

**INTERREG V-B ADRIATIC IONIAN  
PROGRAMME  
ADRION**

**O.T.2.1 Action plan for promotion of sustainable  
valorisation and preservation of natural and  
cultural heritage in protected areas**

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**Work package: T2 - Policy implementation through Virtual Chamber**

**Activity: T2.1 – Virtual Chamber functioning**

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## 1. Introduction

Overpopulation, cultural misappropriation, and a decline in genuineness are some of the issues that can arise as a consequence of tourism's beneficial impact on the promotion and accessibility of cultural and natural resources. Although tourism can have positive effects on the economy and employment, it also has the capacity to adversely affect the local societies and natural or / and cultural landmarks. Several residents and cultural heritage experts have expressed their opposition to tourism and its accompanying expansion due to the potential adverse consequences of excessive tourism.

However, both current and future generations are morally obligated and urgently required to take action in order to safeguard and conserve our cultural and natural heritage. These invaluable artefacts serve as the storehouse of our culture's collective memory and are vital to the functioning of our planet's ecosystems. Conversely, the management of cultural and natural heritage presents a distinct array of challenges that necessitate meticulous planning, collaboration, and a focus on long-term strategies.

The PRONACUL project has aimed to strike a delicate equilibrium between economic development and the growth of the tourism industry, while also preserving the cultural and natural heritage.

As part of the project implementation, a strategy paper has been created to develop international tourism initiatives for the ADRION region. The paper aims to promote and protect the region's cultural and natural resources in the project's pilot regions, which include UNESCO and Natura 2000 sites, as well as upcoming protected areas.

The objectives of the proposed action plan aim to promote a comprehensive approach to heritage management that effectively combines preservation, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and sustainable development.

## 2. Analysis of the destination

The primary objective of the PRONACUL project is to create international tourism initiatives for the ADRION region, while simultaneously safeguarding and promoting the region's abundant cultural and natural resources. This includes the protection and promotion of UNESCO and Natura 2000 sites, as well as upcoming protected areas within the project's pilot regions.

The project has demonstrated that nature and culture-based tourism has the capacity to revolutionise both the local and national economy. It serves as a centre for the development of specialised activities focused on knowledge and as a platform for the implementation of interconnected systems and technologies. Tourism requires a distinct combination of policies to enhance knowledge and value in an industry or business that does not create technology but relies on and utilises it.

A diverse range of alternative forms of tourism could thrive in the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region, as long as innovative initiatives in the fields of organisation and implementation of new technology or ideas were to be fostered. Similarly, the region's development could greatly profit from the commercialization of its cultural assets, including its physical and intangible heritage, as well as its contemporary cultural productions.

The implementation of the project involved the application of a shared methodology and facilitated interaction, idea exchange, and the identification of needs among all partners. This process provided strong evidence that the tourism sector can bring significant benefits to both local and national economies. However, it also revealed challenges, doubts, and concerns regarding the future and the establishment of a sustainable tourism industry. These objectives provide a foundation for the development and promotion of sustainable tourism in the ADRION region.

### 3. The PRONACUL project's objectives

The PRONACUL project has endeavoured to strike a balance between advancement and the conservation of historical and natural sites. In that mindset specific objectives and goals have been established, based on generated outcomes, including but not limited to the development of a common methodology.

These objectives were formed by input from private and public stakeholders in the tourism sector, gathered during training and capacity building activities, as well as national networking conferences and partnership-wide dissemination activities, with the aim to provide guidance to policy designers, local societies, and actors in the tourism value chain on how to protect, preserve, and promote these unique locations.

#### 3.1 Improve involvement of tourism stakeholders, visitors and society

To achieve sustainable tourism development in the Adriatic region, it is crucial to enhance and promote public awareness about the importance and conservation of natural and cultural assets. This should be done at the local, regional, and transnational levels, with the aim of improving the management of natural and cultural heritage.

Increasing awareness will promote and streamline collaboration among experts from different organisations and policymakers, facilitating the sharing of ideas and implementation of effective strategies. In order to achieve this objective, it is important to consistently carry out marketing and communication activities related to the utilisation of promotional tools.

