, creating new tourism products that bring a positive experience, emotion and memory. The practical field trips introduced participants to functioning successful business models valorising local culture, food or history. Varna's modern and ancient heritage inspired the participants form Armenia, Georgia, Greece and Bulgaria to conceptualize business models and strategies for marketing.









#### Common borders. Common solutions.

#### Practice

Pilot Inventories of heritage and culture activities and events tourism combining business model analyses and description of HCBET-activities from Bulgaria









Find them here









### Networking

International Conference on Digital Technologies for Experiential Tourism - Varna, Bulgaria

28.07.2022 Varna University of Management on-site and on-line 40 participants on site



The Conference brought together researchers, practitioners, students and the general public interested to explore together



and discuss the role of the digital technologies in all stages of creation and delivery of experiences in tourism and hospitality. The event was streamed on-line and enjoyed high media attention. Interesting discussions on the dichotomy between technologies and traditional approaches in creation experience added to the quality of the event. The key topics covered digital tools used for enhancing the tourist experience during culture events, digital Innovations and their role in research, investigation and presentation of historical artefacts, consumers' expectations and attitudes towards the digital technologies used in tourism, the need of digital skills in tourism, etc.







### Common borders. Common solutions.



### GACC website

GACC Facebook

#### Research and training

#### **PRO EXTOUR in Georgia**

#### Responsible partner: Georgian Arts and Culture Centre

GACC is one of the leading NGOs in Georgia with 25 years of operational experience. In 2016 GACC became official representative of Europa Nostra in Georgia. The mission of the organization is preservation, development, promotion and sustainable use of Georgian culture and cultural heritage; further support the development of cultural industries, cultural tourism among them; through capacity building support strengthening of cultural institutions, culture-based SME and individuals economic viability, market development, junction with the tourism industry, awareness-raising locally and internationally; assist to the further promotion of international relations and cultural exchanges; support various educational and gallery/exhibition activities. GACC works for the development of management plans for cultural sites, creation of cultural districts, use of tangible and intangible heritage as a source for the creation of new offers to the tourism industry and hence economic viability of the culture.

#### A Regional Needs Assessment Report for the development of experiential tourism in Georgia



The main directions in HCBET in Georgia are crafts, culinary and gastronomy, polyphony and music as well history of the Soviet era. HCBET is a new field in the country. Traditional products need government support in developing of regulations, keeping the identity of the products and labelling and branding. More recently the concept of resilience receives increasing attention in the discourse on transitions towards a more sustainable future of tourism and its socio-ecological adjustments to a rapidly changing world. It puts the process of capacity building at the centre of attention and implies transitions in governance, which enable communities' radical changes in ideas, and practices. Such participatory management mitigates conflicts among competing interests, increases the quality and legitimacy of solutions, and collaboration between various actors at all level.

#### Read here







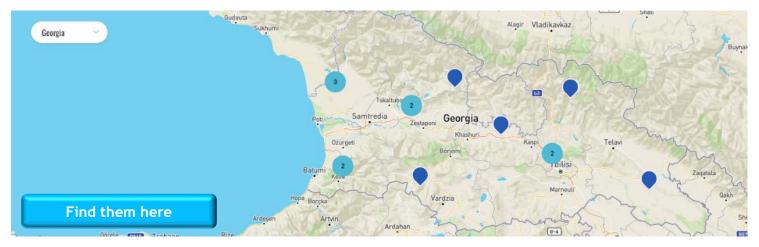
### Common borders. Common solutions.

A Regional Action Plan for encouraging the heritage and culture-based experiential tourism in Georgia

Implementation of the action plan for achievement of the common goal of sustainable development in Georgia requires cooperation of several institutions and persons. Despite this necessary joint attempt, the main responsibility for the tourism sector lies with the Georgian National Tourism Administration and therefore, it ensures cooperation of activities. At the same time, for the purpose of effective implementation of the strategy, close cooperation with the Cultural Routes Office and the Creative Georgia Department under the Ministry of Culture is desirable. It is also important to develop an integrated approach which ensures engagement of stakeholders in the decision-making process (especially, using "bottom-top" approach).



An Inventory of Business Models for experiential tourism combining blueprints and case studies of HCBETorganisations from Georgia - 15 good practices defined with their aims, activities, thematic areas, marketing approach, finance, key success factors and challenges and development potential



Black Sea Hub on Experiential Tourism in Georgia - Tourism Experiential Tourism Hub (TETH) hosted by the Georgian Arts and Culture Centre

27.05.2022 Georgian Arts and Culture Centre on-site 24 participants Pilot Demonstration Projects of the Black Sea Hubs on Experiential Tourism - showcasing the result of training and mentoring activities in BS HUB GE

The event was designed to present the result form the training and mentoring activities performed by the PRO EXTOUR Hub on Experiential







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tourism in Georgia and to present the trainees entrepreneurial projects. The event was included in the programme of the ETHNOFEST in Tbilisi.





