



**Report**  
**for**  
**identified good practices**  
**and**  
**tourist packages**  
**in the cross-border region Bulgaria-Turkey**

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## **I. Introduction**

In the modern world, the importance and role of tourism not only for the national but also for the world economy is steadily increasing. Today, tourism is among the major economic sectors in a number of countries, providing jobs, investment, poverty reduction, state revenues, and local producers. The dynamic development of tourism has gradually transformed it into a catalyst for socio-economic development in many countries around the world. In addition to improving the economic indicators of a country, tourism also helps to create real conditions and preconditions for the development of international relations in terms of intercultural, historical and social exchanges.

Today, tourism goes through its natural evolutionary transformation, and one of its characteristic features is that modern tourism becomes more and more sustainable. The concept of sustainable tourism is based on the effective interaction of the following components, forming the tourist product, namely: satisfaction with the tourist package, economic factors, environmental factors, cultural and historical value, social factors. Looking for a balance is a major task in implementing the concept of sustainable tourism. Other essential characteristics of sustainable tourism are related to the need to set a tolerance rate for environmental load from human activity; the understanding of cohesion between the environment and economic activity; formulating clear rules on how to implement the concept of sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism, with a clear strategy and vision on the part of the state-run tourism policy, helps to improve its international image. There are a number of world-wide examples of how countries, by implementing a national strategy, with a clear and effective methodology of objectives and tasks, are able to develop tourism products to promote their countries as first-class tourist destinations. An example of such countries are some EU countries, South-East Asia, etc. who have succeeded, thanks to their national tourism policies, to develop tourism packages that contribute to improving the international image. This in turn leads to a number of economic, cultural and social benefits.



As regards the characteristics of the cross-border project region - Bourgas-Edirne-Kirklareli and Bulgaria and Turkey as a whole, there are many real conditions and prerequisites to assert that the potential for developing the tourism potential between the two countries is significant, but a clear, concrete and coherent strategy is needed. This also applies to the development of cultural and historical tourism in the cross-border region, which has not been sufficiently optimized and balanced at present.

Tourism is a sector that is largely based on the strength of successful stories and good and innovative practices. Sustainable tourism has a cumulative nature that is largely based on the fact that a good and / or innovative practice can be successfully integrated, naturally taking into account specificities in tourism policy and hence product in another country. This in turn contributes to the overall development of the tourism sector. There is a positive feature in the tourism sector that the taking and integration of good and innovative practices has a very multiplier effect. Often, even these practices are further developed to enhance the quality of the various packages offered.

**Main target** of the research is the identification of best practices and tourist packages that have the potential to be replicated in other locations in the cross-border region in Bulgaria as well as in Turkey. **The focus** of the research was also on tourist attractions, tangible and intangible heritage of the area, with historic, architectural or cultural value. The research focused on the following destinations in Bulgaria: Nesebar, Sozopol, Burgas and the village of Brqashlian, since these are major tourist destinations in the region, mainly in the summer season. In Turkey the research focused mainly on destinations in Edirne and one destination in the city of Luleburgaz, Kirklareli vilает.

**Further objectives** of this research: The Turkey cross-border region (Districts of Edirne and District of Kirklarely) in general falls short in long-term tourist visits for two main reasons: (i) there is neither a sea or a mountain to attract holiday tourists during the summer or winter periods; (ii) the proximity of Istanbul, the major Turkish tourist destination, is the reason for the tourist to prefer visiting it instead of Edirne and other tourist sites in the cross-border region. The same shortfalls apply for the other two districts of the Bulgarian border region – Yambol and Haskovo. Both of them lack of direct access to sea or mountains and the proximity of other



major tourist locations leave them aside from the tourist flow. Considering the more developed tourist industry in the Burgas and Edirne region, the research tried to find out best practices and tourist packages from these region, information about which can help the other regions – Kirkclareli, Haskovo and Yambol, to develop similar practices and products to foster their tourism potential.

The aim is to apply best practices from the cross-border region and, in particular, the Burgas and Edirne regions as they have a strong tourist potential that can positively serve the development of the entire region. These practices can be successfully and quickly implemented in practice for other tourist sites and for the development of tourist packages in the cross-border region, especially taking into account the specific features of the region.

Another additional objective is to incorporate and incorporate these good practices into qualitatively changing the nature of tourism in the cross-border region, focusing on attracting tourists seeking to explore the cultural and historical heritage in the region. As a result, conditions will be created to diversify the region's tourist flow and to provide additional opportunities for developing the tourism potential of the cross-border region.

**The subject** of the survey is focused on how the tourist attractions in the cross-border region of Burgas - Kirkclareli - Edirne can be effectively and successfully adapted and integrated into other subregions, thereby enhancing the overall tourist potential and promoting other or further development of current tourist packages which in turn is to increase the competitiveness of the region.

**The subject** of this study focuses on the presentation of proposed good practices from different tourist destinations / sites of cultural and historical importance in the cross-border region, which can serve as a successful example and, under certain circumstances, be applied for the promotion and development of other destinations / sites in the cross-border region, thereby enhancing its tourist potential and competitiveness.

**The timeliness** of the study is determined by the growing importance of tourism in Bulgaria and Turkey, especially in the area of the cross-border region and in particular the regions of Bourgas and Edirne. According to data of the National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria and Eurostat for 2016, total revenues from tourism and related industries



in Bulgaria account for 13% of the country's GDP<sup>12</sup>. The tourism forecasts in Bulgaria, and especially in the region of Bourgas, are also predicted that in the summer season 2018 Bourgas Airport is expected for the first time in its history to meet 3 million foreign tourists, which is about 10% for the summer season 2017<sup>3</sup>.

As regards Turkey, according to data from the Knoema International Statistical Platform, the share of tourism in the country's GDP in 2017 is similar to that in Bulgaria and forms 11.6%<sup>4</sup>

The above data shows that Bulgaria and Turkey have a strong tourist potential, as it, especially in the border region of Burgas - Edirne-Kirklareli, can be further developed. For this purpose, different good practices from the cross-border region should be explored and implemented and further integrated in the region.

**The methodology** of the survey includes the identification and description of proposals for good practices and package packages based on the analysis of specialized reports in the field of tourism for the cross-border region and Bulgaria and Turkey as a whole, as well as the use of information from interviews conducted by representatives of the target group as well as on the basis of reports from focus groups - activity under the project "Support for Sustainable Tourism" (Ref. No. CB005.1.22.063 IPA CBC BULGARIA-TURKEY PROGRAMME 2014-2020).

The interviews were taken by representatives of the tourism sector - tour operators, museum managers and cultural and historical sites, representatives of the local government and branch associations and unions. Special qualitative and quantitative data and indicators are used in the specialized tourism analyses and in the project focus group reports. The qualitative data are mainly recommendations, opinions and findings from the target group's stakeholders on the development of sustainable tourism in the region and the identification of good practices and package travel as well as interviews, while quantitative data are related mainly with statistical information and data from various analyses and reports on the state of tourism in the surveyed

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<sup>1</sup> National Statistical Institute, <http://www.nsi.bg/bg/>

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism\\_statistics/bg](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism_statistics/bg)

<sup>3</sup> Burgas Airport, <http://www.bourgas-airport.com>

<sup>4</sup> Knoema, Turkey - Contribution of travel and tourism to GDP as a share of GDP, [www.knoema.com](http://www.knoema.com)



project regions. Thus an effective interaction is achieved in the compilation of the good practice study in the transnational region, which takes into account both academic and analytical data, as well as those of the project target group, thus achieving a multiplier and sustainable effect of the project.

**The sources** handled in the research are different in nature. The bibliography includes a variety of specialized analyzes and reports in the field of tourism, available in the public Internet space, including the specialized statistical platforms (Eurostat, NSI, Knoema, etc.).

Of particular importance for the formulation and identification of good practices and tourist packages in the cross-border region Bulgaria - Turkey are the “Sustainable Tourism Support” project (REF No CB005.1.22.063 IPA CBC BULGARIA-TURKEY PROGRAM 2014-2020) focus- groups and interviews by representatives of the target group. It is the effective information cohesive in the use of data from the public specialized sources and analyses and the results of the conducted focus groups and interviews, which is extremely important in the qualitative identification of good practices and the formation of tourist packages in the cross-border region Bulgaria - Turkey.



