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**JOINT STRATEGY ON THE DEVELOPMENT, EVALUATION AND INNOVATION OF A
TOURISM IN THE PROJECT**

<<Development and promotion of an integrated cultural heritage tourism product: Route
"Natural protected heritage within the cross-border region Romania-Bulgaria">>,
15.2.1.068.

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I. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATURAL POTENTIAL IN THE ROMANIAN-BULGARIAN CROSS-BORDER AREA AND IN THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

1.1. Brief description of Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region from the perspective of ecotourism development

The Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region, which has been largely deployed along the lower Danube River, and comprises 7 counties in Romania - Mehedinti, Dolj, Olt, Teleorman, Giurgiu, Calarasi, Constanta - and 8 regions in Bulgaria - Vidin, Montana, Vratsa, Pleven, Veliko Tarnovo, Ruse, Silistra, Dobrich, has a particularly valuable natural heritage that creates the premises for the development of ecotourism in the region.

The relief is particularly varied in this region, where the plain has an important share - the Romanian Plain, on the Romanian side and the Danube Plain, which extends to Bulgaria up to the Balkan Mountains. The Danube Cliff is spectacularly different on the two sides of the border; is rocky on the Bulgarian side, and on the Romanian side the smooth relief, dominated by meadows and plains. Hills and plateaus are developing as we leave the Danube, and valleys and lakes are numerous on both sides of the border.

This border area is covered by six NUTS 2 regions:

- Mehedinți, Dolj and Olt counties - part of South-West Development Region Oltenia - RO41;
- Teleorman, Giurgiu and Calarasi counties - part of South Muntenia Development Region RO31;
- Constanta County - part of the South-East Development Region RO22;
- Vidin, Vratsa, Montana and Pleven Districts - part of the North-West Region BG31;
- Veliko-Tarnovo, Ruse and Silistra districts - part of the North Central Region BG32;
- Dobrich District - part of the North-East Region BG33.

The level of development of all the Romanian counties and districts in Bulgaria that form the border region is very low, taking the last positions in the EU in terms of general regional competitiveness.

The cross-border region Romania-Bulgaria comprises a wide range of ecosystems and natural habitats with high conservation importance - specific ecosystems and high biodiversity such as rivers, rivers, confluences, island

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ecosystems, national parks, natural parks, RAMSAR sites and other reserves high protection status. Thus, the common route proposed in the preliminary study includes natural objectives recognized for special landscapes, such as sections of the Danube River, parts of the Stara Planina and Carpathian mountain chains or the Black Sea coast.

Therefore, the Romanian-Bulgarian cross-border¹ region is characterized by a high biodiversity, as well as protected sites and a diverse natural landscape. These natural heritage objectives are present along the entire length of the border.

The level of protection of these areas ranges from natural parks to Natura 2000 sites, from biosphere reserves to UNESCO sites. Eight natural and national parks are located in this region. Thus, there are three natural parks in Romania - Mehedinti Plateau Geopark, Iron Gate Natural Park and Comana Natural Park and a national park - Domogled National Park - Cerna Valley, and in Bulgaria there are four natural parks - Vrachansky Balkan Natural Park, Persina Nature Park, Rusenski Lom Natural Park and Zlatni Pyasatsi Natural Park (Gold Sands). Rusenski Lom Natural Park is an exceptional monument and is on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve is a true biodiversity museum, a natural value bank of invaluable value for the universal natural heritage. In Bulgaria, there are two biosphere reserves, Chuprene and Srebena (Ramsar site).

Ramsar sites are located in the studied area, including 15 sites in Romania - including the Danube Delta, Lake Techirghiol and the Iron Gate Natural Park and 6 sites in Bulgaria - including the Persina Nature Park, Srebarna or Shabla Lake.

The Natura 2000 ecological network is represented by 54 special conservation areas - SCIs and 46 special avifauna - SPA special protection areas in Romania, while in Bulgaria there are 92 SCI sites and 40 SPA sites.