#### 3.2 Increase the level of capacity for the stakeholders in the fields of natural and cultural heritage protection

In order to establish successful creative and cultural businesses, it is necessary to reconsider existing laws, strengthen cultural governance institutions, and enhance the expertise and knowledge of professionals. Vocational education and training (VET) will greatly influence the knowledge of individuals employed in the tourism sector, as well as the dissemination of information on cultural management and diverse business strategies.

It is necessary to address these objectives in order to develop and implement effective measures for increasing public awareness of the value of natural and cultural heritage and its protection. The PRONACUL project has demonstrated the necessity for the ADRION

community to work together in order to establish a knowledge society that prioritises education and connects entrepreneurship with research and innovation.

### 3.3 Diversify tourism product in the Adrion macro-region

The pandemic has highlighted the tourism industry's susceptibility to external factors, emphasising the need for a comprehensive reassessment of the tourist product and its propagation, both within each nation's borders and beyond.

After implementing the project's strategy, it is widely agreed respectively it has been demonstrated that actors in the tourism industry in the ADRION region should aim to expand their product offerings while avoiding direct competition with other countries in the region. Instead, they should focus on highlighting their unique strengths and advantages.

### 3.4 Provision of permanent support services to actors of the wider tourism value-chain

A strong network of local, regional, and national stakeholders, along with tourism providers, is essential for successful and sustainable tourism development in the ADRION region. In addition, the establishment of a permanent support service for protected areas is a critical factor for development.

The PRONACUL project has emphasised the importance of informing and educating stakeholders in the project's target areas about new initiatives and opportunities for collaboration in the fields of managing and utilising cultural and natural resources, as well as in the tourism sector.

## 4. Actions, Resources and Timeframe

Objectives	Actions (to be) implemented	Resources	Timeline
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**Improve involvement of tourism stakeholders, visitors and society**

- The primary means to accomplish the stated objective is the Virtual Chamber. The Virtual Chamber will expand to other protected regions in the Adriatic -Ionian macro region due to its operational concept, which focuses on establishing a consulting service for stakeholders. This service aims to facilitate networking, knowledge sharing, and the exchange of best practices in the conservation and preservation of natural and cultural heritage. Additionally, it will provide opportunities for collaboration and information on new collaborative initiatives.
- The Virtual Chamber enables administrators to track users' entry and exit points, average time spent on different pages, and other metrics as part of the website's regular monthly Google Analytics monitoring. This helps improve the project's dissemination strategy by providing more targeted data.
- The Virtual Chamber's primary benefit lies in the undeniable interactivity among its members. The project's stakeholders primarily comprise public bodies, private bodies, public-private partnerships, and academic institutions, among others. Participation is available to all individuals and entities, such as private corporations, organisations, chambers of commerce, and municipal governments, who have an interest in joining. This is because each individual has the potential to make a distinct and valuable contribution. Professionals engaged in the advancement of cultural tourism and cultural heritage include individuals responsible for crafting traditional products, formulating marketing strategies, and facilitating the sale of goods, among other roles.
- Prospective partners are being enlisted through media channels and personal networks. Subsequently, the Virtual Chamber will be disseminated through the portals, newsletters, and other communication channels utilised by each collaborator.

The Virtual Chamber will continue to function, overseen by the Ilia Chamber of Commerce, with the active participation of the designated communication team from each project partner.

Until 2027, extension period is envisaged.



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Increase the level of capacity for the stakeholders in the fields of natural and cultural heritage protection</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The networking and B2B section of the Virtual Chamber provides businesses with the opportunity to access funding scheme expertise, innovative tax strategies, and efficient preparation of financial statements and tax returns by private companies. Private companies seeking to showcase their proficiency in rural and cultural tourism can utilise the Virtual Chamber as a promotional platform.</li> <li>• Organisations and chambers of commerce are providing support with marketing and administrative matters. These organisations have the ability to identify, generate, and execute various initiatives that focus on both cultural tourism and entrepreneurship development.</li> <li>• Local governments have the ability to offer assistance and expert advice when it comes to development incentives, laws, and limitations.</li> <li>• The Scientific Committee of the project is actively involved in project activities and offers professional, marketing, and networking advice in addition to conducting research based on the requirements of Virtual Chamber members.</li> </ul>	<p>Chambers, registered enterprises, and the scientific committee of VC are actively involved in enhancing the skills and knowledge of important individuals and groups.</p>	<p>Until 2027, extension period is envisaged.</p>
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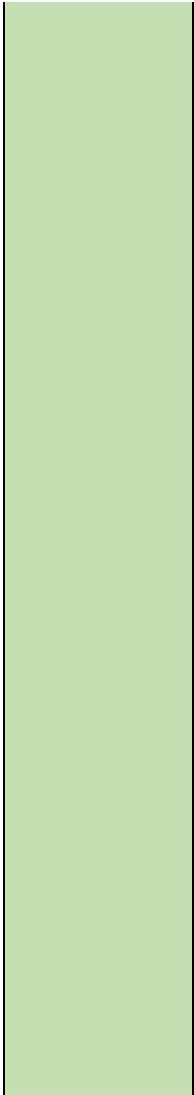
**Diversify tourism product in the Adrion macro-region**

