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Be.CULTOUR
Beyond cultural tourism

Action plan

for the development of circular cultural tourism in North-East Region of Romania, on the theme of the cultural route of the ruler Stephen the Great and Saint

2023-2027

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List of acronyms

ADR – Regional Development Agency
AER – Romanian Ecotourism Association
AFCN - Administration of the National Cultural Fund
AI – Artificial Intelligence
APDT – Association for Tourism Promotion and Development
APT – The Alliance for Tourism
ASR – Archdiocese of Suceava and Radauti
ATU – Territorial Administrative Unit
Be.CULTOUR - Beyond CULltural TOURrism
CCACS-NT Centre for Culture and Arts "Carmen Saeculare", Neamț
CEAP – Circular Economy Action Plan
CERC – Tourism Resource and Research Centre
CIT – Tourist Information Centre
CJ – County Council (ro: Consiliul Judetean)
CMN-NT – Neamț National Museum Complex
COSME - Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
DGECT - Directorate-General for Economics, Trade and Tourism
DJC – County Department of Culture
EMAS – Environmental Monitoring and Assessment
GHG - Greenhouse gases
ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability
INCDT – National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism
IT&C – Information Technology and Communication
LAG – Local Action Group
LAP – Local Action Plan
LWS – Local Workshop
MMB – ASR – Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bucovina – Archdiocese of Suceava and Rădăuțiului
NE – North-East
NIS / INS – National Institute of Statistics
NRDP – National Regional Development Plan
NRRP – National Recovery and Resilience Plan
nZEB – Near Zero Energy Building
OAR – Order of Architects of Romania
DMO / OMD – Destination Management Organizations
OSIM – State Office of Inventions and Trademarks
PNVN – Natural Park Vânători Neamț (ro Parcul Natural Vânători Neamț)
POCIDIF - Operational Programme Smart Growth, Digitalization and Financial Instruments
PRAT - Regional Action Plan for Tourism
PUG – General Urban Plan (Plan de Urbanism General)
PUZ – Zonal Urban Plan (Plan de Urbanism Zonal)
RAF – Romanian American Foundation
RDI – Research, Development, Innovation
REVE - REvitalization of VErnacular Heritage
RIS – Regional Innovation Scheme
SDD – Sustainable Development Strategy
SDG – Strategic Development Goal
SIDU – Urban Integration and Development Strategy

SME – Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SO – Strategic Objective
SOP – Sectoral Operational Programme
SWOT – Strenghts, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TTR - Romanian Tourism Fair
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNTWO – United Nations World Tourism Organisation
USV – Stefan cel Mare University, Suceava
VR – Virtual Reality
WTO - World Tourism Organization

Introduction

The Action Plan 2023-2027 of the North-East Region of Romania, for the development of circular cultural tourism, on the topic of the route the Ruler Stephen the Great and Saint, was developed within the Horizon 2020 Project Be.CULTOUR, implemented by a consortium in which Romania was represented by the Agency for Regional Development North-East.

Be.CULTOUR - Beyond CULtural TOURrism aims to overcome the classical limits of cultural tourism, by supporting the innovation networks of heritage, oriented towards the circular economy of tourism. The objective is to go beyond the first level of mass tourism, and to orient this industry towards a long-term, human-centric development, improving the protection and valorisation of heritage, and the protection of cultural landscape.

Targeting remote, peripheral, deindustrialized and disadvantaged areas, as well as overexploited territories, the local heritage innovation networks have been encouraged to develop, in a participatory approach, heritage- and nature-based projects, that could contribute to strengthening inclusive economic growth, well-being and resilience in the community.

The project places at the forefront, vital elements of the tourism of the future: preparation for the European Green Agenda and sustainable tourism in communities that want to remain attractive as long as possible. Circular tourism is brought to the front as an exhortation that could change the paradigm in which tourism is made and consumed. The great merit of this project is the co-creation approach, that is bringing together the members of the regional tourism ecosystem of the North-East Region, in outlining an action plan for circular cultural tourism, based on a participatory approach. Thus, the content of the plan and the actions contained therein, are the result of three participatory workshops, carried out between December 2021 and June 2022, in which representatives of different interest groups have identified valuable resources for circular cultural tourism on the topic of the Rules Stephen the Great and Saint, have analysed the challenges faced by the tourism industry.

Circular cultural tourism can enhance the quality of life for the entire North-East Region, on the way to a sustainable future, in which communities learn to respect their resources, reuse them, preserve them and value them.

The Action Plan is not an additional level of planning within the existing governance framework but is designed and will be applied in synergy with the existing plans (Regional Action Plan for North-East Tourism 2017-2023, Romania's National Strategy for Tourism Development 2019-2030), while also offering an innovative approach, viable for sustainable and circular cultural tourism.

The activities included in the plan should be considered only a starting point, some of them being developed within the acceleration process of the Be.CULTOUR project. However, excepting the framework delimited by the project, circular tourism could be a model of valuing business resources and the tourist destinations from North-East Area.

