



D.3.2.1: Seminar for touristic guides and professionals

Responsible partner: Municipality of Strumyani

The Project is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and by national funds of the countries participating in the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020”

Project web-site: <https://www.riverplus.eu/>

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MUNICIPALITY OF STRUMYANI

1 "7-mi April" sq., 2825 Strumyani village, District of Blagoevgrad;
Tel: 07434/31 08, fax: 07434/31 05, e-mail: strumyani_oba@abv.bg

To: Mr. Yulian Mishev, Interim Mayor of Municipality of Simitli and Contact person for the project (PB1)

Dear Partner,

In connection with implementation of activities within WP3 under project with acronym River PLUS, in which Municipality of Strumyani is acting as PB2, we would like to inform you for upcoming event "Seminar for touristic guides and professionals". Main objective of the seminar is: improving their capacities on the sustainable exploitation of cultural and natural resources and the promotion of the common identity of the area. In accordance with approved project, participation in event should take touristic guides and professionals from Bulgaria and Greece, the seminar will be with duration of 20 hours (3 days).

The seminar will take place on **21-23 of July 2022 in Town of Sandanski, Bulgaria.**

We would like to invite participants from Municipality of Simitli. In connection with necessity of rent of hall, food, coffee breaks, materials and etc., please send us a list with the name and position of people who would be able to take part in the upcoming event, **not later than 15.07.2022.**

We will send you Official Agenda and more information about the seminar right after the list of participants is finalized.

Thank you in advance for your responses and do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions!

Kind Regards,

Emil Iliev

Mayor of Municipality of Strumyani



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MUNICIPALITY OF STRUMYANI

1 "7-mi April" sq., 2825 Strumyani village, District of Blagoevgrad;

Tel: 07434/31 08, fax: 07434/31 05, e-mail: strumyani_oba@abv.bg

To: Gousiou Katerina, Contact person for the project for Municipality of Irakleia (PB3)

Konstantinidou Eythimia, Contact person for the project for Municipality of Sidiki (PB4)

Anastasiadis Aristoklis, Contact person for the project for Municipality of Emmanouil Pappa (PB5)

Ioannis Kalogeroudis, Contact person for the project for Serres Development Agency S.A. (PB6)

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We would like to invite participants from each project partner from Greece and Bulgaria. In connection with necessity of organization of transport, accommodation and etc., please send us a list with the name and position of people who would be able to take part in the upcoming event, **not later than 15.07.2022.**

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Kind Regards,

Emil Iliev

Mayor of Municipality of Strumyani



Agenda

of the Seminar for touristic guides and professionals
project “STRYMONAS COOPERATION CORRIDOR”, project acronym:
River PLUS

Place of the event: Conference hall at Hotel “Spartak”, Sandanski Town

Date:	21 th of July 2022
10:30 - 11:00	Welcoming the participants and registration and Coffee break
11:00 - 11:30	Official opening and introduction of the participants
11:30 - 12:30	Short presentation of the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Partners- Objectives of the project- Target groups of the project- Activities- Expecting results
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch and free time
14:00 - 16:00	Lecture on theme: Potential for tourism development in the CB area Greece-Bulgaria - natural, historical, arhcitechural and other tourism resources
16:00 - 16:30	Q&A session
16:30 - 16:45	Coffee break
16:45 - 18:00	Lecture on theme: Branding on tourism destinations - good practices
18:00 - 18:30	Q&A session
18:30 - 19:30	Dinner

Date:	22 th of July 2022
08:30 - 9:30	Breakfast

9:30 - 9:45	Welcoming the participants and registration
9:45 - 12:00	Lecture on theme: Tourism routes - integrated development of alternative types of tourism - part 1
12:00 - 12:30	Q&A session
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch and free time
14:00 - 16:00	Lecture on theme: Tourism routes - integrated development of alternative types of tourism - part 2
16:00 - 16:30	Q&A session
16:30 - 16:45	Coffee break
16:45 - 18:00	Free discussion - exchange of experience in tourism development
18:00 - 19:00	Dinner

Date:	23th of July 2022
08:30 - 9:30	Breakfast
9:30 - 9:45	Welcoming the participants and registration
9:45 - 12:00	Lecture on theme: Main obstacles for the development of sustainable tourism in the CB area Bulgaria-Greece
12:00 - 12:30	Q&A session
12:30 - 13:00	Official closing of the seminar and Coffee break