From the perspective of the development of tourism in this region, besides the natural protected areas included in the route "Natural protected patrimony from the territory of Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region", cultural, historical or archaeological objectives near the natural areas were taken into account. Thus, the cultural and historical component of the route is well represented, including attractions such as Radetski Shipyard in Kozloduy, Ulpia Oescus archaeological site in Karaboaz area, Ancient Dimu Castrum in Belene, Tsarevets Fortress in Veliko Tarnovo, Aladzha Monastery near Natural Park The Golden Sands, the Iron Gates Hydropower Museum in the Portile de Fier Natural Park, the Comana Monastery and the Calugareni History Museum in Comana Natural Park, the Trophaeum Traiani Monument and the Adamclisi

¹ Cohesion Policy Support for Local Development: best practices and and future policy options, DG Regio, CCI n. 2009.CE.16.O.AT.081, Final Report

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Museum of the Natura 2000 Site Dumbrăveni-Valea Urluia-Vederoasa Lake, Callatis Fortress and the Callatis Archeology Museum in Mangalia, numerous museums in Constanta and many other archaeological sites and places of worship on both sides of the border.

The cultural heritage² of the Romanian-Bulgarian border area is dense and diverse, consisting of a wide variety of historical and architectural monuments, museums or churches and monasteries, archaeological sites, legends, folklore, etc. In all counties and districts there are cultural heritage objectives.

In the border area, respectively in the seven counties, 268 cultural heritage objectives of national and international interest were identified in the Romania-Bulgaria Cross-border Operational Program 2014-2020: monasteries - 26 objectives; cult buildings - 64 objectives; urban civil buildings - 42 objectives; infrastructures and utility buildings - 7 objectives; boyars' residences (castles, mansions, palaces) and memorial houses - 29 objectives; museums - 6 objectives; urban assemblies - 4 objectives.

Globally, tourism is the second largest industry and one of the most expanding sectors, and both countries, Romania and Bulgaria, rely on tourism for international openness and economic development, all the more so as tourism generates economic effects additions in other sectors such as transport, entertainment and services.

Natural heritage has limits beyond which its modification or use of resources would lead to diminishing or even loss of diversity or natural beauty. From area to area, specifics, sensitivities, species and habitats vary, as they can cope with economic activity due to the pressure on tourists in different, unpredictable ways and guiding local authorities and businesses in tailored management and development plans area.

These elements help the community to develop economic activities, attract local revenue from the tourists' party, add value to natural products and attract investors. The way a local community manages to use its natural heritage - wise and moderate - is essential to ensuring future development options.

Economic activities - particularly ecotourism - that harness the patrimony and natural resources have a direct impact on them. This impact may be beneficial, such as the development of a tourist component, or harmful, such as pollution, resource depletion, unattractive landscapes, or biodiversity loss.

² Cohesion Policy Support for Local Development: best practices and and future policy options, DG Regio, CCI n. 2009.CE.16.0.AT.081, Final Report

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1.2. The international context of the protection of natural heritage and tourism development, especially ecotourism

The legal framework for the capitalization of cultural or natural heritage by tourism varies substantially, with various purposes: to regulate, to authorize, to prohibit, to provide resources, to sanction, to grant rights or to restrict.

Regardless of the nature or level of legislation, the legislative framework must provide for sufficient legal and regulatory instruments to protect the cultural or natural heritage.