## **II. Presentation of good practices and tourist packages in the cross-border region Bulgaria - Turkey**

As stated in the introduction of the present study based on the project focus groups and on the basis of interviews with representatives of the project target group, the following good practices and tourist packages were identified in the border region of Burgas - Edirne - Kirklareli, namely: The Old Town of Nessebar, Bulgaria; Edirne and its markets, Turkey; Village of Brashlyan, Bulgaria; the Selimiye Mosque, Edirne, Turkey; Town of Sozopol, Bulgaria, Complex Sultan Bayazid and Museum of Health, Edirne, Turkey ; Castle, Burgas region, Bulgaria; Cluster of tourist sites: Justice Tower, Sarayıçi Kırkpınarır Square; Edirne New Palace and Balkan Wars Memorial Edirne and the region, Turkey; Island of St. Anastasia, Bulgaria; Sokullu Mehmet Pasha Complex, Lyuleburgaz, Turkey.

Some of the identified good practices and package packages are discussed in detail in the focus groups. Most of them were accepted unanimously by the focus group participants. During the focus groups are also presented the results of the interviews with the representatives of the target group. Some of the good practices associated with successful stories about promoting a tourist destination were also suggested during focus groups. Such is the proposal as a good practice to identify the opportunities offered by Saint Anastasia Island. It has been discussed that good practices such as processes and a management system can serve to promote other destinations / sites in the cross-border region. Such examples are given, for example, by the example of Sozopol and Nessebar, which can be used to develop tourist packages of other less popular tourist destinations such as the Aytos and Karnobat regions, to which include Rusokastron, Markeli, Aqua Calidae, the Roman baths the Deultum settlement, the black mosque in Karnobat and other sites / destinations in the area.

Participants in the focus groups unite that in order to develop the less popular tourist destinations / destinations in the cross-border region, good practices should be identified from the already existing and successfully developed tourist destinations in the region, as well as a strategy as to how the most efficient and optimal to apply these practices. The topic of diversification of the nature of tourism has also been taken into account both during focus





groups and in interviews. According to the general opinion of the Bulgarian representatives in the target group, Bulgarian tourists travel much more often to Turkey than the Turkish ones in Bulgaria who visit the cross-border region. For the Bulgarians, Edirne and Kirklareli are well-known destinations not only for shopping, but also because of the fact that there are historic sites of global importance for culture all over Europe. However, there are places that are not yet known for Bulgarian tourists, which can be successfully developed as an example of the Turkish package-oriented tourism packages and good practices proposed by the focus groups.

The main **criteria** for identifying the practices and tourist packages presented below are related to several main points, namely: Popularity of the site / destination among tourists with a profile focused on cultural and historical tourism; available effective site / destination management / management system based on preservation of the cultural and historical heritage; accessible infrastructure; cultural and historical value of the site / destination, the opportunity to effectively appraise the good practice of other tourist sites and destinations in the region.

Identified good practices and tourist packages undoubtedly represent to a large extent sites / destinations of significant cultural and historical value, but at the same time, from the point of view of their management, they can serve as a successful example by which to create an effective model for the implementation of best practices for the promotion and development of new and / or insufficiently popular from the viewpoint of cultural and historical tourism objects / destinations in the cross-border region.

The identified good practices and tourism packages are only presented in the cross-border region. The reasons for this are related to the fact that the main purpose of these good practices and tourist packages is to be successfully applied as models in other less popular destinations / destinations in the region. The region's specific factors, taking into account common characteristics in the region's historical development, resemblance to historical architectural styles, cultural and social traditions and custom, make use of identified good practices and tourist packages as one of the most effective and optimal options for the overall and complex development of the tourist potential of the cross-border region.



Last but not least, for the sake of full academic clarity in the identification of good practices and tourist packages, a **working definition** should be given in the present study of the terms 'good practice' and 'package travel'.

For the purposes of this study, "**good practice**" takes the definition given by the American business consultancy WebFinance Inc., namely: Method or technique consistently and consistently showing better results than such achieved using other means<sup>5</sup>.

For the purposes of this study, "**tourism package**" will be understood as the definition used by the EU Council, and in particular for the "Package Tourism Travel", namely: "Package Tourism travel" is a combination of tourist services that usually include transport, hotel and some other services, such as renting a car<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Good practice (best practice) definition, WebFinance Inc., <http://www.businessdictionary.com>

<sup>6</sup> "Package Tourism travel: improving tourists' rights", <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/bg/policies/package-travel/>



## **Old city of Nessebar, Bulgaria**

### *Geographical location*

**Town of Nessebar**, Population: 14 157 inhabitants (GRAO, 2017-12-15); GPS Coordinates: 42.660555, 27.737331

**Municipality of Nessebar**: Area: 420 sq. km; Population of the Municipality: 25 000 inhabitants;

**Type**: small town/tourist town.

### *Description:*

The first identified by the focus groups and the conducted interviews is good practice in the town of Nessebar. It is among the most popular and well-developed tourist destinations / sites in the Bulgarian part of the cross-border region. The mediaeval city is defined as the jewel of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. It is a successor of an ancient Thracian village Menebria and of a Greek colony and important trade center Mesembria. Nessebar is one of the oldest cities not only in Bulgaria, but also in Europe and one of the richest in architectural monuments from the middle ages of Bulgaria. It was founded as Messambria in the 6th century B.C. by Greek colonists and has been on the World Heritage List of the UNESCO since 1983.

Located on a small peninsula in the Black Sea the delightful tourist spot yearly attracts a million visitors. A small road, which connects the peninsula with the mainland, leads through the narrow gateway in the ancient fortress wallright to the quaint, tiny historic down town area with numerous well preserved buildings (mainly mediaeval churches) and narrow cobbled lanes, winding amongst wooden houses of the 18th and 19th century. Nessebar's typical houses have stone foundations and broad, overhanging wooden superstructures.

Today the spirit of the ancient market lives on with a multitude of sidewalk vendors, hawking all sorts of art work and tourist souvenirs, such as fine crochet works, knitwear,



pottery, carvings, paintings and other souvenirs showing the cultural and historical heritage of the city.

Idyllic restaurants on the steep coast or in the middle of the old town invite the visitors to rest and to get acquainted with the cultural and historical heritage and value of Nessebar.

The old town of Nessebar is a successful combination of the different historical and cultural eras - Antiquity, Middle Ages and Bulgarian Revival, which combined with various complex measures to popularize the town as a tourist destination make it a good tourist practice with the possibility to develop different tourist packages, cultural and historical sites in the city itself.

Alongside the vast number of architectural and archaeological monument, the town had developed a very good infrastructure for tourists and visitors. There are a number of bus lines that connect the city with other major tourist destinations in the region: Sunny Beach, Burgas, Sozopol, St. Vlas and Pomorie. The buses have very convenient precise schedule during the summer season, and are served by on-the-spot controllers who sell you tickets in the bus and can give you directions on which bus stop to get to reach your desired destination. The bus service has convenient numerous stops throughout the Sunny Beach complex and St. Vlas village, which makes the trip from the these top tourist complexes to the Nessebar site very comfortable for all tourist that want to visit it.

A regular attraction train transfers tourists from and to Sunny Beach while its rout goes alongside the see beach and across the new city of Nessebar. There is a convenient junction between the attraction trains circulating within the Sunny Beach and the trains going to Nessebar. At the peak hours the trains pass every 5 to 10 minutes and are convenient for tourists since the well developed routs make it possible for tourists to catch these trains anywhere on the main walking passages in the complex.

On top of the road means of transportation, the old city harbor provides opportunities for water transportation. There are regular shuttle boat transfer to Sunny Beach and St. Vlas. The harbor itself is a wonderful place to walk and have a relaxation passing the spectacular small fisher boats and the new powerful yachts and catamarans docked at the harbor.



There is no fee to enter the old city and the tourist can observe all monuments for free. There is a small ticket price for those who would like to see the monuments inside and this fee is provided to cover the costs for guarding the monuments (each monument has one or two service persons who monitor the heritage to be preserved) and for its maintenance and reconstruction. In the city there are tens of restaurants, coffee shops, fast food outlets and hundreds of shops for souvenirs, clothes, jewelry, crafts, and other products of interest to the tourists.

Just aside from the harbor, for those traveling by car or by excursion buses, is available a parking area with capacity of 500 vehicles. The parking is 5 minutes away from the old city and provides convenience for the tourists to reach the sightseeings with minimum walking. The preserved monuments from all stages of its long existence: remnants of fortress walls from Roman times and the Middle Ages, old Byzantine and Bulgarian churches, antique 18th and 19th century houses make the destination unique for the tourists. Another great treasure of the town are the numerous churches. The city also has an archaeological museum where the tourists can learn more about the architecture of the city's monuments.