- The primary means of diversifying the tourism product in the ADRION region will involve implementing the project's shared methodology through the Virtual Chamber. Additionally, the Common Strategy on Transnational, National, Regional, and Local Policy Improvements will be disseminated to policy makers, SMEs, think tanks, and other relevant stakeholders in the tourism industry at the local, regional, national, and international levels.
- Furthermore, the Virtual Chamber of PRONACUL will serve as a consulting service for stakeholders in Adrion regions who are interested in implementing a shared methodology for preserving natural and cultural resources and establishing connections with other Adrion areas. It will also facilitate the dissemination of this methodology to other Adrion regions.
- In order to guarantee the project's sustained success, the Virtual Chamber of PRONACUL will persist in seeking out, disseminating, attending and organizing transnational networking activities to establish a network connecting Adrion areas located within the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion and Europe.

PRONACUL's Virtual Chamber, the institutions that have signed the MoUs, and PRONACUL's established network of stakeholders will collaborate to promote the project's agenda to influential policy makers at a higher level. This is to ensure the implementation of the policy recommendations outlined in the 'Common Strategy on Transnational, National, Regional, and Local Policy Improvements'.

**PRONACUL will contribute to:**

- Slovenia's Development Strategy 2030;
- Smart Specialization Strategy S4;
- NGO Development and Volunteering Strategy to 2023;
- Zasavje Regional Development Program 2021-2027;
- Marketing strategy for Zasavje tourist destination;
- Regional Development Program of Coastal-Karst region 2021-2027 and will improve the effectiveness of regional development policies for Coastal-Karst region;
- Multi-year strategic guidelines of the Bologna's Tourist Destination (approved by the Metropolitan Council in February 2017) to promote Bologna as SLOW AND SMART;
- The Italian Strategic Plan for Tourism 2017-22;
- Veneto Digital Agenda 2020;
- Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025;
- Master Plan for Sustainable Development of Fruska Gora mountain;
- Spatial plan Fruska gora till 2022;
- The Fruska Gora tourism strategy as the result of PRONACUL will be implemented in new Spatial plan Fruska gora till 2029 and new Regional spatial plan of Vojvodina Province 2022-2032;
- Tourism development programme of Vojvodina Province 2018- 2022;
- Strategy of development of tourism in Republic of Srpska;
- Strategy of Tourism Development of Federation of BiH;
- Strategy of cultural policy of BiH;
- Strategy of Development of the Municipality of Trebinje;
- The Tourism Development Strategy of Herzegovina-



- Neretva Canton 2011-2021;
- Development Strategy of the Municipality of Jablanica 2019-2023;
- The Stolac Municipality Strategy 2015-2024;
- Rural Development Program (RDP) of Greece 2021-2027;
- Local Pyrgos Program Ilias Prefecture;
- Strategic Action Plan of the Croatian Ministry of Tourism 2019 to 2021;
- Zagreb County Tourism Development Strategy until 2025;
- The strategy of cultural development of the Zagreb County;
- Croatian National Development Program for Social Tourism

**Provision of permanent support services to actors of the wider tourism value-chain**

- The virtual Chamber is being created as a long-term support service for protected areas, aiming to facilitate the collaboration among local, regional, and national stakeholders, as well as tourism providers. Its main objective is to educate those involved in managing and utilising cultural and natural resources, as well as providing tourism services in the project's target areas, about new initiatives and opportunities for project cooperation.
- Partners and stakeholders can track the progress of the project and offer feedback or suggestions using the reviewing and rating tools provided by the Virtual Chamber platform. These tools enable both qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the project's outcome, via, inter alia, a reviewing component, which is available to the general public via a publicly accessible URL and a scannable QR code.
- All users have the liberty to offer feedback on both current and upcoming projects and activities, and anyone is permitted to duplicate an existing project to streamline the process of creating something similar.
- Every user will have the ability to access this section in order to review updates and significant announcements.

