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REGIONAL ACTION PLAN OF HARGHITA COUNTY



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Harghita County Council



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Contents

Part I. General information	1
Part II. Policy context	1
Part III. Project background	3
General description of the area	5
Results from researches, interviews, questionnaires, statistical data	6
SWOT analysis	9
Stakeholders.....	11
Summary Matrix of the Actions.....	20
Finding solutions for the problems from the good practices of the INTERREG partners Good Practices	22
Part IV. Details of the Actions Envisaged	26
Action 1 – Infrastructure development of heritage tourism	26
Action 2 – Widening and strengthening regional network of heritage tourism – production and promotion	32
Action 3 - Support for heritage tourism - workshop for the LEADER Action Groups, institutions and authorities in Szeklerland.....	35
Result indicators	38
Risk assessment.....	39
Impacts	40

Action Plan for Harghita County, Romania

Part I – General Information

Project: *Local Flavours: Authentic tourism based on local cultural flavours*

Partner organization(s) concerned: *Harghita County Council*

Country: *Romania*

NUTS2 region: *Centre Region, Romania*

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Part II – Policy Context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs program
- European Territorial Cooperation program
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed: *Regional Operational Program 2021-2027; National Strategic Program on rural development.*

Due to the fact that Regional Operational Program is not yet approved and the structural political and pandemic problems could further delay implementation, the action plan propose changes in two policy instruments.

Further details on the policy context and the way the Action Plan should contribute to improve the policy instrument:

- 1. The first policy instrument addressed is the Regional Operational Program 2021-2027**, Priority Axis 5: Improving the urban environment and conservation, protection and sustainable use of cultural heritage.

Harghita County Council intends to improve the targeted policy instrument by proposing changes in its management and implementation, as follows:

- Observations and proposals by the Harghita County Council (CCHR) regarding version 0 of the Regional Operational Program (ROP) 2021-2027 of the Center Region, submitted as address no. 22737 / 30.06.2020 of the Center Regional Development Agency (A.D.R.) Through the address no. 14987 / 10.07.2020 of CCHR, the following modifications / completions were proposed on the topic of cultural tourism:
 - o Online promotion of tourist products and attractions
 - o Financing of programs for the creation of (cultural) tourist destinations
 - o Financing the publication of promotional materials (films, spots on tourist destinations and hand crafts in the area)
 - o Construction or development of the infrastructure of information centres, theme parks - gastronomy workshops, shepherding demonstration sites, lookout towers and viewpoints.
 - o Investments in cultural infrastructure. Besides the rehabilitation and modernization of existing cultural infrastructure, there is a need in large and medium urban centres to create and equip new cultural spaces and multifunctional buildings.
- In its address no. 26558 / 12.11.2020 “containing Annex 1 to the Proposals and comments to Version 1 of the ROP 2021-2027 for the Centre Region”, Harghita County Council proposed the following changes and completions on the topic of cultural tourism:
 - o Supporting thematic and alternative tourism (gastronomic tourism, wine tourism, cycling tourism, adventure tourism, heritage tourism incl. handicrafts, religious tourism, forest schools, spa tourism, camps for people with disabilities, etc.)
 - o Construction or development of the infrastructure of information centres, theme parks – gastronomy workshops, shepherding demonstration sites
 - o Conservation, protection and sustainable use of cultural, natural, religious heritage and traditional crafts,
 - o Development of utility infrastructure and the network of municipalities to support the sustainable development of cultural and leisure tourism and the promotion of local crafts.
- In address no. 55388 / 02.08.2021 containing “Annex 1 “Proposals and observations to Version 2 of the ROP 2021-2027, for the Center Region”, the Harghita County Council proposed the following changes and completions on the topic of cultural tourism:
 - o Supporting thematic and alternative tourism (gastronomic tourism, wine tourism, cycling tourism, adventure tourism, artisanal / craft tourism, religious tourism, forest school camps, spa tourism, camps for people with disabilities, etc.)
 - o Construction of centres, theme parks in order to preserve and promote religious traditions, local handicrafts;
 - o Construction or development of information centres, theme parks, gastronomy workshops, shepherding demonstration sites, viewpoints

Harghita County Council will work closely with the Managing Authority in contributing to any further version of the ROP 2021-2027.

- 2. The second policy instrument addressed in the framework of this project is the National Strategic Program (NSP) on rural development.** The LEADER programme is going to be part of NSP. As a local development method LEADER has been used for 30 years to engage local actors in the development and implementation of local strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of rural areas. In the rural development context, LEADER is implemented under the national and regional Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) of each EU Member State, co-financed from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). As a Community Led Local Development (CLLD) initiative, LEADER is an integrated development process designed to engage, enable, resource and empower local communities in undertaking their own local development. **Thanks to interregional cooperation, LAGs from other regions find inspiration and bring in new types of projects that are funded from their programs. And since the funding fund is available, for the first implementation, a policy change will take place.**

Part III – The Project’s Background

The purpose of the Action Plan is to establish the main guidelines for conservation, protection and sustainable use of cultural heritage in Harghita County, with particular emphasis on the protection of local values and traditional folk costumes and the possibility of their touristic utilisation.

The main guidelines are based on:

- results obtained from meetings with local stakeholders / partners,
- good practices acquired during international meetings of project partners.

By focusing regional thematic calls for proposals, and improving the project selection process, the targeted Policy Instruments (PI) can be better positioned to tackle the following strategic goals of Harghita County:

- Boosting sustainability through sharper focus on the exploitation of local resources based on the authentic tourism potential in Harghita County,
- More balanced regional cooperation among the stakeholders in tourism.

Description of factors influencing policies:

Changes in Operational Programs: influencing managing authorities to modify existing measures or even creating new measures in existing programs, based on lessons learned.

The proposed performance indicator in relation to the policy instrument addressed is the number of supported projects related to heritage tourism.

Project background – why focus on the traditional costumes?

In order to understand the identity of the citizens of Harghita County, it's important to know that 6,5% of the population of Romania is Hungarian (1.237.746 persons from the total of 19.042.936¹).

Harghita County has the highest percentage of Hungarians in Romania, just ahead of Covasna County. The vast majority of municipalities has Hungarian population, the few Romanian villages are located in the northern and eastern part of the county. The population density in Harghita county is 46 people/km², so there are no big cities, it is mainly a rural area, an inner periphery of Romania.

Szeklers maintain a different set of traditions and different identity from that of other Hungarians in Romania and even in Hungary. The three counties of the unofficial Szeklerland – Harghita, Covasna, and Mureş – have a combined ethnic Hungarian population of 609,033 people.

In the past centuries the process of making clothes was part of the everyday life of the families. They cultivated hemp for making textiles and flax for making fibres. The wool was used long before the hemp and the flax and was a perfect method of zero-waste approach, after clipping the sheep. Nearly all of the men's clothes were made of wool and many pieces of woman's clothing too. The leather was used for making footwear, but also vests or fur coats. The climate of Harghita county is not suitable for cotton production, so cotton was bought on markets and later in stores. Due to its cheapness, it had been used more and more until it replaced the hemp and flax almost entirely.

The value of the textiles was appreciated much more than nowadays mainly because of the time needed for preparing them. 25-30 hours of work was needed to make one meter of canvas. Often a blanket had a higher price than the bed. Girls had to learn these crafts already in their childhood.

The use of minority symbols gradually receded during communism. Only traditional costumes survived being so personal that it could not be banned. In the communist era the Szekler costume however became a specific clothing used on theatrical stages. It was used by students at school events or by those, who played in amateur theatres or folk-dance groups. These costumes were made by old people who still had the knowledge about how to make them, but they were made of new, cheap materials and fabrics bought in stores.

The uniformization of folk costumes which had unique characteristics in each settlement is definitely an important problem. We must strive to find, revive and preserve these

¹
<https://insse.ro/cms/files/statistici/comunicate/alte/2012/Comunicat%20DATE%20PROVIZORII%20RPL%202011e.pdf>

differences. These are important resources that provide an experience for tourists who come from countries and regions where folk costumes have been forgotten.

After the revolution in 1989 a rebirth of the Szekler folk costume is noticeable. Many of those people who want to have Szekler costumes are interested in the older, traditional version. For this purpose, we have different sources to research.