The old city of Nessebar has its share for the development of the tourism in the border region of Bulgaria. **It has successfully combined the ancient cultural and historic monuments with modern transport infrastructure.** The old type houses are well transformed into hotels, restaurants, craft shops and other places of tourist attraction. Millions of tourists choose destinations as Sunny Beach, St. Vlas, Pomorie, Aheloy, Ravda, Burgas, Sarafovo, to enjoy the Sea coast during the day and have amazing experience at afternoon walks or having a dinner in the ancient surrounding of old city of Nessebar. Thus, because of its unique combination of values provided to the tourists, the city of Nessebar takes the first place as a best practice for tourist attraction. Millions of tourist packages are sold each year for this destination, combined with different means of transportation – line buses, organized bus trips, rent-a-car, boats, and attraction trains.

### *Objectives and activities*



The objectives of applying good practice are mainly related to the implementation of the tourist model of Nessebar in other destinations / sites in the cross-border region with relatively similar characteristics and conditions, but with less tourist popularity. As mentioned, the city develops well tourism through various factors, including infrastructure. The objectives are also related to the fact that some elements of this tourist model of the city, which have been identified as good practice in the cross-border area in the objectives of the present study, have been successfully incorporated into other destinations, to increase the tourist potential of the region. It also aims at exploring the possibility of including the Old Nessebar as a component of new joint tourism packages linking it to other destinations / sites of the region with significant cultural and historical heritage. Such packages would be, for example, the "Ancient Black Sea: Nessebar, Pomorie, Sozopol" or others.

#### *Achieved results and indicators*

It is undisputed that Nessebar is one of the most visited tourist destinations on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, and perhaps also in the country. Pomorie-Ravda-Nessebar-Sunny Beach-Sveti Vlas Tourist Agglomeration is one of the regions in Bulgaria with the highest concentration of foreign tourists. The different types of tourism that this tourist agglomeration offers, including the cultural and historical - the Old Town of Nessebar, allows the different needs of the tourists to be met. Given the free access to the Old Town of Nessebar, it is difficult to give accurate statistics on the exact amount of foreign tourists, including Turkish and Bulgarian tourists. This is also driven by the ever-growing contingent of tourists who organize their own trips. One of the factors that reflects on the cultural and historical tourism in the Bourgas region is that it is largely associated with the summer tourist season, which in turn is actually about 3 months. Recently, local administrations in the region of Burgas have taken measures to partially diversify the cultural and historical tourism in the region, which aims to increase tourists outside this summer period. The measures are related to adding new convenient flights from local airports operating off-season, as well as improving road infrastructure. Thus, the season of cultural and historical tourism in the cross-border region can be increased from



March to October, thus increasing the tourist potential of the region. However, the implementation of the tourist model of Nessebar and its Old Town in other destinations and sites, including those in the cross-border regions of Turkey, will be of utmost importance.

#### *Further comments*

The developed by the local administration strategy for the development of the city's tourism potential can be considered by other cities in the cross-border region to foster their tourism potential. In the example of Nessebar, other destinations / sites in the cross-border region can be developed. The most important example could be the town of Nessebar, Pomorie, which is also a town with ancient history and has real conditions to use the available infrastructure. The tourist model of Old Nessebar can be successfully implemented in Pomorie and even joint tourism packages can be developed, especially for tourists seeking cultural, historical and archaeological focus on their travels. This is also due to the already good infrastructure between the cities in the region and the proximity to the airports in the region. Elements like transport infrastructure, utilizing nearby large tourists complexes, proximity of large tourist city destinations, etc. can be considered by the administrators and tourist providers in the city of Vize (Turkey), Edirne (Turkey), Tsarevo (Bulgaria) and Malko Tarnovo (Bulgaria). These destinations can apply separate good examples from the whole tourist model of Old Nessebar, which is defined as good tourist practice in the cross-border region.



## **City of Edirne and its markets, Turkey**

### *Geographic location*

**City of Edirne**, Population: 166 000 inhabitants; GPS coordinates: 41°40'37.6"N 26°33'20.4"E

**Edirne Municipality**: Area: 844 aq.km.;

**Type**: big city / administrative center / predominant economy: agriculture, commerce, tourism.

### *Description:*

This beautiful city is famous with its plenty of mosques with elegant towers and minarets, which reveal views to the whole province. Edirne is located on a very strategic location near the borders of Turkey with Bulgaria and Greece. In 1363 it became capital of the Ottoman Empire and remained as such till 1453 when capital became the city of Istanbul (then called Constantinople). Today the city inherits the spirit of the past and is a vibrant commerce center. It is one of the main factors that the city and its markets can be identified as good tourist practice in the cross-border region. Since its creation, thanks to its strategic location, the city is known as a shopping center, and its present markets can be regarded as sites that link tourists with the cultural and historical heritage of the city. The very walk in these markets, presented by a tourist guide, can attract tourists in some past historical eras when the city was a major shopping center in the region of Thrace. According to the representatives involved in the focus groups, the markets of Edirne are an integral part of the city's cultural and historical heritage.

Visitors interested in the historical and cultural sights have the possibility to walk around the center of the city and enjoy the beautiful architecture of the mosques, buildings, markets and houses in the typical for the Ottoman empire style. In addition to the Syuleime Mosque, the Archeological and Architecture Museum, the Sultan Beyazit Complex, the Museum of Health, which are major tourist attractions, the tourist can enjoy stunning architecture and paintings in the: Uch Seleferi Mosque, the Old Mosque/Eski Cami, the Bulgarian Church St. Georgi, the Grand Sinagogue, Dar-ul Hadis Mosque, Ismail Aga Mosque, San Melek Pasha Mosque, Hasan





Sezai Turbesi. Most of these historical and religious monuments are located within ten-to-twenty minutes walk from the center of the city, which allows for the tourists to visit these monuments while in the same time relax in the center of the city and the numerous small restaurants located in the center of the city.

The city is also famous with its gastronomy. It is known as the place where the traditional Turkish meal, fried liver (ciget tava), is best made in the north part of Turkey. Not surprisingly, there are tens of small restaurants in the center and around the city, which offer this meal to local people as well to tourists. The visitors can also taste the Turkish delight – lokum and the halva and other sweet products, which are traditional for the Turkish cuisine and are popular on the European cuisine as well.

In the center of the city are located several tourists markets, which offer garments, shoes, textile for the home, souvenirs, traditional musical instruments, and gold and silver jewelry. These markets, especially the Indoor Market near the Old Mosque, are facilities of cultural and historical value built in the 16th century.

The location of the city near the Bulgarian and the Greek border makes it easier for tourists to visit it. Most of the tourists are short-term visitors who, in many cases, come for a day or two and then return to their countries. Major challenge for Edirne is to develop such tourist packages and implement best practices that can make the tourists stay for longer periods in the city. Such products and best practices can include establishment of tourist attractions, better promotion of the historical and architectural treasures of the region, more and better tourist information materials, in English, Bulgarian and Greek languages, distributed to the tourist agents in Bulgaria and Greece and more specifically to Bulgarian and Greek destinations where foreign tourists are concentrated.

Although the city is easy to reach by car, it is not easy to reach it by public bus or train. There is no direct train that goes to Edirne from Bulgaria or Greece. There is no direct train to reach Edirne from Bulgaria or Greece. There are not also regular public buses that connect major Bulgarian and Greek cities (Burgas, Sofia, Haskovo, Komothini, Xanthi, Komothini) with Edirne. All transnational bus lines go to Istanbul and the passengers need to leave their buses on the high way near Edirne and change it with smaller busses that go from the high way



to the center of Edirne. This makes the travel by public buses inconvenient since foreigners who do not often go to Edirne feel unsecure changing buses on the highway and the transfer of luggage from bus to bus also provides additional difficulties.

Regardless of the shortfalls described above, Edirne is highly efficient by offering a bundle of tourist attractions – historical, cultural, religious and architectural achievements combined with high quality local food and meals. Because of this it managed to achieve remarkable results in attracting new tourists in the area. For the last fifteen years the number of tourists who visit the city for less than three days doubled in numbers due to improved promotion of the historical sites, the development of the local markets, and the increased and quality production of the agriculture sector.

