

Interreg Europe project CHRISTA – Culture and Heritage for Responsible, Innovative and Sustainable Tourism Actions

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## PRESS RELEASE – 30 May 2016

### **EU project to protect and preserve European natural and cultural heritage assets and to deploy them for the innovative, sustainable and responsible tourism strategies**

Cultural and natural heritage is very important at all levels, local, regional, national and European, consisting of several dimensions that can lead to resource efficiency, through deployment for sustainable and responsible tourism development, with innovative character. Policies for heritage applications to eco-cultural tourism need to be further developed, implemented and monitored, through interregional cooperation.

CHRISTA (Culture and Heritage for Responsible, Innovative and Sustainable Tourism Actions) project in the Interreg Europe interregional cooperation programme of EU, aims to **protect** and **preserve natural** and **cultural heritage** assets and **deploy** them for the development and promotion of **innovative, sustainable** and **responsible tourism strategies**, including **intangible** and **industrial heritage**, through **interpretation** and **digitisation**, with **capitalisation** of good practices, **policy learning, policy implementation** and **capacity building**.

CHRISTA project started in April 2016, involving 10 partners from 10 EU Member States regional and local authorities, as well as tourism authorities in 9 EU regions.

Project partners are: **Pafos** Regional Board of Tourism (Cyprus, Lead Partner), **European Cultural Tourism Network** (Belgium), **Veneto** Region (Italy), Region of **Central Macedonia** (Greece), Region **Vastra Gotaland** (Sweden), County Council of **Granada** (Spain), **Vidzeme** Tourism Association (Latvia), **Sibiu** County Tourism Association (Romania), **Burgas** Municipality (Bulgaria) and Intermunicipal Community of **Ave** region (Portugal).

During four years, the project partners will focus on the improvement of regional operational programmes, regional/local strategies and plans in nine destination regions, advances in relevant policy implementation, as well as upgrading of cultural and natural assets and innovative applications.

The project main outputs will be Action Plans, with implementation and monitoring of improved Regional Operational Programmes, regional/local Strategies and Plans in nine destination regions, communication and dissemination tools for policy learning and capacity building, contribution to EU policies and EU2020 targets.

The main beneficiaries are public authorities and their stakeholders.

The overall budget of CHRISTA project is 1,771,775 EUR, co-financed by European Regional Development Fund with a budget of 1,506,008.75 EUR (85%).

**Project CHRISTA Inauguration was started by 1<sup>st</sup> Interregional Steering Committee Meeting which took place in Thessaloniki, Greece on 23 – 24 May 2016.**

At this meeting the project partners were introduced to each other, presented their regions and cultural assets and discussed the four selected good practices as well as the roles and tasks of the project and its partners.

European Cultural Tourism Network will be the project Communication Manager, coordinate the interregional exchange of experience policy learning process by providing technical assistance to the partners on the specific topics through external expertise, as well as secure durability of the project results through continuity in policies, responsible tourism actions beyond the project end and making the policy learning and capacities available to other destination authorities.

Financial management, technical coordination and the project publicity matters were discussed and procedures agreed.

The next event will open exchange of experience process through the 1<sup>st</sup> Interregional Thematic Workshop on the priority theme 'Intangible Heritage' capacity building with study visits in Ave Region, Portugal, on 23 – 24 September 2016, organised by the project partner Intermunicipal Community of Ave, Portugal.

Intangible Heritage topic is defined as: oral traditions; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices and traditional craftsmanship.

During the Workshop, the project partners will identify, analyse and exchange the knowledge and practices on the topic 'Intangible Heritage' with innovative character with focus on understanding how the exchange of experience can directly influence improvement of policies, strategies and plans tackled in the project.

**CHRISTA project is made possible by the financial support from the European Union – the Interreg Europe programme and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).**

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Contacts:

Ieva Treija, CHRISTA Communication Manager, European Cultural Tourism Network  
E-mail: [ectn.info@gmail.com](mailto:ectn.info@gmail.com)

**Notes to Editors:**

**1. CHRISTA project Partnership:**

Pafos Regional Board of Tourism, Cyprus (Lead Partner) [www.visitpafos.org.cy](http://www.visitpafos.org.cy)

European Cultural Tourism Network, Belgium  
 Veneto Region, Italy  
 Region of Central Macedonia, Greece  
 Region Vastra Gotaland, Sweden  
 County Council of Granada, Spain  
 Vidzeme Tourism Association, Latvia  
 Sibiu County Tourism Association, Romania  
 Burgas Municipality, Bulgaria  
 Intermunicipal Community of Ave region, Portugal

[www.culturaltourism-network.eu](http://www.culturaltourism-network.eu)  
[www.regione.veneto.it](http://www.regione.veneto.it)  
[www.pkm.gov.gr](http://www.pkm.gov.gr)  
[www.vastarvet.se](http://www.vastarvet.se)  
[www.dipgra.es](http://www.dipgra.es)  
[www.vidzeme.com](http://www.vidzeme.com)  
[www.sibiu-turism.ro](http://www.sibiu-turism.ro)  
[www.burgas.bg](http://www.burgas.bg)  
[www.cim-ave.pt](http://www.cim-ave.pt)

## 2. Brief history of the CHRISTA project idea

The CHRISTA project idea stems directly from the [THESSALIA CHARTER](#), produced by the completed INTERREG IVC CHARTS project, which brings together the main principles, features, findings, conclusions and recommendations on good practices regarding engaging culture and heritage for sustainable tourism development.

**3. Interreg Europe programme** is one of the instruments for the implementation of the EU's **cohesion policy** and helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy. The Cooperation programme covers the whole territory of the European Union and Norway and Switzerland. The programme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with a budget of €359 million for the 2014-2020 period.

## 4. Background information of CHRISTA project –

The common challenges that are jointly tackled in the CHRISTA project are:

- Natural & Cultural Heritage assets are valuable treasures, sometimes in danger and in need of proper conservation, preservation and/or restoration,
- These assets can be deployed for the purposes of sustainable and responsible tourism development, namely cultural tourism, heritage tourism and ecotourism,
- The tourism potential of these assets may facilitate the preservation and restoration efforts, if performed in a sustainable and responsible way,
- Innovation can contribute greatly towards improving cultural and natural heritage policies for sustainable and responsible tourism development.