Nowadays, when we can easily change our clothes, following fashion or our personal needs, we don't remember anymore how much our ancestors had to work to create their own clothing. Our attitude is very different from theirs and we have forgotten the old processes of making textiles at home. The knowledge is still in the memory of some people, but if we lose them, we lose a knowledge which was an important part of the everyday life, a world which was connected with different crafts and techniques.

No wonder, that Szekler costumes had become symbols of this small society. Some old people make serious efforts to revive, keep and spread the habit of wearing traditional costumes - even among the youth.

The goal of the project is to use this cultural particularity of the region as a tourism attraction.

Summary of the chapter: In this chapter we highlighted why it is important for the Szekler people to keep the traditional folk costume. We have shown that, although mass products come to the fore in the process of globalization and styles and fashion change, in our region there are lots of people who preserve, follow and live folk traditions. They wear proudly the hundreds of years old folk costume pieces on local festivities and family events.

General description of the area

Harghita County lies in the middle of Romania, it has a total area of 6,639 km². It is the meeting point of the Transylvanian Basin and the Eastern Carpathians. It is renowned for its rich traditions, authentic folk art, its beautiful landscapes, unique and very rich natural treasures. It is a predominantly rural area since the relief is mostly determined by mountains, gorges and beautiful lakes. All this provides a high potential for tourism built on natural resources and valuable cultural heritage. The county has 35 protected areas and national parks; more than 2000 mineral springs; mountaineering and skiing resorts; a very important pilgrimage destination; small crafts dating back several hundred years; folk arts.

Harghita County is no exception to the declining population of Europe, nor to the processes of population ageing. The population decline in Harghita County is similar to that in the rest of the country. Over the past 20 years, the population has declined by just over 3%, of which a 1.6% decline occurred after 2007. The average age has increased by 5 years in the past 20 years. The number of young people in Harghita County has decreased by 30% in the

last 20 years and the proportion of elderly people has increased by 30%. In the county, 10% more people live in the countryside than in the city, numbers show a slight increase².

According to official statistics, Harghita County had 409 tourist accommodation units in 2017, with a total capacity of 488,269 annual guest nights. However, a mere 20,3% of this capacity is utilized, suggesting that the tourism potential of the area is far from being properly exploited. Small and medium sized towns of the county with rich cultural heritage are Borsec, Baile Tusnad and Miercurea Ciuc (their tourist sites are Harghita Bai and Sumuleu Ciuc respectively). The uncompetitive presentation and visibility of their attractions and the lack of professional heritage management mechanisms are seriously contributing to their low performance in tourism.

National level information databases on tourism are underdeveloped in Romania and it is an additional bottleneck that databases managed by different institutions are not interconnected. As a result of the implementation of Local Flavours project these institutions will work together.

Summary of the chapter:

The chapter presents the geographical location, climatic and ethnographic characteristics of the target area, in order to provide some background for the Local Flavours project to help the development of tourism in the county.

Results from researches, interviews, questionnaires, statistical data

Situation analysis:

The starting point of the status-quo analysis was the first Local Stakeholder Group meeting. Stakeholders agreed that folk costumes and living traditions are a feature of the area that is worth exploiting, developing, and may even become a strong pillar of the area's value proposition in tourism. However, they also agreed that traditions can only become a real regional resource if, in addition to improved dissemination, traditions are preserved, displayed and propagated in a way which ensures the preservation of their original form. This is very important because if modern elements are allowed to enter the realm of traditions, they are slowly incorporated, posterity can no longer distinguish the original from the mixture, and as more and more elements become incorporated, tradition loses its authenticity, merges into the ordinary, and no longer represents a special feature on which to build.

The main topic of the local stakeholders meeting was an inventory of the situation of the traditional Szekler costume. They identified the problems in this field and drew up possible solutions or at least they emphasised the importance of raising awareness of these problems.

² Source: http://elemzo.hargitamegye.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/AnalizaSiStrategie_20161012.pdf

In order to get a comprehensive picture of the existing situation of traditional costumes in the county, we gathered statistical data from all those county level institutions which are involved in preserving folk tradition. These institutions and their representatives are the local stakeholders of cultural heritage protection. The most important institutions are:

- Harghita County Council
- Harghita National Szekler Folk Ensemble
- András Foundation
- Harghita County Cultural Centre
- Harghita County Folk Art School
- Centre of Traditional Culture-Preservation Harghita County
- Szekler Museum of Csík
- NGOs and folk ensembles in the county.

Conclusion of the research, identified problems

On the first stakeholders meeting the following problems were identified: a small number of the folk costumes; spreading popularity of not authentic, confection “folk” costumes; wearing inappropriate footwear with the folk costume; lack of consultation on the right form of traditional costumes; lack of the quality raw materials; small number of dressmakers; a small number of manufacturers of traditional shoes and boots; saving authentic folk costumes; lack of traditional folk costume shops; lack of clothing rental services; lack of training and career guidance; lack of vocational trainings in this field.

Our research has shown that our traditions, that couldn't be practiced for many decades during the communist dictatorship, are now alive and they grow year by year. They revival is wide spread, not only at individual events, and not only by cultural actors, but everyday people are also happy and proud to wear their traditional attire. It is an expression of national identity, belonging and unity.

At the same time, the analysis also highlighted the shortcomings and dangers that require concrete solutions. A well-developed action plan is needed to prevent our traditional costumes to become distorted, old patterns to get forgotten. The strategy has to ensure that the same enthusiasm and pride remains in future generations.

This should result in further increase of number of people wearing them as seen from their parents, grandparents, teachers and leaders.

In the second meeting of the local stakeholders, good practices from the INTERREG project were presented. Our goal was to identify possibilities of the further exploitation of local cultural resources. Proposals were drawn up for the conservation, protection and sustainable capitalization of the cultural heritage of Harghita County, with special emphasis on the protection of local values, respectively the traditional folk costume.

We can be proud that while globalization has eradicated traditions and differences in much of the world, the tradition in our region is alive and nurtured by thousands.

What are tourists curious about? Our cultural, anthropological environment can become the basis of new tourism offers? Who are we? What defines us? What can we provide that elsewhere in the world tourists don't get?

If we combine this cultural tradition with the opportunities provided by clean air, beautifully managed landscapes, biodiversity, traditional folk crafts and gastronomy based on local ingredients and traditional recipes, local resources can be used in new ways. Multiple meetings with stakeholders have outlined the issues to address in order to make progress in the use of Szekler traditional clothing in tourism. We highlighted these in the SWOT analysis and based on them, we identified the challenges that the Action Plan responds to.

In order to maintain the authentic look of costumes, it is important to highlight the difference between cheap, low-quality uniforms and authentic folk costumes. Wool and hemp is replaced with plastic textiles. But the quality of the celebration dresses used for important events determines the self-esteem and identity of both the individual and the community. Awareness needs to be raised; poor quality needs to be reduced. To this end, we propose Action 1 - the Slowdress program, in the action plan.

In order to raise awareness, we propose to organize promotional events. It's important to involve the youth, starting from an early age. At the same time, in the context of tourism, it is very important to identify the traditional costumes of each region. Drawing on the experiences of the INTERREG Local Flavours project partners, we propose a folk costume designer application in the action plan.

The numerous organizations and associations in the county should build stronger cooperation to know better each other's activities knowledge and data. As a result, they can implement joint projects in the field of keeping traditions alive and utilizing them in tourism. Therefore, building on the good practices of the partners, we have included in the action plan an activity that initiates cooperation between different organizations.

And in order for all this to achieve its goal - we will visit the real traditions, the various actors are working together, tourists and local young people can get to know the folk costumes - then the traditional tourist sales can also start. Therefore, Action 2 of the action plan is to develop tourism packages.

The third Action aims at the exploration of potential sources for financing for the actions described above.

Together, the three actions in this action plan form a whole, the main objective of which is to develop tourism based on tradition. There is little or no initiative to show folk costumes in this way. There is an iteration between the individual actions, they build on each other and can be a good starting point for harmonizing the regional aid objective and instruments.

Although the implementation of each action is planned to involve several sources, this will increase the commitment of the partners and the sustainability of the projects implemented during the action.