The good practice identified by the focus group and interviews is related to the established tourist model, which presents the city as a historical and commercial center, an integral part of which is its markets. This in turn can lead to positive preconditions for the development of new or further development of already existing tourist packages. The visit to the historic markets of Edirne is part of the cultural and historical heritage - an intangible asset that creates a sense of experience and experience for potential tourists. This good practice can be applied to other destinations in the cross-border area and further tied to tourist packages.

### *Objectives and activities*

The objectives are to promote the identified good practice in the cross-border region and to link it with the development of tourist packages to meet different tourist needs. Another goal is to make it possible for these tourist packages to include different types of tourist excursions that focus on the various tourist attractions and attractions in the city but also create added value by including different experiences - with a guide, a gastronomic tour, opportunities for presentations of various local traditional events - oil wrestling, the Roma feast of Hederlezi, etc. This is also intended to increase the period in which tourists visit Edirne. The tourist packages can also be linked to other cities in the cross-border region, which however take on some of the peculiarities of the good practice of the tourist model in Edirne.



### *Achieved results and indicators*

According to many opinions from the conducted focus groups and interviews, today for Bulgarian tourists Edirne, apart from the historical center, is also a place for trade and market. The feeling that Edirne creates for tourists from Bulgaria is that the city has always been and will continue to be a trading venue. A large part of the tourists from Bulgaria to Edirne visit the city for the purpose of driving. This points out a historical continuity in the development of the city from the times of the Ottoman Empire. That is, the city has indirectly built a certain image that can be successfully developed today as part of its tourist face. The challenge is to develop tourist packages in Adrianople to provide a balance of tourist services and experiences - that is, to find an optimal balance between the visit of the various monuments and sites of historical and cultural heritage, the shopping experience and the connection to the region's typical traditions and customs. As a result of the good practice of Edirne and its markets, the city has realistic prerequisites to create sustainable and attractive packages, as well as to achieve the above-mentioned goals.

### *Further comments*

The good practice identified and the tourist packages identified above can be reproduced elsewhere in the cross-border region, naturally with certain conditions in the specific locations. Apart from the fact that the tourist package can be combined with additional destinations, such as the Edirne-Kirklereli-Luleburgas tourist package, the template of the Edirne tourist model can be adapted to Kirklareli, Lyuleburgas as well as to towns in Bulgaria such as Malko Tarnovo, Karnobat, etc.



## **Brashlian village, Bulgaria**

### *Geographic location*

**Brashlian village**, Bulgaria 67 inhabitants; 6 square kilometers; GPS Coordinates: 42°02'47.9"N 27°25'45.6"E

**Type:** small village / predominant economy: tourism.

### *Description:*

The village of Brashlian has a long history, which starts from XVII century, when the population of three tiny neighbourhoods – Iurtet, Selishte and Jivak (with a trachian name of Kokon/Kikos from the Trachian language Jik – Mercuty) moved to live in the down, the oldest part of the village and name the new village Sarmashik. According to an ancient legend here was born Orpheos. Since then till 1934 the today village of Brashlian is named Sarmashik and under this name is called in the Strandja Mountain anthem „Clear moon rising up”.

The village of Brashlian has a heroic historical being. The population of the village gave victims during the Hateria (Greek movement for national freedom) in 1821, as well as during the Preobrajensko rising in 1903. The village has been visited by Vasil Levski, whereas the house in which he stayed overnights is preserved till today. In Brahslian was organized the so called “Sarmashik affair” at which falled the first victims of the Preobrajensko raising. Among the flowrishing plants of Rosin and Ivy, growing on the century old beech and oak trees, are preserved abut 80 houses in an authentic Strandja architecture from XVII – XIX century. The authentic look of the village, its heroic past, the well preserved houses and the amazing surrounding nature are the reasons the destination to be recognized by the Bulgarian Government as an architectural and historical reserve with national meaning in 1982. Some twentyyears after this act of the government, and together with the sharp development of the tourism after 2000, the village became an important destination for tourists with interest in Bulgarian village architecture, national traditions and the beauty of the nature.



The village is located 60 km from Burgas and is only 2 km away from the main road Burgas – Malko Tarnovo – Edirne. The closeness to the main regional center and the big tourist destinations like Sunny Beach, Nessebar, Pomorie, Sozopol, Tsarevo, Chernomorets, Kiten and others, make it an easy to reach tourist site. Nine of the houses of the village are granted certificates for national importance, 22 are recognized as a part of the overall village architecture and the rest are with local meaning, but all of them have statute of architectural monuments. The oldest preserved house, which is inhabited till today, is built in XVII century. It is not by chance that Brashlian is called the pearl of the Strandja region.

But not only the houses and the nature make the village a preferred destination for the tourists. The people of Brashlian managed to preserve the traditions and rituals from the past and the visitors of the village can observe these old rituals. Such rituals include performance of wedding ceremonies, Christmass traditions, rituals for fruitfulness and other traditions. Most of the performers are people who moved to live in the city of Burgas but during the summer months stay in the houses in Brashlian where they were born.

In the village the visitors can see the church St. Dimitar, which was built in XVII century and its church school built in 1871. In the center of the city the building of the former school is reconstructed and is now a beautiful hotel complex with nice restaurant and an area for the kids to play in the former backyard of the school.

An excursion to Brashlian can also be combined with visits to several other historically important sites in the area, namely the tracian cultural complex in Mishkova niva, the catholic church “St. Troitsa” and the church “Uspenie Bogorodico” from 1745 in the city of Malko Tarnovo. For excursions lasting 2 to 3 days other places of interest can be the tracian svetilishte “Indipasha” (10 km away from the road Malko Tarnovo – Tsarevo), the tracian svetilishte “The stone” (15 min from the road Tsarevo-Primorsko), the village of Balgari (home of the fire walking Bulgarian tradition recognized by UNESCO as an intangible heritage with world meaning), the old church “St. St. Konstantin and Elena”, the most beautiful church in strandja region in the village of Kosti, visiting the churches “St. St. Kiril I Metodii” and “St. Georgi” in Sozopol, where can be seen the remains of St. Joan the Baptist.



The village had successfully used its heritage and natural resources to efficiently attract tourists in the region. For the last twenty years the tourist flow increased from almost zero to up to 5 thousand visitors during the summer months. The best practice can successfully be replicated in any small villages on the Bulgarian or Turkish territory that has similar characteristics as Brashlian – old style architecture of the houses, preserved nature, people opened to share their cultural habits and traditions with the rest of the world.

### *Objectives and activities*

In recent years tourist interest in cultural reserves - sites such as the village of Brashlyan has increased enormously. As far as Bulgaria is concerned, much of it has been concentrated in other regions of the country such as the Rhodopes, Stara Planina, Rila and Pirin. Following the needs of tourists and the growing interest in rural tourism coupled with cultural and historical elements, good conditions and prerequisites for the further development of new destinations with even more virgin nature and even more cozy and unique sites have been created. Situated in the Strandzha Mountain, near Malko Tarnovo and the border with Turkey, the village of Brashlian today can serve as a starting point for the development of this type of specific tourism in the cross-border region. This is the main objective of developing new tourist packages - to find and adapt new places like the village of Brashlyan and to create tourist packages to meet the needs and needs of tourists looking for similar tourism. Naturally, the Region aims to develop the economic and social indicators in these villages and towns through the development of tourism.

### *Achieved results and indicators*

The achieved results are related to the growing interest of the tourists in this type of tourism offering both tangible and intangible elements of the region's cultural and historical heritage combined successfully with rural tourism. The example of the village of Brashlian is indicative considering that the village has not been visited by tourists years ago, whereas at



present the annual tourism is 7000 people<sup>7</sup>. This in turn can successfully serve as a model of development for other destinations with similar characteristics as the village of Brashlian to develop their tourist and hence economic potential, especially taking into account the tourist needs for this. The condition is that a balance must be sought, in which, along with the development of compulsory infrastructure, all the typical features of cultural and traditional origin in these destinations are preserved. The development of this type of tourism requires careful consideration of all potential factors in the development of tourist packages. Consideration should be given to such factors as the bed base, the number of hotels, the non-commercialization of destinations, thereby losing the uniqueness of these places as well as a number of other factors.

#### *Further comments*

The applied good practice can be very successfully developed as a tourist package including Malko Tarnovo, Petrova Niva, as well as the possibility of including nearby towns and villages in the cross-border region of Turkey - such as Vise, Kiyikoy, etc. Field surveys should be conducted for others on similar sites in the Strandzha Mountain and in the cross-border region to analyse how good practice of Brashlian village should be successfully incorporated.