Methodology for the action plan development

> "The Stephen the Great and Saint route seems to be very promising, being based on culture, traditions and history" (*Stefano Dominioni, director of the European Institute for Cultural Routes, Council of Europe*)

The Be.CULTOUR Action Plan is a strategic document that reflects a common vision for circular cultural tourism, which aims to improve the sustainable valorisation of the local heritage and proposes consensual pathways, in the form of objectives and actions needed to achieve the objectives in the pilot heritage sites, in a timeframe between 3 and 5 years. The potential of cultural tourism in the North-East Region of Romania and on the theme of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route.

Categorization of Best Practices:
Be.CULTOUR PILLARS

Circular economy in tourism **Human-centred approach & development** **Cultural tourism as driver of Europeanisation**

Figure no. 1. The central pillars of the development of circular cultural tourism Be.CULTOUR
Source: Project Be.CULTOUR

The action plan was developed in a participatory approach ('co-creation'), with the involvement of stakeholders from the public and private sector, through a series of local co-creation workshops, informal meetings and learning activities, within the community created around the Be.CULTOUR project coordinator in Romania, ADR North-East.

The three workshops were held for the tourism community in Romania (two workshops) and the Republic of Moldova (one workshop). The first one addressed the evaluation of the potential of circular cultural tourism, it inventoried, with the direct involvmen of the participants, the relevant stakeholders, the known and the hidden resources/ assets of the reference area.

Figure no. 2. Co-creation stages for the circular cultural tourism action plan
Source: Be.CULTOUR project worksheets

The second workshop focused on the analysis of the challenges and their correlation with the actions that could contribute at regional level to the transition from the linear economy to the circular economy in the cultural tourism associated with the Cultural Route Stephen the Great and Saint. In the third workshop, the actions were detailed, in order to transform them into viable business ideas, which could be part of a future oriented towards circular tourism.

This current action plan presents the results of the working groups and the proposals that resulted from the workshops.

1. The potential of cultural tourism in the North-East Region of Romania, on the route Stephen the Great and Saint

1.1. Introduction to the pilot area in Romania: Cultural Route Stephen the Great and Saint

The legendary figure of Stephen the Great and Saint voivode is associated with a multitude of locations in the NE Region, with religious and cultural objectives, with villages and communities where local stories still bear the traces of events that happened centuries ago. Stephen the Great is associated with national dignity and with a period in which the principality of Moldavia had earned a well-deserved respect in the European countries of those times. Perhaps for this reason, over time it has generated a high interest from visitors (especially Romanians) to reach the places marked by his life and political course.

The cultural route of Stephen the Great and Saint is an itinerary developed in 2019 as a result of collaboration between the Ministry of Tourism of Romania and the

Investment Agency from the Republic of Moldova, and was officially launched during the Romanian Tourism Fair (TTR), organised in Bucharest on the 21st February 2019[1].

Figure no. 3. Cultural route " Stephen the Great and Saint" in Romania and Republic of Moldova
Source: https://stephenthegreat.travel/ (accessed 22.12.2021)

The route crosses about 2000 Km and includes both historical objectives or locations that, according to the facts and legends, are related to the ruler Stephen the Great and Saint. The current network includes 20 objectives in Romania and 9 in the Republic of Moldova. On the territory of Romania, the following objectives are included:

County (number of objectives)	Objective name
Bacău (1)	1. The Church "Assumption of the Virgin" from Borzești
Botoșani (1)	2. "Saint Nicholas" Monastery from Popăuți
Iași (5)	3. "Saint George" Church from Hârlău 4. The church "Pious Parascheva" and the ruins of the Royal Cellar from Cotnari 5. The Palace of Culture in Iași 6. The "Saint Nicholas" Church, Iași 7. The Church of Dobrovăț Monastery, dedicated to "Descent of the Holy Spirit", Dobrovăț.
Neamț (4)	8. Neamt Fortress, near the city of Târgu Neamț 9. The Royal Court and the Church dedicated to "Saint John the Baptist" from Piatra Neamț 10. Neamț Monastery, Vânători Neamț 11. Războieni Monastery, dedicated to "Saints Archangels Michael and Gabriel", Războieni
Suceava (7)	12. The Fortress of Suceava, Suceava Municipality

[1] https://www.i-tour.ro/prima-ruta-culturala-romania-republica-moldova-voievodul-stefan-cel-mare-si-sfant/, https://stephenthegreat.travel/about-us

County (number of objectives)	Objective name
	13. Putna Monastery – "Assumption of the Virgin" Church 14. The Church "Exaltation of the Holy Cross", Pătrăuți 15. The church "The Great Holy Martyr George" of the former Voroneț Monastery, Voroneț 16. The church "Beheading of St. John the Baptist" from Reuseni village 17. The church dedicated to "The Exaltation of the Holy Cross", Volovăț commune 18. The church dedicated to "Saint Elijah", Sf. Ilie Village, Șcheia.
Vaslui (2)	19. The monumental ensemble "Podul Înalt" from Băcăoani 20. The ensemble of the Royal Courts from Vaslui and of the Royal Church "Beheading of St. John the Baptist" from Vaslui Municipality