Lecturers:

Georgi Kunchev

Miroslava Kostadinova

Yordanka Stamenova,

Moderator:

Ivo Chakarov

**Seminar on Tourist Guides and Professionals under the project “STRYMONAS
COOPERATION CORRIDOR” with acronym “River PLUS”
MINUTES**

In the period 21.07.2022 - 23.07.2022 was held a Seminar for Tourist Guides and Professionals under the project “STRYMONAS COOPERATION CORRIDOR” with MIS code 5052243, funded by Sybsidy Contract No. B2.6c.20/29.11.2019 under the Cross-border Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020, Priority Axis: “Sustainable and Climate Adaptable Cross-border Area”. The event took place in the conference hall of Hotel Spartak, town of Blagoevgrad. The main objective of the training/seminar was to increase the capacity for sustainable use of cultural and natural resources and to promote the common identity of the cross-border region in the municipalities of Simitli and Strumyani in Bulgaria and Iraklia, Sintiki, Emmanuel Papa and Serres in Greece.

The seminar was organized by the Municipality of Strumyani - Beneficiary No. 2 of the project, which is implemented in partnership between the Municipality of Simitli, Bulgaria (Lead Beneficiary), the Municipality of Iraklia, Greece (Beneficiary No. 3), the Municipality of Sintiki, Greece (Beneficiary No. 4), the Municipality of Emmanouil Pappa, Greece (Beneficiary No. 5) and the Serres Development Agency, Greece (Beneficiary No. 6).

Tourism professionals participated in the seminar. Among the topics of the lectures that were delivered to the participants were:

- Potential for tourism development in the cross-border area Greece - Bulgaria - natural, historical, architectural and other tourist resources
- Branding of tourist destinations - good practices
- Tourist routes - integrated development of alternative forms of tourism
- Major obstacles to the development of sustainable tourism in the region

The participants in the event took an active part in the discussions with the lecturers on the various topics, exchanging experience and knowledge in the field of tourism, driven by the common desire to turn the cross-border area Greece - Bulgaria into a modern and recognizable tourist destination.

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***Проект: "Коридор за сътрудничество
Струма", с акроним "River PLUS"***

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Водещ бенефициент: Община Симитли

***Бенефициенти: Община Емануил Папа,
Община Ираклия, Община Сидики, Община
Струмьяни, Агенция за развитие на Серес***

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***Цел:* Повишаване на туристическата привлекателност на района чрез трансгранично сътрудничество за опазване и популяризиране на местното природно и културно наследство и ресурси**

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Бюджет: 1.011.737,58 €

Принос от ЕФРР: 859.976,94 €

Национален принос: 151.760,64 €

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Районът, в който се реализира проектът, се характеризира с богато културно и природно наследство. Общините Симитли и Струмяни в България и Ираклия, Синтики и Емануил Папа в Гърция, намиращи се по поречието на река Струма, имат големи територии, принадлежащи към зони от Натура 2000 и други защитени територии.

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В същото време те принадлежат към слабо развитите селски и отдалечени райони и имат благоприятни условия за развитие на екотуризм, тематичен туризм и потенциал за развитие на трансгранично сътрудничество.

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Приликите в природата и социалната среда на партньорите адресират общи проблеми, въпроси, предизвикателства и възможности, като се фокусират върху опазването, управлението и експлоатацията на природни и културни ресурси и местни традиционни дейности.

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Съществува силна нужда от подобряване на състоянието на опазване и увеличаване на капацитета на културните и природни обекти, използвани за туристически цели.

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Общата цел на проекта е да се повиши туристическата привлекателност на района чрез транснационално сътрудничество за опазване и насърчаване на местното природно и културно наследство.

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Подходът на проекта се фокусира основно върху три проблема.

Първата част от проекта се отнася до необходимостта от инфраструктура за подобряване на състоянието и за опазване и популяризиране на културните и природни обекти и дейности в района.

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Проектът включва изграждане на зона за отдих, дейности за увеличаване на капацитета за настаняване на туристи, съоръжения за приключенски спорт, информационни центрове и музей за местни традиционни дейности.

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Вторият част от проекта е тази, която се занимава с нови подходи и инструменти с трансграничен характер за района и прави ясен транснационалния приоритет, който се отнася до подобряването на обща туристическа идентичност чрез проучвания, семинари за държавни служители, професионалисти и местни хора, а също така и тематични работилници за иновативни туристически знания.

