



*THEmatic Transnational
church Route development
with the Involvement of
local Society*

Transnational strategy development including transnational focus areas

THETRIS PROJECT

Output 3.4.3

PP6 - LAMORO Development Agency

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INTRODUCTION

This CORE output is realised in the framework of the THETRIS project - <http://www.thetris.eu/> - implemented through the Central Europe Programme co-financed by the ERDF. Central Europe Programme - <http://www.central2013.eu/> - supports the preservation of cultural heritage, both tangible than intangible, to foster knowledge, strengthen regional identity and commitment and increase the regions' competitiveness.

The overall objective of the THETRIS project is the preservation and the enhancement of cultural heritage based on churches in the regions of eleven project partners coming from eight central European countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia), through the implementation of specific management strategies. The specific objectives of the project are the increasing of the competitiveness of the different regions by the capitalization of cultural heritage, the development of long-term strategies for the preservation and the sustainable exploitation of churches, and the reinforcement of awareness for the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

A fundamental step of the THETRIS project is constituted by Work Package 3 (WP3) named "Targeted analysis of tangible and intangible cultural heritage", whose main objective is to analyze tangible and intangible cultural heritage linked to churches in all partners' regions and to build regional and transnational strategies for their preservation. In the framework of this work package, many outputs have been produced: some of them have been realised at the regional level by each of 11 partners involved in the project implementation and others are produced at the transnational level and gather information from single pilot regions in order to build a strategy at the European level. An example is the CORE output named "Transnational strategy development including transnational focus areas", whose aim is to provide a transnational strategy for the preservation and the enhancement of cultural heritage linked to churches. In order to draw up this strategy, some focus areas have been identified and analyzed: through these main assets, regional stakeholders can build their pilot strategies and, at the transnational level, a common action plan can be identified and implemented. In the identification of the focus areas, cultural experts and decision makers have been involved and the results of this work is here presented with a transnational approach.

THE TRANSNATIONAL STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING TRANSNATIONAL FOCUS AREAS

The **“Transnational strategy development including transnational focus areas”** report is a CORE output of WP3 **“Targeted analysis of tangible and intangible cultural heritage”**, and it has been composed on the basis of previous activities undertaken by the THETRIS Project Partners since the beginning of the project.

According to the THETRIS application form, this output should have been prepared on the basis of other important steps of WP3: the regional strategies on the preservation and sustainable utilization of churches prepared by each Partner, and the peer reviews organized with the aim of gathering comments and recommendations by experts in cultural matters and heritage.

Actually - with the aim of a good effectiveness of the THETRIS project - and in order to offer concrete inputs useful for the implementation of several pilot projects to be carried out within WP4 **“Piloting Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Services”**, it was not possible to wait for the implementation of regional strategies and then proceed with the drafting of the transnational document that defines and describes the focus areas.

Regional strategies are in fact expected for the month of April 2014, while this transnational strategy - so as to be really effective as an input for pilot actions implementation - shall be discussed and finalized several months before, simultaneously with the start-up phase of WP4 (June 2014). The **“Transnational strategy development including transnational focus areas”** was therefore set on the basis of some key products obtained in the context of WP3:

- regional swot analyses;
- transnational swot analysis;
- transnational working groups;
- input from partners concerning regional church routes and pilot areas.

Later, with the subsequent execution of peer activities and the progressive definition of regional strategies by the 11 Project Partners, this transnational strategy has been further implemented and the setting of the focus areas previously identified has been confirmed and deepened.

The first proposal for the selection of focus areas was discussed during the 3rd Transnational Working Group Meeting that took place in Bosco Marengo, Italy, June 20th 2013.

As stated before, this proposal was made on the basis of the results of 11 Regional SWOT Analyses and of the Transnational Analysis. Discussions and comments that emerged during the first two transnational working group meetings were also important for the implementation of this proposal.



Picture 1: TWG Meeting in Bosco Marengo, June 20th, 2013

Regional and Transnational SWOT analysis have been carried out on the basis of four main topics, identified as focus areas:

- SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP;
- ROUTES AND LOCATION;
- HERITAGE AND PRESERVATION;
- LOCAL IDENTITY AND COMMITMENT.

In regional SWOT Analyses, for each of these main topics, *Strong Points*, *Weak points*, *Opportunities* and *Threats* of THETRIS pilot Regions have been reported and analysed.

These four major assets used to describe the different pilot regions appear to be the focus areas that need to be analyzed at a transnational level in order to build and implement concrete strategies to enhance the tangible and intangible cultural heritage related to churches. The local socio-economic context, the networks for the usability of cultural and tourism assets, the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage, local identity and population involvement, are in fact strategic areas to be taken into account when implementing a pilot project that aims at enhancing the cultural heritage of a territory; in the implementation of an enhancement strategy, these complementary areas are tightly interconnected to each other, and each one of them requires a careful in-depth analysis for a successful outcome.

Through the analysis and integration of these 4 strategic areas, the various stakeholders can build enhancement projects able to meet the challenges disclosed by the issue of the conservation and enhancement of sites and traditions related to churches, thus allowing the tangible and intangible cultural heritage to enrich the collective memory and create strong connections at transnational level, aiming at strengthening the European identity.

