



CRinMA 2.0 Cultural Resources in the Mountain Areas

CULTURE-PANDEMIC-TOURISM

Recommendations and solutions for stakeholders and managing authorities active in the field of transborder heritage management/ heritage tourism management in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic

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Introduction

The CRinMA 2.0 project concerns the impact of the pandemic on the resources of cultural and natural heritage in the mountain cross-border areas of Poland and Slovakia (Carpathians), Spain and Portugal, as well as Italy and France (Alps). The project is an extension of the CRinMA (1.0) project "Cultural resources in mountain areas", implemented since 2016 under the Interreg Europe Program. The project leader is the Marshal's Office of the Malopolska Voivodeship.

The aim of this document is to propose general recommendations/ solutions, based on concepts and ideas developed during the project meeting and also on the basis of desk research, which will be helpful in heritage management and culture tourism management in the era of pandemic risks.

Methodology and project approach

The project involved institutions and organizations supporting the development of heritage tourism, active heritage protection and management of natural and cultural heritage as well as entities directly dealing with heritage/ tourism activities (attracting tourists, local communities cooperation, local business, supporting heritage protection).

For this reason, the expert activities were as practical as possible. The idea was to implement meetings of practitioners and experts sharing their experience during pandemic (for designing new solutions and tools, management during social distancing, crisis management, redefining strategies and approaches).

The findings from the project meetings were also studied in context of the reports and strategic documents developed in this area covering pandemic issues. Their findings strengthen and provide the context for the expert work during this project.

The main purpose of this document is to find recommendations, the implementation of which will ensure the resilience of this sector to the pandemic challenges, as well as tackle changes caused by the pandemic.

Question 1: What strengthen sector resilience / flexibility	Question 2: What are sector transformations / new strategies facing pandemic challenge?	Question 3. Is there any social change in the field of heritage and tourism; how sector responses to it?
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Table 1. Key research issues

Transboundary cooperation	Mountain cultural and natural heritage resources	Heritage and tourism management
How to promote cooperation between regions and organisations sharing common transboundary heritage to help their economic and social development and tackle the obstacle of borders?	How to boost sustainable development in mountain areas through the better valorisation of the cultural and natural heritage?	What are innovative solutions in area of heritage tourism fit for replicability and adaptability to mountain regions?

Table 2. Key project dimensions

Local and regional self-governments	Cooperation networks / associations for mountain areas	Agencies and institutions for local and regional economic development	Enterprises, organizations and institutions active in the field of heritage and heritage tourism
Management of development public funds and building appropriate public policies	development of cooperation networks and creation of joint initiatives and projects	Supporting entrepreneurs and companies in the implementation of their development initiatives focused on innovation	Responding to challenges, implementing innovations for sustainable development

Table 3. Key project stakeholders and their activities

Pandemic challenge

The above issues are being considered in relation to the impact of the pandemic as a new factor and risk in the socio-economic space. The pandemic can be considered at the level of the health risk to individuals that requires the implementation of countermeasures minimizing this risk, having an impact on the range of regular activities in the sector as well as on the phenomenon of travel and tourism itself. On the one hand, there are administrative restrictions which are a limitation for business actions, on the other hand, there are fears of infection and its consequences, which change the habits and models of tourism.

The impact of a pandemic can be considered at the first level, related to the direct impact of this factor (following waves, uncertainty about the future and the strength of successive strokes of the pandemic) and long-term permanent changes (accelerated changes permanently changing the socio-economic reality). Together, this situation has come to be called “the new normality”, which is characterized by a different specification if compared to the times before the pandemic.

The heritage dimension

Natural heritage	Cultural heritage
<p><i>Natural heritage refers to natural features, geological and physiographical formations and delineated areas that constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants and natural sites of value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty. It includes private and publicly protected natural areas, zoos, aquaria and botanical gardens, natural habitat, marine ecosystems, sanctuaries, reservoirs etc.</i></p> <p>(Source of definition: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics and UNESCO, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972.)</p>	<p><i>Cultural heritage includes artefacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance. It includes tangible heritage (movable, immobile and underwater), intangible cultural heritage (ICH) embedded into cultural, and natural heritage artefacts, sites or monuments.</i></p> <p>(Source of definition: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics)</p>

Table 4. Natural and cultural heritage

There is an increasing recognition of strong interconnections between natural and cultural assets and of the need for their integrated management in the area of recreational and eco-tourism activities and delivering “green jobs” and additional revenues (for example, maintaining and protection the natural and cultural heritage of mountain areas in Europe).