Table1. The objectives of the Cultural Route Stephen the Great and Saint, located on the territory of Romania

As depicted in the Table 1, the area on which the route stretches in the North-East region covers all 6 counties.
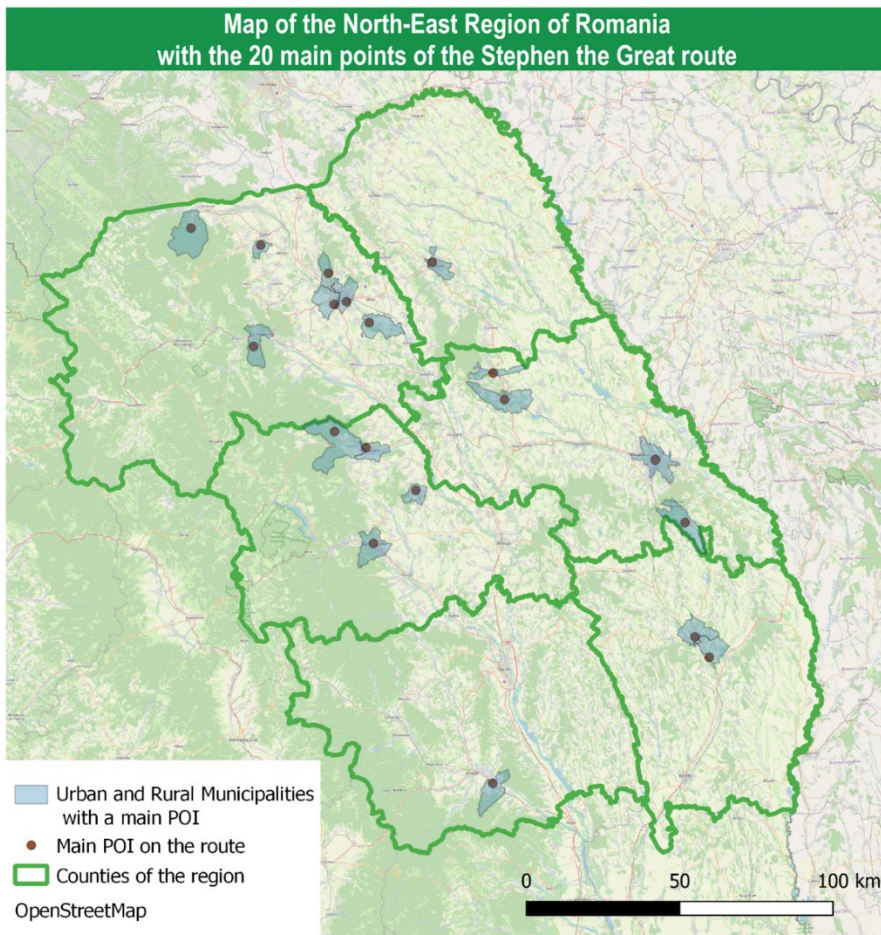
Figure no. 4. Territorial distribution of the objectives included in the route and the administrative units
Source: ADR Nord-Est, documentation of Be.CULTOUR project

The objectives are located in 19 territorial administrative units– 9 urban localities and 10 rural settlements.

1). 9 Urban localities:
6 municipalities: Suceava, Botoșani, Iași, Piatra Neamț, Vaslui, Oneşti;
3 cities: Gura Humorului, Hârlău, Târgu Neamţ.
2). 10 villages: Putna, Pătrăuți, Udești, Volovăț, Șcheia, Cotnari, Dobrovăț, Vânători-Neamț, Războieni, Muntenii de Jos.

"The route is not a fixed itinerary, but an institutional initiative to identify and articulate, through a cross-border route, several cultural, historical and touristic objectives from both countries. Tourists from both sides of the Prut river will be able to fully travel on this trail or will be able to select certain objectives, depending on their interests. "
(Moldova Investment Agency)

The online presence of the route is ensured by the official page: www.stephenthegreat.travel. Although the page is attractive and the visual elements are harmonised with the brand elements of the Republic of Moldova[2], it is necessary to complete and revise the functionality and the information that can be accessed:

- The page is relatively simple, the descriptive information being minimal;
- The data submitted relate strictly to the en-route objectives;
- The description of some objectives is limited only to mentioning the year of construction and architectural style;
- Small number of images presenting the objectives;
- Lack of information related to other objectives, events and tourist activities in the area;
- The need to revise the texts in order to provide correct information (for example both for the Dobrovat monastery and for the Church from Reuseni, are mentioned as the last foundation of the Stephen the Great).

From the interviews held with the partners from the Republic of Moldova, from the Investment Agency of Moldova, the page is a variant of initial presentation, to be completed with other information.