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<sup>7</sup> “Village of Brashlyan this summer again attracts thousands of tourists”, 25.08.17, <http://bnr.bg/burgas/>



## **The Selimiye Mosque, Edirne, Turkey**

### *Geographic location*

**City of Edirne**, Population: 166 000 inhabitants; GPS coordinates: 41°40'37.6"N 26°33'20.4"E.

The Selimie Mosque is located in the central part of Edirne.

**Edirne Municipality**: Area: 844 aq.km.;

**Type**: big city / administrative center / predominant economy: agriculture, commerce, tourism.

### *Description:*

Syuleime Mosque is the landmark tourist attraction of the city of Edirne. Today it is considered the landmark of Edirne. Syuleime Mosque was built between 1569 and 1575 and is the major architectural achievement of the famous Ottoman architect Mimar Sinan. The buiding was one of the most unique works of the time when it was constructed and is still an example of the human creative genius. For a long time this is also the largest mosque in Turkey. Its size, aesthetic proposition, the cut stones it was made, the wood and pearls decorations and original pen works, the beautiful marble elements and painted dome and minarets make the monument the most attractive place for tourists in the city. In 2012 UNESCO included the mosque in its World Heritage List to recognize its valuable and significant achievement for the world's architectural heritage.

The mosque complex includes other attractive for the tourists places, like a museum with archaeological, historical and ethnographical expositions, religion museum, bazaar and a bath. It is located just on the top of the main pedestrian street of the center of the city and is easily accessible by foot. Next to the mosque is provided a large tourist parking where the cars or buses can be left. Tourists can also use the numerous parking lots available alongside the main pedestrian area of the center of the city. Just two minutes away are the bus stops of the city bus transportation system, from where tourists can take rides to any destination of the city.





There is a free access to the inside of the mosque and tourists can access it at any time during the day and in the time when prayer service is provided. There are visible and well placed signs that show the foreign visitors the manner of conduct to be followed in the religious buildings as is the mosque – women should wear scarves on the shoulders and all visitors should take off their shoes when entering the mosque. Visitors can also enjoy a walk in the garden alongside the mosque and have a rest in the court of the mosque. The valuable architecture, the stunning arts inside the mosque, its proximity to the city center and the available transport infrastructure make this location most preferable for the the tourists visiting Edirne.

The strategy of the city of Edirne to make the Syuleime Mosque its landmark attraction was very effective. In the summer months more than 100 000 tourists visit the site, including the other buildings in the mosque complex. Although it is difficult to replicate, the best practice can serve as an example for other municipalities on how to structure a complex of buildings in one place so that the one important structure and its surrounding buildings can add value to each other by showing different aspects of the local development – religious, historical, architectural and cultural.

### *Objectives and activities*

The main purpose of the identified good practice is to create a need for tourists visiting the city mainly for the Selimie mosque to create the conditions and prerequisites to visit on site and other cultural and historical heritage sites in the immediate vicinity - Old Mosque, Indoor Market, Üç Şerefeli Mosque and others. The Selimiye Mosque serves as a starting point for tourists.

### *Results achieved and indicators*

As mentioned, the Selimiye mosque is a landmark of the city of Edirne around which the city's tourism is developing. Clear is the fact that the Selimie mosque is the starting point for every tourist visit to Edirne. As mentioned in the summer months, over 100,000 tourists



visit the mosque. It is believed that many of these tourists initially identified the Selimiye Mosque as the only tourist destination in the city that deserves their attention. Consequently, thanks to the identified good practice, conditions were created in which the Selimiye Mosque managed to connect the tourists with other cultural and historical sites in the city.

*Further comments*

The identified good practice can be successfully applied in other cities in the cross-border region, especially those with a strong historical Ottoman presence, including the architectural and urban planning aspect, where the city center has similar facilities as the Selimiye Mosque. This requires further analysis and on-site research of potential cities in the cross-border region, such as Kırklareli or Lyuleburgaz. It is also possible to study how this practice can be applied in the cross-border region in Bulgaria, for example in mosque towns in the central part of the city such as Karnobat.



## **Sozopol and the islands of St. Ivan and St. Peter, Bulgaria**

### *Geographic location*

**Town of Sozopol**, Population: 5,195 (GRAO, 2015-03-15); GPS Coordinates: 42.419167° n.w.  
27.693611° e.l.

**Sozopol Municipality**: Area: 480 sq.km.; Population: 13 000 people;

**Type**: small town/predominant economy: tourism.

### *Description:*

Sozopol is located about 30 minutes drive from the main regional city of Burgas. Sozopol is one of the oldest towns on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. Convenient intercity bus lines provide connection between Burgas and Sozopol every 30 minutes in the summer and every two hours in the winter months. Similar to the city of Nesebar, Sozopol offers spiritual experience with its traditional architecture houses, two small but very beautiful churches and plenty of cozy restaurants that offer nice traditional and sea food meals. Almost every house, most of them having traditional structure and interior, is transformed into a guest house in the summer. The tourists can enjoy the traditional surrounding, sunbathing on the nearby beaches, nice food in the numerous restaurants and cultural programme that includes visits to both churches as well as to the nearby two islands – St. Ivan and St. Petar.

The church St. Georgi is located in the heart of the old town of Sozopol. It was built in 1828 and nowadays exhibits the remains of St. Joan The Baptist, which were found in 2012 on the Island St. Ivan. The island itself used to be a holy place for the ancient Thracians, which made their own sanctuary there in VII century before Christ. At this time on the south coast of the island was built a large cathedral complex at the center of which was placed a 13,2 meters high bronze statue of god Apollo. As part of the complex also was built the monastery St. Joan the Baptist where in 2010 the Bulgarian archeologists found the remains of St. Joan the Baptist.



Now these archeological treasure is placed in the church St. Georgi and attract hundreds of thousands of visitors to Sozopol each year.

The island of St. Ivan and the nearby island St. Peter, just a few hundred meters from each other, are home for habitats of more than 70 species of birds. They also are home of the largest population of Seagulls (*Ichthyaetus audouinii*) and Yellowtail Seagulls (*Larus cachinnans*) in Bulgaria. The Island of St. Joan is protected areas and is granted the statute of archeological and natural reserve with national meaning. The access to both islands is free and during the tourist season small boats and ships transfer the tourists from the port of Sozopol to the islands. Water transportation by boats and small ships is available for transfers to the cities of Burgas, Nessebar and Sunny Beach. The cozy atmosphere of the old Sozopol, the nearby magnificent two islands, the possibility for the tourists to see the remains of St. Joan the Baptist and the good transport infrastructure make this place an attractive destination for tourists all over Europe.

The well developed tourist accommodation and the numerous small traditional and fish restaurants provide additional value for tourists and help the city to become one of the most preferred holiday tourist destinations in the summer season.

### *Objectives and activities*

The objectives in applying good practice are mainly related to the application of the tourist model of Sozopol to other destinations / sites in the cross-border region with similar characteristics, but with more marked tourist popularity. The objectives are also related to the fact that, if not completely, some of the components of the tourist model of Sozopol will be reproduced elsewhere in the cross-border region.

### *Results achieved and indicators*

Despite the similar characteristics of Sozopol and Nessebar taking into account various similarities of the historical and cultural development of the cities, the relatively related tourist infrastructure as well as the agglomeration principle in the development of the tourist network



in the regions are also factors, especially with regard to the current tourist models on which both cities operate. Unlike Nessebar, Sozopol does not have such well-preserved remains from the ancient period of the city as opposed to the Medieval town and that during the Bulgarian Revival, as evidenced by the Old part of the town. This, in turn, creates a feeling for tourists of a slightly different historical age when the city is visited.

The region around Sozopol, perhaps after that around Nessebar, is one of the most visited tourists in the region of Burgas. This creates many prerequisites for developing the tourist potential of the region. Good infrastructure is further positive for the development of tourism in the region.

#### *Further comments*

The identified good practice developed by the Sozopol administration can be reproduced in cities with similar characteristics. As already mentioned, tourist packages, including the towns of Sozopol, Nessebar and Pomorie, would be extremely successful. It can be used not only during the summer season but also from March to October. In this way, this package may become desirable for tourists from Turkey, given the rich cultural and historical heritage of the region, coupled with good infrastructure, as well as for foreign tourists who are increasingly using available flights from airports in the region even outside the summer season.