Mountain areas dimension

Mountains cover nearly 29% of EU-27 countries and 13% of its population. Mountain regions are sensibly different from all other territories, both in terms of assets and challenges. Because of this, the European Union decided that a “particular attention shall be paid to [...] mountain regions” (Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union), by funding specific projects and programmes in mountain areas. Cohesion policy is a European policy which, with the collaboration of regional authorities, makes it possible to rebalance territorial inequalities and to encourage regional development.

(Source: <https://www.euromontana.org/en/project/montana174/>)

Table 5. Mountain areas in EU

Following the authors of the Mountains for Europe's Future Agenda, we can say that the mountains and their natural and cultural heritage require a proper innovative approach: *Europe's mountains are not only among the regions where the effects of climate change are most evident, but are also experiencing notable land use change and significant losses of rural populations. Some of Europe's less developed regions are in mountainous areas, yet mountains are among the most important providers of natural resources. Many mountain*

areas are at risk of becoming primarily tourism destinations for urban citizens, with negative impacts on cultural and natural heritage.

(Source:

https://www.oeaw.ac.at/fileadmin/Institute/IGF/PDF/News/Mountains_for_Europes_Future_04_16_d.pdf)

In this project, this special treatment is strongly linked to the promotion of sustainable heritage tourism which, on the one hand, gives impetus to economic development, and on the other hand, is based on the principles of preserving the local authenticity and heritage resources.

Heritage tourism dimension

Historical or heritage tourism means traveling with the primary purpose of exploring the history, landscape and heritage of a place by sightseeing of historical urban or rural areas, visiting local museums, wandering through national parks or other natural beauty areas, taking part in local traditions and fests. People often combine their love of heritage and history/ culture and nature with other tourist enjoyments like shopping, workshops attendance, park visits, and resort stays. So places that have a rich heritage are popular tourist destinations. Which is both an opportunity and a threat to heritage and local communities.
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Table 6. Heritage tourism

Cooperation and management dimension

There is an important role of public policies and activities to create a well-functioning system of connections and supporting relations between local actors (entrepreneurs, business environment institutions, R&D, local authorities, public bodies, culture and education institutions, heritage organisations). This program focuses particularly strongly on cross-border cooperation. Regional and local (transboundary) cooperation is essential for sustainable development, this is an important role of local authorities and network cooperation in achieving economic growth and sustainable development.

The aim is to create network solutions which are stable and predictable, but also flexible enough to react to the many social challenges, open for dialogue with stakeholders, able to introduce new policy solutions and deliver better projects bringing innovations. The question is how to create good management environment for enhancing the capacity of stakeholders, such as social partners and non-governmental organisations, to help them delivering better tailored heritage tourism services.

In the next part, the characteristics of pandemic changes in context of heritage management and tourism are presented on the basis of workshops in the project team and a literature review.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings relevant to the recommendations

First of all, it is necessary to point out the long-term impact of a pandemic on economic or management-related activities, which are well described in the literature:

- Pandemic as rapid factor of change, running ongoing process of acceleration of changes related to the economic and social activities; new hybrid model of social interactions (more energetic and socially relevant real/ virtual connections); pandemic, although it is already “under control”, has triggered permanent and irreversible processes of changes.
- Pandemic as a new risk factor related to the epidemic regime (social distance, lockdown of the economy) planning alternative methods of action in similar situations in the future; the need to be prepared for the risk associated with a global pandemic; resilience as a new model of business activities related to the design of infrastructure, processes and programs; in other words, it increases costs and slows down operations but it allows to survive in a new, more difficult, more risky environment.
- Pandemic as "technical break" of many important social processes and social or economic interactions resulting in a multitude of various perturbations and crises extended in time that interfere with each other; such a break, although it seems to be only a pause in activities, causes the breakdown of chains of connections and the breakdown of social and business relations. On the other hand, it is the moment, when arise new ventures that use other methods of operation, that are more suited to the new situation.