1.1.1. The context of regional development in the pilot area in Romania. North-East Region

Romanian tourism has been going through intensive attempts in the recent decades to formulate an attractive message for its placement on the international market. The national strategies of the last two decades, both the one conceived by the WTO in 2007 (World Tourism Organisation, 2007) and that carried out by the experts of the World Bank (The World Bank, 2018), have highlighted the aspects that need to be optimised, referring to the quality of natural and heritage resources. Also, the industry has recognized their value, the tourist packages being focused on capitalising on their uniqueness.

Significant efforts to anchor tourism to contemporary trends and to professionalise the tourism industry have also been made in the North-East Region. The development of tourism is governed by the Regional Action Plan for Tourism (PRAT) North-East 2017 – 2023 (ADR Nord-Est, 2017), and the objectives of this document are subordinated to the PRAT objective: *"Sustainable tourism development, increasing the competitiveness and*

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[2] https://pomulvietii.md/files/Moldova%20Guidelines.pdf (accessed on 02.03.2022)

tourist *attractiveness of the NE Region by capitalizing on the natural and anthropogenic* heritage *and increase the quality of tourism products and services*'.

In addition, the strategies for economic development or tourism development elaborated by the counties from the North-East region, set the directions for the current and future periods. They will be the subject of an analysis in a later chapter.

The North-East region is one of the eight development regions in Romania and includes 6 counties: Bacău, Botoșani, Iași, Neamț, Suceava and Vaslui. Geographically, the region is bordered by Ukraine, by the counties of Galați and Vrancea (South-East Region), Republic of Moldova, by the counties of Maramures and Bistrita-Nasaud (North-West Region) and the counties Mureș, Harghita and Covasna (central Romania, the "Centru" Development Region).

From the point of view of the relief, the region covers a diverse territory, dominated in the west by the Carpathian Mountains. With a total area of 36,850 sq Km and a resident population of 3,174,470 inhabitants (July 1, 2020), the North-East Region is the largest of the eight development regions of Romania.

The potential offered by the North-East Region for the development of cultural tourism is given by the presence of numerous monuments of cultural-historical-religious heritage, as well as of a variety of cultural facilities (libraries, museums, cinemas, art galleries, concert halls, philharmonics, theatres, etc.). To these we can add the events connected to the intangible cultural heritage, which outlines a strong cultural identity of this area. Traditions are still part of the daily lives of many rural communities, which is also evident in the promotional messages of the tourist destinations.

The North-East region is served by 3 international airports, which also offer domestic flights, but the offer of low-cost flights for western and southern Europe predominates, areas where a large part of the diaspora lives and works (seasonally or permanently).

The vast majority of the natural heritage of the region is located in the mountainous areas in the west of the region, and the cultural heritage is concentrated in the north of the region with three distinct areas in Suceava, Neamț and Iași.

In 2021, out of the total number of tourists registered in Romania, the North-East Region attracted only 11.51%. Distribution by county shows that Suceava county attracted the highest number of tourists – 37.6%, followed by the counties of Iași 21.75%, Neamț 19.46%, Bacău 14.43%. The counties Vaslui and Botoșani have attracted the smallest number of tourists: 3.73% respectively 3.03%.

Tourist arrivals in establishments of touristic accommodation with functions of tourist accommodation, in the North-East Regional and in the component counties

Types of tourists	Macro-regions, development regions and counties	Years		
		Year 2019	**Year 2020**	**Year 2021**
		UM: Number of people		
		Number of people	Number of people	Number of people
Total	TOTAL	13374943	6398642	9370232
-	NORTH-EAST Region	1352527	691913	1078799
-	Bacău County	176693	99300	155642
-	Botoșani	51975	21128	32663
-	Iași County	341916	143951	234588
-	German	265055	149167	209982
-	Suceava	465921	254480	405680

Types of tourists	Macro-regions, development regions and counties	Years		
		Year 2019	Year 2020	Year 2021
		UM: Number of people		
		Number of people	Number of people	Number of people
-	Vaslui	50967	23887	40244
Romanian	TOTAL	10691195	5944775	8527409
-	NORTH-EAST Region	1197264	664159	1033025
-	Bacău County	163687	96781	150263
-	Botoșani	49167	20507	31658
-	Iași County	277533	127699	214559
-	German	249539	147452	205896
-	Suceava	409793	248997	391841
-	Vaslui	47545	22723	38808
Foreign	TOTAL	2683748	453867	842823
-	NORTH-EAST Region	155263	27754	45774
-	Bacău County	13006	2519	5379
-	Botoșani	2808	621	1005
-	Iași County	64383	16252	20029
-	German	15516	1715	4086
-	Suceava	56128	5483	13839
-	Vaslui	3422	1164	1436

Table2. Distribution of tourists in the North-East Region
Source: TEMPO Database - NIS

Most of the tourists visiting the region come mainly from other areas of Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Only 11.48% of the tourists who arrived in the region in 2019 were from outside Romania. Starting with 2020 and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic due to travel restrictions, this number has decreased to 4.02% in 2020 and to 4.22% in 2021.

