

ITALY

POLICY BRIEF

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The vision of tourism *and* the vision of culture in Piedmont

For a balanced valorisation of cultural tourism

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Introduction

Alba and the surrounding areas of Langhe and Roero were subjects of a case study for the EU-funded SPOT cultural tourism project.

Data collection and documentation for the SPOT project work package were committed to collecting secondary data from institutional documents and databases and preparing a series of questionnaires on case study stakeholders. To collect data, a survey was carried out in 2020 on tourists, residents and cultural and tourist entrepreneurs.

Led by the SPOT project team dedicated to Policy, Practices and Strategy, a series of analyses on national, regional and local policy documents was carried out in 2020 and twice updated in 2021, in consideration of Italian national political changes in the institutional organisation of tourism. In 2021, four round tables were conducted with the local key stakeholders in the sectors of tourism, culture, and other tourism-related activities in the area of Langhe Monferrato and Roero area to identify avenues for improvements in cultural tourism.



Horizon 2020

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All these activities took place in Italy amid intermittent lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation certainly affected the UNIVR team's findings. Nevertheless, the pandemic, otherwise dramatic, provided the opportunity to understand the importance of tourism from an economic and social point of view and increase the knowledge base at national, European and international levels.

The relevant policy problem observed using different instruments (surveys, round tables, researchers' observations and interviews) as part of the SPOT project concerns a factual connection between tourism and culture in the regional government division (which is also appointed to sport), but a segmented action in policies' definition is reflected in likewise segmentation of tourism and culture public funding.

1. Evidence and Analysis

In Italy, tourism is mainly managed at a regional level. In 2021, the Ministry of Tourism was created to assist the sector through different centralised financial support tools. Further, a strategy-setting conference will be conducted at the end of October 2022. If the former Ministry of Culture and Tourism was an institutional combination favourable for a solid framework to improve cultural tourism, the actual (in September 2022) Ministry considers the entire sector to be a strategic industry. Foreign promotion of Italian tourism's image is implemented through the ENIT (the National Tourism Agency), which is a public body under the control of the Ministry of Tourism but formerly it was the control of the the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Management and promotion of destinations are still strategic actions carried out at the regional level. Despite this, an ambiguous way of handling the relationships between culture and tourism is recognised by interviewed stakeholders, who reported little expertise in the development of tourism and culture. These are perceived as bounded sectors in the actual regional division of Piedmont.

The policy problems here described are due to both circumstances and structural reasons. The consequences of this unprecedented pandemic must be taken into consideration when assigning legal deadlines and implementing political changes in regional government and public bodies. Some structural reasoning must be adopted for the Italian organisation (and continuous reorganisation) of the cultural sector and conservation institutions: during the first SPOT project, it was strictly connected to the tourism sector, while it was later attributed to the specific ministry. In particular, two aspects have been identified that are major factors for the development of cultural tourism:

At both regional and local levels, the agencies appointed to the task of tourism policy formulation have witnessed leadership changes after the most problematic year of the pandemic, 2020. Even if accountability and programming have been guaranteed along the vacancies at both regional and local levels by the technical staff of a very high level, a clear strategic and long-term vision still lacks (at the moment of writing in September 2022).

At regional level, during the SPOT project data collection, the cultural heritage sector emerged as fragmented, largely reflecting the public/private sector divide, which is quite characteristic in the Italian context, where propriety, conservation and presentation depend on different institutional (sometimes private) bodies. Despite this, the commitment of civil society, associations and foundations is strong enough to promote projects in the cultural creative sector. They collaborate with local bodies for cultural heritage management and valorisation expositions, for organising festivals and performances and promoting strategic assets. Further considerations could not apply because the culture program for the three-year period of 2022–2024 (Deliberazione 5 luglio 2022, n. 227 – 13907) largely deals with some of the SPOT project evidence on this topic.



2. Policy Implications and Recommendations

In the tourism sector, **the mid-term vision expressed in 2018 should be reassessed in light of the pandemic and produce a longer-term vision**, considering European Green Deal policies and more balanced promotion of different regional cultural specificities.

Similar to the tourist sector, where a specific body provides the knowledge of the whole sector and oversees its promotion, in the cultural sector, **a general direction to the management and economy of the cultural sector should be provided in order to achieve a greater and systematic knowledge of little and very little cultural initiatives** in the field of history, intangible cultural heritage and traditional festivities, where residents are mostly involved.

This could be considered **preparatory work for the creation of networks** (for instance, among local museums, non-profit associations or several interest groups committed to cultural heritage valorisation) and the exchange of good practices among different districts in the region, based on the involvement of both the younger and elder generations with a view of long-life learning and inclusive activities.



FIGURE 1: “The cultural landscapes of the Piedmont vineyards provide outstanding living testimony to winegrowing and winemaking traditions that stem from a long history, and that have been continuously improved and adapted up to the present day” (Criterion iii of the Vineyard Landscape of Piedmont: Langhe-Roero and Monferrato inscription into the UNESCO World Heritage Site List, 2014). Picture by Giovanna Rech (2022).



Project Identity

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