In the context of tourism, heritage and mountain areas, this could mean:

- discovering by tourists nearby locations (microtourism);
- raising the importance of regionalism as not only cultural issues but business ties;
- stronger connection of the virtual world with the real one in the form of interconnected activities,
- development of various types of recreation in the nature (active tourism),
- more opportunities to live away from urban centres (online work);
- more unpredictable seasonality of tourism (extending the season beyond the traditional calendar);
- emerging new lifestyles that emphasize freedom, slow-life, independence, autonomy, self-sufficiency, nature balance, minimizing the negative impact on the environment,
- rediscovering heritage as "reduce, reuse, recycle" part of lifestyle;
- assigning great importance to natural areas, land restoration, which may include renaturalisation or rewilding, green activities as an important part of the mountains areas image;
- development of hybrid styles of heritage participation consisting in the simultaneous combination of activities in real space (visiting a museum, wandering mountains,

staying in a regional inn) with activities in virtual space (online maps, virtual exhibitions and archives, social media, etc.)

- assigning great importance to the visual aspect of the location (natural beauty for social media).

But also:

- the challenge of maintaining the tourism ecosystem (shifting professionals and staff to other, more predictable sectors);
- loss of economic balance of tourist regions (quick transitions between the complete lack of tourists to the overcrowding of tourists- difficulties in planning);
- greater social averseness to jobs, which are not work-life balanced, which, however, are related to tourism (instability of activity; work on weekends; b2b contracts);
- assigning tourism as a threat to local specificity and identity, tourism can offer jobs with no real benefits to the community;
- paying attention to question, how huge an industry tourism became, how much impact it has on local communities, how much it shapes local heritage and natural resources. It was a deep breath and a calming effect, resulting in questions about the meaning and purpose of mass tourism;
- multiple influx of tourists to safe places in nature, in the mountains due to the limitation of other forms of recreation (European records in the number of visits to national parks as example).
- disruptions in the economy reducing tourist's confidence in the future, which may result in limiting expenses (doing "the same" for less money).

The biggest problems were related to the most severe phase of the pandemic, when the lockdown situation appeared:

- the organizations couldn't function normally in their offices or audience spaces;
- there were administrative restrictions related to the organisation activities and undertakings with audience
- decline of tourist trips because of the limitations of social distance
- financial turmoil in all three sectors resulting in many problems with maintaining adequate resources for restarting operations
- cutting off many self-employed people from their sources of income.

The sector's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in light of research and reports, and based on the project achievements

To begin, it should be pointed out that the pandemic simply had a huge impact on heritage, which is the basis for the development of sustainable heritage tourism: *The impact of the pandemic has been far-reaching and devastating. It has also highlighted the importance of our interconnectedness and common humanity. For many communities struggling with or recovering from the pandemic, living heritage has become an important source of resilience, helping to overcome social and psychological challenges and strengthen ties. In the past years, communities have adapted how they practice their living heritage to unexpected situations, highlighting the resilience of living heritage and our reliance on it.* It is an essential feature of heritage that it lives in the contemporary cultural circuit and has the ability to reorient and reorganize in new unexpected situations. Thus, heritage was a resource for innovation and resilience. (Source: Living Heritage and the COVID-19 pandemic: responding, recovering and building back for a better future: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/living-heritage-and-the-covid-19-pandemic-01179>)

In the area of activities and operations related to the tourism services, during the worst phase of a pandemic, three strategies were implemented: disrupting / closing operations; postponing activities to later, simple reorienting towards online virtual activities. Currently, due to a more friendly situation, but due to the fact that the pandemic has permanently shifted patterns and models of operation, two approaches dominate: regeneration/ renewal and transformation/ innovation.

Regeneration/ renewal is a stream of activities related to the renewal, resumption, restoration of cultural and heritage activity, reconstruction of relations and the role of culture, which, after a "technical break", after the trauma of closure, has a chance to return to a previous permanent track. It is thinking about culture as a fragile issue of social life that needs to be repaired and restored to on-site activities. It is thinking about the area of culture as a place that requires support and attention from decision-makers, because there are damages to be cured, there are matters that need support. It is about participating in culture as a constant social need and returning to cultural places: theatre halls, galleries, exhibitions and concerts, fests and festivals. It is thinking about culture as a social ritual, as creativity that requires direct contact with the audience. Institutions and organizations must return to their agenda and "catch up" lost time spent in the virtual world, which is an epoch of "real" art and culture.