In terms of economic services and activities, accommodation and HoReCa services are mainly provided by local small businesses. The number of tourist accommodation structures differs quite a lot from one county to another. On the total region, according to the National Institute of Statistics (Table no. 2) a number of 1129 tourist accommodation structures are registered, on the first place being the county of Suceava with a number of 537 units, followed by Neamț county with 205 units and Bacău county with 163.

Touristic accommodation structures in the North-East Region

Macro-regions, development regions and counties	Year 2022
	UM: Number
	Number
NORTH-EAST Region	1129

Macro-regions, development regions and counties	Year 2022
	UM: Number
	Number
Bacău County	163
Botoșani	20
Iași County	79
German	305
Suceava	537
Vaslui	25

Table3. Number of tourist accommodation structures in the NE Region (2022)
Source: TEMPO Database - NIS

Regarding the number of arrivals, in 2021 there were a number of 1078799 people, out of which 1033025 Romanians (95.7%) and 45774 foreigners (4.3%). The low number of foreign tourists could be explained by the post-pandemic situation and by the critical geo-politic situation.

Tourist arrivals in tourist accommodation establishments

Types of tourists	Macro-regions, development regions and counties	Years
		Year 2021
		UM: Number of people
		Number of people
-	NORTH-EAST Region	1078799
Romanian	NORTH-EAST Region	1033025
Foreign	NORTH-EAST Region	45774

Table4. Tourist arrivals in the tourist accommodation structures in the NE Region (2021)
Source: TEMPO Database - INS

A considerable part of the tourist flow is determined, on one hand, by the interest in history, tradition, religion, spirituality and pilgrimage, and on the other hand by nature and active tourism. Although tourism in these areas is seasonal by nature, the regional administration is interested in developing the north-east region as a destination throughout the year.

In recent years, the tourism sector has received more attention and has become one of the main priorities for the development of the area. But, in order to become an engine of regional development, it must overcome the main challenges it faces. Directly linked to cultural heritage, investment is still needed to improve the accessibility to certain destinations/ objectives, to protect the built heritage and to adapt to new patterns of consumption. Certain tourist attractions have already been included in restoration programs and have been transformed to offer more interesting and interactive experiences (Neamț Fortress, Suceava Fortress, Palace of Culture, etc.).

The region is strongly affected by the migration of population: from the 8 development regions, in the North-East region was recorded the highest number of

emigrants. This has also affected the tourism sector, with a shortage of employees in the tourism industry.

1.1.2. The context of cultural tourism in the North-East Region

Cultural tourism entails opportunities, but also risks. Tourism as a whole can be a highly volatile economic sector. If not managed properly, cultural tourism can easily turn into an 'extractive' value industry, generating a negative impact on the environment, on local communities and ecosystems.

In the list of recommendations made on the occasion of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, the European Commission underlines the important role of sustainable cultural tourism, defined as "*integrated management of cultural heritage and* tourism *activities in collaboration with the local community, creating social, environmental and economic benefits for all parties interested parties, achieving tangible and* intangible preservation of *cultural heritage and sustainable development of tourism*'. Scientists, policymakers and practitioners stress the need to foster the development of cultural tourism in Europe as an opportunity to connect to common European culture and history.

The development of cultural heritage can contribute to raising awareness and pride in historical and cultural values, as shown by the results of the Eurobarometer, on the attitudes and opinions of EU citizens.

Cultural heritage is an essential resource for the transition towards sustainable cultural tourism, as regards the less well-known heritage assets which, if properly valued (through a more efficient management of cultural visitor flows) could enable a long-term sustainable development (European Commission, 2019).

The competitive advantages of tourism in Romania have been in recent decades grouped around two main values: NATURE and CULTURE. The studies carried out, the branding policy (Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism, 2011) and the tourism strategies (Ministry of Tourism, 2019, The World Bank, 2018), have highlighted as main motivation for visiting the country, the wish to discover authentic places, to experience the life of local communities, to visit tourist attractions .

Cultural tourism is based on quality experience in culture rich communities, on the authenticity of places, people and their stories. Perhaps precisely for this reason, the "cultural" tourists remain longer in the destinations that they visit.

The North-East region needs to move from the transit tourism to "slow tourism", to a tourism that is based on a qualitative offer and interesting tourism packages, that could determine the tourist to stay longer in the area, to discover its attractions.

The North-East region, with its component destinations, but also as a whole, regarding tourism development is focused on the same elements that are included in the unique sales proposal (USP) of Romania: nature and culture.

