



# FINCH Regional Action Plan for SOUTH WEST Oltenia Region



*REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY SOUTH WEST OLTENIA*



# **FINCH** - Financing impact on regional development of cultural heritage valorisation

**An interregional cooperation project for improving natural and cultural heritage policies**



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Produced by each region, the **action plan** is a document providing details on **how the lessons learnt** from the cooperation will be implemented in order to **improve the policy instrument** tackled within that region.

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## Project General Information

Project: **FINCH - Financing impact on regional development of cultural heritage valorisation**

**Project partners:**

**Piemonte Region** (Financial Resources and Asset Directorate) – **Lead Partner** (IT)

**University of Turin** – Advisory partner (IT)

**Development Bank of Saxony-Anhalt** (DE)

**Lodzkie Region** (Marshal's Office) (PL)

**Regional Development Agency South-West Oltenia** (RO)

**Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia** (FI)

**Region of Thessaly** (Department of Development Programming)(GR)

Partner organisation(s) concerned: **Regional Development Agency South West Oltenia**

Country: **Romania**

NUTS2 region: **South – West Oltenia**

Financing investments in heritage has a **direct impact on growth and a considerable potential for creating new jobs**, which leads to long-term social and economic benefits. The EU's cohesion policies can be an instrument in promoting the valorisation of cultural heritage. That's why **seven partners from six European regions have decided to join their efforts to face the challenge of conservation, restoration, valorisation and management of cultural heritage with the involvement of private actors**.

The **overall project objective** is to increase the economic and social impact of cultural heritage valorisation activities by improving related policies and facilitating the involvement of private actors (mainly no-profit oriented or young entrepreneurs) in the conservation, restoration, valorisation and management of cultural heritage, through partnership between public and private sector and with financial instruments support.

**Specific objectives** of the project are:

- **to support public authorities in increasing available resources for investments** in cultural heritage conservation, protection and exploitation (through methodological tools to define and adopt light financial instruments);
- **to create more favorable regional framework** conditions to strengthen the partnership with the private sector in the field of in the conservation, restoration, valorization and management of cultural heritage;



- **to strengthen the role of all relevant stakeholders, enabling the adoption of Regional Action Plans** for regional policies improvement and awareness raising among politicians and policymakers.

## Project partner General Information

**Regional Development Agency South-West Oltenia (RDA SW)** is one of the 8 regional bodies created to manage regional development in Romania. For 2014-2020 period, RDA SW Oltenia is an Intermediate Body for the Regional Operational Programme at regional level. Also, RDA is carrying out the following main activities: regional planning and programming, regional marketing and promotion of investments, managing business initiatives such as grant schemes, innovation projects and clusters.

For 2021-2027 period, RDA SW was designated Managing Authority for the Regional Operational Programme for South West Oltenia Region. The programme will take into consideration the needs and challenges identified within the Regional Development Plan.

Its mission is to facilitate the transfer of knowledge between public and private actors in the field of cultural heritage protection, valorization, management and exploitation, to promote dynamic and innovative actions, events and projects in the region's cultural heritage, to offer solutions to their needs in terms of innovative methods of assuring the required operational funding. RDA SW aims its services at key strategic areas of RIS3.

## Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:  Investment for Growth and Jobs programme  
 European Territorial Cooperation programme  
• **Other regional development policy instrument**

Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed: **The Regional Development Plan – Priority: The development of tourism, capitalization of natural heritage and cultural-historical heritage.**

In the context in which the ROP policy instrument, chosen in the project, is difficult to influence at this time, RDA, after consultation with the main stakeholders, considered other policy instrument according to period of time and which can have an effect on the territory.

Other policy development achieved thanks to the project is related to a modification of the policy instrument - **The Regional Development Plan (RDP)**, with emphasis on the economical valorisation of the touristic potential of the region based on the identification of new financing solutions and the digitalisation of the cultural heritage.

The RDP represents the strategic basis for substantiating the projects initiated in the region and is a benchmark both for the national authorities regarding the justification of the financing programs, and for the county / local authorities and potential public or private investors.

The RDP was developed for periods corresponding to the planning process at European level. For the period 2014-2020, PDR was approved by CDR SV Oltenia in February 2015.