Transformation/ innovation is a stream of activities related to the reorganization of culture and culture tourism in connection with the assimilation and acceptance of hybrid culture - existing on equal rights in the real and virtual/ Internet world, interconnected with each other. It assumes that mediated contact is not worse, but can create real bonds and real participation in culture. The pandemic can be described as catalyst for changes that had already taken place before, but their significance was not recognized or adequately secured in development programs and action strategies. Now digitization and mediatization could

break into the mainstream of cultural transformation. Certainly, there has been also a stronger networking and an increase in the temperature of discussions about strategies and plans for development. The pandemic provoked talks about "internal" phenomena - discussions about work in the area of culture, heritage, financing public policies, and about the mission and responsibility of culture in the context of sustainable development. Planetary threats and the climate crisis have been placed at the heart of this discussion. Mountain areas are a asylum of values and resources lost in other more accessible places. During stable times, the introduction of innovative, systemic solutions on a larger scale is rare, primarily because it is not has enough incentives for change. Now the whole sector is up to them forced, so it is worth taking advantage of it. The slowdown and limitation of activities provided space for reflection and verification of the existing development paths.

(Source: Raport „Regeneracja czy transformacja. Kontynuacja czy innowacja. Kultura po pandemii koronawirusa” <https://mik.krakow.pl/wp-content/uploads/Regeneracja-czy-transformacja.pdf>)

Therefore, it is possible to indicate proactive and reactive responses in the area of culture, heritage and tourism. Regenerative methods can restore the importance of relationships and community actions, which are especially important for social ties untied during the pandemic. Transformational methods can be a laboratory of changes and innovations of tourist services, or securing the sustainability of heritage resources, finding them a new place in the new socio-economic reality. Perhaps the key is to combine them together in the organization of public policies.

The aim is to achieve *sustainability as the practice of reducing or eliminating environmental impact and improving the quality of life of communities and also resilience which focuses on designing things to endure physical, social and economic shocks and stresses.*

(Source: <https://www.ovpm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/tourismguidelines2020.pdf>)

Recommendations and proposals for action

Based on the discussion conducted during the project at conferences, panels and workshops, it is possible to present selected recommendations that contribute to this discussion and are a good response to the established challenges. Due to the large number of recommendations developed during pandemic and post-pandemic times, it is worth referring to existing studies and selecting for the purposes of this project those, which are key recommendations for mountain areas and cross-border cooperation.

- *Help communities build back better by strengthening recovery support mechanisms to living heritage bearers at the local level, including through local governance structures.*
- *Take advantage of digital technologies to increase the visibility and understanding of living heritage.*
- *Strengthen and amplify the linkages between safeguarding living heritage and emergency preparedness, response and recovery plans and programmes.*

(Source: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/living-heritage-and-the-covid-19-pandemic-01179>)

- *Improve information and data exchange between sectors.* *The information flow between sectors is key to understanding the pandemic's impacts and devising effective responses. Specific data on the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on culture and tourism, as well as on the solutions being put in place for cultural tourism survival, will allow for more focused mitigation plans to respond to different needs and replicate good practices.*
- *Launch innovative alliances. The confinement has proven the importance of new technology and media in our daily lives. With millions of people confined to their homes, this is an opportune moment to develop and promote cultural experiences to a captive audience. The challenge is providing these experiences in a way that supports direct benefits to the involved organisations and practitioners. During this digital transition, tourism and culture can forge alliances with tech companies and the private sector to improve access to capacity building programs on culture and sustainable tourism, available online.*
- *Inspire a more sustainable future for cultural tourism. The tourism and culture sectors must continue to work together to inspire a more sustainable future for cultural tourism. Marketing strategies in tourism are highlighting local cultural expressions not only to address new audiences, but also to inspire responsible travel. Destinations and cultural sites are grappling with how to survive this period of hibernation, while planning for reopening of tourism.*
- *Form a more resilient tourism and culture workforce.* *The professional profiles of culture and tourism workers will require new skills for immediate actions and to take part in the recovery. Both sectors need to develop creative and inventive employment solutions to provide resilience to the workforce after decades of precarity. The*

existing jobs in cultural tourism should be kept and upskilled as human talent and knowledge are already there.

