# **EPICAH: THE WORK EVOLVES**

***EPICAH partners meet virtually with renovated efforts and illusion to share their improvements implementing their action plans.***

This meeting, which should have been in Italy, was the first one since the end of 2019 when partners closed the first phase of the project with all their action plans approved and ready for implementation. Today, nine months and one pandemic after, partners proved their resilience and how they overcame COVID-19 effects to get their Action Plans in the good pace for their implementation.

Not all action plans go for the same measures and not all of them suffered the restrictions in the same degree. But in general terms, in spite of suffer some delays; all of them are progressing according to the initial calendar.

As usual, partners’ meeting went far away than expected. In addition to the recap of the project activities and planning future actions within the project, partners explored options to keep the partnership and the network activities alive even once the project finish. Priorities of each region in tourism and heritage policies and how they are being worked on by different governments were also and issue of exchange and debate among partners.

## **Some Action Plans in deep**

At the meeting, each partner could present a summary of its action plan as well as the degree of implementation and perspectives next year. Here some examples of what is being done:

## **SPAIN – PORTUGAL**

The Spanish/Portuguese Action Plan has two actions:

1. Strategic framework for cross-border tourism projects. This action aims to produce, working closely with local stakeholders of the border, a manual to improve the capitalization of the projects presented to the cross-border interreg programme between Spain and Portugal.

The manual is already in well advanced version and ready to be shared with local stakeholders in the coming weeks. In addition to the written consultation, there will be some focus groups with especially relevant institutions before the end of the year, moment in which the manual should be ready to send to the managing authority.

1. Capitalization forum of cooperation projects in the field of tourism for the POCTEP area. This forum had to be postponed due to COVID19 restrictions for meetings. The idea is to organize it as soon as possible in 2021, according to the safety measures and the COVID situation at the beginning of the year. In any case, it will be organized, on-site or virtually, in the first semester of 2021.

## **ITALY – FRANCE**

The Italian/French Action Plan has one action: implement changes in the process of capitalization of the IT-FR Maritime Programme.

In 2019, following the input of ASEV based on the results of EPICAH activities, the lesson learned and the LSG meetings’ results, the IT-FR Maritime Programme activated so called ‘**guided capitalization path**’, which was aimed at identifying possible capitalization actions and economies of scale between the projects. In 2019, about twenty projects of the poles 'Sustainable Tourism' and 'Natural and cultural heritage' participated to this path. In 2020 it has been extended to the projects of the 3rd and 4th calls of two above mentioned poles and to the other poles of the Program. The methodology of the guided capitalization path is now available on the website of the IT-FR Maritime Programme:

<http://interreg-maritime.eu/documents/197474/794500/All.15_metodologia_IT/18a9efb8-07a0-454d-8e25-9bf14360ead6>

In addition, the IT-FR Action Plan includes a **pilot action** dedicated to the experimentation and formalization of a governance model through the establishment of a cross-border governance table for one of the projects of the IT-FR Maritime Program: INTENSE project. The action aims to develop a working mechanism of the table and to verify the possibility of ensuring the sustainability of the integrated products of the Programme through the involvement in the capitalization process of policy makers, institutions, competent authorities and other interested parties (both private and public) that manage the respective areas, themes and data. In the first half of 2020, focus groups were launched to define functions and tasks of the governance table and to identify public and private decision-makers and stakeholders to involve.

## **CZECH REPUBLIC - BAVARIA**

The main objective of the Czech/Bavarian Action Plan is to increase the long-term effectiveness of the development of natural and cultural cross-border heritage in the Czech-Bavarian region through the Cross-border Program. This should be achieved by:

* Improvement of the knowledge of the program's contribution by promotion of the results of individual activities funded by the Cross-border Program;
* Improvement of the level of mutual knowledge among actors across disciplines and thematic disciplines through targeted and proactive coordination of cross-border links;
* Guarantee of the added value of the individual cross-border initiatives and their results thanks to sharing good practices, knowledge transfer and capitalization process.

Until September 2020 forms and procedures that can ensure a sufficient degree of capitalization of the results of cross-border cooperation in the territory were determined. Next, good practices and actors with high potential for development of cross-border cultural and natural heritage were identified, as well as the relevant development areas/ideas. Furthermore, dissemination plan of the results of the cross-border cooperation is nearly developed and first supporting activity is planned for October 2020. The only problem we struggle continuously from the spring are bad condition for travelling across border because of the COVID19 restriction.

## **ESTONIA - LATVIA**

The Estonian/Latvian Action Plan has two actions:

Action 1: capitalisation of the results of the EstLat Programme 2014-2020

We work to overcome low impact and sustainability of single cross-border heritage tourism projects and aim for the integration and capitalisation of routes and further synergies.

In the summer we had networking meetings between implemented and ongoing heritage tourism project coordinators and now further communication with national tourism portals is going on. We presented our ideas also at Est-Lat tourism projects workshop, organised by JTS in August,

Action 2: funding scheme for small-scale projects in the EstLat Programme 2021-2027

According to our survey of 2019, the inhabitants of the border municipalities have significant interest towards the option to carry out local cross-border cooperation in the frames of small projects supported by the Estonia – Latvia Programme 2021-2027. We have presented the overview about the results of the survey to the MA and other stakeholders in spring; also answered 2 surveys by the Programme, on the preferred cooperation topics/forms in summer. In December 2020 we plan Cross-border cooperation seminar/stakeholder meeting to discuss further ideas for people to people projects.

## **ROMANIA-HUNGARY**

The main objective of the Romania-Hungary border Action Plan project is to provide proposals of improvement of the policy instrument Interreg Romania-Hungary Programme concerning the capitalization and preservation of historical, cultural and natural assets of cross-border area in a coherent manner, in order to develop an integrated cross-border thematic destination that will achieve sustainable development.

The **main objectives** of the proposed Action Plan are:

1. Promoting a robust institutional framework, including greater vertical and horizontal integration at local, national and cross border level
2. Promoting a policy mix supporting heritage preservation and tourism growth.

The AP itself is foreseen as a framework for awareness of cooperation between interested stakeholders, without creating legal institutional changes at the present stage, only informal arrangements.

The implementation of the action plan for the Romania-Hungary border is going quite well in terms of mapping and improved management but is quite slow in terms of cross-border networking mainly due to the COVID crisis.

## **SLOVAKIA – HUNGARY**

The Slovakian/Hungarian Action Plan has four actions, two LSG meetings, dissemination event and capitalization workshop:

1. Dissemination event. This action aims to invite representatives of good international practices and a wide range of stakeholders from both sides of the borders to promote and communicate the adaptable solutions in case of cultural and natural heritage as well as cross-border tourism for both the general and professional public. The event is under preparation. It will be organised probably virtually in November of 2020.
2. Capitalisation workshop with Slovakian-Hungarian beneficiaries and potential applicants regarding natural and cultural heritage as well as cross-border tourism This forum had to be postponed due to COVID19 restrictions for meetings. The idea is to organise it as soon as possible in 2020, according to the safety measures and the COVID situation at the beginning of the year. In any case, it will be organised on the site or virtually, at the end of 2020.
3. LSG meetings: One of the LSG meetings held on 18th of September in Tállya (Hungary) with the possibility of online participation too. The event was streamed on Facebook of Tokaj Wine Region Developing Council and in Hegyalja TV (regional television). With the same concept, we wish to organise the second LSG meeting this year too, if the COVID19 restrictions allow us.

More information: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/epicah/>