- The Virtual Chamber will remain operational, under the supervision of Ilia Chamber of Commerce, with the active involvement of the designated communication team of each project partner.
- The PRONACUL results and outcomes are currently being utilised in another section of the Virtual Chamber to identify potential avenues for leveraging these results and outcomes. This encompasses details regarding the preparation and submission of proposals, assistance during project implementation, identification of project partners, and various other relevant subjects. Additionally, it includes information, announcements, and guidance regarding pertinent EU projects.

Until 2027, extension period is envisaged.

## 5. PRONACUL's approach on Sustainable Development

Creating a strategy to protect our natural and cultural heritage necessitates a dedication to its enduring conservation. It recognises the ever-changing quality of tradition, perceiving it as a connection between the past, the present, and the future. By implementing meticulous planning, fostering collaborative efforts, and enacting innovative legislation, we can ensure the preservation, protection, and enjoyment of our cultural and natural heritage for future generations.

Based on this premise, the PRONACUL project established, followed, and promoted the goal of assisting in the development of transnational strategies for collectively marketing the Adriatic-Ionian macroregion as a tourist destination, with the aim of promoting and preserving the ADRION region's natural and cultural resources.

In particular, strategies have been used to demonstrate means and strategies for improving the management of natural and cultural heritage in order to promote the development of sustainable tourism in the ADRION region, both ecologically and economically. PRONACUL's actions, outcomes, and policy recommendations will influence tourists, visitors, and travellers to regard natural and cultural resources as exceptional content. This will enable PRONACUL partners to capitalise on their distinct strengths and promote economic development while benefiting local economies.

The PRONACUL action plan includes a comprehensive strategy for managing and safeguarding natural and cultural resources, which are expected to increase in economic importance in the coming years due to the exceptional beauty of the region's natural and cultural heritage sites. This framework has been used to develop, implement, and promote a comprehensive plan for managing the Adriatic-Ionian region's natural and cultural resources.

This plan takes a participatory approach, encouraging the involvement of various stakeholders to achieve the project's goals. Because of its design and functionality, the Virtual Chamber has aided in the spread of the standardised method and its integration into the Adriatic-Ionian Macro region's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

By acting as a consulting entity for tourism stakeholders and providing a platform for various pilot areas to engage in discussions regarding strategies for the preservation of cultural and natural resources, the Virtual Chamber has presented policymakers with a

valuable policy design instrument, in the form of proposals for specific local, regional, and national policy documents, aiming to enhance the administration of natural and cultural resources and reinforce policies for improvement.

PRONACUL's approach to the project is innovative in that it goes above and beyond standard operational procedures by building an enduring virtual chamber as a service for Adrion policy makers. The procedures carried out within the Virtual Chamber follow the same industry-specific methodology used in the pilot projects, providing ongoing support to stakeholders in pilot areas, among other consultative services.

The Virtual Chamber's primary goal, as the executive arm of the PRONACUL project's methodology and vision, is to develop effective promotion strategies for the entire programme area by establishing a collaborative cross-sectoral network. Even after the project is completed, by continuing to promote natural and cultural assets as a key factor in development, new approaches to forming action plans in the programme area will be possible.

PRONACUL has managed to offer an all-encompassing action plan and strategy for managing cultural properties, which carefully considers all pertinent factors. This strategy acknowledges and protect the inherent importance of these historical sites, while optimising their potential for long-term and environmentally-friendly growth.

By prioritising the aforementioned action plan in local, regional, national, and interregional policies, the ADRION Region can establish itself as a distinctive tourist destination that upholds and safeguards its natural and cultural surroundings. Simultaneously, it can attract investments and foster conditions conducive to the economic growth of the business ecosystem and societal welfare.