The revision of the RDP is a long process and involves both specific analysis, consultations with regional partners and reconsideration of measures / priorities depending on the lessons learnt from different projects (including FINCH) and the final document is materialized in the new Development Plan of the Region. The process of revising the RDP started in 2019 and all the analysis and lessons learnt from FINCH could be integrated in the document.

The RDP for 2021-2027 is published on website for public consultation since June 2020 and it will be officially approved by the Regional Development Board.

## Policy Change

The update of the RDP started during Semester 3 of the FINCH project. In this document, thanks to the participatory process of identification and documentation of good practices in the field of protection, management and sustainable capitalization of cultural heritage within FINCH project, there were several lessons learned about financial instruments and / or public-private partnerships that can be used in order to sustainably capitalize on the cultural heritage of our region.

All the possible transfers of experiences were discussed with the regional stakeholders (representants of county council or local councils, museums) during the FINCH regional meetings but also during the thematic working groups organized for the Regional Development Plan.

Many of the RDP key actors were involved in FINCH Stakeholder Group meetings. (for example, Mehedinti County Council, Dolj County Council). More, these key actors which were presents both in FINCH and RDP meetings, are members of the Regional Committee which is in charge with the approval of the RDP.

So that, based on the lessons learned from FINCH, several financing solutions were identified through various financial instruments such as micro-grants, crowdfunding, or loans (based on the example from Magdeburg Region). All these were integrated in the RDP as possible solutions to stimulate the participation of private actors, mainly young and innovative entrepreneurs, of NGOs, in public-private partnerships. It was also foreseen to boost up local digitalisation of the cultural heritage as already made with the Citynomadi mobile app realised to visit the Water Trail in Finland.

Regional Development Plan is a strategic document outlining the priorities of the Region in terms of competitiveness, social cohesion and sustainable development and responding to the specific challenges and needs. One of the priorities addressed in the RDP refers to the development of tourism, capitalization of natural heritage and cultural-historical heritage.

Fostering the development of cultural heritage and tourism is one of the priorities of the South-West Oltenia Regional Development Strategy 2021-2027. Under the Regional Priority 6 *Development of tourism, capitalization of natural heritage and cultural-historical heritage*, Field of intervention 6.1 *Conservation, protection and capitalization of the natural and cultural heritage of the region*, the role and importance of the development of tourism, capitalization of natural heritage and cultural-historical heritage at the regional level are further reaffirmed and readdressed.

Indicative operations in support of all the above are provided, such as:

- ✓ Restoration, protection and tourist capitalization of the architectural and cultural heritage and their endowment accordingly;



- ✓ Economic capitalization of the spa, speleological, saline, archaeological potential and of the natural resources;
- ✓ Restoration, consolidation, protection and conservation of historical monuments;
- ✓ Creating the necessary infrastructure for the enhancement of the natural heritage;
- ✓ Increasing access to cultural and architectural heritage objectives;
- ✓ Support for initiatives to capitalize on ethnographic and ethnic specifics;
- ✓ Financing solutions through various financial instruments, e.g. micro-grants, crowdfunding or loans;
- ✓ Increasing the digitization of cultural heritage

In the framework of FINCH Interreg Europe project, the current action plan is aiming at transferring the best practices and lessons learnt during Phase 1 of the project. Thus, the action plan provides details on how the lessons learnt from the partnership will be exploited in order to improve the policy instruments proposed to be enforced. It foresees the main actions to be implemented within a specific timeframe, the stakeholders involved, the costs and funding sources and documents on how to implement all of them successfully. In this sense, the Action Plan is structured in order to impact on the mentioned instrument of both the current and the future programming period, as described earlier.

## Details of the actions envisaged

The necessity and opportunity of choosing the actions was based on data and information on the current situation in the region regarding the cultural heritage and on the potential of transfer of the good practices identified in the partner regions.

