WORKING GROUP ON TOURISM

Action Plan for 2015-2016

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Modern tourism is closely linked to territorial development and these dynamics have turned tourism into a key driver for socio-economic progress.

As laid down by Art. 195 of the TFEU, the European Union has specific competences in order to:

- complement the action of the Member States in the tourism sector (e.g. promote the competitiveness of undertakings);
- encourage the creation of a favourable environment for the development of undertakings in the tourism sector;
- promote cooperation between the Member States (e.g. exchange of best practices).

Beside the necessity of cooperation between EU Member States, candidate and neighbouring countries, stated by the European Union, Tourism Working Group will attempt to assist European Union’s Directorates-General – DG Regio, DG Mare and DG Grow in particular – with a view to encourage collaboration in tourism, in order to generate growth and jobs for all and at the same time ensure sustainable economic, social and environmental development.

In this context, the Region of Central Macedonia, which is leading the Balkan & Black Sea Regional Commission Tourism Working Group, is expected to develop a coordinated action in order to make sure that regional voice could be heard at European, regional and national level. Regional authorities represent key actors in encouraging responsible and sustainable tourism.

Sustainable and responsible tourism potential of the Balkans and Black Sea area, through innovative and quality tourism products, services, and efficient management mechanisms, will be the aim of the WG on Tourism, together with alleviating seasonality.

To this end, the Region of Central Macedonia will capitalize its experience gained in the wider Balkan and Black Sea area, also within the framework of the previous Black Sea Basin Programme (2007-2013) as the leading partner and coordinator of the ongoing “Tourism Paths of the Black Sea Region - BSB TOUR” Project.
II. OBJECTIVES, PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

The Region of Central Macedonia will provide organization and coordination for the Balkan & Black Sea Regional Commission Tourism Working Group within the general objective of harmonising the interests of the BBSRC regions, in order to reach to the technical objectives established through a mutual understanding and agreement between the members.

In this frame and taking account of the European Commission Communication “A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism”, as well as of the first European Interparliamentary Conference “Challenges of Sustainable Tourism: Promoting Cultural Heritage and Environment Protection”, the Group will focus on the following priority action lines and initiatives:

P1. To create concrete project proposals for EU programmes and funds (short-term)

Projects under preparation:

- **Project proposal on Small Cruise and Yachting style tourism**, in collaboration with the RESHIP (REsearch in SHIpping and Ports Laboratory, Department of Shipping Trade and Transport, University of the Aegean), under the initiative of the Region of Central Macedonia

- **Project proposal on Ecotourism**, under the initiative of the Region of Eastern Macedonia - Thrace

Possible actions:

- Underwater Cultural Routes (within the CPMR Intercommission Tourism Working Group)
P2. To develop cooperation activities
(short/mid-term)

Possible actions:

- To elaborate policy papers, developing synergies with the BBSRC WG on Business Cooperation and the CPMR WG on maritime policies;
- To organize brainstorming sessions and/or public seminar targeting European Institutions;
- To develop studies and/or benchmarking activities;
- To prepare joint project proposals;
- To foster intensive promotion actions for increasing tourist flows through advertising spots and billboards in partner regions;
- To develop a coercive influence from private or public actors, providing tax benefits for private companies if they support regions by investing in advertising and public media campaigns.

P3. To develop a direct communication with EU governmental officials
(mid/long-term)

A concrete set of strategic and sectoral specific ideas should be elaborated jointly in the frame of the upcoming meeting, in order to move from the needs of the territory to the ideas, and after to the calls and the funding opportunities. At the same time, the funds and cooperation programmes of the EU should be monitored in a systematic way.

The group should also try to put together the outputs of previous tourism projects in order to capitalize the best results in the frame of the new initiatives.
III. ORGANIZATION AND SCHEDULE

The Region of Central Macedonia, as leader region of the BBSRC Tourism Working Group, proposed the following in order to achieve our targets:

- preparation and activation of periodic working meetings;
- monitoring of policies and regulations, recommendations, etc. adopted by the European Institutions, analysis and decision-making agreements within the BBSRC;
- participation in the CPMR Intercommission Tourism Group;
- submitting proposals to the BBSRC Political Bureau and General Assembly;
- representation of the Group in the fora organized at European and Black Sea level on tourism issues, considered of interest;
- Synergies with the NECSTouR network.

Participants:

- a coordinator from the Region of Central Macedonia;
- one member from each participating region of the BBSRC, in charge of tourism;
- a representative of the BBSRC Secretariat;
- a representative of the CPMR Intercommission Tourism Working Group;
- external technical and institutional partners, as necessary.

The group should assign its main tasks in a coherent way to its members in order to value its expertise and interests in the frame of the achievement of the above mentioned priority action lines.

Once the tasks and the working packages are defined, the involved members should coordinate the specific actions using especially internet and videoconferences.

Moreover, each member of the group should try to establish and develop useful contacts with external experts, lobbyists and representatives of the EU Institutions or other Organizations (i.e. BSEC) relevant for Tourism issues.

A special relation should be followed with the EU Commission’s DGs (Regio, Mare, Grow). Synergies with the CPMR General Secretariat, its working group on Tourism, as well as with the BBSRC working group on Business Cooperation, the CPMR Geographical Commissions, and external institutions, organizations and institutes are also needed.
SCHEDULE

The Tourism Working Group shall meet regularly, according to current demands imposed by EU and the Balkan & Black Sea agenda.

The group will try to match, as far as possible, with BBSRC/CPMR meetings and other tourism specific fora (organizing at least two regular meetings per year, subject to special meetings that may be proposed by the leading Region and the partners of the group).

The working language is **English**.

As a general rule each member of the group will assume the travel and accommodation expenses arising from the attendance to the scheduled meetings. Exception will be made in case of the synergies made with European running projects. In the future, the group should try to find other financial resources to help the regions co-fund their travel costs.

NEXT MEETINGS

1. 28 May 2015 (Brussels)
2. 4 November 2015 (Florence – Tuscany, Italy)

NB: Responsibilities/tasks to be assigned in the upcoming meeting of the Working Group on 28 May.

IV. ANNEXES

I. **Calls for proposals and programmes interesting for the Group**

- [ENI CBC Black Sea Basin Programme 2014-2020](#)
- [Balkan-Mediterranean Programme 2014-2020](#)
- [Danube Transnational Programme 2014-2020](#)