1.2.1. UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage³

According to this convention, the natural heritage includes natural aspects consisting of physical or biological formations or groups of such formations, which have an extraordinary universal value from an aesthetic or scientific point of view. The natural heritage also includes geological, physico-geographic formations and well-defined areas that constitute habitats for plant species or animals of extraordinary scientific or conservation value that are in danger. Thirdly, the natural heritage includes well-defined natural sites or well-defined natural areas of extraordinary scientific, aesthetic or conservation value. Through this convention, signatory members recognize the responsibility of the state to identify, protect, preserve, present and transmit to the future generations the cultural and natural heritage of their state. Each member assumes the following:

- Adopt a general policy that puts cultural and natural assets in the community lives together and integrates the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programs;
- To establish on its territory services for the protection, preservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage, where it does not already exist, and having prepared staff who have all the means by which to perform their functions;
- To develop scientific and technical and research studies so that implementation methods give the state the opportunity to counteract the dangers and threats to which the natural and cultural heritage is subjected;
- Take the legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary to identify, protect, preserve, present and rehabilitate the patrimony;

³ <http://whc.unesco.org>

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- Support the establishment or development of national or regional training centers on the protection, preservation and presentation of natural and cultural heritage, in order to encourage scientific research in this field.

1.2.2. Convention on Biological Diversity⁴

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is an international agreement adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It has three main objectives:

- conservation of biological diversity;
- use its components in a sustainable way;
- fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

Unlike other international agreements setting binding targets and obligations, the CBD has a flexible approach to implementation. It identifies general objectives and policies, and countries are free to determine how they want to implement them. One of the most important CBD achievements so far has been to increase biodiversity interest in both developed and developing countries. Biodiversity is now seen as a major and growing issue.

Within the new European tourism policy "Europe, the world's favorite tourist destination - a new political framework for European tourism", four priorities for action have been identified:

- Stimulating competitiveness in the European tourism sector;
- Promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism;
- Strengthening Europe's image as a collection of sustainable and high-quality destinations;
- Maximizing the potential of the European Union's financial policies for tourism development.

The objectives outlined around the first priority are: promoting a diversification of tourist offer; development of innovation in the tourism industry; improving professional skills; encouraging the extension of the tourist season; strengthening the socio-economic knowledge base on tourism. For Priority 2, the following actions are envisaged: the development of a system of indicators for sustainable destination

⁴ www.cbd.int

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management, the organization of awareness-raising campaigns for tourists on the choice of tourist destinations, means of transport, etc., the development of a European mark to increase consumer confidence in the product tourism, facilitating the identification of climate change risks in order to avoid unprofitable investments and the development of alternative tourism offers, creating a sustainable tourism book, proposing a strategy for sustainable coastal and maritime tourism, strengthening cooperation between the European Union and major emerging countries and countries from the Mediterranean Sea. Priority 3 sets out the following actions: creating a "Europe mark" to complete national and international promotion, promoting the visisteurope.com portal, supporting joint promotion for international events, "strengthening the European Union's participation in international fora".

1.2.3. The European Landscape Convention

The objective of the European Landscape Convention is "to promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to organize European cooperation in this area". The Convention applies to the entire territory of the Parties, either land, inland waters and marine areas, or the landscape is considered special, ordinary or degraded. The implementation of the agreement will be done "in accordance with its own division of competences, its constitutional principles and administrative regulations, and respecting the principle of subsidiarity, taking into account the European Charter of Local Self-Government."

Each signatory member undertakes:

a) "to legally recognize landscapes as an essential component of the living environment for the population, an expression of the diversity of the cultural and natural heritage and the foundation of its identity";

(b) "to establish and implement landscape policies aimed at protecting, managing and arranging it by adopting specific measures referred to in this Convention";

c) "to set up participation procedures for the general public, regional and local authorities, as well as other stakeholders to define and implement the landscape policies referred to in b)";

d) "to integrate the landscape into spatial, urban, cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as other policies likely to have a direct or indirect impact on the landscape".