The Regional Development Agency will envisage 3 actions which can be integrated in a broader framework: **Support the cultural heritage valorisation, Strategy for sustainable development of cultural heritage tourism in the South-West OLTENIA REGION as a supporting tool for the Regional Development Plan, Updating and monitoring the Regional Development Plan.**

### ACTION 1: Support the cultural heritage valorisation

#### Relevance to the project

As a partner in the FINCH project, RDA SW Oltenia aims to optimize and consolidate the specific policy instruments in the territory of The South-West Oltenia Region in Romania and to contribute to the improvement of their performance as a result of interregional learning. Cultural heritage is one of the areas that has a significant competitive advantage from the perspective of tourism resources offered by the SW Oltenia region.

Cultural heritage-related tourism has seen in the last years a rising dynamics in the demand and consumption of cultural heritage tourism services as a result of the increasing interest of the population in artistic, literary, scientific, religious events. The South-West Oltenia Region is noticed by an intense cultural activity, supported by the institutions. The development of this segment of tourism services is underpinned by the diversity of regional, material and immaterial cultural heritage, with unique elements at national and even international level, which are properly promoted, can



significantly contribute to shaping and defining a cultural identity of the South-West Oltenia region. This is a region that brings together not only historical edifices and monuments but also cultural-historical, ethnographic, artistic and religious values represented by different traditions and forms of artistic expression. Some examples of values in the region: numerous old churches and monasteries, the native house and village of renowned sculptor C. Brancusi, outdoor exhibition of Brancusi sculptures, specific folklore treasures of peasant art, clothes, dances and music, the old wineries in the hilly landscapes, village museums, local village fairs, archeologic sites from Roman conquest period, renowned old spas etc.

Cultural heritage is an essential ingredient for our communities that are vibrant and dynamical. It has the power to transform and innovate, and across the region and the local communities agree and are acknowledging and leveraging the contribution of cultural heritage to their community. Across SW Oltenia region, municipalities are working towards a common goal of harnessing the cultural energy of their unique communities as a way of promoting the culture, and contributing to and planning for growth and development. Through the development of cultural heritage plans, municipalities are taking a lead role in identifying and leveraging a community's cultural resources, strengthening the management of cultural heritage resources, and integrating those cultural resources across all components of local government planning and decision-making. The result - the overall advancement of a vibrant, culturally rich community for current and future residents.

In the South-West Oltenia region, according to official data published by the National Heritage Institute in 2015, there are 3,322 historical monuments. In the region, their number is distributed among the component counties as follows: 700 monuments in Dolj county, 503 in Gorj county, 570 in Mehedinti, 758 in Olt and 791 in Valcea county. Out of a total of 391 category A monuments, about 239 are located in rural areas. However, cultural heritage faces important challenges in terms of gradually deteriorating physical conditions. The condition of most monuments is poor, and the quality of cultural heritage sites or related activities is considered poor by the visitors. A good part of them requires preservation, protection or investment for their development and capitalisation by inclusion in tourist circuits. Public tourism infrastructure remains precarious. Despite investments made in previous programming periods, the needs for upgrading reception capacities and recreational facilities remain high.

The FINCH project emphasizes the importance of the cultural heritage and tourism for long-term social and economic benefits and helps regions to improve their policies in this field. A major deliverable of the project's first phase is the *Living Document on Financial Instruments and Regulatory Frameworks for the Introduction of Partnership with Private Sector* ('Living Document') that was composed by the project Advisory Partner, the University of Turin, and that collects approaches on financial instruments and regulatory frameworks regarding the cultural heritage sector with special attention to the possibilities for partnerships between public and private actors.

In order to increase the tourist attractiveness, other factors must be considered, besides the European Funds/ROP interventions, such as: the existence of a technical-material base (reception-accommodation structures, public alimentation structures, leisure structures) and of the general infrastructure access - road, rail, air, naval). RDA SW will support the stakeholders through increasing awareness about funding possibilities and offering inspiration for adopting new approaches to valorise cultural heritage objectives.



## Nature of the action

Actions will be materialized through:

- ***Specific guidance to strategic planning in tourism and cultural heritage in compliance with the EC strategies and recommendations through events, direct meetings and online/offline publications;***

Complying with a range of policies and regulations may at first seem overwhelming. This guidance via publications or events/meetings will offer practical steps and information for getting started and for developing tools and approaches that can benefit all parties. This is also an opportunity to bring all the stakeholders together and to continue the cultural heritage working group created for the FINCH project. Stakeholder consultation and engagement processes can result in unexpected opportunities to innovate and collaborate on shared challenges, build trust and credibility, and improve outcomes.