Summary of the chapter: In this chapter, we analyse the topic examined by the Romanian partner in the framework of the Local Flavours project, highlighting how local stakeholders see obstacles to the development of heritage tourism and what suggestions they have to solve these problems. The identified problems and challenges were summarized in a SWOT analysis. In the second half of the chapter, we described the rationale of the Actions identified to respond to these challenges.

SWOT ANALYSIS

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <p>Strong pride of traditions.</p> <p>Rebirth of the Szekler traditional costume after banning them during communism.</p> <p>Interest for traditional costumes in every age group: children, youth, adults, elderly.</p> <p>Intention for participation in lifelong learning and in vocational training courses.</p> <p>Existing programs to promote and support traditional crafts.</p> <p>Existing workshops, manufactures, entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Related activities (twig basket spinning, straw hat making, Easter egg decoration, traditional pottery, raw material preparing) offer wider touristic possibilities.</p> <p>Living traditions, ongoing programs and events are present day occasions to wear folk costumes.</p> <p>Existing handicrafts and traditional merchants.</p> <p>Folk costumes have distinguishing patterns connected to settlements.</p> <p>The knowledge of making textiles at home is still in the memory of some people.</p> <p>Plenty of tourist accommodation units and rich cultural heritage can contribute to development of heritage tourism.</p>	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <p>The support of the purchase of traditional costumes influenced their value.</p> <p>The many related knowledge about the old Szekler folk costumes is in the mind of the ageing population.</p> <p>The meaning of patterns and motifs is fading out, their use becomes incidental, based on aesthetics and artistic preferences.</p> <p>The cultural heritage is losing its attraction due to unattractive presentation and lack of professional heritage management mechanisms.</p> <p>The level of cooperation of regional tourism stakeholders is low.</p> <p>National level information sources on tourism are underdeveloped in Romania.</p> <p>Lack of quality raw materials, costume makers, shops and costume renters.</p> <p>Traditional folk costumes are used only on few occasions.</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Existing grant program of Harghita County Council to rescue traditional, carved Szekler gates and traditional costumes.</p>	<p>THREATS</p> <p>Fashion has a deteriorating effect on the popularity of traditional costumes.</p>

<p>The handicraft could contribute to include different enterprises into support programs.</p> <p>Grant schemes of the Hungarian Government.</p> <p>Adding heritage tourism topics to the measures of the Operational Programs.</p> <p>Creation of demonstration workshops.</p> <p>Local art, handicrafts and small museums can enhance the use of folk costumes.</p> <p>Making heritage tourism part of local offers/packages.</p> <p>Traditional motifs and patterns can add special value to consumer goods</p> <p>Involvement of children and youth in traditional art and handicraft activities.</p> <p>Pieces of traditional folk costumes can be presented through modern technologies (short films in social media, apps, digital games).</p> <p>Cooperation projects can be implemented on clothing design.</p>	<p>Modern industrial production and sales don't tolerate traditional items.</p> <p>The new measures of the policy instruments typically focus only on modern themes.</p> <p>The lack of good examples / best practices from other regions makes difficult to promote local values on international level.</p>
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Stakeholders:

The work of **Harghita National Szekler Folk Ensemble** and of the András Foundation is an extraordinary contribution to the maintenance of Szekler traditions. They had an important role in the renewal of dance house movement in Miercurea Ciuc that started in 1971. These traditional dance houses demonstrate that many Szeklers are willing to relearn their traditions. This movement also defined a new direction for folk dance and folk music: to return to the roots, to search for the original elements. This philosophy became one of the founding concepts of the new ensemble.

Their primary goal has always been the exploration of folk culture, living, presenting, popularizing and handing it down in an authentic manner.

Their ongoing programs are:

- **The Day of the Thousand Szekler Girls**

This is the feast of the Szekler folk costume, folk dance and religion. The target group is composed of 0-70 years old people from both urban and rural areas. The majority of participants is comprised of the 20-25 folk dance ensembles each having between 16-24 members. Besides them any interested enthusiast can join the action in folk costumes. They typically come from Harghita county but more and more join in from the neighbouring counties of the territory of Szeklerland. Usually, the twinning towns and villages from foreign countries also send some representatives. Thus, the total participant number reaches 3000 from approximately 100 localities. During the festival folk craft masters have the opportunity to present and sell their traditional products.

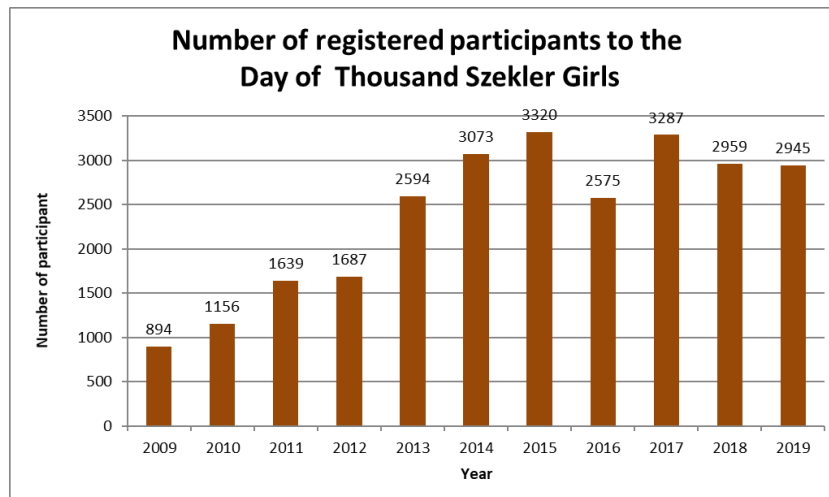


Figure 1 - Data: Harghita National Folk Ensemble, Bíró Judit, volunteer organiser of The Day of the Thousand Szekler Girls



Figure 2 - The Day of Thousand Szekler Girls

(Source: <https://hargitatanc.ro/hu/articles/list/0/6/ezer-szekely-leany-napja>)

- **Costume show:**

This event is part of The Day of the Thousand Szekler Girls. It aims to award the most original, most traditional and most authentic folk costumes. The program has started in 2013, the jury is formed by local experts on authentic folk traditions:

1) Zoltán Kallós (1926-2018) is a Prize-winning Hungarian ethnographer and folk music expert from Transylvania. He was awarded the title of “Artist of the Nation”; decorated with the “Hungarian Corvin Chain”, member of the Folk Art and Ethnography Department of the Hungarian Academy of Arts (2005). As a result of his folk music collections, he recorded about 15,000 tunes and released 26 cassettes and several CDs. He played a major role in the establishment and spread of the dance house movement in Transylvania and Hungary. He is the most renowned expert on the costume pattern.

2) Irén Kisé Portik, ethnographer, honorary citizen of Gyergyószentmiklós, author of the book „Szépanyám szötte, dédanyám varrta és hímezte” (“My great-great grandmother has woven it, my great-grandmother sewed and embroidered it”).

3) Reverend Ágota Dezső is a dedicated researcher, renewer and producer of authentic Szekler costume.

4) Reverend Anikó Hegyi, private collector, costume maker, member of the folk wear sewing occupation,

5) György Katalin, member of András Foundation, collector, organizer of the folk wear sewing occupation,

6) Szabó László folk costume-maker, member of the folk wear sewing occupation,

7) Mátéffy Mária private collector of authentic folk costumes, and enthusiastic volunteer organizer.

Participants of the show are encouraged to wear the old folk costumes inherited from older family members or to wear their tastefully made new costumes, giving them space to present these on stage. The great result of the show is that countless, truly excellent, valuable folk costumes have come to the fore.

- **“Csúrdöngölő” Children and Youth Folk Festival**

The aim of the organisers is to present and to build emotional bound between the local traditions, and the young generation in the framework of a folk-dance festival. The target group is composed of 3–14-year-old children. About 60 children dance groups participate each year, each group consisting of 20-28 dancers. The number of participants is growing each year. The series started in 2001; between 2001-2015 there were 2 events yearly, and from 2016 one festival is organised each year. In 2019, the 32nd festival was organised.