Good practice related to the Sozopol tourist model can be successfully replicated in the cross-border region of Turkey, for example the town of Enez, which is located on the Aegean coast, as well as other cities that have good land and / or maritime transport infrastructure to major Turkish cities such as Istanbul, Edirne, Lyuleburgaz.



## **The Sultan Bayazid Complex and the Health Museum, Edirne, Turkey**

### *Geographic location*

**City of Edirne**, Population: 166 000 inhabitants; GPS coordinates: 41°40'37.6"N 26°33'20.4"E.

The Health Museum and Sultan Bayazid Mosque are twenty minutes from the center of Edirne.

**Edirne Municipality**: Area: 844 sq.km.;

**Type**: big city / administrative center / predominant economy: agriculture, commerce, tourism.

### *Description:*

The Sultan Beyazid complex is located about 10 minutes by car and 30 minutes by walk from the center of Edirne. The entire complex is also known by the Ottoman term “cullie”. Cullie is a concept characteristic of Ottoman architecture, designating a complex of buildings in the center of which is a mosque. Sultan Bayazid II cullie is built in 1488. At present only six of the buildings of the complex are preserved - the mosque, the hospital, the medical school, two guesthouses and the bridge. The other structures of the complex, that have been destroyed throughout the years, included a Turkish bath, a watermill, a musical school, an elementary school and so-called muvakkithane that informed people about the date and the time.

The hospital and the medical school buildings have been renovated by the Turkish government at the beginning of the century and were transformed into the Museum of Health. The museum provides insights in the traditional methods for cure in the Ottoman empire and the Muslim medical practices. Also preserved are plenty of medical textbooks and papers from the middle ages developed and used by the doctors and students of the facility in the past. Not surprisingly in 2004 the Council of Europe prised the facility for the best European Museum of 2004.

For the visitors of the mosque will be interesting to know that it is placed between two other mosques of Edirne – Syuleime and Uc Serefeli. At its front one first enters a spacious



courtyard that has three entrances. The courtyard is surrounded by domed porches, supported on marble and granite columns with capitals displaying honeycombs ornamentation. The arches between these columns are painted in red and white stripes. The insides of small domes covering the porches are beautifully painted in decorative patterns. The dome above the arch leading to the mosque is slightly bigger and elevated.

There are decorative niches with honeycombs pattern on both sides of the mosque entrance. The arch above the doors is made of black and white marble blocks. There is a massive honeycomb vault above the doors and three plates with gold calligraphic inscriptions on the black background. The door wings are made of wood, intricately carved in geometric patterns, resembling stars and flowers. The mosque has numerous windows with wooden shutters, providing the illumination of the porches, and the frames around these windows are also painted, to create an illusion of multiple doors. In the centre of the courtyard, there is an ablution fountain with a pool. A small well stands on the northern side of the yard. Two minarets rise above the mosque, to the north-east and south-west of the central dome. These minarets are of equal height of 38 meters and are decorated with a single balcony each.

Facilities for the visitors to the complex include parking area, souvenir shop, nearby small suburban restaurants. It is disadvantage of the place that it can not be easily reached by foreign tourists using public transportation, and although not very far from the center, it is difficult to reach by foot as well since the road passes land areas and long river crossings.

The plan of the Edirne authorities to establish the Museum of Helath as part of the Sultan Beyazit complex-culieye helped the city effectively attract more tourists. It is here that the good practice has been identified, which shows how these complexes characteristic of the Ottoman Empire can be further developed. The well articulated combination of tourist attractions and the international recognition of the Museum of Helath helped the city and its sightseeings be visited not only by tourists from the neighborhood countries, but also from tourists from Europe, Asia and Americas.

### *Objectives and activities*



The main objectives in identifying the current good practice are to further develop the characteristics of the cross-border region, especially in the territory of Turkey, of complexes that represent new, unknown for many tourists, specific historical, cultural and architectural moments in the history of the Ottoman historical period in the region. In this way the tourist potential of the region will be further intensified, and the needs of tourists interested in the Ottoman cultural and historical heritage and traditions are expected to be met. The activities of the Edirne administration in the creation of the Museum of Health are extremely adequate and create positive prerequisites for increasing tourist flow in the region and diversifying tourism in Edirne. It also aims at creating a system of complexes - the cross-border regions and their linking with tourist packages.

#### *Results achieved and indicators*

Sultan Bayazid complex is one of the most popular tourist sites in Edirne. Successful actions by the city administration, which turn part of the complex, namely the hospital to the Health Museum, have led to a dramatic increase in the number of tourists not only in the complex but also in the city of Edirne itself. According to opinions expressed during focus groups and interviews, today the Health Museum is perhaps the most popular tourist site in the city after the Selimiye Mosque. Good practice with the creation of a Health Museum is a new life not only for Sultan Bayazid's complex, but also creates the prerequisites, using the current model, that good practice also serves to promote these complexes located on the territory of the cross-border region and thus creating new tourist packages.

#### *Further comments*

The identified good practice is mainly related to the presentation of the typical for the Ottoman period in the history of the cross-border region - the cultural area, as a cultural and historical monument with material and non-material significance. The Sultan Bayazid Cullie, including the Health Museum, the Sultan Bayazid Mosque and some other facilities, is one of





the most preserved and successfully designed to attract tourists in the cross-border region. After the Selimye Mosque, the Health Museum is one of the most popular tourist sites in Edirne. Good practice related to the management model of Cullie Sultan Bayazid can be successfully replicated in other cities in the cross-border region, especially in Turkey such as Kirklareli and Lyuleburgaz, and subsequently to develop new tourist packages related to visiting these complexes demonstrating the architectural achievements of Ottoman culture. It is necessary to investigate whether and in which cities today are located in the cross-border region in Bulgaria there are such complexes typical of the Ottoman period and how the good practice of the complex Sultan Bayazid can be successfully approbated on the spot.



## **Castle, Burgas region, Bulgaria**

### *Geographic location*

Due to considerations regarding state support to private entities, the location of the site is not mentioned in this study.

### *Description:*

This is a newly built private castle, which became the most visited private attractions in the Burgas region for the last several years. The construction of the castle started in 1996 and was completed in 2012 although new parts and additional attractions are being added each year. The attraction is placed on a territory of 20 hectares. Its structure is formed by 20 000 tons of marble varovik, taken from the Strandja mountain. The architecture of the castle is very interesting itself. The roof has the form of a orthodox cross and is covered with copper and brass. The walls of the castle are covered with Ivy, which makes it look spooky and ancient. Around the building there is a marvelous park with several thousand exotic trees, plants and flowers. In the parks are located several deep water lakes inhabited with different fishes and birds (white and black swans, pelicans and ducks). It is permitted for the visitors to fish if they bring fish rod and bate with themselves.

A small zoo can be enjoyed by the visitors and their kids. Amongst other attractins are the fountain for desires, the magic hut/pavilion, the kinetick sculpture, the enchanted fountain of the desires, bronze and marble sculptures, Horse base for horse riding, chapel, winery for degustation of wines and other local drinks (rakia, kvas, shara), art gallery, game zone (escape games, treasure hunters), restaurant and a coffee shop, shop for souvenirs, kids corner with games for the youngest visitors, retro photography kiosk, romantic photo selfy, free parking area. In addition to all these amenities, in 2016 justnext to the castle started operations the largets in Bulgaria aqua park, which increased the tourist potential of the area.



What makes the castle important for the development of the tourism in the region, and the reason to include it in this report, is that its establishment helped the area develop its tourism potential by utilizing the private investment made in a spot where 10 years ago was not of any interest to the tourists. The EUR 30 mln investment now adds to the attractiveness of the region and supports the overall tourist value of the cross-border region of Burgas. Tens of thousands of tourist from all near tourists resorts travel to visit the castle each year. On their way to the castle they visit the city of Sozopol and its historic treasures, the churches, St. Ivan and St. St. Kiril I Metodii, Burgas with its spectacular sea garden, huge shopping malls, the city restaurants, museums, and shops. The existence of the castle spreaded the information about Bulgaria as a tourist destination around the world and supported the development of the sustainable toruism.