The geographical space is diverse, combining the Carpathian area with the sub-Carpathian one, with hills and plains. The remarkable landscape offers a suitable setting for unique experience, with already famous attractions: from Bicaz and Ceahlău Gorges, to Bucovina Hills and Rarău Massif, from Bistrița Valley, Siret Valley to Izvorul Muntelui Lake. On the territory of the North-East region there are 120 nature reserves, 20 nature monuments, 24 Natura 2000 protected areas (PRAT, p. 11) with a remarkable diversity of vegetation and fauna. It should be noted that the area benefits from the existence of two[3]

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[3] www.taradornelor.ro (accessed on 2.03.2022)

ecotourism destinations, Dornelor Land (Țara Dornelor, Suceava county) and Bison Land (Ținutul Zimbrului, Neamț county)[4]. There are examples of good practice for the sustainable development of communities, combining the rational use of natural resources with the exploration of cultural resources, in the development of unique tourism experiences.
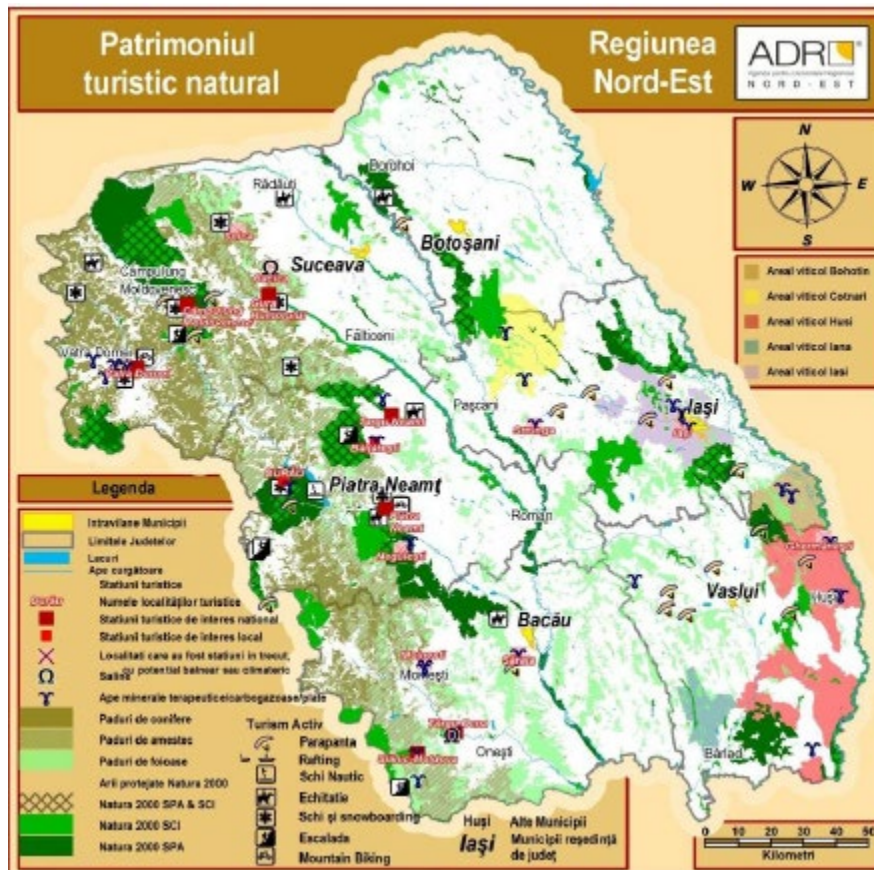
Figure no. 5. The natural touristic heritage of the North-East Region
Source: Regional Plan of Action for Tourism, 2017-2023, p.11 (ADR Nord-Est, 2017)

As far as the cultural heritage concerns, the cultural networks of the North-East Region are extremely rich and diverse: archaeological sites, fortresses, monastic ensembles, churches, castles and urban ensembles, memorial houses, traditional villages. The North-East region comprises 4003 monuments of international, national and local interest (list of Historical Monuments, made by the Ministry of Culture and Cults, 2015), with 1634 objectives located in the county of Iași, 537 in Neamț, 518 in Suceava, 510 in Botoșani, 438 in Vaslui and 366 in the county of Bacău.

Also important are the performing arts institutions, the theatres and music festivals, as well as the established galleries, but also those recently initiated by the creative industries sector, which has been extremely dynamic in recent years. Finally, the vernacular architecture and the cultural landscape of the traditional villages are an important component of the tourist packages in the countryside, bringing authenticity in the centre of the tourist experience.

