

tourism development
& promotion project

Building a Regional Network Across Culture

GRANT FACT SHEET

GOAL

Development and promotion of a new cultural route building on traditional lifestyle, songs and dances, verbal history, myths and legends, and authentic rituals, cuisine and handcrafts maintained in remote villages in the cross-border region of the Accursed Mountains.

Location

Albania, Kosovo*, Montenegro (Bjeshkët e nemuna/Prokletije - Accursed Mountains)

Action value

EUR 49,000.00 (EU/RCC grant: EUR 44,000.00)

Category

Cultural tourism

Lead applicant

Institute of Public and Private Policies - IPPP

Implementation period

November 2018 - June 2019 (7 months)

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

INTRODUCTION

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) implemented and European Union (EU) funded Tourism Development and Promotion Project worth EUR 5 million works to develop and internationally promote joint regional cultural and adventure tourism offer, increase number of tourists visiting the six Western Balkans economies (WB6), lengthen their stay in the region, increase revenues and employment in the industry, and remove policy barriers to further development of tourism.

The Project utilises EUR 1.62 million grants scheme to help improve quality of services and infrastructure along the selected routes. The first 12 out of 30 + grants - worth up to EUR 54,000 each - were awarded in November 2018. Institute of Public and Private Policies (IPPP) is amongst the first twelve grant recipients.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

Current situation

Accursed Mountains is a 3,000 km²-large mountain range extending through Albania, Kosovo* and Montenegro. This remote cross-border region is characterised by forests, pastures and severe natural conditions all of which shaped the common culture of mountain communities in those three economies. Their deeply rooted traditional lifestyle and heritage which includes myths and legends, rituals, traditional songs and dances, music instruments, cuisine, handicrafts, architecture and religious monuments remained authentic and resilient to modernity.

The region is lately gaining recognition as an attractive adventure tourism destination but its unique potential in cultural tourism remains untapped and as a result the region is not prospering while negative population trends continue.

Actions to be performed through grant

To begin valorising on the rich cultural heritage and contributing to the wellbeing of local communities in the Accursed Mountains the Institute of Public and Private Policies (Albania), in cooperation with association Marimangat from Kosovo*, and Alpet Shqiptare - Albanian Alps - Albanske alpe from Montenegro will develop and promote a new cultural tourism route through the region focusing on the authentic lifestyle and cultural heritage scattered along the mountain chain.

Their activities include researching, documenting, mapping (GPS) and developing a cultural itinerary along, and in access to, the existing hiking trails across the Accursed Mountains. The preparatory work entails field visits and interviews with villagers, local businesses, tour guides and tourism experts and will lead to the creation of a database of attractions and tangible and intangible heritage, accommodation facilities, shops (also offering handicraft items), bars and restaurants, as well as the creation of an annual calendar of traditional celebrations and events organised by locals.

Itinerary and the information gathered will be utilised in the development and implementation of a promotional campaign that will include a dedicated web site, downloadable and trackable map of itineraries, brochure, five-minute promotional video and social media channels. The promotional activities will be delivered under a newly developed brand

for the route which is to be launched through the action (Accursed CulTour).

Regional promotion of the new route will begin with a kick-off conference for tourism and culture agencies and the media, among others, and will further include interviews and appearances in electronic and print media.

In addition, a training course on the itineraries, tangible and intangible heritage and storytelling will be held for guides and tour operators to enable them to proactively promote the new route and guide tourists. Attention will also be paid to the green-border crossings procedures.

Results and sustainability

Sustainability of the newly developed and promoted cross-border cultural route will build on the close involvement of the key stakeholders. Local community representatives are the holders of the intangible cultural heritage - stories, myths and legends - as well as service providers (accommodation, gastronomy, hospitality, local experience); tour operators and guides are the intermediaries between the local communities and tourists; while the governments provide for the maintenance and regulation of the route.

The action implemented through the grant will develop the product and promotion platform both of which will be sustained following the action implementation by local tour operators and guides.

Due to its nature, apart from harsh winter conditions, the route will not be greatly affected by seasonality of tourism offer thus catering to a steady inflow of tourist and revenues.



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