FOCUS AREA 1: SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

This focus area aimed at analysing the following aspects:

- Development in partnership and/or cooperation, including cross-border: labour market, entrepreneurship, public services, tourism.
- Development of environment and community-friendly tourism.
- Enhancement of local food and beverage (especially organic).

From the results of the SWOT analyses, it was shown that the location of the partners' areas is generally close to borders and in some cases also to main infrastructures.

These areas present traditional specific features and connections to the cross-border either about commercial activities or different kind of tourism.

Moreover, already existing cross-border exchanges could be strengthened with specific programmes subsidizing already existing activities and involving foreign partners.

The closeness of natural preservation areas and the easy links to different eco-friendly routes (paths, bike routes, pilgrimage routes, historical and cultural routes...) invite people interested to feel the natural and cultural characteristics of the regions, people that appreciate environment and community-friendly accommodations.

Rooms in existing buildings or directly inside the owners' houses help local population to stay, to reinforce their activities, to increase they earnings, being at the same time focus points for the area development, that keep its spirit and features, both in the building preservation or in the landscape one.



Picture 2: The Monumental Complex of Bosco Marengo, used also for congresses and cultural events (it also hosts the World Political Forum event)

Agriculture shaped the landscapes of all the areas, quality local food it's directly related to the area features, sometimes to the religious heritage as well (i.e. Benedictine monasteries cultivating huge fields around their abbeys).

Quality local food is more and more frequently related to organic agriculture, therefore to green jobs that are opportunities for local youths, preventing their emigration.

Local food and beverages can become part of restaurant menus and attractive means to keep visitor staying for longer periods. In association with crafts they are the basic products of local markets.

From the peer Review Reports with Recommendations, it emerges also that there is a high development potential for the regional church routes identified. The review teams generally commented that taking advantage of the already existing experiences and involving the local populations as well as the private and public sectors can lead to a better tourism environmental and general enrichment for the areas.

Proposed transnational strategy:

- create cross-border routes involving the entrepreneurial side as well as the touristic one on specific topics;
- promote local and organic agriculture to create green jobs for young people;
- promote local markets for food and crafts;
- highlight and strengthen the local accommodation: village houses, rural houses, agro-tourism, where it could be possible to find local products to taste and to buy (as identity marker of a region, food and gastronomy may meet the specific needs of consumers, local producers and other actors in rural tourism);
- enhance the connection spirituality-nature with specific activities and programmes, dedicated to different users.

FOCUS AREA 2: ROUTES AND LOCATION

This focus area aimed at analysing the following aspects:

- Sustainable public mobility.
- Routes networking (hikers, bikers, pilgrims...).

From the results of the SWOT analyses , it emerges that all the areas are located in places with existing and/or under development routers networking.



Picture 3: Access to Novalesa, Susa Valley (Piedmont, Italy)

Different routes are used by people with different backgrounds or attracted by different features: pilgrimage routes related to specific devotions (e.g. Marian Pilgrimages, Saints' Trails), pilgrimage routes for people seeking for spirituality (e.g. via Francigena), trails in natural parks and reserves, cultural routes (e.g. Woodworking itineraries), historical routes (e.g. Ancient Roman roads, Napoleonic itineraries).

All the areas are very close to parks or sites with a natural and ecological values, a connection with them can attract people searching for still and spiritually enforcing places.

In many partners' areas, it could be easy to link the different routes and/or to create common signposting and mapping.

Sustainable means of transport are basic elements to enhance the eco-friendly area characteristics and the attractiveness of the area for visitors.

On the other hand, a good transport networking with eco-buses, local trains, and electrical bikes can help the ageing population to stay in the area without losing their mobility opportunities, as well as improving the overall accessibility to the area.

The peer Review Reports with Recommendations contained similar suggestions for the visited areas: a better sign-posting and mapping of churches will make the regional routes more attractive to tourists. The use of mobile applications, interactive maps, web applications, social networks might be used in marketing and development activities targeted on both locals and visitors. In addition, accessibility has to be granted both in an inclusive (i.e. towards people with reduced mobility) and in a sustainable (e.g. with electric means of transport) way. A good routes network should be supported.

Proposed transnational strategy:

- develop the routes networking with overall and detailed maps and a coherent and easy to read signposting;
- link the routes to activities that are specific of the area (art, handicrafts, agriculture...);
- establish routes as emotional experiences;
- create facilities to encourage slow mobility: bikes and e-bikes stations, car sharing, eco-buses on demand;
- develop mobile applications as a way of knowledge and tourist promotion of the routes as well as ways to involve youths in specific activities along the routes.

FOCUS AREA 3: HERITAGE AND PRESERVATION

This focus area aimed at analysing the following aspects:

- Connection to Cultural heritage and Natural preservation areas.
- Religious landmarks as attractive points.
- Internet and digital media development.