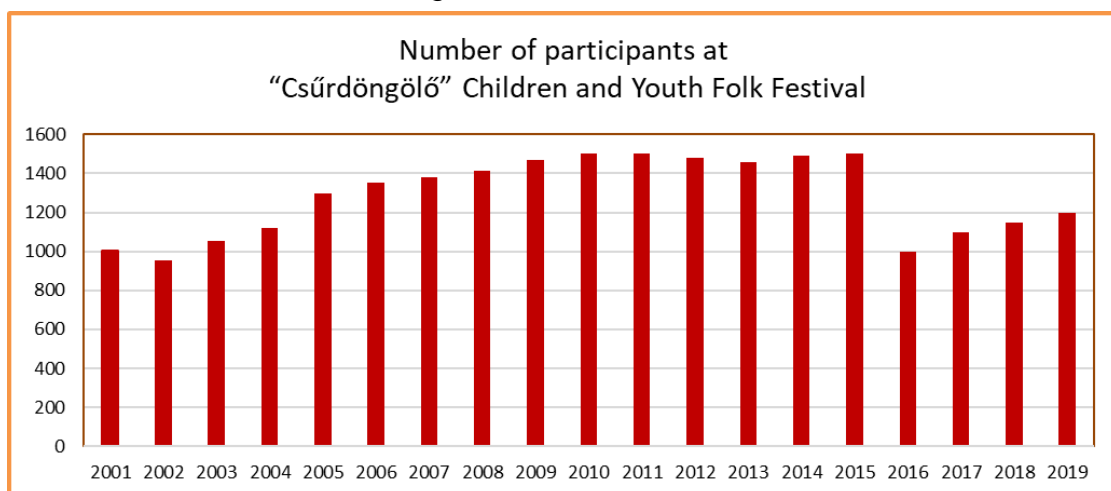


Figure 3 - Data: Harghita National Folk Ensemble



Figure 4 - Csúrdöngölő – Children and Youth Folk Festival

(Source: <https://hargitatanc.ro/hu/articles/list/0/4/csurdongolo--gyermek-es-ifjusagi-neptanctalalkozo>)

- **The Day of Szekler Folk Costume**

Everyone is encouraged to wear the traditional costume on this day. People can dress up in full costume or wear only a piece of it and wear it the whole day: on the workplace, during shopping, etc. The target group includes all age groups. The number of participants is growing continuously.

Participants (employees, members of organizations, families or individuals) are encouraged to send pictures to the organisers while they are wearing the traditional dress on this day. The number of participants as well as the number of submitted photos are increasing yearly.



Figure 5 - The employees of Harghita County Council participating in the Day of The Szekler Folk Costume

Source: Harghita National Szekler Folk Ensemble

- **Heritage program – folk music and dance assembly** – Harghita County Council supports the Ensemble to regularly visit settlements in the Hungarian diaspora of Romania. These are occasions for those Hungarians who live in settlements with a very high assimilation rate to stay in some contact with their Hungarian identity and culture.
- **The Assembly of Transylvanian Folk Violinists** serves the exploration and gathering the folk traditions of the community. The event has a double purpose. On the one hand, it offers the opportunity for the creation of high-quality sound registrations with the informants (traditional, mainly old musicians and singers), on the other hand it is an opportunity to organise stage performances for these little or un-known informants.
- **Gathering of the Hungarian Professional Dance Ensemble** of Transylvania. The event provides an opportunity to each group for a performance. Following the

performances experts and group leaders participate on panel discussions to evaluate the current status and plans of each ensemble.

András Foundation is a non-governmental organization in Transylvania, based in Miercurea Ciuc and having a festival venue in Lăzărești. The Foundation's main objective is to preserve folk traditions and to support initiatives to this end.

It is a strong knowledge base and a non-governmental background organization to strengthen Hungarian identity and help the survival and development of Hungarian communities through folk culture. They also contribute to the success of the above presented Csúrdöngölő festival for kids.

- **They annually organize the Lázárfalvi kaláka**

In this camp of communal work, everyone has to find out what they can add to the work of the community during 10 days. During these days participants can learn folk songs and dances, paint furniture, participate in gardening, baking bread, learn about ethnography and help cleaning up the surroundings of the old, open air village spa.

- **“Corner” dance house**

This program has been started 10 years ago with a few enthusiastic adults, who wanted to re-learn their traditional dance. Since then, the program became open dance class to everyone, nowadays it is attended by a large number of people from all generations. The class is followed by a dance house to exercise and enjoy dancing without interruption.

- **“Corner” dance group**

The participants of the Corner folk dance house are closing every season with a performance on the Day of a Thousand Székely Girls in July. The success of these performances encouraged them to accept invitations to further events and they started call themselves the Corner dance group. In the past few years, they represented Harghita county in Romanian settlements with Hungarian minority, and also performed in Hungary, and Turkey. The members of the group are adults, who voluntarily spend they spare time with weekly classes and the preparation for performances.

- **Sewing workshops for traditional costumes**

Not too long ago, countless number of old folk costumes ended up as doormats, or blackout curtains. Today, however, preserved family costumes are highly valued. The folk costume sewing group is an open forum to study old folk costumes, where the participants exchange knowledge, and this knowledge results in new creations. The workshops started five years ago and the participants have already made numerous folk costume masterpieces.



Figure 6 – Handwork on the Szekler apron

Vámszer Géza Folkhighschool of Arts and Crafts is an innovative institution that provides a solid foundation for music and fine arts, successfully prepares for the pursuit of higher education. It provides training for all age categories, in various fields of arts. Offers an out-of-school program for children but also adult education. The main disciplines are: music (drums, flute, wind conductor, guitar, violin, conductor, clarinet, saxophone, vocals, brass instruments, folk instruments, synthesizer, music theory, piano) performing arts, folklore, fine arts, applied arts(furniture painting, furniture restoration, wood carving, ceramics, folk handicrafts). In the last few years, they had provided adult education courses regarding folk weaving, sewing for more than 100 women.

The **Cultural Center of Harghita County** is the successor of the House of Folk Creation of Harghita County, which was established in 1968. At present the Centre is a specialized institution of the Harghita County Council, and functions as a separate legal entity. It is a scientific and methodological centre of the cultural activities in Harghita county. The Institution helps the local governments' cultural work, as well as the local society's various cultural and public organizations. Its task is to collect, research, preserve and promote the County's cultural values and traditions.

Center for Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Culture of Harghita County. The Centre's main activity is the organization of events, such as: public cultural festivals, scientific lectures, conferences, professional meetings, book shows, fine arts and ethnography exhibitions, concerts, meetings of amateur photographers in the "Documentation photo camp" and the "village houses in Harghita county photo camp", rural youth festivals and competitions (acting, folk songs, poetry, etc), documenting and exhibiting traditional folk costumes, designing clothes decorations inspired by traditional folk motifs, preparing publications on ethnography and local traditional knowledge, producing ethnographic documentaries in Harghita County, operation of a website promoting cultural programs. The institution has more than 10 years of experience with its twelve staff members.

In the period of 2015-2018 the institution had an adult training program for craftsmen entitled “Folk motifs in today’s use”. The program aimed at the rethinking of the use of traditional folk motifs for contemporary purposes. A number of 43 participants had finished the training. On the closing exhibition a smaller room was furnished with home decoration textiles, pieces of painted furniture, clothes all decorated with folk art ornaments.



Figure 7 - Folk motifs in use today - training for craftsmen. Odorheiu Secuiesc, September -November 2019.
Source: <https://hagyomány.ro/nepi-motivumok-mai-hasznalatban/>

Szekler Museum of Csík – was a partner in the “INEXTEX” international Grundtvig project, and provides data and pictures with the results of the project.

Local Action Groups – bottom-up rural development organisations funded by the EU. Local Action Groups can provide grants for NGOs aiming at supporting cultural activities (purchase of folk costumes, support for museums, village cultural and ethnographical centres).

Mayor’s offices: the town-twinning relations between the settlements of Harghita county and foreign settlements can bring many benefits to a community. By bringing people together from different parts of Europe, it gives an opportunity to share problems, exchange views and understand different viewpoints on any issue. They have the opportunity to get acquainted with each other’s culture and to disseminate cultural values among their own people.