The specific measures defined in the Convention consist of:

- "Increasing the awareness of civil society, private organizations and public authorities regarding the value of landscapes and the role of their transformation";

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- Promoting the training of "specialists in knowledge of landscape interventions", "multidisciplinary training programs in policy, protection, landscape management and landscape planning for private and public sector and stakeholder associations", "school and university courses which, within the framework of the specialization to address issues related to landscape and its protection, management and arrangement";
- "Each Party shall identify the landscapes and any other relevant information about them: characteristics, dynamics, transformations, etc.";
- "For each landscape identified, targets will be set by public consultation";
- "Each party must put in place the necessary tools to implement its policies."

1.2.4. EU Directive 2015/2302 of the European Parliament and of the Council on package travel and associated travel services

This directive establishes the rights of consumers with regard to travel packages, holiday packages and circuits, ensuring transparency and improving the level of legal certainty for both traders and tourists. In the context of this project, Article 6 of EU Directive 2015/2302 states: "At present, the cross-border potential of the Union travel package market is not fully exploited. The disparities between the rules protecting existing passengers in different Member States are a factor which discourages travelers from a Member State from purchasing travel and associated travel services from another Member State and, similarly, organizers and retailers in a Member State to sell those services in another Member State. In order to allow passengers and traders to take full advantage of the benefits of the internal market while ensuring a high level of consumer protection across the Union, a closer approximation of Member States' legislation on travel packages and services associated travel".

Article 24 also recommends the development of communication channels between traders and customers: "With regard to packages, retailers should be responsible, together with the organizer, for providing pre-contractual information. In order to facilitate communication, especially in cross-border cases, travelers should be able to contact the organizer and through the retailer where they purchased the package."

Regarding the information required by the consumer prior to the purchase of a service package, Article 25 states: "The traveler should receive all necessary information before purchasing a package, whether it is sold by means of distance communication, in the agency or by other means types of distribution. When providing that information, the trader should take into account the specific needs that he could reasonably anticipate for passengers who are particularly vulnerable due to age or physical disability"; and Article 26 states that "Essential information, such as those

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relating to the main features of travel or pricing services provided in advertising material, on the organizer's website or in brochures as part of the pre-contractual information, should be binding, unless the organizer reserves the right to make changes to these items and the changes are communicated clearly, intelligibly and visibly to the traveler prior to the conclusion of the package travel contract. However, given the new communications technologies that allow for easy updating, it is no longer necessary to provide for specific provisions on brochures, but it is appropriate to ensure that changes to pre-contractual information are communicated to the traveler. It should always be possible to make changes to pre-contractual information where both sides of the package travel contract explicitly agree to this." Thus, the information provided to the consumer must include the main features of the services:

- "destination / destinations, itinerary, periods of stay, ... number of nights included";
- the means of transport, their characteristics and categories, the places, dates and times of departure and return, the times and places of intermediate stops and transport links;
- "location, main characteristics and, where appropriate, tourist category of accommodation according to the rules of the country of destination";
- "mass services offered";
- "visits, excursions or other services included in the total agreed package price;
- the fact that "travel services will be provided to the traveler as part of a group";
- "whether the ability of the traveler to benefit from other tourist services depends on actual oral communication, the language in which the services will be provided";
- "if the journey or holiday is generally adapted for disabled persons and, at the passenger's request, precise information on the adequacy of the journey or holiday taking into account the needs of the traveler";

In addition to these features, the package must also include the business agent's name, address, and contact details - phone, email addresses; package price; payment methods; minimum number of people; general visa and passport related information; information about the possibility of terminating the contract; travel insurance information required or optional.

1.3. Local context of protection and capitalization of natural and cultural heritage

The strategy is based on the legislation of the two countries (Romania and Bulgaria) on the protection and valorisation of natural and cultural heritage.