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Третата част от проекта също е от съществено значение и се състои от развитие на мрежа за професионалисти и заинтересовани страни от района чрез обмен на ноу-хау и най-добри практики, както и общи туристически бизнес експедиции.

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Проектът е съфинансиран от Европейския фонд за регионално развитие и от националните фондове на страните, участващи в Програмата за сътрудничество Интеррег V-A “Гърция-България 2014-2020”

Съдържанието на този материал е изцяло отговорност на Община Струмяни и по никакъв начин не може да се счита, че отразява гледните точки на Европейския съюз, участващите страни, Управляващия орган и Съвместния технически секретариат.

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Project: **"STRYMONAS COOPERATION
CORRIDOR", with acronym "River PLUS"**

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***Lead Beneficiary:* Municipality of Simitli**

***Beneficiaries:* Municipality of Emmanouil Pappa**

Municipality of Irakleia

Municipality of Sidiki

Municipality of Strumyani

Serres Development Agency - S.A.

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Overall objective: Enhance touristic attractiveness of the area through the transnational cooperation for the protection and promotion of local natural and cultural heritage and resources.

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Budget: 1.011.737,58 €

ERDF Contribution: 859.976,94 €

National Contribution: 151.760,64 €

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The project area is characterized by rich cultural and natural heritage. Municipalities of Simitli and Strumyani in Bulgaria and Iraklia, Sintiki and Emmanuel Pappa in Greece, run by Struma or Strymonas river, have large areas belonging to Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas.

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Furthermore, belong to low-developed rural and remote areas and bear favorable conditions for the development of eco-tourism, thematic tourism and potential for development of cross border cooperation.

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The similarities in the nature and social environment of the partners address common problems, issues, challenges and opportunities focusing to the protection, management and exploitation of natural and cultural resources and local traditional activities. There is a strong need for improvement of the preservation status and increasing the carrying capacity of cultural and natural sites used for tourist purposes.

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The overall objective of the project is to enhance touristic attractiveness of the area through the transnational cooperation for the protection and promotion of local natural and cultural heritage and resources.

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The project's approach is focusing mainly in three issues. The first refers to the need for infrastructures for improving the preservation status and promoting of the cultural and natural sites and activities of the area.

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The project includes the implementation of works at a recreation area, works for increasing thematic tourists hosting capacity, adventure sports facilities, information centers and a museum for local traditional activities.

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The second, which is that one that is addressing new approaches and tools with cross border character for the area and makes apparent the transnational approach, refers to the enhancement of a common touristic identity through studies, seminars for public servants, professionals and local people and thematic workshops on innovative touristic knowledge.

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The third part of the project is also essential for ensuring the cross border character of the project and giving an added value in its actions. It consists of the development of a network for the professionals and stakeholders of the area through know-how and best practices exchange and common touristic business expeditions.

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The expected results include a better preservation status and increased attractiveness of area's natural and cultural assets for local and international visitors, increased tourist traffic and improved capacities of local authorities and actors to sustainably use area's natural and cultural resources, through the improved infrastructures, the training of personnel and the knowhow and best practices exchange. The above results will contribute in improved, in the long term, living standards and environmental conditions through a better use of natural resources and improved employment opportunities in environmental and touristic services.

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**Pictures from Seminar on Tourist Guides and Professionals under the project
“STRYMONAS COOPERATION CORRIDOR” with acronym “River PLUS”**







