



## Cultural Tourism from Local Stakeholder's Perspective

**For European policymakers: Improving EU policy**

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### *Introduction*

The SPOT Horizon 2020 project organized a **series of stakeholder roundtables in the 15 countries** that formed part of the project. Altogether 167 stakeholders were consulted. The numbers and types of stakeholders varied between countries, but they focused mainly upon local stakeholders most closely involved with the case studies being investigated. A list is provided at the end. The meetings, carried out during 2021, were constrained by the Coronavirus lockdown regulations in different countries, so some were carried out face to face and others online. The results were summarized in a stakeholder report that can be found on the SPOT website (<http://www.spotprojecth2020.eu/>).

Cultural tourism has been identified fairly recently as a source of income for many regions and is defined in many different ways. The relationship between the issues identified at an EU level may differ from what is seen at a national level and can be different again to how it is viewed from the “bottom-up” by local stakeholders and residents. This policy brief **summarizes the points raised by different stakeholders at a local level and suggests policy directions to deal with their queries**. It is aimed at EU level policymakers and national level policymakers since while there might be flows of policy directives downwards, it is not always clear how results are communicated upwards. This is what the Policy Brief aims to do.



## 1. Evidence and Analysis

Many stakeholders pointed out that there was a **lack of connection** between national-level policies, which might emphasize the importance of cultural tourism, and local experiences for stakeholders and residents. Many stakeholders were not aware of national policies or did not see any benefits locally. Proclamations are often made about cultural tourism at a national level that was not born out locally.

There was a **lack of join up** between cultural policies and tourism policies. Often these were situated in different ministries at a national level and not connected in practice. Therefore, economic issues connected with tourism were not connected to cultural issues connected with museums and local history.

In some cases, cultural tourism was seen as **part of a nation-building strategy** directed at domestic audiences to create awareness of national culture more than attract visitors. An example would be the opening of the Museum of Slovenian separation from Yugoslavia in Ljubljana, where a Museum of Slovenian history already exists. This is to further a nationalist agenda.

In other cases, the **more international orientation neglects local issues**. This was the case in Scotland where the VisitScotland tourist agency closed all the local offices in favour of a high level, generic promotion of the Scottish image of long-haired cows, mountains, etc. Local stakeholders on the Borders, far from the Highlands, felt that their offerings were lost.

In places that were weak economically, such as Eastern Europe, there was **great dependence on EU programmes and policies** tended to follow EU guidance. In other places it was more autonomous, reflecting more regional or national issues. However, national funds did not always follow EU funding requirements resulting in a confusing multitude of terminology and funding sources that did not always connect with one another.

A strong finding was that local stakeholders felt that **cultural tourism policies should more reflect local residents and stakeholders' interests** and that local people should be more engaged in the creation of cultural tourism experiences offered. This was important because often the cultural offerings rely on the input of volunteers and the production of intangible as well as tangible cultural heritage. Where this was recognized, for example in the case of the Italian Literary Park, the recognition of cultural heritage was transformational, with people attracted back to the area as a result.

In the Netherlands, **social media was used to engage local communities** and in other cases, local organizations were able to take on this role. However, in most cases, there were no mechanisms for engaging local communities and giving them ownership of cultural offerings.

Many stakeholders noted that the importance of cultural tourism was that it **offered a quality product**, in contrast to mass tourism. It was felt to be important to maintain the quality and distinctiveness of cultural tourism offerings.

Cultural activities such as dance, music, food etc. were seen to offer a **cultural bridge** to help bring together different ethnic and national communities, for example in a cross-border setting (Estonia and Hungary were examples),

Local stakeholders saw it as important to **promote a shared vision of their area**, in which they would have input. This was particularly important because many of the case studies were set in peripheral or former industrial areas where residents did not see themselves as a centre of "culture" until now.

Whilst some stakeholders were keen on promoting a **Green Agenda** through developing cycle routes and sustainable strategies (Spain, Slovakia) other areas felt that the Green Agenda was just a constraint on what they could do economically (Greece, Estonia).

