

Interreg Europe project CHRISTA – Culture and Heritage for Responsible, Innovative and Sustainable Tourism Actions

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## **PRESS RELEASE – 5 October 2016**

### **Interreg Europe project CHRISTA has capitalized good practices on Intangible Heritage by exchange of experience and exposed it to a wider audience towards sustainable tourism development in Europe**

In the framework of Interreg Europe project CHRISTA (Culture & Heritage for Responsible, Innovative and Sustainable Tourism Actions), the first exchange of experience process started with capitalization of good practices related one of the priority theme 'Intangible Heritage Tourism' between 22 – 24 September 2016 in Guimaraes, Portugal at the 'Platform for Arts and Creativity' centre.

The project meeting was organised by the project partner Intermunicipal Community of Ave, Portugal, in close cooperation with European Cultural Tourism Network, Advisory partner in the project.

The first day, 22 September, started with presentations of intangible heritage assets in 8 project partner destinations and their best practices in deploying them for cultural tourism development and promotion. The project partners with their stakeholders identified, analysed and exchanged the knowledge and practices on the topic 'Intangible Heritage' with innovative character and focused on understanding how the exchange of experience can directly influence improvement of policies, strategies and plans tackled in the project.

External expert, Dr Jordi Tresserras from the University of Barcelona LabPRTC/Ibertur, presented 'State of the Art' of intangible heritage for sustainable cultural tourism and proposed guidelines to generate policies, strategies and operational plans.

The day was concluded with discussions on the key questions: how to deploy Intangible Heritage Assets for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism development and promotion in partner regions and how to improve policy instruments tackled in the project. Synthesis and conclusions were drawn with the contribution of the external expert and ECTN policy advisor.

On the second day, 23 September, the Workshop theme continued and was exposed to a wider audience with keynote speakers, policy makers, experts and external contributors in the conference format, entitled: 'Intangible Heritage: Incomparable Asset for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Development'.

Keynote speakers were: the Vice-Chair of the Commission for Natural Resources, Committee of the Regions, Mr. Anthony Buchanan who spoke about 'Tourism as a Driving Force'; Council member of Europa Nostra, Prof. Konraad Van Balen who presented 10 key findings and 5 strategic recommendations of the study 'Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe'; representative of the European Travel Commission Ms. Iulia Niculica, presented 'The European Tourism Manifest for Growth & Jobs'; and the Chair of NECSTouR Working Group

Cultural Tourism and Cultural Sustainability, Mr. Jose Luis Maestro Castineiras presented good practices, and results on intangible heritage in NECSTouR regions.

The conference was supported and specially addressed by video messages from Claudia Tapardel, Member of the European Parliament, Co-chair of the Intergroup for European Tourism Development, European Parliament Committee on Transport & Tourism Member and Carlo Corazza, European Commission, DG Growth, Head of the Tourism, Emerging and Creative Industries Unit.

Executive Secretary, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and Director of the European Institute of Cultural Routes Dr Stefano Dominioni made live intervention online by presenting the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme and practical examples of cultural and responsible tourism based on the immaterial heritage.

Through a 'Call for Presenters', 21 presentations have been selected in the programme coming from 11 countries, including from CHRISTA project partner's regions.

Presentations were made in 6 parallel sessions on oral traditions & communities; social practices, rituals & festive events; traditional craftsmanship; gastronomy and wine; performing arts, as well as on knowledge and practices by 10 destinations (Vastra Gotalad in Sweden, Volos and Thessaloniki in Greece, Granada and Catalonia in Spain, Vidzeme in Latvia, Vila do Conde in Portugal, Pafos in Cyprus, Burgas in Bulgaria, Sibiu in Romania); 10 universities (3 universities from Georgia, 3 universities from Spain, and 4 universities from Romania, Portugal, Poland, Bulgaria) with one consultancy company from Spain.

All Presenters showcased relevant experience, shared best practices, methods, concepts and provided practical recommendations in order to preserve, deploy and promote intangible heritage for responsible and sustainable tourism development.

During this day, there was a ceremony of the **ECTN Award prize for 'Destination of Sustainable Cultural Tourism 2016'** on the theme **'Intangible Heritage Tourism'**. During the ceremony, the three winners, selected by a Panel of Judges among 23 candidates were announced, honoured with a prize and received special prize with certificate.

Award prize for cultural tourism was initiated by INTERREG IV project CHARTS and for the first time it was organised in 2014.

The Conference day was concluded with a Panel debate on the potential of intangible heritage for innovative, sustainable and responsible tourism development between keynote speakers, externa expert Dr J.Tresserras and ECTN Policy Advisor, Mr Manos Vougioukas.