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1.3.1. Legislation in Romania - Protection and Recovery

The main legislative regulations in force at national level, relevant for the development of a tourism product in the project "Development and promotion of a common natural heritage product: Route" Protected natural patrimony within the cross-border area Romania- Bulgaria »" are:

1.3.1.1. JUDGMENT no. 558 of 4 August 2017 regarding the approval of the Program for the development of tourism investments - Masterplan of investments in tourism - and of the criteria for eligibility of investment projects in tourism

According to the Decision no. 558 of August 4, 2017, the Tourism Investment Program (or the Tourism Master Plan and eligibility criteria for tourism investment projects) aims to develop local communities in areas with high tourist potential by increasing public investment in tourism infrastructure, competitive tourism development and efficient targeting of public investment, the development of a network of international tourist destinations and the identification of an integrated approach to regional tourism policy on sustainable development.

The Masterplan of tourism investments covers several major development directions, namely: the development of health tourism, recreational tourist infrastructure, the Danube Delta tourist area and the Black Sea seaside resorts, as well as the tourist infrastructure in the high mountain area and the field ski.

Thus, the following types of investments will be supported: the arrangement or rehabilitation of the skiing area and the development of the infrastructure for other recreational activities; arranging or rehabilitation of theme parks, water parks, installations (toboggan, carousel, etc.), development and arrangement of recreational areas (camping / holiday village, ice rink, picnic areas, etc.); the construction, arrangement or rehabilitation of first aid stations, pontoons and recreational ports, camping and fishing areas and visiting and observation infrastructure in protected areas, lakes, beaches and nautical projects, mountain refuges and access infrastructure.

The amounts needed for these investments are allocated from the state budget by transfer from the Ministry of Health budget to the local budgets of the administrative-territorial units, which can request the financing of the project proposals by submitting the technical-economic documentation and the building permits by the end of the next year (31.12.2018).

The main eligibility criteria to be met by the administrative-territorial units submitting project proposals are:

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- including in the annexes to Government Emergency Ordinance no. 142/2008 on the approval of the National Territory Planning Plan Section VIIIa;
- including in annex no. 1 to the Government Decision no.1.016 / 2011 regarding the granting of the status of spa resort and balneo-climatic resort, with the necessary additions;
- the proposal for projects concerning the development of the ski area requires the inclusion in the annex to the Law no. 526/2003 for the approval of the National Tourism Development Program "Skiing in Romania";
- the administrative-territorial units that submit project proposals referring to the program "Development of recreational tourist infrastructure" may be: - tourist resorts of national interest, respectively local, according to Government Decision no. 852/2008.

1.3.1.2. ORDINANCE no. 58 of August 21, 1998 on the organization and development of tourism activity in Romania

According to Ordinance 58/1998, tourism is a priority for the national economy, this ordinance regulating the organization, coordination and development of tourism. The tourism resources are defined as "components of the natural and anthropic environment, which by their qualities and specificity are recognized, registered and valorised by tourism, insofar as they are not subject to an integral protection regime", namely "natural - elements geological, geomorphological, climate, flora and fauna, landscapes, deposits of mineral substances and other factors; anthropic sites: archaeological monuments, archaeological sites, monuments, memorial ensembles, technical and artistic monuments, museums, folklore and folk art, etc. ". Touristic accommodation structures are defined as "any construction and fitting intended, by design and execution, for accommodation of tourists, serving the table for tourists, recreation, special transport for tourists, spa treatment for tourists, together with the related services" and includes "reception facilities touristic tourist functions: Hotels, hotels, apartments, motels, tourist cottages, cottages, bungalows, holiday villages, campsites, rooms for rent in family homes, river and sea boats, tourist boarding houses and agritourism tourist accommodation; tourist reception facilities with public catering functions: catering units within the reception facilities with functions of accommodation, catering establishments located in tourist resorts, as well as those managed by tourism companies, restaurants, bars, fast food establishments, confectioners, pastries and which are certified according to the law; tourist reception facilities with leisure functions: clubs, casinos, polyvalent halls, facilities and facilities specific to the tourist leisure; (railway trains, rack trains, etc.), river and sea transport (touristic boats), cable transport (cable cars, ski lifts, etc.) ; tourism reception facilities with balneary treatment functions:

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