The coronavirus pandemic resulted in various transformations at a local level, including stimulation of national tourism, appreciation of nature and culture at a local level, increased attention to hygiene and health. However, it also resulted in labour shortages and tourism businesses going bankrupt.

The report classifies innovation types according to:

**Incremental Innovation** - expanding horizons to introduce new client groups or services – storytelling to link local places and history, providing bicycles or e-bikes, improved signage and information.

**Radical Innovation** - a new development for example a forest becomes a venue for learning traditional woodworking crafts, exploration of historical trade routes between countries, attempts to develop out-of-season tourism, development of themed experiences to encourage longer stays.

**Transformational Innovation** - innovation made possible by external events or a new political or regulatory regime - for example, re-branding a de-industrialized area as a new attraction, developing new technologies of communication such as games and digital tours, linking to European Cultural Routes.

## 2. Policy Implications and Recommendations

There is a need for **connections to be made between policies on culture and policies on tourism** at a national and regional level. These two fields should support each other with clear connections made between them.

There is a need for policies to reflect a **shared vision at all levels**, which should include local stakeholders as well as national and regional ones. Vehicles for managing this should be set up so that there is a genuine voice for local as well as national leaders. The role of local stakeholders in managing quality and intangible as well as tangible cultural heritage needs to be recognized.

There needs to be attention paid to the **mechanisms through which local stakeholders can be represented** and their voices heard. This could be through Business Associations, cultural associations, community associations etc. What form this takes would differ according to local circumstances.

**National and regional policies need to align with EU policies**, especially in the administration of funding. However, there needs to be flexibility to allow local stakeholders to develop their distinctive offerings.

**Mechanisms for engaging local businesses and residents should be explored**. One possibility is through volunteering, another through the use of social media, special pricing for locals etc. so that local people feel they have ownership over cultural offerings.

**The Green Agenda** needs to be promoted in such a way that it connects with local priorities and is seen as advancing the interests of local stakeholders rather than working against them.

**Cultural activities that can act as a bridge between different ethnic and national communities** could be stimulated through festivals, events etc. associated with cultural tourism. In this way, cultural tourism can help to educate local communities about their own cultural offerings as well as attract visitors.

There needs to be **local training and education to promote work in the cultural industries** and increase employment opportunities, especially in the wake of the pandemic.

Elsewhere we describe examples of good practices and guidelines by which to judge them.



### 3. List of Case Studies and Countries

#### CASE STUDIES



##### Southern Moravia in Czechia

Represents a de-industrialised area along with gastronomy, viticulture, folklore, architectural heritage and distinctive landscape.



##### Beith Sh'ean Valley in Israel

The Land of Heritage and Springs.



##### Buzău Carpathians and Subcarpathians in Romania

A unique blend of scenic natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage and traditional habits and lifestyle.



##### Leichhardt Landscape in Germany

Welcome to the Leichardt Landscape: Ludwig Leichardt was a German explorer and naturalist, famous for his exploration of the nature of northern and central Australia.



##### Komárom-Komarno twin cities (Hungary and Slovakia)

Culture and heritage across the border, beside at Danube river.



##### Kinderdijk in Netherlands

From protection against water to protection against tourists. How a UNESCO heritage status leads to mass tourism.



##### Ida-Virumaa in Estonia

Crossing borders in Ida-Virumaa.



##### „Steirische Eisenstrasse” in Austria

A region built of ore, steel and coal.



##### United Kingdom

Media tourism in Scotland.



##### Cyclades in Greece

Global tourism destination, symbol of Greek landscape.



##### Art Nouveau in Barcelona, Spain

Breaking tradition to embracing cultural tourism.



##### Piedmont landscape in Italy

Reading the Piedmont landscape of Langhe-Roero and Monferrato and its cultural identity.



##### Lower Silesia in Poland

Multicultural heritage in mountainous landscape.



##### Ljubljana in Slovenia

Cultural, art, experience and festival capital of the Slovenia!



##### Nitra in Slovakia

The mother of all Slovak cities.



# Project Identity

<b>Project name</b>	Social and innovative Platform on Cultural Tourism and its potential towards deepening Europeanisation (SPOT)
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