The third day of exchange of experience, 24 September, was dedicated to Study visits in Ave region, organised around the topic by including two days activites and conclusions/findings presented 'on the ground. CHRISTA project partners together with their stakeholders, key note speakers, experts and other external contributors had an opportunity to visit Guimaraes traditional Needlework and "Lovers Pottery 'Oficina', the railway museum of Arco de Baúlhe and the Tamancos exhibition, to Casa da Lã - Bucos – Cabeceiras de Basto – project for the development of traditional wool craft and demonstrations of a traditional stick fight Luta do Pau - Bucos – Cabeceiras de Basto.

CHRISTA (Culture and Heritage for Responsible, Innovative and Sustainable Tourism Actions) project in the Interreg Europe interregional cooperation programme of EU, aims to **protect** and **preserve natural** and **cultural heritage** assets and **deploy** them for the development and promotion of **innovative, sustainable** and **responsible tourism strategies**, including **intangible** and **industrial heritage**, through **interpretation** and **digitisation**, with **capitalisation** of good practices, **policy learning**, **policy implementation** and **capacity building**.

CHRISTA project started in April 2016, involving 10 partners from 10 EU Member States regional and local authorities, as well as tourism authorities in 9 EU regions.

Project partners are: **Pafos** Regional Board of Tourism (Cyprus, Lead Partner), **European Cultural Tourism Network** (Belgium), **Veneto** Region (Italy), Region of **Central Macedonia** (Greece), Region **Vastra Gotaland** (Sweden), County Council of **Granada** (Spain), **Vidzeme** Tourism Association (Latvia), **Sibiu** County Tourism Association (Romania), **Burgas** Municipality (Bulgaria) and Intermunicipal Community of **Ave** region (Portugal).

During four years, the project partners will focus on the improvement of regional operational programmes, regional/local strategies and plans in nine destination regions, advances in relevant policy implementation, as well as upgrading of cultural and natural assets and innovative applications.

The project main outputs will be Action Plans, with implementation and monitoring of improved Regional Operational Programmes, regional/local Strategies and Plans in nine destination regions, communication and dissemination tools for policy learning and capacity building, contribution to EU policies and EU2020 targets.

**CHRISTA project is made possible by the financial support from the European Union – the Interreg Europe programme and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).**

- Ends -

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## Notes to Editors:

### 1. CHRISTA project Partnership:

Pafos Regional Board of Tourism, Cyprus (Lead Partner)	<a href="http://www.visitpafos.org.cy">www.visitpafos.org.cy</a>
European Cultural Tourism Network, Belgium	<a href="http://www.culturaltourism-network.eu">www.culturaltourism-network.eu</a>
Veneto Region, Italy	<a href="http://www.regione.veneto.it">www.regione.veneto.it</a>
Region of Central Macedonia, Greece	<a href="http://www.pkm.gov.gr">www.pkm.gov.gr</a>
Region Vastra Gotaland, Sweden	<a href="http://www.vastarvet.se">www.vastarvet.se</a>

County Council of Granada, Spain  
 Vidzeme Tourism Association, Latvia  
 Sibiu County Tourism Association, Romania  
 Burgas Municipality, Bulgaria  
 Intermunicipal Community of Ave region, Portugal

[www.dipgra.es](http://www.dipgra.es)  
[www.vidzeme.com](http://www.vidzeme.com)  
[www.sibiu-turism.ro](http://www.sibiu-turism.ro)  
[www.burgas.bg](http://www.burgas.bg)  
[www.cim-ave.pt](http://www.cim-ave.pt)

2. More information about CHRISTA project and activities can be found here:  
<http://www.interregeurope.eu/christa/>

3.

**3. Interreg Europe programme** is one of the instruments for the implementation of the EU's **cohesion policy** and helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy. The Cooperation programme covers the whole territory of the European Union and Norway and Switzerland. The programme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with a budget of €359 million for the 2014-2020 period.

**4. Background information of CHRISTA project –**

The common challenges that are jointly tackled in the CHRISTA project are:

- Natural & Cultural Heritage assets are valuable treasures, sometimes in danger and in need of proper conservation, preservation and/or restoration,
- These assets can be deployed for the purposes of sustainable and responsible tourism development, namely cultural tourism, heritage tourism and ecotourism,
- The tourism potential of these assets may facilitate the preservation and restoration efforts, if performed in a sustainable and responsible way,
- Innovation can contribute greatly towards improving cultural and natural heritage policies for sustainable and responsible tourism development.