#### X Joint Entrepreneurial Camp for Experiential Tourism in Georgia

21-23.08.2022 Georgian Arts and Culture Centre Georgia and Greece



During three days the camp participants attended training on entrepreneurship, innovation and marketing campaign, based on which they prepared business models on innovative and tourism products. The workshops covered design thinking, opportunity mindset, organic ideation, ideation on demand, idea and market validation, business modelling, value segmentation, pitching and story-telling about business ideas, fundraising and others.





### Practice

X Pilot Inventories of heritage and culture activities and events tourism combining business model analyses and description of HCBETactivities from Georgia

Find them here













**EUROPEAN UNION** 





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#### **PRO EXTOUR in Greece**

Responsible partner: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, City\_Space\_Flux

AUTh constitutes a comprehensive institution with 41 faculties and Schools

serving a vast array of scientific fields, ranging from natural and technological

to social and health sciences, arts and humanities. The University aims to offer equal opportunities for learning, research and communication; it aspires to create an environment where education and research thrive, and subsequently, realize the vision for a better world with equal rights for everybody to claim the fruits of economic growth and social prosperity. City\_Space\_Flux (CSF) constitutes an interdepartmental research unit of AUTh

that promotes knowledge, innovative research and pilot practices on topics that focus on the strong linkages between spatial and transport planning. Its special emphasis is on cities and the interactions between urban dynamics,

city structure, travel behaviour and spatial flows of any character.



AUTh website

AUTh Facebook

#### Research and training

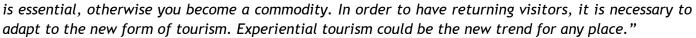
A Regional Needs Assessment Report for the development of experiential tourism in Greece

**Research Unit** 

The Regions of Central Macedonia and Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (BSB-GR regions) are two regions with rich history, wealth of natural resources, many important historical monuments, and population with vivid and diverse cultural background. They possess all the ingredients, both tangible and intangible, that could be utilised to create and offer remarkable experiences for the visitors and many opportunities for the development of experiential tourism. As the field survey has shown, an alternative form of sustainable tourism could further support the economic, social, and environmental development not only of the regions themselves, but for the broader area and the country itself as well. As an interviewee stated:

PRO EXTOUR

"The economic and social conditions of the pandemic create the need of an alternative form of tourism, the need of offering "the experiences". You cannot survive otherwise. Sustainable development





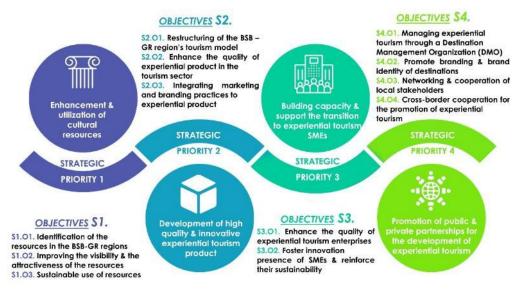




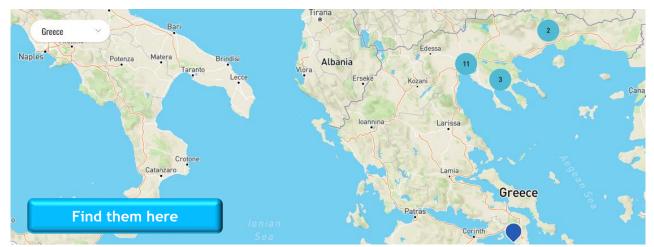
### Common borders. Common solutions.

A Regional Action Plan for encouraging the heritage and culture-based experiential tourism in Greece

An integrated policy for the promotion and implementation of strategies for experiential cultural tourism at all levels is necessary. The inadequate and insufficient tourism legislation in combination with the lack of strategic planning and clear content definition inhibits the development of experiential tourism activities and businesses. This is partly due to the fact that mass tourism is still dominant in the tourism sector all over Greece including the two BSP-GR regions. National government should develop an integrated action plan for alternative forms of tourism, including experiential tourism.



An Inventory of Business Models for experiential tourism combining blueprints and case studies of HCBETorganisations from Greece - 15 good practices defined with their aims, activities, thematic areas, marketing approach, finance, key success factors and challenges and development potential









### Common borders. Common solutions.

- Black Sea Hub on Experiential Tourism in Greece (BSB UB GR) -hosted by the City\_Space\_Flux Research X Unit at AUTH
- X Pilot Demonstration Projects of the Black Sea Hubs on Experiential Tourism - showcasing the result of training and mentoring activities in BS HUB GR

28.05.2022



The City\_Space\_Flux Research Group of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and BSB - GR HUB organized the public presentation of the experimental walking action entitled "Tramway Stories". In the preserved Villas dating from the end of the 19th century, which are located in the Eastern district of the municipality of Thessaloniki (Villa Allatini, Villa Zartinidis, Uziel District, Depot, Casa Bianca, and Villa Mordoch), stories, images, melodies and flavours of another era revived. The participants imagined and discussed the future of the city if it was redesigned around the line of a modern tram along the major arterial Vasilissis Olgas Avenue.



Joint Entrepreneurial Camp for Experiential Tourism in Greece

## 6-8.07.2022 15 young entrepreneurs and



The camp was organized under the motto "Experiencing Central Macedonia Region". Through theoretical and practical seminars, workshops, experiential activities, food and wine tastings, participants met the history, culture, customs, local products and gastronomy of the Central Macedonia Region. Furthermore, through collaboration and networking, they developed a business idea related to experiential tourism, based on culture and heritage.