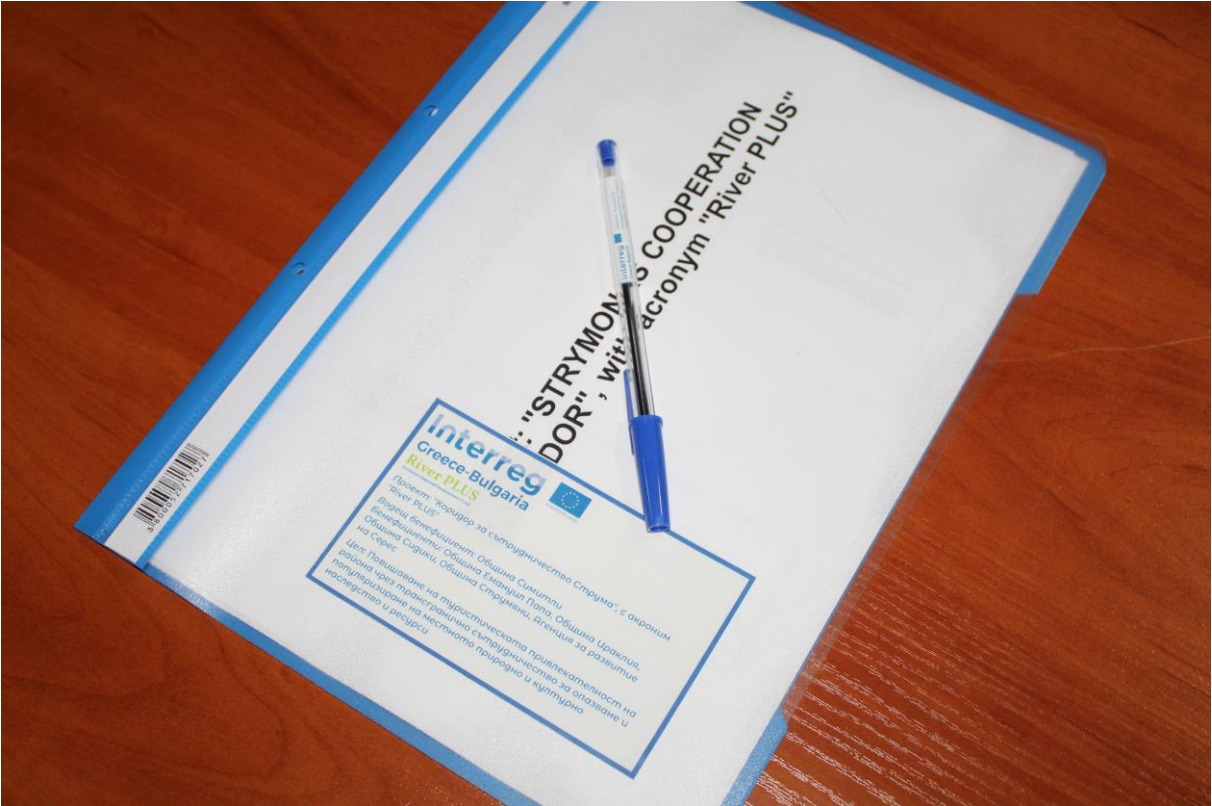








Promotional materials distributed among participants in Seminar or Tourist Guides and Professionals under the project “STRYMONAS COOPERATION CORRIDOR” with acronym “River PLUS”





**Seminar for Tourist Guides and Professionals under the project “STRYMONAS
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TRAINING MATERIALS AND LECTURES**

Potential for tourism development in the CB area Greece-Bulgaria – natural, historical, architectural and other tourism resources - Unlocking the Tourism Potential in the Cross-Border Area of Greece and Bulgaria: A Comprehensive Exploration of Natural, Historical, Architectural, and Other Tourist Resources

Introduction: The cross-border area of Greece and Bulgaria, encompassing the municipalities of Simitli and Strumyani in Bulgaria and Iraklia, Sintiki, Emmanuel Papa, and Serres in Greece, is a treasure trove of diverse and untapped tourism potential. This training material aims to delve into the rich natural, historical, architectural, and other tourist resources that make this region a unique and promising destination. By understanding and harnessing these resources, tourism professionals can contribute to the sustainable development of the area and foster a shared identity among its communities.

Topic 1: Natural Attractions

1.1 Diverse Landscapes:

- Explore the region's diverse natural landscapes, including mountains, valleys, and water bodies.
- Highlight the unique flora and fauna, emphasizing biodiversity as a key attraction.
- Discuss the potential for eco-tourism, hiking, bird-watching, and other nature-based activities.

1.2 Protected Areas and Reserves:

- Identify and showcase protected areas and nature reserves in both countries.
- Discuss the importance of conservation efforts and sustainable tourism practices.
- Encourage the creation of guided tours and educational programs focused on environmental awareness.

Topic 2: Historical and Cultural Heritage

2.1 Ancient Sites and Ruins:

- Delve into the rich historical tapestry of the region, featuring ancient Greek and Roman ruins.
- Highlight archaeological sites and their significance in shaping the cultural identity of the area.
- Discuss the potential for guided tours, historical reenactments, and cultural festivals.

2.2 Traditional Villages and Customs:

- Showcase the charm of traditional villages, preserving local architecture and customs.

- Emphasize the authenticity of local experiences, including folk music, dance, and artisanal crafts.
- Encourage the development of cultural routes that connect key heritage sites.

