

INTERREG IVC project CHARTS press release No.1 from 30 June 2012

PRESS RELEASE – 30 June 2012

THE FIRST STEP OF CHARTS PROJECT FOR TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY

Culture & Heritage are important factors for sustainable development, contributing to protection of natural and cultural heritage, extension of tourism period, increasing the awareness of tourists and host communities, regional GDP and multiplier effect. There is hence a need to enrich regional policies with culture and heritage added value for sustainability of tourism.

CHARTS (Culture and Heritage Added-value to Regional policies for Tourism Sustainability) Project in the INTERREG IVC inter-regional co-operation programme of EU, aims to capitalize and exploit the outputs, methods, results, policies and strategies of previous projects and initiatives, for transfer of highly relevant Good Practices between participating regions and Europe-wide for culture, heritage and sustainable tourism development strategies to effective regional policy formulation and implementation, as well as contributing to the Lisbon & Gothenburg Agendas. CHARTS project started in January 2012, involving 13 partners from 11 EU Member States and culture or tourism authorities of 10 EU regions.

The CHARTS project focuses 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 regional development policies, especially in relation to challenges of climate change and the economic crisis.

Project CHARTS was opened by 1st Inter-Regional Steering Committee Meeting in Argalasti, South Pelion Municipality, Greece on 22-23 March 2012. At this meeting the partners were introduced to each other, presented their regions and cultural assets and discussed the 12 selected good practices as well as the roles of partners as Donors, Recipients and Observers by Good Practice were allocated, subject to further refinements. Financial management, technical coordination and project publicity matters were discussed and procedures agreed. A press conference was held at the end, as well as technical visits to South Pelion cultural attractions.

The next event was implemented with the first stage of the exchange of experience process at a **Joint Training Seminar on 21 – 22 June 2012 in Barcelona**, Spain, for officers and policy makers of partners' regions. At this Joint Training Seminar under the title "**Heritage and Cultural Policies and Strategies for a Sustainable Tourism Promotion and Development in European Regions**", partners' representatives were involved both as trainers and trainees in order to benefit the staff of the partner regions in culture and heritage inputs to tourism sustainability regional policies and related innovations. External experts were also involved as speakers, including UNESCO representative, Barcelona Tourism Authority, Catalonia Cultural Department, academics, members of European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN, also project partner), Creative Tourism Network, Mayors from Latvia, Vice Mayor from Bulgaria, Regional Councillor from Greece, etc. The Seminar was attended by 10 invited speakers, 52 participants of project partners regions and institutions and from 11 EU countries – Greece, Spain, Bulgaria, United Kingdom, Belgium, Italy, Cyprus, Romania, Latvia, Ireland and Sweden.

Joint Training Seminar was organized by Project Partner IBERTUR-Network of Heritage, Tourism and sustainable development/University of Barcelona in collaboration with the Catalonia government.

Scheduled project CHARTS activities by the end of 2012 are: in September thematic workshop on climate change in North Wales (UK) and study visit on railway heritage, in November thematic workshop on accessibility to heritage in Midland region, Ireland and in December thematic workshop on effective partnership in Burgas, Bulgaria. Staff exchange programme is also due to start in the autumn of 2012.

For further information about CHARTS visit www.charts-interreg4c.eu

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Notes to Editors:

- 1. Brief history of the CHARTS project proposal** – The Key partners of three previous projects INTERREG IIIC Operation ECTN, the INTERREG IIIB CADSES Project CHIRON and the INTERREG IIIC CultMark Operation came together in this project proposal to share the Good Practices, capitalise the results and achieve a sustainable approach to heritage and cultural tourism destinations through exchange of knowledge and experiences, aiming towards more effective regional policy and sustainable tourism strategy development.
- 2. 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.
- 3. CHARTS Project Partners -**
 - 1) Municipality of South Pelion, Greece www.argalasti.gr (Lead Partner)
 - 2) Welsh Assembly Government, UK www.wales.gov.uk
 - 3) ECTN Network, Belgium www.ectn.eu.com
 - 4) Midland Regional Authority, Ireland www.midlands.ie
 - 5) Region Västra Götaland, Sweden www.vgregion.se
 - 6) Pafos Regional Board of Tourism, Cyprus www.visitpafos.org.cy
 - 7) Veneto Region – Tourism Department, Italy <http://www.regione.veneto.it>
 - 8) Vidzeme Tourism Association, Latvia www.vidzeme.com
 - 9) National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism, Romania www.incdt.ro
 - 10) Mallorca Council - Environment Department, Spain www.conselldemallorca.net
 - 11) Union of South-East Region Local Authorities, Bulgaria userla.office@gmail.com
 - 12) Greek National Tourism Organisation, Greece <http://gnto.gov.gr/>
 - 13) IBERTUR Network/University of Barcelona, Spain www.gestioncultural.org/ibertur

4. Background information of CHARTS project -

Tourism comprises 1.8 million enterprises, caters for 5.2% of employment and contributes to more than 5% of European GDP, tourist activity in Europe fell by approximately 5.6 % in 2009 due to

the economic crisis and European destinations face increasing competition from other global destinations. The current demographic trend will mean that in a few years' time we will have more aged tourists – our tourism products and our infrastructure has to be well-catered for that. Tourism products also need to be more sustainable, thus taking into account commitments related to climate change and dependence on water and energy and ever-developing information and communication technologies also offer new opportunities.

These are few but very important facts and trends issues for all Europe declared in the Communication COM 352 of Europe Commission „Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe”. CHARTS project addresses 11 out of 21 actions proposed in the above Communication.

All local, regional and state authorities must act now in response on climate change, environmental risks what affect heritage assets, degradation of the cultural heritage assets and landscapes due to the thoughtless exploitation. These are issues challenging all EU regions and are often very relevant to the cultural tourism sector. For resolving these problems, we need for cohesion supportive policies require mitigating these and encouraging management to adopt policies and strategies that will aid delivery at local , regional and EU level. CHARTS project in the INTERREG IVC programme addresses the above issues at inter-regional and pan-European levels.