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[4] www.bisonland.ro (accessed on 2.03.2022)

To show the diversity and the multitude of resources, we present in the following image (Fig. Nr. 6) the museums and museum collections existing in the region. Of course, in addition to a quantitative analysis, it is important to analyse the quality of the tourist experience within these places of culture.
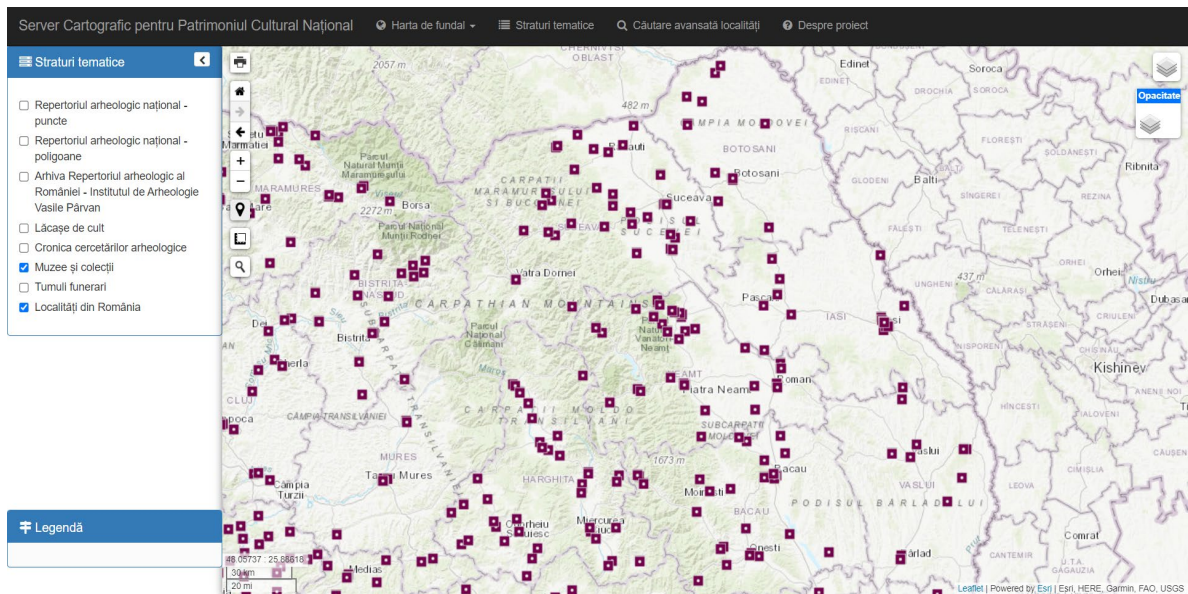
Figure no. 6. Territorial distribution of museums and museum collections in the NE Region
Source: https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/, Cartographic server for the National Cultural Heritage
(accessed on 23.12.2021)

The cities of Moldova have recently followed an interesting evolution, which led to the diversification of the cultural offer through new events, by improving the touristic and visiting infrastructure. From the point of view of cultural activity, the municipalities of Botoșani, Iași, Suceava and Piatra Neamț are ranked in the top of the cities in Romania, according to a study conducted by the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training. From a number of 46 cities, the above-mentioned municipalities are on the places 11th, 16th, 22nd and 23rd, in what concerns the cultural life.

At the level of the North-East Region, certain cultural poles for cultural events are beginning to take shape, the most representative being the Municipalities of Iași, Suceava and Neamț.[5] The cultural events are diverse, from large-scale events, organized in the big cities and regions, to events organized in rural areas. For the last category, although they have grown in number, their importance has remained a minor one.

The touristic potential is distributed in the countryside but also in urban areas, being able to offer various cultural experiences. The connection to cultural tourism can be made by accessing the patrimonial resources managed by the cultural institutions or those that are privately owned, traditional ensembles and villages, ethnographic collections or cultural centres.

Another experience associated with the spirituality and authenticity of the place is visiting the monastic landscapes. Eight monasteries in this area are on the list of UNESCO World Heritage List, as "The Painted Churches of Northern Moldova". Two of these are also included in the Route of the Ruler Stephen the Great and Saint: the "Saint George" church from the Voroneț Monastery and the Holy Cross Church from Pătrăuți. In addition to these, the monasteries in the Neamț county are other unique treasures of the spirituality of the place.

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[5] Regional Needle Plan touring and Culture, p. 7
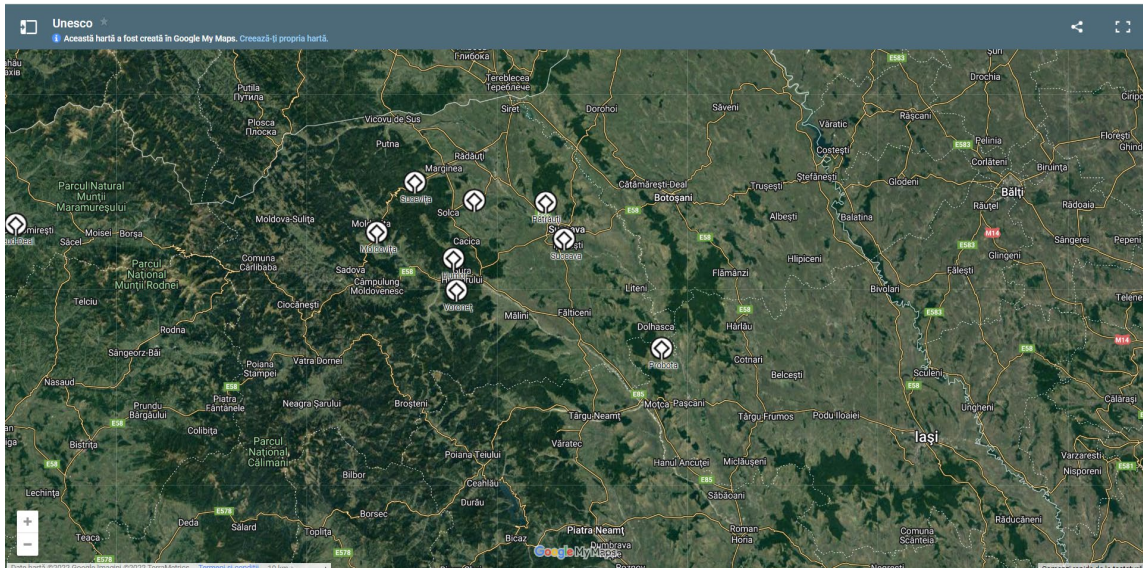
Figure no. 7. Distribution of UNESCO monuments in the NE region
Source: https://patrimoniu.ro/monumente-istorice/egispat (accessed 22.12.2021)