In 2013 a film company from Hillywood used the castle as a natural décor to shoot the movie the last version of the story “The Sleeping Beauty”. The castle has its international recognition proved by the following nominations:

- Gold and silver prize in a competition for architecture and design “A’ Design Award”;
- Fourth place in the ranking of Euroepan Best Destinations;
- First prize for “Innovation in the tourism” of VIP Business Awards;
- Since 2016 the castle is a member of the Skal International Tourism Award;
- It is nominated in two categories of the online ranking World Best Destinations – 2017 (“The best place for wedding” and “Mystic places”);
- Included in the ranking of EDEN for “Most beautiful castles in Europe”. With this nomination the castle supported the nearby city to be nominated for the best European destination for 2017 together with Milan, Paris, Brussels, Barcelona, Rome, San Sebastian and Athens;
- Announced for summer attraction #1 in the campaign “The miracles of Bulgaria” as pat of the official activity of the Historic Museum of Bulgaria;
- The International Institute for Research on the Influence of the Slavish Culture on the World made a publication about the castle as a cultural spot.



The site turned to be very effective in attracting tourists in the area. Since it was opened for visitors, the tourists in the area and the nearby municipality significantly increased, this leading to increased visits to the municipal historical and architectural sites and to the restaurants and hotels in the area.

### *Objectives and activities*

The castle is an object - a private investment and as such relies on entrance fees from visiting tourists. The built tourist model of the Castle is something extraordinary new for the cross-border region, which, given the statistical indicators and the overall effect on tourism in the region, should be duly taken into account. Effective use of available infrastructure and good marketing to promote the castle also help to realize the project's goals of increasing the number of tourists visiting it. This in turn has a positive effect on the region and the development of tourism potential.

### *Results achieved and indicators*

Although it is a private investment, the castle, in terms of statistics, is exceptionally good. Good practice can also be considered in terms of how to manage a tourist object (processes, marketing, team, development strategy, etc.). Creating the conditions for effective public-private partnerships in the field of tourism should also be taken into account. In many countries it is precisely such a partnership that is at the heart of creating conditions for quality sustainable tourism. The castle has a rather ancillary role in the overall development of tourism in the region of Burgas. It should not be underestimated that thanks to the tourist flow visiting the castle many local producers, including the nearest village, which has no access to the beach, are supported. The site also creates jobs. The castle also helps diversify the tourist sites in the region.

### *Further comments*



Focus groups and interviews included the castle as a good practice for tourism development in the cross-border region, based on good indicators such as the number of tourists who visited it since its discovery and the global promotion of the cross-border region on a global scale. Although the castle can not currently be designated as a tourist site with a historical heritage and its cultural subject is subject to further comments and discussions, it has a positive impact on tourism in the region and may be included in various tourist packages, for tourists looking for a different type of cultural experience, as well as those related to cinema or other types of entertainment art.



**Cluster of tourist sites: Justice Tower, Sarayıçi Kırkpınarır Square; Edirne New Palace and Balkan Wars Memorial, Edirne, Turkey**

*Geographic location*

**City of Edirne**, Population: 166 000 inhabitants; GPS coordinates: 41°40'37.6"N 26°33'20.4"E.

The above mentioned sites are located near the city of Edirne;

**Edirne Municipality**: Area: 844 aq.km.;

**Type**: big city / administrative center / predominant economy: agriculture, commerce, tourism.

*Description:*

At the vicinity, north of the center of the city of Edirne, in a relatively small area are located several important sights with cultural, archeological and historical value: The Justice Tower, The Sarayıçi Kırkpınarır Square; the Edirne New Palace and the Balkan War Memorial. In addition the visitors to this area can also see three typical for the Ottoman architecture bridges: the Sarachane (the Sultan's) Bridge, the Canuni Bridge and the Fatih Bridge.

Each of the mentioned above landmarks has its own significant meaning. The Edirne New Palace was a place used by the Sultan when Edirne was capital of the Ottoman empire. The palace complex at this time consisted of 72 buildings with 117 rooms, which were occupied by thousands of people. A few structures survived by today, including the Justice Tower and the remains of the Fatih Sultan Mehmet's Natural Palace.

The Justice Tower was built in 1562 by the great architect Sinan, who was also the architect of the Syuleime mosque, at the request of Sultan Suleiman, the Magnificent. It reflects the Seljuk Architecture style. For some time in the past it was used for meetings of the Council of Ministers and as a High Court when Edirne was the capital of Turkey. The tower includes a serbethane on the first floor, sofa clerks on the second floor and a marble saloon on the third floor where the Council Committee used to meet. In the middle of the saloon is placed the



sultan's throne and a marble pool. Two stone columns still stand in front of the tower: right one, called the "Respect Stone", was used to present the petitions of the people to the sultan, and the left one, named the "Warning Stone", to display capitated heads of criminals sued by the court.

At the Sarayıçi Kırkpınarır Square the tourists can see the oil wrestling stadium and statues of the famous Turkish oil wrestlers. The oil wrestling was recognized by UNESCO as a cultural heritage with World's importance. The statues are stunning and the atmosphere on the tepich is unreplicable when wrestling competitions are hold.

The Balkan Wars Memorial was opened for visitors in 1994. It is memorial burial ground for Ottoman military personnel, which died during the Balkan Wars 1912-1913. On more than 850 sq.m. are laid monuments and memorial blocks with the names of hundreds of officers and soldiers who lost their lives in this war.

In and just next to this area tourists can also see three bridges that reflect the Ottoman architecture style. The tiny Fatih Bridge connects the Fatih Sultan Mehmet's Natural Palace and the Balkan War Memorial with the Justice Tower and the Sarayıçi Kırkpınarır Square. After crossing the Sarayıçi Kırkpınarır Square the tourists approach the Canuni Bridge and several hundred meters south is located the Sarachane (the Sultan's) Bridge, which had the purpose to connect the center of Edirne to the Sultan's castle. The bridge impresses with it being 120 meters long, 5 meters wide and 12 arches of almost 3 meters high. This bridge has also historical meaning since it was an important war structure used by the military for supply of munitions and for defense of the city.

The area has the potential to attract tourists since it encompasses sites with cultural, historical, architectural, and sport value of national importance for Turkey. In a relatively small area visitors can see monuments from different ages of development of Turkey and learn not only about its history but also about its culture, architecture, politics, governance, military and the local most popular sport – the wrestling. The combination of elements with values for different types of tourist groups helps the area to be visited by tourists with different interests.

### *Objectives and activities*



The objectives and activities undertaken by the Edirne administration in the development of the cluster of tourist sites are to enhance the quality of tourism products and services in the area, to promote Edirne as a tourist destination with sites representing the cultural and historical heritage of the region, as well as and further increased the tourist potential of a region by creating a suburban package within Edirne that could potentially be linked to other similar clusters.

#### *Results achieved and indicators*

The development of a cluster of tourist sites helps to increase the number of tourists visiting the sites included in the network. It also contributes if a tourist is only familiar with one of the sites, subsequently visiting him to visit the others included in the tourist cluster of sites. This leads to an increase in the number of tourists in Edirne and to an increase in the tourist potential of the cross-border region.

#### *Further comments*

The good practice of creating a cluster of tourist sites in a region, and in particular by linking the Justice Tower; Sarahich Kirkpainer Square; The new Edirne Palace and the Balkan War Memorial in the Edirne region are a good option to present a longer historical period to the different tourists and at the same time to present typical customs and traditions. As regards the application of good practice of other sites / destinations in the cross-border region, further investigation and public and sector inquiry is needed which sites in which areas can be united in such a cluster. The cities with a great cultural and historical heritage from the cross-border region, such as Nessebar, Sozopol, Burgas, Kirklareli, Malko Tarnovo, etc. have potential for that.





## **St. Anastasia Island, Burgas, Bulgaria**

### *Geographic location*

**City of Burgas**, Population: 206,371 (GRAO, 2015-03-15); GPS Coordinates: 42.5° n.w. 27.466667 e.l.; The island is located in the area of Burgas;

**Type:** big city / administrative center / predominant economy: industry, transport, tourism.

### *Description:*

St. Anastasia Island is located in the aquatory of Burgas Bay (6,5 km from Port of Burgas) and is the only inhabited island on the Bulgarian Black Sea. On it was built and is still functioning the only island monastery in Bulgaria - „St. Anastasia Farmakolitriya”, which in Greek literally means “savior from suffering”. During the middle ages such holy retreats were located on the Sozopol’s islands St. Ivan, St. Kirik and Iulita and St. Toma, but nowadays there are only architectural ruins left from them.

