

SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL TOURISM



Every four years, EU Member States agree a Council Work Plan for Culture. The last Work Plan for Culture, 2015-2018¹, incorporated a mandate² for a Sustainable Cultural Tourism Open Method of Coordination working group (SCT OMC)³. This SCT OMC, comprising 23 Member States plus Iceland, met over an eighteenth month period to draft recommendations for a report, using case study examples, for policy makers and practitioners.

Sustainable Cultural Tourism was highlighted as one of ten initiatives for the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018. As a result, the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 provided an unprecedented opportunity to explore the relationship between cultural heritage and cultural tourism. Several events held during the Year encouraged discussions around the SCT OMC mandate and examined the delicate balance between protecting and safeguarding cultural heritage and availing of that unique asset to encourage economic growth and employment.

The policy recommendations of the SCT OMC working group are presented in this document along with a new definition of sustainable cultural tourism. The full report will be published during the first quarter of 2019. Once published, it is hoped that some, if not all, of the recommendations will be taken on board and the debate around the concept of 'sustainable cultural tourism' will continue.

NEW DEFINITION

Sustainable Cultural Tourism

Sustainable cultural tourism is the integrated management of cultural heritage and tourism activities in conjunction with the local community creating social, environmental and economic benefits for all stakeholders, to achieve tangible and intangible cultural heritage conservation and sustainable tourism development.

1 https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework_en

2 Mandate for SCT OMC

Identify ways to create a European tourism offer based on tangible and intangible cultural heritage as a competitive factor in order to attract new forms of sustainable tourism.

Explore how digitisation of cultural content and digital services can foster the expansion of trans-European tourism networks and further the development of itineraries, including small emerging destinations, also taking into account contemporary arts activities, festivals and cultural events.

3 An OMC group is a form of "soft" law and involves each Member State being invited to nominate a representative to the working group to prepare a report according to the mandate.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

EU

- > Facilitate the wide dissemination of the Report when published and promote the uptake of its recommendations.
- > Conduct a mapping exercise of research and policies relating to visitor access and carrying capacity at sensitive cultural sites, including intangible cultural heritage practices, of EU Member States.
- > Create a network of experts from Member States in order to exchange good practices, knowledge and expertise and facilitate peer learning, study visits and training to promote knowledge transfer.
- > Increase awareness in DG AGRI, DG ENV, DG GROW, DG MARE, and DG RTD of the relationship between cultural heritage and sustainable cultural tourism to encourage sustainable development.
- > Develop the imminent 'Quality standards for EU interventions on tangible cultural heritage' to encourage good management practices in Member States in relation to sustainable cultural tourism.

EU Policymakers and stakeholders

- > Continue to invest in digital technology, visitor management, facilities including interpretation and infrastructure such programmes as Horizon 2020, Creative Europe etc.
- > Encourage a participatory approach to the governance of cultural heritage places with local/community involvement.
- > Promote and supplement Member State's capacity in education and training in the field of sustainable cultural tourism e.g. Erasmus+ http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en
- > Encourage responsible tourism and assist those operating in the field of cultural heritage and cultural tourism industry in line with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals at European, national, regional and local levels.
- > Ensure integrated and participatory management models for cultural heritage, which incorporate continuous assessment of visitor usage, access and regional spread.
- > Ensure that cultural heritage is foremost in plans and policies including tourism, economics, land-use, environment and social and other relevant areas.
- > Encourage networks, digital partnership platforms, public and private partnerships to address the issues of carrying capacity and access at Europe's hot-spots.
- > Support and encourage cultural heritage sites and practices to develop off-season activities.



EU Member States

Policy

- > Develop long-term national spatial plans based on the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.
- > Build capacity and improve coordinating actions across different levels of government and policy areas, including tourism, environment and innovation, to support the shift to more sustainable tourism investment and financing practices (OECD Tourism Trends and Policies, 2018 report p.22).
- > Promote an integrated approach and enhance the cooperation between ministries responsible for economic, cultural and regional affairs at national and/or regional government level in order to break down thematic silos and to develop all-inclusive strategic plans.
- > Implement the recommendations of International Conventions of UNESCO and Council of Europe (Faro Convention), as well as the Directives of the European Commission.
- > Support participation in networks, partnering schemes, collaborative programmes and initiatives on multiple levels of governance (national, regional, local).
- > Create synergies by forming digital working groups between members of established projects, for example the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes, UNESCO's World Heritage Journeys web platform, national cultural routes programmes, European Capitals of Culture, European Heritage Label, European Capitals of SMART tourism, and European Destinations of Excellence.