- *Strengthen governance structures for better coordination and information sharing. This crisis is an outstanding opportunity to build cross-sectoral governance models between tourism and culture key players. These models should involve tech partners to build platforms and exchange forums to coordinate actions and share information. The platforms should imply an effective communication, decision-making and agreements on setting the limits of tourism development involving cultural assets.*
- *Attract new audiences. The culture sector is shaping up committed global citizens and the tourists of the future, by reaching out to children & youth. The emotional bonds emerging now between citizens and cultural creators will make a difference in the years to come. The confinement can also make repeat visitors and “senior” cultural tourists support culture with patronage and solidarity actions.*

(Source: <https://www.unwto.org/cultural-tourism-covid-19>)

- *Cultural institutions will attract enthusiasts and creative people, if they will be living laboratories focused on mission, creating and implementing serious, not only current goals. They will become interesting for authors and recipients, but also partners for wise local authorities. The implementation of such objectives, however, requires a change in the way of thinking about cultural institutions as institutions with a specific structure of employment and competences. Still too often the internal configuration is too complex, hierarchical on the one hand, and fragmented - on the other. We are in favour of decommissioning, or at least reducing the silos structure. Instead of maintaining internal structures, it is necessary to revive project work using the skills and competences of various people, programs or ideas. So that the archipelagos of endemic islands can be interconnected.*
- *After the pandemic is over, we will need new competences, not only digital ones, but also soft ones, relating to values such as solidarity, trust, empathy, mindfulness and dialogue. These hard (technological) and these soft (social) competences must combine and complement each other. When the heroic period of doctors is over, there will be a need for guardians and curators of collective memory, helping everyone in the art of coexistence. The time comes for a culture of solidarity. Without culture, society will not come back to life.*

(Source: <https://oees.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Raport-Kultura.pdf>)

Take steps towards establishing a sustainable and resilient destination:

- *Include a clear understanding of which local products and markets are to be developed and which are to be managed.*
- *Ensure that marketing and media exposure is objective and aimed at potential cultural tourists who have a real interest in visiting the destination for its inherent qualities.*

- *Use destination management techniques to balance demand and capacity by managing/restricting access to sensitive sites and spread the visitor load both spatially and temporally and consider lengthening the stay.*
- *Include an understanding of factors and mechanisms to respond to potential crisis (resilience).*
- *Use interpretation carefully to celebrate the distinctive culture, heritage and diversity of the place*
- *Establish mechanisms to ensure that a proportion of the economic benefit accruing from tourism is reinvested in the culture and heritage of the place.*
- *Actively promote the use of sustainable transport, including cycling, walking and public transport, locally and for access, and charge accordingly*
- *Meet visitor needs for services, information, comfort, stimulation and safety.*
- *Provide advance information to visitors to plan their visit effectively and encourage appropriate and sustainable behaviour and transport use.*
- *Respect diversity and meet the needs of minority groups and people with impaired mobility.*

(Source: <https://www.ovpm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/tourismguidelines2020.pdf>)

The discussion during the workshops at the conference summarizing the project may help in selecting key recommendations. The following key themes and important topics for the stakeholders of this project appeared there:

- Designing new tourist services in a response to the change in the style of tourism (importance of environmental and social issues);
- Better relationships and joint activities in a separate sector of institutions dealing with natural and cultural heritage;
- Silver tourism and service design for people with special needs;
- Tension between profitable mass tourism and sustainable tourism oriented towards balance regarding local specificity, heritage, local community;
- The protection of heritage in contemporary cultural circuits requires a new, more adapted approach, there is a growing lack of "natural" ways of transmitting heritage, an increasingly lacking "natural" space for its reproduction in the process of social interactions. The important role of institutions, leaders, building community involvement in heritage area of local activities;
- The balance between creative and adaptive activities due to the difficulty of assessing what will work in the near and long term. The vagueness and opacity of the future;
- Paying more attention to the balance between the development of leisure industries and the quality of life of the local community, whether tourism can bring benefits in this area (and not only financial income in this sector);
- Broader connection of action strategies with local methods and socio-economic models, expert knowledge from the "outside" is still dominant throughout Europe, which is not conducive to building unique, local solutions;

- Stronger observation by public authorities and large players in the sector of solutions and activities of small entities, NGOs, which use their resources and creativity to the maximum. Their knowledge needs to be used more in policy and strategy actions.



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