Szárhegyi Cultural and Arts Center

The camp of Szárhegy (Lăzarea) is a “window wide open to the world”, becoming the mirror of contemporary arts in Romania, by accepting and honouring many different branches of art. Participant can choose between painting, drawing, carving, and more. Currently, their

collection has 2117 pieces. They are busy organizing various contemporary cultural and artistic events, concentrating their efforts on medial and conceptual forms, but preserving the freedom of creation as defined in its founding document.

Gránátalma Association Gheorgheni

The purpose of the Gránátalma Association is doing embroidery with maximum devotion. Their work represents the most complex forms of embroidery, also considered a Hungarikum (distinctive and registered value of the Hungarian culture). The embroidered works are faithful regarding the size, composition and harmony of the patterns, the choice of colours of the embroidery threads as well as their fineness. Embroidered patterns are not invented by the members of the association, but they choose them from the Renaissance or Baroque times.

Portéka Association from Gyergyószentmiklós (Gheorgheni)

The members of the association participate in various activities with their products and services. Their purpose is to promote traditional crafts and organize craft events.

The Harghita Community Development Association (ADI Harghita) was founded in 2009 as the initiative of the Harghita County Council and with the support of 45 local municipalities.

The goal of ADI Harghita is to create and maintain long-term cooperation with the county's local municipalities and organizations working in the field of tourism, carrying out national and international projects. Its purpose is to develop and advertise tourism, as well as to protect and valorise regional culture and the natural environment.

Main activities:

- development and popularization of tourism (facilitate access to development possibilities for stakeholders in tourism; improve institutional frameworks in the tourism sector; organize fairs, exhibitions, tourism conferences; disseminate publications; participate in thematic projects (e. g. Mary's Way), and advertise religious and cultural tourism, etc.) in Harghita county;

- management of protected areas (conducting research; administration of protected areas; development of programs and projects in the field of sustainable tourism).

Mózes wool processing and weaving manufacture of Csíkkarcfalva (Cârța)

They started their business in 1991 in order to promote products made of natural materials. The company is engaged in the production of woolen fabrics, wool being an excellent raw material for the production of folk clothes and costumes. The product range is enriched with blankets, wool pillows and hand-woven duvets. In 2012, 7 of their products won the right to use the trademark SZEKLER PRODUCT.

FOLK TEXT folk art store from Miercurea Ciuc – manufactures and distributes folk costumes for children and adults since 1994, for both women and men. The folk costumes are made according to the particularities of the areas (clothes characteristic for Csík (Ciuc), Gyergyó (Gheorgheni), Udvarhely (Odorhei), Keresztúr (Cristur), Casin, clothes from Homoród and Maros Valley Area). They sell popular embroidered products in different sizes and colours (“written” and “cross stitch” embroidery), modern embroidered pieces and traditional hand-woven products.

All these organisations, businesses, programs, activities, encourage the protection and preservation of traditions. They raise the awareness of young people to pay attention to their traditional values and folk costumes from an early age. At the same time they serve as a promotion of traditional values to the visitors.

These events fulfil their purpose thanks to good community cooperation and co-organization.

The local stakeholders and the main beneficiaries of the good practice include people from all age categories, include those working for value preservation and also the visitors of the county.

Summary Matrix of the Actions

#	Name of the Action	Timeframe		Coordinator	Stakeholders	Cost (eur)	Result indicator(s)
		Start date	End date				
1	Action 1 Infrastructure development of heritage tourism	October 2021	January 2023	HCC	Board of experts Local entrepreneurs, museums, NGOs, private individuals	53800	Slowdress workshop established Number of visitors, trainees Number of workshops organized Number of participating entities Number of flyers distributed Number of events in which the Outdoor Museum was presented Existing App
2	Action 2 Widening and strengthening regional network of heritage	November 2021	January 2023	HCC	ADI Harghita (Harghita Community)	38200	Number of meetings organized Existing tour package

	tourism - production and promotion				Development Association) Local stakeholders (hosts, local guides, mayors, village museums, regional associations)		Number of short films Number of flyers and posters distributed
3	Action 3 Support for heritage tourism - workshop for the LEADER Action Groups, institutions and authorities in Szeklerland	May 2022	December2022	HCC	Harghita County Council LEADER LAGs	1800	Number of meetings organised Number of commitments signed Number of LAGs collaborating

Finding solutions for the problems from the good practices of the INTERREG partners Good Practices:

Action 1 - Infrastructure development of heritage tourism

"Slowdress"

GP: Municipality of Vittorio Veneto (IT): Slow tourism and slow food: the case of Bra

Source: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5510/international-city-to-city-networks-slow-turism-and-slow-food-the-case-of-bra/>

Idea: Developing a network of museums, tourist agencies and enterprises to present folk costumes

GP: Institute of Advanced Studies (HU): Day by day summer programme in Kőszeg and its surroundings.

Source: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5035/day-by-day-summer-program-in-koszeg-and-in-its-surroundings/>

Idea: organizing exhibitions in partnership with local museums, visitor centres.

"Outdoor Museum" program

GP: Institute of Advanced Studies (HU): Day by day summer programme in Kőszeg and its neighbourhood.

Source: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5035/day-by-day-summer-program-in-koszeg-and-in-its-surroundings/>

Idea: Day by day programmes which can be presented in different towns.

App for folk costume-design

GP: Waterford City and County Council (IE): Creation of a Visitor Experience Development Plan and an APP to encourage visitor dispersion

Source: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/4630/tourism-analysis-promotional-plan/>

Idea: APP to help visitors find the places where folk costumes can be tried on

Action 2- Widening and strengthening regional network of heritage tourism - production and promotion

Tour packages

GP: Savonlinna Development Services Ltd. (FI): Cultural routes of the Council of Europe in South Savo Region

Source: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes>

Idea: linking cultural events and other attractions to develop a cultural route.

GP: Waterford City and County Council (IE): Tourism Analysis & Promotional Plan 2019 provides an excellent template for the development of a tourism promotional plan for a small or medium sized region.

Source: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/4630/tourism-analysis-promotional-plan/>

Idea: evaluation of the main visitor attractions focused on traditional dresses and widening the tourism offer by these.

GP: Municipality of Vittorio Veneto (IT) - The Area Brand of the Thematic Didactic Parks of the Alta Marca Trevigiana.

Source: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/4590/the-area-brand-of-the-thematic-didactic-parks-of-the-alta-marca-trevigiana/>

Idea: a tourism promotion strategy based on a “learning by visiting” approach.

Short film (teaser), folk costume-related leaflets, information bulletins

GP: Waterford City and County Council (IE): Creation of a Visitor Experience Development Plan and an APP to encourage visitor dispersion

Source: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/4630/tourism-analysis-promotional-plan/>

Idea: Presenting the use of traditional folk costumes through different media

Action 3- Support for heritage tourism - workshop for the LEADER Action Groups, institutions and authorities in Szeklerland

GP: Savonlinna Development Services Ltd. (FI): Cultural routes of the Council of Europe in South Savo Region

Source: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes>

Idea: To provide seed money (grants) to associations, folk dance assemblies or SMEs to make or to buy traditional folk dresses, or to support traditional handicraft.