Management

- > Expand the use of bottom-up approaches and tools (when applicable) in policy design, strategic planning and management and involve all relevant stakeholders
- > Actively support cooperation schemes that facilitate the exchange of good practices and knowledge respecting the principle of subsidiarity.
- > Encourage a cross-sectoral approach in all tourism sectors so that sustainability is taken account.
- > Encourage digital platforms with the relevant stakeholders that consolidate booking systems for transport, admission tickets and accommodation to encourage low season visitors and facilitate market intelligence purposes.

Awareness

- > Increase awareness raising programmes and campaigns using all forms of traditional and digital marketing to encourage responsible tourism with an emphasis on the environment and an ethical approach to tourism.
- > Promote sustainability awareness in education policies at all levels of education.

Research

- > Support academic and innovative research on sustainable cultural tourism to develop indicators (carrying capacity, access, energy efficiency, responsible handling of waste, etc.), evaluation tools and recording of both quantitative and qualitative data.



Economic/funding

- > Provide adequate and continuous funding for the safeguarding and interpretation of cultural heritage (tangible and intangible).
- > Consider re-investing revenue generated from tourism taxes and fees into local cultural heritage sites and practices to be used for the protection, development and upkeep.
- > Support alternative forms of tourism with emphasis on low impact and responsible tourism, especially, but not exclusively, in areas with low carrying capacity or burdened by overuse.

Local and Heritage Communities

- > Promote community 'ownership' of cultural heritage through awareness raising, site visits and capacity building.
- > Incentivise and encourage local participation in networking, partnering schemes, synergies, collaborations, programmes and initiatives.
- > Instigate coordinated representation in dialogue schemes with other stakeholders.
- > Revive old customs, traditions and customary practices as a means of both safeguarding intangible heritage and creating additional cultural offer(s)/experiences.

Cultural Heritage: religious heritage, organisations, institutions, sites, practices

- > Adopt appropriate site management plans to ensure the correct balance between safeguarding and conserving cultural heritage resources with visitor access and facilities.
- > Use cross-disciplinary scientific tools to conduct research on visitor impact and develop strategic indicators to prioritise sustainable carrying capacity - adjust visitor flow accordingly in favour of the cultural and natural assets integrity.
- > Avail of digital tools to facilitate remote access, interpretation, communication, marketing and business intelligence such as such as Joint Research Council Cultural Gems App <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/science-update/cultural-gems>
- > Explore creative ways of actively engaging local communities in projects with a focus on younger generations e.g. European Solidarity Corps https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en and Discover EU https://europa.eu/youth/discovereu_en
- > Integrate both tangible and intangible heritage into the design of new cultural tourism offers/experiences/products and consider the appropriate adaptive reuse of cultural buildings.
- > Develop staff training programmes to raise awareness of sustainability, environmental issues, responsible tourism etc.
- > Develop fundraising strategies for the protection and presentation of cultural heritage to include public private partnerships, crowd funding, philanthropy etc.



Tourism associations, operators, developers and entrepreneurs

- > Invest in long-term economic and entrepreneurial development plans that include sustainability and social responsibility as part of the business strategy.
- > Consult with local communities to develop and agree high quality tourism offers/ experiences/products based on authentic cultural heritage.
- > Provide guidelines and training for responsible tourism for both tourism practitioners (tour operators) and consumers (individual travellers).
- > Support start-up clusters for cultural tourism entrepreneurship.
- > Avail of existing applications (e.g. United Nations Environmental) or develop new online toolkits and digital applications for measuring visitor impact.
- > With the support of local communities, promote new emerging destinations and facilitate integrated marketing.
- > Develop pricing structures that encourage longer stays and visits in the low season.
- > Publish tourism data to enable evaluation, monitoring and mapping of the variable dynamics in the field by local and national governments.
- > Support local businesses and favour local products to encourage unique offerings.
- > Ensure a positive working environment by the creation of permanent employment or long-term employment through the low season.

Tourists (consumers)

- > Adopt responsible behaviour both as a traveller and as a consumer.
- > Be conscious of 'impact' and 'ecological footprint' and use online toolkits and applications to measure impact.
- > Be conscious of the use of natural resources and follow any special instructions.
- > Respect the local community and engage in the area's history, tradition, culture.
- > Avail of local produce, creative industries, goods and services to stimulate the local economy.

Mandate for SCT OMC

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Explore how digitisation of cultural content and digital services can foster the expansion of trans-European tourism networks and further the development of itineraries, including small emerging destinations, also taking into account contemporary arts activities, festivals and cultural events.

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For further information, please contact:

European Commission

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

Directorate D – Culture & Creativity

Unit D1 – Cultural Policy

Contact: Anne Grady

Email: EAC-UNITE-D1@ec.europa.eu



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