RDA will provide support to design the strategies and projects for tourism and cultural heritage and to identify appropriate funding opportunities.

- ***Information on the opportunities to obtain funding through events, direct meetings and online/offline publications;*** Information will be presented in understandable and culturally appropriate format; This will also contribute to increase the administrative capacity at local level to develop and implement regional policies;

The main objective of this action is to provide guidance and measures for new projects related with preservation and promotion of the natural and cultural heritage. The operationalisation of this action will contribute to the improvement of the policy instrument by achieving RPP indicators related to tourism and cultural heritage. One of the funding sources for RDP priorities is the Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027 in South West Oltenia Region for which the Regional Development Agency South West Oltenia will act as Managing Authority. Through the types of actions supported, there will be: *development of public tourism infrastructure and public tourism assets and the conservation, protection and sustainable exploitation of cultural heritage*. These specific actions fall under **Policy Objective 5 – A Europe closer to the citizens** and a specific territorial strategy is required in order to finance the projects. So, the guidance offered to the stakeholders in terms of strategic planning and compliance with EC rules will provide a suitable framework for financing new projects. This will help to reach the indicators relates to the capacity of supported cultural and tourist infrastructures and number of tourists/visits in supported sites.

All the relevant information will be available through the web page dedicated to FINCH project already created on RDA web site. As proposed **targets for the action**, there are: *the number of potential beneficiaries: 5 County Councils and the localities declared as touristic resorts in the region, webpage updated with accessible information on funding on cultural heritage, 2 meetings with the potential beneficiaries*.

## Stakeholders involved

- ✓ FINCH project partner's team RDA SWO;
- ✓ Representatives – five county councils and municipality councils in SWO region;
- ✓ County and Municipal Tourism Entrepreneurs professional associations;



- ✓ Representatives of tourism professional associations acting in the five counties and head municipalities, tourism clusters;

✓

Timeframe: Period 2021-2023

Costs: 5.000 Euro

Funding sources: RDA budget

## ACTION 2: Strategy for sustainable development of cultural heritage tourism in the South-West OLTENIA REGION as a supporting tool for the Regional Development Plan

### Relevance to the project

The regional competition requires the search for and use of new tourist sites and resources to be used in compliance with the principles of sustainable development. The opportunities that SWO Region offers as a cultural heritage and recreation destination are not sufficiently developed or keep fresh potential that waits to be discovered and take its deserved place in innovative tourist services.

The purpose of the Strategy is to clearly map out the development path of cultural heritage tourism in the SW Oltenia region and to serve as the basis for the development of an Action Plan. The idea is based on the experience and lessons learned from study tours within FINCH project in Italy and Poland, as well as a staff exchange programme participation in EU countries. It becomes clear that it is required to work out the strategic documents as a base for further improvement of cultural heritage tourism capitalization in the SWO region that has an extensive list of local stakeholders and are important for development and implementation of strategic documents.

Tourist attractions are rarely grouped in a single locality. Many suburban and periurban towns have a high concentration of heritage buildings. In Vâlcea County, for exemple, the surrounding towns gather more heritage buildings than the municipality of Râmnicu Vâlcea county residence. This obviously requires integrated approaches - from the coordinated development of tourism infrastructure to the joint promotion of larger areas.

	Distribution of historical heritage in the main city		Sourrounding Urban Area	
	Architectural Monuments	Monuments Category A	Architectural Monuments	Monuments Category A
Craiova	264	17	96	18
Drobeta-Turnu Severin	136	11	51	13
Slatina	100	4	61	7



Târgu Jiu	51	6	84	15
Râmnicu Vâlcea	44	11	211	45

Source: Romanian Ministry of Culture (World Bank)

For the next programming period, in order to access funding for cultural heritage and touristic sites, it is necessary to **envisage an Integrated territorial strategy with a focus on the tourism approach**.