Summary table with identified solutions from the good practices of the INTERREG partners

Action	Task	Good practice		
		Title	Owner	Main idea
Action 1 Infrastructure development of heritage tourism	“Slowdress” – workshop, research, product development	<i>Slow tourism and slow food: the case of Bra</i>	Municipality of Vittorio Veneto (IT)	Network to present folk dresses based on cooperation between museums, tourist agencies and enterprises
		<i>Day by day summer programme in Kőszeg and its neighbourhood</i>	Institute of Advanced Studies (HU)	Organizing exhibitions in partnership with local museums, visitor centres
	“Outdoor Museum” program	<i>Day by day summer programme in Kőszeg and its neighbourhood</i>	Institute of Advanced Studies (HU)	Day by day summer programmes which can be presented in different towns
	App for folk costume-planning	<i>Creation of a Visitor Experience Development Plan and an APP to encourage visitor dispersion</i>	Waterford City and County Council (IE)	APP to help visitors find the places where folk costumes can be tried on
Action 2 Widening and strengthening regional network of heritage	Tour packages	<i>Cultural routes of the Council of Europe in South Savo Region</i>	Savonlinna Development Services Ltd. (FI)	Linking cultural events and other attractions to develop a cultural route

tourism - production and promotion		<i>Tourism Analysis & Promotional Plan 2019</i>	Waterford City and County Council (IE)	Provides an excellent template for the development of a tourism promotional plan for a small or medium sized region. Idea: evaluation of the main visitor attractions focused on traditional dresses and widening the tourist offers.
		<i>The Area Brand of the Thematic Didactic Parks of the Alta Marca Trevigiana</i>	Municipality of Vittorio Veneto (IT)	Tourism promotion strategy based on a “learning by visiting” approach.
	Short film presenting the particularities of the area (teaser), folk costume-related leaflets, information bulletins	<i>Creation of a Visitor Experience Development Plan and an APP to encourage visitor dispersion</i>	Waterford City and County Council (IE)	Presenting the use of traditional folk costumes through different media
Action 3 Support for heritage tourism - workshop for the LEADER Action Groups, institutions and authorities in Szeklerland	Workshop with neighbouring LAGs and the financing authority	<i>Cultural routes of the Council of Europe in South Savo Region</i>	Savonlinna Development Services Ltd. (FI)	To offer seed money (grants) for associations, folk dance ensembles, SMEs to make or to buy traditional folk dresses, or to support traditional handicraft

Part IV – Details of the Actions Envisaged

ACTION 1

Name of the Action: Infrastructure development of heritage tourism

1. Relevance to the project

As heritage tourism covers a wide segment, this activity consists of several smaller steps. By implementing this action, we create a feasible model which could be easily duplicated and financed by the Operational Program.

Action 1 consists of a number of sub activities which are mutually supporting each other to reach the goal of this Action.

These sub-actions are:

- 1.1 - "Slowdress" workshop
- 1.2 - "Outdoor Museum" program
- 1.3 - Folk costume designer application.

1.1 - "Slowdress" workshop

The idea for the creation of the Slowdress workshop was drawn from the good practice of the Municipality of Vittorio Veneto (IT), more specifically inspired by the "Slow tourism and slow food" program created for the city of Bra.

We found their programme very useful, which links today's needs with the traditional values. Despite the fact that the program of the partners is about gastronomy and slowfood, we felt that this was the direction for us as well - reconciling the needs of life and people today with the existing, living tradition. *„New clients” (and their new needs). The aim is to emphasize the links between tourist operators and the local population and their territory, which is based on two essential dimensions: first, the physical one which involves the places, the scenarios and the sites; second, the cultural one which expresses traditions, customs and everyday life.*

Inspired by this, our goal is to create workshops where the traditional, slow way of clothes production can be demonstrated step by step. In this place time slows down, visitors can immerse themselves in the serenity of making individual pieces of clothing by hand, experience the joy of a slow and quiet lifestyle.

Elements of good practice to be adopted:

- *Good Tourism governance where the different levels are connected and coordinated. Local tourism policies aimed at fostering local empowerment*
- *Quality of hospitality service is high*
- *Effective territorial marketing through folk costumes and traditions.*

Idea: Setting up a network of workshops to present folk dresses, and a step-by-step, meticulous, attentive, slow way of making folk costumes. Cooperation between museums, tourist agencies and enterprises.

Inspired by this good practice, in this Action Plan our goal is to create and sell new, useful objects based on traditional folk motifs / patterns in the “Slowdress” - workshops –

Research, product development

The workshops will bring together artisans, museums, agencies, associations and other local stakeholders to develop plans for this segment of heritage tourism.

1.2 - “Outdoor Museum” program

GP: Institute of Advanced Studies (HU): Day by day summer programme in Kőszeg and its surroundings

“In order to meet the challenges of the new situation, to ensure a visitor experience offer, the Írott-kő Nature Park Association in collaboration with Kőszeg town, the local Cultural Centre and local businesses launched a new week-long programme offer ‘Day by Day Summer Program’. The organizing institutions in partnership with local museums, visitor centres, businesses elaborated a week-long programme aiming at the possible highest inclusion of locals and visitors ensuring program elements free of charge and ones with discounted rates. The programme provided access to significant living cultural and natural heritage sites aiming to promote smart and slow tourism with the help of authentic experience creation.”

Idea: Day by day programmes which can be presented in different towns.

The cooperation between the institutions involved is a good example we would like to build on.

Inspired by this, on the Local Stakeholders meeting we mapped out and tried to reach all relevant institutions, museums, associations and individuals to enable them to think, suggest, find solutions together, listen to and take into account each other's - often different - perspectives.

Inspired by this good practice, our aim in this sub-action is to encourage co-operation between museums, tourist agencies and businesses in Csík, Udvarhely, Gyergyó area. The ultimate goal of the sub-action is that these stakeholders develop joint programs around folk

art, and launch the "Museum Outdoors" program. It supposed to become an attention-grabbing outdoor presentation of the costumes and related crafts in busy places like main squares, parks in the towns of the county.

1.3 - Develop a folk costume designer application

GP: Waterford City and County Council (IE): Creation of a Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP) and an APP to encourage visitor dispersion

The overall objective of the Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP) presented by them is to unlock the economic growth potential of an area by developing existing and new experiences that will motivate potential visitors to visit and stay in the area. It will work to encourage visitors to immerse themselves actively in the locale, interact with the local community; engage the senses by getting active in nature; attend festivals; learn the history and stories of the places; and enjoying the food and entertainment on offer. The focus will be to deliver memorable moments that inspire tourists to not only share their experience with others, but also make them want to return. The app will allow the visitor to immerse themselves in the heart of rural Waterford keeping the visitor informed of the legacy and stories that surround them. They will be guided to hidden treasures, will experience the beauty, take the walk less taken, discover the characters and explore beyond the known. The focus will be on the journey, a tour of discovery, link places and stories, encourage footfall to local town and villages and connect to Visit Waterford.

Our idea: Develop an APP to design a folk costume and to help visitors find the places where folk costumes can be tried on. It will also allow visitors to interact with local people, to acknowledge traditions and the people presenting traditional ways of making folk costumes.

Together, these three sub-actions contribute to the success of Action 1.

2. Nature of the action

2.1. **“Slowdress”** – Our idea is to create a demonstration workshop for research and product development - new objects based on traditional samples. In the frame of the manufacture there will be organized workshops, where entrepreneurs, museums, civilians, agencies discuss the situation together in relation to the project objectives.

Steps:

As a first step, a conference and workshop will be organized, where experts, entrepreneurs, museums, agencies work out the details of a functioning Slowdress Workshop.

Secondly the location of the first Slowdress workshop must be identified. We recommend a rather busy place visited by many tourists in a bigger town. Later

when the concept is fine-tuned more Slowdress workshops can be opened in less frequented towns and even villages.

The Workshop has to be set up in a museum-like way: with traditional machines such as looms, spinning machines, mechanical sewing machines, etc. On the other hand, a modern way of making clothes must be made possible. The goal is that if someone looked out in the app (described below) what folk costume they wanted, it could be made in the workshop - at least some parts of it. It should give tourists, or even locals, the opportunity to contribute to the process of making their own costume. For example, someone can embroider a part, or try weaving, or crochet lace. This program can be extended for longer period of time, while a whole folk costume will be made.

We have to work out the possibilities of the operation of the workshop. Local handicrafts and folk costume-makers need to be involved in the operation. An employee of a company could be "on duty" in the workshop for a certain time interval on a certain day of the month. Participating companies need training on what to present, how to talk, a positive attitude, and so on.

Printed and electronic information flyers should be used to promote the workshop and advertise on cultural events and websites.

2.2 "Outdoor Museum" program.

A way for tourists and visitors to meet, learn about and appreciate traditional values. Exhibitions would appear in busy and unexpected places of the cities in Harghita county. This could be a thematic program included into the "Academy" programme of Harghita County Council. It would build on a cooperation between museums, tourist agencies and enterprises of Csík, Udvarhely and Gyergyó, to introduce different customs related to folk art.