On the island are also located a small church, which is part of the monastery complex, a museum, a lekarna, a lighthouse and a restaurant. The monastery offers some of its cells for tourists who want to spend the overnight on the island. In the lekarna are offered miraculous herbs and potions associated with the traditional medicine. The restaurant surprises the visitors with authentic for Burgas meals cooked using old recipies and some meals with herbs that are offered in the lekarna. In the museum tourists can learn about the history of the island and the use of its buildings throughout the years. On the island and on the Sea Port of Burgas (where ships start to the island) tourists can find advertisement and information materials and buy souvenirs.

The island can be visited by tourist ships service contracted by the municipality of Burgas. Three times a day ships start from the Port of Burgas to the island and return after three hours stay on the island. There is a dedicated web site, with information in Bulgarian and in English, about the island – its history, attractions, information about the means and times of



transportation to it. Also available for the tourists is information on how to book tickets for the ships, prices and how to find the place on the port where the ships start their voyage to the island.

The renovation of the island and the establishment of good transport infrastructure to it was key for the municipality of Burgas to add to the city's attractions this unusual tourist destination. Each year more than 15 000 persons visit the island, of which half are foreign tourists<sup>8</sup>. The island helped the city of Burgas become more attractive for Bulgarian and foreign tourists and be a preferred destination for holiday seekers staying in Burgas and the other cities in the region.

### *Objectives and activities*

When developing the tourist destination St. Anastasia Island objectives are to create conditions for diversification and further development of the tourist potential of the Burgas region, especially as regards the cultural and historical heritage of the cross-border region. The activities and efforts of the Burgas Administration are aimed at the development of the destination, related to the provision of adequate tourist infrastructure, promotion of the island among the target groups, etc. The project started as a pilot one, but the results are currently very satisfactory, resulting in an identified good practice that can be successfully replicated not only in the cross-border area but also globally as a whole.

### *Results achieved and indicators*

Since the island of St. Anastasia becomes accessible to tourists, thanks to the Municipality of Burgas, every year the number of tourists who visit the island is increasing. As of August 2017, the number of tourists visiting the island for the year amounts to 25,000 people, many of whom are foreign tourists<sup>9</sup>. The Burgas Administration is also working to

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<sup>8</sup> "Over 25 thousand visited St. Anastasia Island", 22.08.17, <http://bnr.bg/burgas>

<sup>9</sup> "Over 25 thousand visited St. Anastasia Island", 22.08.17, <http://bnr.bg/burgas>



promote the tourist destination of the island of St. Anastasia through various interactive platforms and a dedicated internet site, as well as presenting the island during various promotional events in the field of tourism.

*Further comments*

Island of St. Anastasia is a demonstration of how the Municipality of Burgas succeeds in rebuilding the island, making it an interesting tourist destination. This is also the essence of good practice that can be reproduced in some other sites / destinations in the cross-border region. It would be most reasonable to apply good practice on the island of St. Anastasia in the nearby islands of St. Ivan and St. Peter. As mentioned above, these islands have cultural and historical significance, with archaeological activities on the discovery of the various Thracian facilities and an appropriate tourist infrastructure including transport, guides, materials and multimedia for the islands. This in turn will lead to the development of joint tourist packages linking the islands of St. Anastasia and St. Ivan and St. Peter.



## **Sokullu Mehmet Pasha Complex**

### *Geographic location*

**City of Luleburgas**, Population: 138 000 inhabitants; GPS coordinates: 41.397867, 27.362507;

The complex is located in Lyuleburgaz;

**Lyuleburgaz Municipality**: Area: 1,018 sq.km.;

**Type**: large city / administrative center / predominant economy: agriculture

### *Description:*

The Sokullu Mehmet Pasha Complex is located in the center of Luleburgaz in the Kirklarely vilayet. It is built in 1569 by the Grand Vizier Sokullu Mehmet Pasha and its architecture is designed by the architect Sinan, who is also the designer of the Süleymaniye Mosque in Edirne, St. Sofia complex in Istanbul and other attractive for the tourists buildings across Turkey.

On the territory of the complex the tourists can visit the mosque, a medrese, a caravanserai, a tabhane, an imaret, an arasta, a prayer dome, a jugular, a bazaar, a double bath, a bridge, a fountain, waterways and other landmarks. The mosque has simple exterior architecture but the size of the building and its historical and religious importance make it an attractive point for the visitors of the city. The mosque is constantly opened for visitors and for worships throughout the day. Around the Sokullu Mehmet Pasha Complex complex are located plenty of city's coffee/tea palaces and restaurants and hotels where tourists can relax and stay overnight in this beautiful city.

The city of Luleburgas is located 60 km from Kirklarely and the two cities and their landmarks can be visited as part of one tourist excursion. Mainly the cities can be visited by transport organized by the tourists or tourist agency, because a small number of people in the intercity transport of Turkey understand and speak English language. Luleburgas, similar to Edirne, is also famous with its tasty national kitchen and deserts such as: baklava, revane, halva,



lokum, etc. and these delicious foods can be found in the surrounding the complex shops and restaurants.

The complex has the potential to attract more tourists to the city of Luleburgaz. The visit of the complex effectively attracts more people from Turkey now, but if well promoted, and included in bundles with sites from Edirne, it can attract significant number of foreign tourists whose primary purpose is to visit Edirne or Istanbul.

### *Objectives and activities*

The aims and activities are related to the popularization of Luleburgaz as a tourist destination, which in most cases often remains in the shadow of Edirne. Apart from gastronomic tourism, the city can also offer sites of cultural and historical value, such as the Sokullu Mehmet Pasha Complex. The efforts of the administration are to develop joint tourism packages with Edirne, especially those related to the work of the most famous Ottoman architect, Mimar Sinan.

### *Results achieved and indicators*

Thanks to the measures taken by the city's administration to promote the Sokullu Mehmet Pasha complex in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of tourists visiting Luleburgaz. Much of the tourists, mostly domestic ones who visit Edirne, previously managed to visit Luleburgaz. This has had a positive impact on the development of the tourist potential of the cross-border region by contributing to its optimal balancing as regards the distribution of tourist sites.

### *Further comments*

Considering that the complex was designed by the famous Ottoman architect Sinan, tourist packages can be developed related to its architectural achievements. This will contribute to the



overall development of tourism potential in the cross-border region, especially as regards the satisfaction of the needs of tourists interested in the Ottoman architecture typical of the Ottoman Empire.



**Opportunities for presentation and promoting the identified good practices and the available tourist packages in the cross-border region Bulgaria – Turkey**

**Internet** - the most effective way to identify effective and qualitatively identified potential focus groups and interviews among potential tourists and representatives of the tourism sector is to disseminate information on the Internet and in particular on specialized tourist platforms, websites and other information internet arrays.

**Tourist promotional videos** - the idea is to promote the tourist potential of the cross-border region, including the above-mentioned good practices and additional tourist packages developed by launching promotional tourist videos for various tourist destinations and sites in the region. These videos can be short, trailer types and longer, and can be played on both national TV and also on travel, history, and other channels. If a budget is available, advertisements for different tourist packages can also be placed in case of interest from tour operators.

**Social networking campaign** – social networks today are a communication phenomenon that can easily reach a particular target group

**Promotional materials** - inclusion of the presented good practices and potential tourist packages in promotional tourist promotional materials to be given to the target group during various events in the field of tourism as well as available in various information tourist centres.

**Promotional events and tourist fairs and exhibitions** - presentation of good practices during various tourism events. These can be seminars, symposia, conferences and others. Tourism events in Bulgaria during the Presidency of the EU Council in 2018 can be particularly effective. Information can also be disseminated during various tourist fairs and exhibitions both in the cross-border region and the whole territory of Bulgaria and Turkey, as well as those abroad.



## **Conclusion**

The potential for development, including that related to tourism, in the cross-border area is significant. The good practices identified in the survey can be applied at different locations - destinations / sites in the cross-border region Bulgaria - Turkey, which will enable its tourism potential and opportunities to be effectively and balanced developed. It is all the factors that the identified practices can be successfully implemented, namely those related to the actions of the local administrative structures, the available tourist infrastructure, the trends in the development of tourism, etc. The implementation of these practices will have a positive effect on the cross-border region, contributing to the increase of tourist flows, support for local producers and small and medium-sized enterprises, and reduction of socio-cultural differences between the different groups.

The identified good practices will help to develop new tourism packages that in turn diversify and balance the current tourist structure in the region by making it more competitive and able to meet the needs of different types of tourists, including those seeking tourism with an emphasis on the cultural-historical and archaeological heritage.





## Sources

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