Tourism is one of the most important economic areas for the development of the region. It has an important role for the region, offers high externalities for retail trade, local services and for improving the quality of living as a resident, but at the same time is heavily influenced by local conditions such as transport, leisure and cultural services. The needs in the sector cover issues such as labour (skilled workers), infrastructure (quality accommodation, sufficient beds, good road infrastructure) and investment in the attractiveness of the place. All the missing points of the aforementioned needs undermine the potential of a particular area to become a catalyst in the region.

That is why is so important to formulate an integrated strategy on which to base the planning and development of tourism and cultural heritage in the region. Also, it is a great opportunity to generate more sustainable projects and to increase the administrative capacity.

This action is interconnected with the first one, but it is focused on creating a proper policy framework which will support the development of tourism and cultural heritage in the region.

The influence of the FINCH project on elaborating this document is concrete and visible in the greater emphasis placed on cultural heritage. The FINCH project has offered new perspectives on heritage management, financing and valorization of cultural heritage and touristic assets in sustainable ways and these aspect will be integrated in the Strategy, as a guiding policy instrument that does not include a budget or allocate funding.

## Nature of the action

*The specific activities to be implemented:*

- 1) Preparation of a comprehensive status quo analysis of cultural heritage tourism development in the SWO region including the main types of cultural heritage tourist assets that are popular in the region. Carrying out a status quo analysis will define the state, trends and factors for the development of cultural heritage tourism in the region, the place counties and municipalities on the cultural heritage tourist services market and its competitive advantages. The analysis will identify the main issues of cultural heritage tourism development as well as identifying the priority areas.
- 2) Elaboration of a strategic framework of the Strategy for Cultural Heritage Tourism Development in SWO region. The strategic framework will include:
  - **a vision** (a short and clear presentation of the desired future state of cultural heritage tourism in the SWO region, following the guidelines for enhancing capitalisation of this sector);
  - **a mission** (according to the vision and outlines the intermediate steps towards the implementation of the cultural heritage tourism policy in the counties of SWO region);



- **strategic goals** (assist in achieving the vision and set the scope of priority development areas) and **priority areas** (help achieve the vision, mission and goals).

- 3) Drafting the Action Plan (The Action Plan serves to present an effective and efficient mechanism for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy. The Action Plan proposes actions which are feasible in terms of competencies, resources and deadlines.)
- 4) Development of a Mechanism for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy. The mechanism will provide reliable feedback on the state/implementation of the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Cultural Heritage Tourism in SWO region for the period 2021 – 2023, helping to take the right management decisions, promoting the popularization and accountability of the actions undertaken to all stakeholders and undertaking the corrective measures, if necessary, in order to have progress on achieving the results.
- 5) Conducting consultations on the Strategy drafting, involving all stakeholders committed to the development of cultural heritage tourism in SWO region (The stakeholders will be consulted in order to reach a common agreement on the overall draft of the Strategy and Action Plan as well as on the cooperation and support in their future implementation).

#### Stakeholders involved

- ✓ FINCH project partner's team RDA SWO and task delegation;
- ✓ Representatives – five county councils and head municipalities of SWO region;
- ✓ Five county councils and head municipality citizens;
- ✓ Tourism Advisory Council at five counties' level;
- ✓ County and Municipal Tourism Entrepreneurs associations;
- ✓ Representatives of the tourist services in five county councils and head municipalities - managers of travel agency, places of accommodation and catering companies;
- ✓ Representatives of tourism associations acting in the five counties and head municipalities, tourism clusters;
- ✓ Mass media and journalists working in the field of tourism;
- ✓ The Directors of the main museums in the five counties of SWO region;

#### Timeframe: 2021-2022

Considering the extent of this action, it is possible that it could exceed the period of FINCH project, an indicative timeframe for each specific activity is presented below:

- Analysis of cultural heritage and tourist assets – November 2021
- Identification of main needs, challenges and opportunities, SWOT – February 2022
- Public consultations with the stakeholders – April/May 2022
- Elaboration of a strategic framework of the Strategy – June 2022
- Action Plan – July 2022
- Mechanism for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation – September 2022



Costs: 10.000 Euro

Funding sources: RDA budget