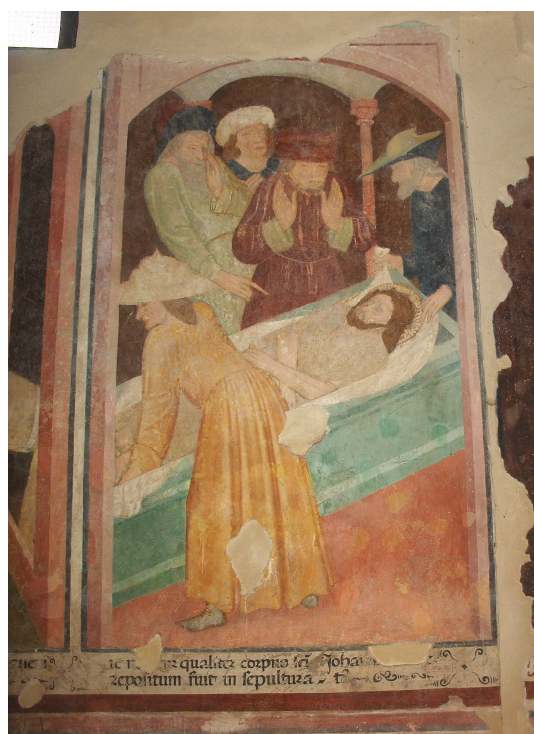
As already seen, all the reference areas identified are close to, or even inside, natural preservation areas and close to cultural landmarks.

Connections should not be only physical, but also in cultural events organization and presentation, trying to attract a wider range of visitors with a networking of activities with cross-initiatives and programmes.

IT solutions can be used not only to better spread information via websites and social networks but also to generate curiosity in involved people. Geo-caches, QR codes, 3D visualizations of the religious heritage are ways to attract people to places they will not otherwise reach, and to look to them in different ways.

The main heritage buildings can become starting points to longer and richer routes, to guide people through landscapes, to reach buildings or natural sites, to see artworks, to meet people...

Various areas host religious buildings that are landmarks widely known for their spiritual importance as well as for the architectural value and the artwork contained. The buildings in the Unesco World Heritage List (Four churches in the Malopolska region and the town of Idrija in Slovenia) and the others that already gather pilgrims and visitors (Mary Mother of God in Sveta Gora, Goriska region, St.Lambrecht and Seckau Abbeys in Styria, Praglia abbey in Padua province, Novalesa abbey in Susa Valley) can be starting points for wider area routes involving the smaller or less known churches and villages. They can also become the main information points and host exchange stations for eco-friendly means of transport.



Picture 4: Frescos in St. Francis Church, Cassine, Italy

From the peer Review Reports with Recommendations, it emerges also that a strong relation between settlements and territories is essential: strengthening the existing links between sites and buildings and between material and immaterial heritage could give the chance to widen the visitors' experience, not limiting it to the visits of buildings (3.5.5 Peer review report Graz Seckau). At the same time, it is of the utmost importance for the local population to be aware of the richness of their regions, and to look at it as an opportunity for capitalisation, and as an asset that has to be preserved and enhanced.

Proposed transnational strategy:

- consider preservation in a wider way, including landscapes and natural areas, ;
- transform the main religious landmarks in starting point to the regions and religious area discovery;
- use IT applications to generate interest on the religious heritage, connecting the spiritual to the cultural side.

FOCUS AREA 4: LOCAL IDENTITY AND COMMITMENT

This focus area aimed at analysing the following aspects:

- Cultural and tradition-based initiatives.
- Associations and volunteers networking.
- Training and teaching to engage the local communities.

Traditions in handicrafts, cultural festivals, historical commemorations, traditional foods are elements that should be better linked together with present activities and initiatives.



Picture 5: The Medieval Festival in Cassine, (Piedmont, Italy)

There are in all areas several associations, with a need of networking lacking in most places. Coordination of different organizations is needed finding ways to better link their programmes and activities.

Volunteers are active in almost all the areas, as memory and knowledge keepers, able to put together the main historical events with the local stories and traditions, the material culture with the

immaterial one.

Local festivals are strong tourist attractors as well as initiatives that encourage local studies, knowledge and tradition related activities.

Heritage is directly related to a collective social memory that preserves the cultural and social identity of a community and tourism may permit participation and cultural integration of external visitors to the memory of a local group.

The peer Review Reports with Recommendations contained similar suggestions for the visited areas: again, the involvement of local population is the key to the preservation of memories and places. The authenticity of traditions and products, linked to the reference areas, can be the starting point for innovative tourism products, such as the “experience tourism” packages.

Moreover, there is a widespread need to involve youth, local associations and generally, the local population, in education and awareness raising activities in order to make tourism

acceptable and accepted by the inhabitants, for the positive impacts it can have on local identity (Peer Review Report Torino).

A specific training for cultural volunteers and guides is basic to widen their knowledge and professionalism.

Proposed transnational strategy:

- promote cultural festivals and initiatives, network them to foreign similar activities;
- create local actors networks in order to establish an efficient management of initiatives;
- establish volunteers and local guides teaching and refresher courses;
- enhance interaction between local people and tourists in order to promote the integration of tourists in local tradition and codes.