### Common borders. Common solutions.

#### Practice

Pilot Inventories of heritage and culture activities and events tourism combining business model analyses and description of HCBETactivities from Greece







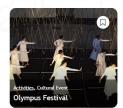


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### PRO EXTOUR in the Black Sea Basin

#### Responsible partner: Varna University of Management

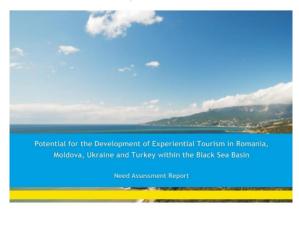
#### Research and training

A Regional Needs Assessment Report for the development of experiential tourism in the Black Sea Basin

Experience-based tourism is implicitly considered in the government policies in the BSB. The tourism and culture policies should be made coherent in order to preserve and conserve the unique resources of the Black Sea Area while avoiding overexploitation. Experiences become central when the visitors get to a place. Sustainability and innovation were not explicitly mentioned as integral parts of this process, even though the survey respondents were intuitively aware of their importance. A holistic approach is needed, including the local community, local and regional authorities, along with the service providers. It is the personal involvement that builds in tourists a sense of care and responsibility, and form a long-lasting memorable associations with the visited destinations.



PROMOTING HERITAGE - AND CULTURE - BASED EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM IN THE BLACK SEA BASIN Project No BSB-1145



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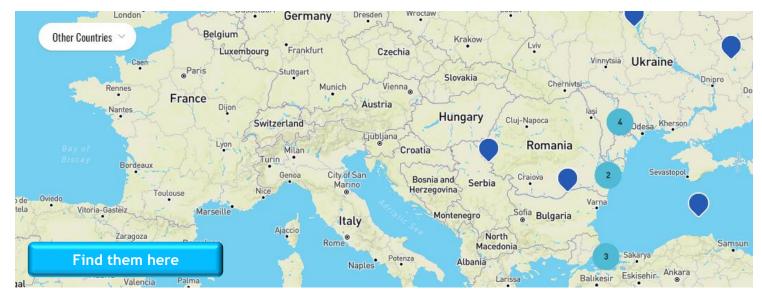
### Common borders. Common solutions.

A Regional Action Plan for encouraging the heritage and culture-based experiential in the Black Sea Basin

HCBET is in the initial state of conceptualization and introduction in the BSB region, and on the global scale. Hence, it is not identified as a distinctive thematic direction in the EU policy-making or the national authorities' agenda. However, HCBET has huge potential for future development and should be considered as a priority sector for the BSB region. It ensures sustainable tourism development, economic growth and community inclusion. The countries in the BSB area should join forces to promote HCBET on a regional level and adopt a coordinated policy towards its development. Some of the key areas of strategic importance include promotion of BSB region as a common destination for heritage - and cultural- based experiential tourism, creating cross-border theme routes and cultural products, efficient utilisation of digital tools and enhancing digital skills to this end.



An Inventory of Business Models for experiential tourism combining blueprints and case studies of HCBETorganisations from the Black Sea Basin - 15 good practices defined with their aims, activities, thematic areas, marketing approach, finance, key success factors and challenges and development potential



Black Sea Hub on Experiential Tourism in Bulgaria (BS HUB BG) - the contact point in Varna is hosted by the Varna University of Management







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- Joint mentorship webinar sharing the training experience and achievements of the PRO EXTOUR Black Sea Hubs
  - 12.01.2023 on-line 59 participants

The Joint Mentorship Webinar presented the activities of the Black Sea Hubs on experiential tourism in PRO EXTOUR as well as the training syllabuses, contents and methodologies, applied in the four joint entrepreneurial camps in the Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia and Greece.



Practice

An On-line Repository of resources and tools for experiential tourism - with integrated route-planner functionality and videopresentations of unique experience-creating activities in the Black Sea Basin **Featured Activities** 



#### **Featured Business Models**







Explore here















### Common borders. Common solutions.

#### Networking

M International Fair on Heritage and Culture-based Experiential Tourism in the BSB - Varna, Bulgaria

8-9.11.2022 Varna University of Management on-site 80 participants The International Fair was aimed to showcase different ventures in experiential tourism from the Black Sea region but also different sites, activities, and events, presenting the indigenous heritage and culture. All participants immersed in the unique arts, crafts, cuisine, wines, museums, masterclasses and other heritages-based businesses and activities from Armenia Georgia, Greece and Bulgaria. Tasting and

experimentations were also part of the programme. A panel was devoted to the presentation of the robot PROFY and the possible role of the robots and AI in the service sector.

#### **PRO EXTOUR Audience**

More than 600 organizations became part of the PRO EXTOUR activities but we shall keep on working on the theme. Our Black Sea hubs on experiential tourism remain active to take the research, training and experimentation in experiential tourism beyond the project.



### Visit our website

Follow us on Facebook









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Joint Operational Programme Black Sea Basin 2014-2020 PRO EXTOUR project partners January 2023

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