Local stakeholder meetings identified a number of less known folk art collections, owned by museums, associations, foundations, and even private individuals, with valuable old garments, more than a hundred years old. These garments carry the old patterns, the old production techniques. We recommend organizing exhibitions from these collections, in popular events that attract larger crowds. (The Day of Thousand Szekler Girls, The Day of Szekler Folk Costume, Children and Youth Folk Festival).

Steps:

- identification of collections
- making owners interested
- identification of events to participate in
- arranging transport
- promotion.

With this action, we enable the old patterns to be absorbed into the public consciousness and appear as ideas on modern clothes and other objects.

2.3 Folk costume designer application

Our goal is to create an application for mobile phones and computers which allows anyone to design traditional folk costumes. It would contain traditional costume elements of a number of ethnic groups. As we presented earlier in chapter “Project background – why focus on the traditional costumes?”, the folk costume of each region is different from the other and contains the characteristics of that particular region. At the same time, there were different wears for different occasions, but the colour and form of folk costumes also changed by age group, wealth or marital status. They wore darker attire for funerals, and older women should not wear bright colours. The colour, length, shape, embroidery, decoration and material of the costume all carried information for the villagers or foreigners. We want to provide this variety by creating an app where the user can select the area, settlement, gender, age, occasion, and the app would show what local folk costumes would suit to that combination of variables. The application can be developed in the first round for the settlements around the County Seat, and later expanded to a wider circle. The aim is to get there - through several tenders - so that everyone in Szeklerland, then in Romania, then in the surrounding countries, in the states of Europe, and anywhere, can design their own traditional wear. Of course, the application will also be linked to the manufactories, where the particular costume can be made.

Steps:

- a group of experts has to create a database of costumes with the exact list of variations based on settlement, age, sex, etc.
- the application must be developed
- promotion of the app
- geographical extension of the database

3. Players / stakeholders involved

The same actors will be involved in the implementation of all three sub-actions. The group of experts has to have deep professional knowledge about the characteristics of folk costumes in different parts of the county. The Day of the Thousand Szekler Girls event in Sumuleu (Csíksomlyó in Hungarian) has a costume show for many years. The members of the jury are excellent candidates for this task (see the description of the show above). In addition, there is a need for researchers, local experts (i.e. elderly women living in villages), owners of folk-art collections, local traditional costume-making businesses, and heads of tourism institutions.

4. Timeframe

4.1 - “Slowdress” manufacture

- 3 conferences – November 2021 - March 2022
- identifying location - November - December 2021
- setting up the workshop, equip the museum: loom, spinning machine, mechanical sewing machine, modern elements, furniture– November 2021 – June 2022
- launch operation – July 2022
- information campaign – print 1000 flyers, work with online media – June 2022

4.2- "Outdoor Museum" program

- identification of collections - December 2021 - March 2022
- signing cooperation agreements with owners - December 2021 - March 2022
- involvement of events to participate in - October 2021
- participating on public events – October 2021 - January 2023
- promotion – January 2022 - January 2023

4.3 - Folk costume designer application

- Board of experts - 2 workshops – January – March 2022
- Developing the application – March 2022 – August 2022
- Promotion – August 2022 – January 2023

5. **Costs:**

5.1- "**Slowdress**" manufacture: **23.100 euro**

- 3 Workshops – 3*500 euro = 1500 euro
- location – 5.000
- workshop:
 - building – rental costs – 7000 euro yearly
 - museum part - loom, spinning machine, mechanical sewing machine – 2000 euro
 - modern elements, furniture– 2000 euro
- operation costs – yearly – 5000 euro
- flyers, on-line ad – 1000 ex. – 600 euro

Funding source: National Rural Development program, LEADER

5.2- "**Outdoor Museum**" program - **4.100 euro**

- identification of collections, signing cooperation agreements with owners – 500 euro
- buying event tent – 2500 euro
- identification of events and transporting collections – 500 euro

- promotion – 600 euro.

Funding source: Hargita County Council

5.3 - Folk costume designer application 26.600 euro

- Board of experts - 2 workshops – 2*500 euro = 1000 euro
- application – 25,000 euro
- promotion – 600 euro

Funding source: National Rural Development program, LEADER

Total costs: 53.800 euro

6. Indicative funding sources

Funding source: National Rural Development program, LEADER

Regional Operative Programme as alternative funding source for duplication of the modell.

ACTION 2

Name of the Action: Widening and strengthening regional network of heritage tourism - production and promotion

1. Relevance to the project

Folk-art related places and events could be connected with local sights or gastronomy in tour packages as individual programs or as the offer of the slowdress workshop.

Starting from the good practice of **Savonlinna Development Services Ltd. (FI): Cultural routes of the Council of Europe in South Savo Region**, which developed two routes, St. Olav's Mainland Way and Prehistoric Rock Art Trails, making a link between two different forms of cultural heritage. The territory of Harghita county is too small to make a whole tourist route based only on folk costumes. On the other hand, the events, even they could cover a wider range of interest for tourists, are time-bounded. A network could work more efficiently, if local sights and gastronomy could complement heritage tourism attractions.

Connecting local values was part of **Waterford City and County Council (IE): *Tourism Analysis & Promotional Plan 2019***. It provides an excellent template for the development of a tourism promotional plan for a small or medium size region. While developing the promotional plan, they evaluated the main visitor attractions and a wider tourist offers, and added proposals to their improvement.

To encourage the use of traditional dresses, a lot of knowledge needs to be gathered and processed: motifs, meaning of motifs, origin, connected stories are elements which made the daily use more attractive. This hidden knowledge could be accessed efficiently through personal experiments. The motto “learning by visiting” presented in the good practice of **Municipality of Vittorio Veneto (IT)** we use the inspiration to include the slowdress workshop to our tour packages. During the slow work in the workshops visitors can learn about stories connected to the folk costumes.

A short film (teaser) will be made to present the local cultural characteristics, flyers will promote costumes and other marketing articles will be placed in restaurants, guesthouses, museums including open air museums. This also represents the cooperation between entrepreneurs and institutions.

A cultural event can be a strong attraction in a tourist offer however since they only happen once a year it limits their effect on tourism. Short films could present all the best of the region, and the mail goal was formulated in the good practice of **Waterford City and County Council (IE): *Creation of a Visitor Experience Development Plan and an APP to encourage visitor dispersion***: “The focus will be to deliver memorable moments that inspire tourists to not only share their experience with others, but also make them want to return”. Also the expression “hidden gems” inspires the necessity to show things which could be not seen permanently. If somebody comes to the area before or after an interesting cultural event, a short film can give an insight into it. Presenting traditional folk costumes through different media and the spirit of an interesting event might inspire tourists to consider a second visit.

2. Nature of the action

- Organizing four meetings for the local representatives to elaborate a heritage tour package.

The questions to answer for everybody:

- What can I offer to a tourist?
 - What can be visited in my neighbourhood (particularly folk art, but also sight and/or food)?
 - What kind of assistance do I need and where can I get it?
- Preparing the tour package

- Making teasers (short films) about the local values, the “hidden gems”.
- Printing marketing materials.

3. **Players / stakeholders involved**

- Intercommunity Development Agency HARGHITA
- Local stakeholders:
 - Hosts
 - Local guides
 - Mayors
 - Village museums
 - Micro-regional associations

4. **Timeframe**

One year and two months (filming in different seasons add artistic value)

5. **Costs**

Organizing meetings for representatives of the network

Preparation and management **3.000 euro**.

4 meetings X 1000 euro = **4.000 euro**

Tour package design and marketing 5.000 euro.

Short film:

400 euro/minute

6 films (10minuteseach): 6X10X400=**24.000 euro**

Printed materials:

A4 Flyer 10.000 examples: approximately **2.000 euro**

A3 Poster average price: 0,5 euro/pcs., 400 pcs. = **200 euro**

Total costs: 38.200 euro

6. **Indicative funding sources**

Harghita County Council,
Regional Operative Programme as alternative funding source for duplication of the modell.

ACTION 3

Name of the Action: Support for heritage tourism - workshop for the LEADER Action Groups, institutions and authorities in Szeklerland

1. Relevance to the project

One basic obstacle, which was confirmed by KRAFT method analysis and by the meeting of local stakeholders, is that the production of demanding pieces of traditional costumes is expensive and the subsidies provided at the county level do not cover the difference between sales price and actual costs. The approach for a solution was inspired by the practice of the Finish partner, **Savonlinna Development Services Ltd.**: in the project *Cultural routes of the Council of Europe in South Savo Region*. They provide support to associations, folk dance ensembles or businesses to make or buy traditional folk costumes and to support traditional handicrafts.