Topic 3: Architectural Marvels

3.1 Byzantine and Ottoman Influences:

- Explore the architectural legacy left by Byzantine and Ottoman civilizations.
- Highlight mosques, churches, and other historical structures that reflect the region's diverse cultural history.
- Discuss restoration projects and initiatives aimed at preserving architectural heritage.

3.2 Contemporary Architectural Wonders:

- Identify and promote contemporary architectural achievements that contribute to the area's modern appeal.
- Discuss the integration of modern design with traditional elements to create a unique aesthetic.

Topic 4: Other Tourist Resources

4.1 Gastronomy and Culinary Tourism:

- Explore the rich culinary traditions of both CB area of Greece and Bulgaria.
- Showcase local specialties and traditional dishes, promoting gastronomic tourism.
- Discuss the potential for culinary festivals, cooking classes, and farm-to-table experiences.

4.2 Cultural Events and Festivals:

- Highlight existing cultural events and festivals that celebrate the region's identity.
- Encourage the creation of new events to attract visitors throughout the year.

Conclusion: By tapping into the diverse natural, historical, architectural, and cultural resources of the cross-border area between Greece and Bulgaria, tourism professionals have the opportunity to shape a sustainable and vibrant destination. Through collaborative efforts and a shared vision, the region can establish itself as a modern, recognizable, and inclusive tourist destination, bringing economic benefits while preserving its unique identity.

Developed by: Georgi Kunchev

Branding on tourism destinations – good practices

Destination branding is more than just creating a logo or a catchy slogan. It's about cultivating a unique identity that resonates with visitors and distinguishes the region from others. Let's explore some good practices in destination branding that can elevate the cross-border area into a modern and recognizable tourist destination.

Authenticity is Key:

- ❖ Embrace and celebrate the genuine character of the region. Authenticity builds trust and connection with visitors.
- ❖ Showcase local traditions, cultural nuances, and the warmth of the communities. This creates a memorable and unique experience for tourists.

Identifying Unique Selling Propositions (USPs):

- ❖ Analyze the natural, historical, and cultural assets that set the cross-border area apart. What makes it special? These become your USPs.
- ❖ Tailor your branding message to highlight these distinctive features, creating a compelling narrative that attracts a specific target audience.

Consistent Visual Identity:

- ❖ Develop a cohesive visual identity, including a logo, color scheme, and imagery, that reflects the essence of the region.
- ❖ Ensure consistency across all promotional materials, online platforms, and signage to create a unified and easily recognizable brand.

Engaging Storytelling:

- ❖ Craft compelling stories about the destination's history, traditions, and the experiences it offers. Storytelling creates an emotional connection.
- ❖ Utilize various media, including social media, blogs, and video content, to share these stories and engage with a wider audience.

Community Involvement:

- ❖ Involve local communities in the branding process. Their insights and perspectives contribute to an authentic representation of the destination.
- ❖ Encourage local businesses to align with the brand and offer products or services that complement the overall identity.

Sustainable Practices:

- ❖ Highlight the region's commitment to sustainable tourism practices. Responsible tourism is an increasingly important factor in destination choice.
- ❖ Showcase eco-friendly initiatives, conservation efforts, and community-driven projects that demonstrate a dedication to preserving the natural and cultural heritage.

Collaboration and Partnerships:

- ❖ Foster collaborations with neighboring destinations, businesses, and stakeholders. Joint efforts can create a stronger regional brand.
- ❖ Explore partnerships with influencers, travel bloggers, and other opinion leaders who can amplify the destination's reach.

The effective destination branding is a dynamic and ongoing process that requires collaboration, creativity, and a deep understanding of the destination's unique characteristics. By implementing these good practices, we can collectively contribute to the transformation of the cross-border area between Greece and Bulgaria into a modern, recognizable, and sought-after tourist destination.

Developed by: Miroslava Kostadinova

Main obstacles for the development of sustainable tourism in the CB area Bulgaria-Greece

As we embark on this transformative endeavor, it is imperative that we acknowledge and address the main obstacles hindering the development of sustainable tourism in our cross-border region. These challenges are not roadblocks but rather navigational points that require our collective attention, creativity, and commitment.

Balancing Conservation and Visitor Experience:

One of the fundamental challenges we face is striking a delicate balance between conserving our cultural and natural treasures and providing a meaningful experience for our visitors. Preserving the authenticity of our destinations while accommodating the needs and expectations of tourists is a delicate dance.