The aim of Action 3 is to create a network of LAGs in order to propose and introduce bottom-up policy changes, to monitor the process and to decide what the long-term outcome of the proposal will be. The Csík LEADER Association gained the appropriate experience in this field, since it has already supported local NGO-s in the acquisition of traditional costumes and from good practices presented in Local Flavours project . This experience was further utilized by the LAGs in the current development period, when the Csík LEADER Association mediated new grants through the measure *Improving the infrastructure and equipment of non-governmental organizations*.

The twelve LEADER Action Groups (LAG-s) of Szeklerland maintain contact with each other: they organize a professional meeting every year since 2014. Networking is of particular importance in this measure, the common goal brings these LEADER Action Groups together and deepens their cooperation.

An outstanding result of the Local Flavours project can be the achievement and practical implementation of the Policy Change initiated from the bottom, which differs from the centrally top-down planning model.

It is important to be mentioned that LEADER financial guidance for transit period 2022-2023, has good chance to be approved in this year (2021) and the implementation of the actions will be done in time.

The experience gained from the Local Flavours good practice can generate a change in the bottom-up financing policy that can be reported.

2. Nature of the action

In the first LAG workshop, we will present the experiences of the Csík LEADER Action Group's measure supporting NGOs and SMEs. The experience will be recommended as a good practice for the 11 participating LAGs in order to include such measures in their next development plans.

The action groups in Szeklerland will sign a commitment to include the presented best practice in their strategies. The indicator for Action 3 will be the number of LEADER groups signing the commitment. In the framework of the Harghita County Action Plan of the Local Flavours project (Action 3), we will monitor the indicators such as the number of signed commitments, the number of LAG-s which included this measure in their strategy and, on the longer term, what change it will bring in the local communities.

Csík LEADER Association will organize the workshop and will present their experience. It will also work out the description of the grant scheme based on the INTERREG Action Plan.

3. Players / stakeholders involved

LEADER is a local development method which has been used in all EU Member States for 30 years. Its aim is to engage local actors in the development and implementation of local strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of rural areas. LEADER is implemented under the national and regional Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) of each EU Member State, co-financed from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Each LAG designs its own strategy. In the 2014-2020 programming period, the LEADER method has been extended under the broader term Community-Led Local Development (CLLD).

In the EU there are around 2,800 Local Action Groups, bringing together public, private and civil-society stakeholders in a defined area (territory). In Romania there are 239 LAGs, from these twelve are located in the Seklerland. These twelve LAG-s incorporate 133 communes and small towns (towns under 20.000 inhabitants), cover 10,383 square km and serves 424,609 inhabitants.

The LAGs involved in action A3 are:

- A Sóvidék-Hegyalja LAG – Harghita and Mures County
- Küküllő-Homoród LEADER LAG – Harghita County
- G-10 LAG – Harghita County
- ALUTUS Regio LAG – Covasna County
- Angustia LAG– Covasna County
- Progressio LAG – Covasna County

- As. LEADER Parteneriat Muresan LAG - Mures County
- Valea Nirajului LAG – Mures County
- Târnavă Mică-Bălăușeri-Sărățeni LAG
- GAL3 LAG - Mures County
- Poarta Câmpiei Mureșene LAG – Mures County
- Csík LEADER Association LAG

Harghita County Council will act as moderator and will monitor the Action's outcomes.

4. Timeframe

May 2022 – organising the workshop - signing commitments

December 2022, review of the final strategies, examination of the fulfilment of the Action's indicator

5. Costs

- Printing costs: printing invitations, brochures, reports, posters, rules, etc.
- Working hours, communication costs: the organization of our community action involves a lot of organisation and coordination
- Costs of creating publicity: design of printed / electronic advertisements, posters, flyers
- Acquisition or rental of various equipment: e.g. microphone, flip-chart, projector, laptop, etc.
- Postage: invitations, brochures, reports
- Catering: coffee breaks and shared meals initiate fruitful dialogues and collaborations.
- Staff costs for follow-up

Total cost: **1800 euro**

6. Indicative funding sources

Harghita County Council own budget, or Harghita County Council as applicant in Financing programmes where is eligible as beneficiary (ROP)

Csík LEADER Association LAG - in-kind

7. Result Indicators

Name of the Indicator	Action 1	Action 2	Action 3
Slowdress workshop operational	x		
Number of persons who interact with the Slowdress workshop	x		
Number of workshops and meetings organized	x	x	x
Number of units participating	x	x	x
Number of flyers distributed	x	x	
Number of events on which the Outdoor Museum was present	x		
Existing App	x		
Existing tour package		x	
Number of short films		x	
Number of signed commitments			x

8. Risk Assessment

#	Risk Classification	Risk Description	Impact Severity (1-5)	Risk Probability (1-5)	Risk Score (Impact x Probability)	Contingency Plan	Responsible
1	External Risk	Changes in the legal framework on EU level	5	1	5	Mobilization of local resources	HCC
2	External Risk	Changes in the tourism sector	4	3	12	Find means of better communication and promotion	ADI Harghita
3	Project Execution Risk	Interruption of funding	1	1	1	Find local financial sources	HCC
4	Stakeholder Risk	Inability to initiate cooperation between stakeholders from different sectors	4	3	12	Initiate a research in order to find better solutions to solve identified problems	HCC
5	Regulatory Risk	Non-inclusion of the sustainable use of cultural heritage in tourism objectives in strategic documents	1	1	1	Improve professional platform to support, facilitate and sustain the network. Find means to a better communication with management and financing authorities.	All stakeholders

9. Impacts

Through the implemented actions internal and external impacts can be foreseen.

In local **internal** level, the impact is more social, with a positive influence on local economy. Raising awareness on the value of the traditional Szekler costumes is an outcome, which is highly appreciated by all stakeholders and cultural experts. Returning to the roots to find self-esteem is a benefit, which strengthen the local communities, and preserving a living, but slowly fading piece of the history. The connection with the ancestors, determine a reevaluation of the local values and their adaptation to the present situation in order to make the local communities more receptive to challenges of the future.

As **external impacts**, we expect the following changes:

- Pieces of folk costumes and traditional handicraft become more fashionable and “trendy” among all: children, youth and adults;
- Entrepreneurs: demand for folk art products will increase, existing and new enterprises extend their activities in this field.;
- New tourism offers: 1) the number of events where traditional folk dresses can be seen will increase, 2) “slowdress” workshops provide active, participatory programs for tourists.
- New best practice: introducing the traditional folk costume in tourism offers can be a model for other counties;
- New cooperation: this project and its results can be developed further as a national or international cooperation project.

#	Policy Instrument	Expected policy change	Name of the Action	Impact (on society and/or policy)
1	Regional Operational Program 2021-2027, Priority Axis 5: Improving the urban environment and conservation, protection and sustainable use of cultural heritage	Using new approach to present the traditional handicraft and to involve traditional elements in local touristic offer	Action 1: Infrastructure development of heritage tourism	Impact on society: determining the communities to use consciously and proudly their tradition in local touristic offer Since the funding fund is available, for the first implementation, a policy change will take place.
2	Regional Operational Program 2021-2027, Priority Axis 5: Improving the urban environment and conservation, protection and sustainable use of cultural heritage	Appearance of the folk-art and traditional dress related topics in local touristic packages	Action 2: Widening and strengthening regional network of heritage tourism - production and promotion	Impact on policy: changing the heed in presentations of local attractivities from natural or architectural values to traditions

3	National Strategic Program (NSP) on rural development	Including grants as financial support for manufactures, handicrafts, NGOs for making and using traditional folk dresses	Action 3: Support for heritage tourism - workshop for the LEADER Action Groups, institutions and authorities in Szeklerland	Impact on policy: introducing the possibility to offer grant for traditional activities. Thanks to interregional cooperation, LAGs from other regions find inspiration and bring in new types of projects that are funded from their programs
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Date: _____

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____