Infrastructure and Accessibility:

The success of sustainable tourism is intricately linked to the development of infrastructure and accessibility. Insufficient transportation networks, inadequate facilities, and challenges in connectivity can deter potential visitors and hinder the growth of tourism in our region.

Community Involvement and Empowerment:

Sustainable tourism is not solely a business endeavor; it is a communal effort. The active involvement and empowerment of local communities are indispensable. Fostering a sense of ownership and pride among residents is a challenge we must overcome to ensure that tourism benefits the entire community.

Balancing Economic Growth and Environmental Preservation:

Striking a harmonious balance between economic growth generated by tourism and the imperative to protect our natural environment poses a significant challenge. Identifying sustainable practices that contribute positively to the local economy while minimizing environmental impact requires careful consideration and innovative solutions.

Overcoming Perception Challenges:

In a rapidly changing world, perceptions matter. Overcoming preconceived notions or misconceptions about our region, be they related to safety, amenities, or cultural offerings, is an ongoing challenge. Clear and effective communication strategies are essential to reshape perceptions and attract a diverse range of visitors.

Regulatory and Policy Alignment:

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Navigating through a complex web of regulations and policies, both at the national and cross-border levels, can be daunting. Harmonizing these frameworks to facilitate sustainable tourism development requires collaboration, advocacy, and a shared vision among all stakeholders.

Climate Change and Resilience:

Our region, like many others, is not immune to the impacts of climate change. Building resilience in the face of unpredictable weather patterns, natural disasters, and other climate-related challenges is vital for the long-term sustainability of our tourism initiatives.

In conclusion, while these challenges may seem formidable, let us view them as opportunities for growth, learning, and innovation. Our collective dedication to overcoming these obstacles will define the success of our efforts in turning the cross-border area between Bulgaria and Greece into a beacon of sustainable tourism.

Developed by: Yordanka Stamenova

Tourist routes - integrated development of alternative forms of tourism

Understanding the Essence of Tourist Routes:

Tourist routes are not just paths on a map; they are narratives that guide travelers through a tapestry of experiences, connecting cultural, historical, and natural landmarks in a seamless journey. Today, let us explore how integrated development of alternative forms of tourism can breathe life into these routes, offering visitors a multifaceted encounter with the rich tapestry of our cross-border region.

Cultural Routes

Cultural immersion lies at the heart of tourism. Our region is steeped in history and cultural diversity. By designing routes that weave through archaeological sites, museums, and local art hubs, we can offer travelers an enriching cultural odyssey. Let's not just showcase history; let's make it a living, breathing experience.

Eco-Tourism Trails

Our natural resources are treasures waiting to be discovered. Alternative forms of tourism, such as eco-tourism, present an opportunity to explore the region's lush landscapes, picturesque trails, and wildlife sanctuaries. Let's invite travelers to not only witness the beauty of our natural surroundings but to actively participate in their preservation.

Culinary Journeys

The way to a traveler's heart is often through their stomach. Our region boasts a rich culinary heritage. By integrating culinary experiences into our tourist routes, we can tantalize taste buds with local flavors, traditional dishes, and interactions with passionate local chefs. This culinary journey becomes a celebration of our culture on a plate.

Adventure Trails

For the more adventurous souls, we have a wealth of opportunities. Hiking, biking, and outdoor adventures can be seamlessly integrated into our routes. Let's appeal to the thrill-seekers, offering not only adrenaline-pumping activities but also a chance to explore the uncharted beauty of our region.

Community Engagement Routes

Tourism is not just about places; it's about people. Develop routes that encourage interaction with local communities. Let travelers immerse themselves in the daily lives of the residents, fostering a sense of connection and cultural exchange.

Wellness and Spiritual Retreats

Our region has a serene and spiritual side waiting to be explored. Wellness retreats, yoga sessions, and visits to tranquil spiritual sites can be seamlessly integrated into our routes, offering visitors a holistic and rejuvenating experience.

The integrated development of alternative forms of tourism within our tourist routes is not a deviation from the traditional; it is an evolution. It is an invitation for travelers to not just visit but to engage, connect, and carry a piece of our cross-border region in their hearts. As we collectively embark on this journey of exploration, let us craft routes that tell a story, leave a lasting impression, and beckon visitors to return for new chapters.

Developed by: Georgi Kunchev