To the current efforts made at regional level (but also by the counties of the North-East Region) to consolidate competitive attractions in the area, relevant for the cultural tourism, other challenges have been added: the Covid pandemic and the crisis in Ukraine. Some challenges are derived from the local context, as for example the rapid and chaotic urbanisation of the countryside, affecting the authenticity of rural areas. Causes are related to the unclear or lax legislation, and to the fact that many heritage buildings are privately owned. As a result, the cultural landscape, an important component of cultural tourism is damaged, requesting for the future time a special attention and dedicated measures.

Although the overall development of tourism in the North-East Region cannot be characterized as a very good one, being affected by the general status of Romanian tourism and by the specific dysfunctions of this industry, there are many examples of good practice, both in urban and rural areas, which can polarise and dictate an adequate level of quality in the next period of development.

Intangible Heritage

UNESCO describes „intangible cultural heritage" as a form of heritage that includes inherited ancestral traditions such as *„oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts"*. Intangible cultural heritage is present in the North-East Region of Romania, and the most important components are presented below:

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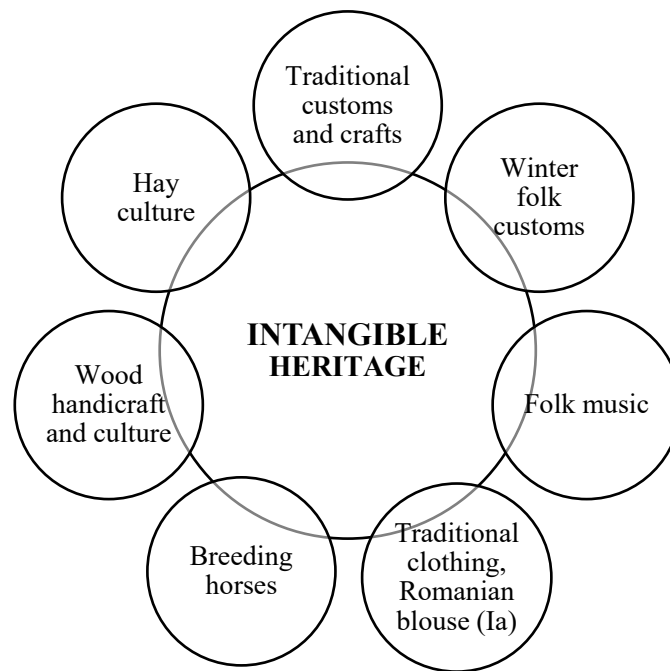
Figure no. 8. Examples of elements of the intangible heritage present in the North-East Region of Romania
Source: own representation

Although the elements of the intangible heritage are common throughout Romania, there are regional differences that can be valued in tourist experiences that can be interesting not only for foreign tourists, but also for Romanian tourists. Thus, museums and ethnographic collections, traditions associated with various religious events, become landmarks for promoting cultural tourism.

Winter folk customs are part of the list of attractions, differing even from one county to another, from one sub-destination to another. The most important winter folk customs practiced in this region are traditional Christmas carols, the dance of the masked people (the bears, the goats, the horses), the Christmas tree, the traditional sayings ("plugusorul'), the "bunghieri"- rebellious gendarmes. Most of these customs are inherited from ancestral traditions.

Another type of intangible heritage in the North-East Region is the "Mărțișor" celebration. The "Mărțișor" is a cultural practice associated with March 1, when men and women share small pendants of different materials to welcome the spring season.

The forms of folk music, the village tarafs or the church choirs are also a component of the intangible heritage found in the North-East Region, especially in the county of Suceava (Fundu Moldovei, Mălini, Straja) and the county of Botoșani.

The tradition of **breeding horses** is another example of an intangible heritage present in the North-East Region (Neamț and Botoșani counties). Communities have developed festive events, equestrian competitions, and traditional crafts related to the promotion of breeding horses. For foreign tourists, the horse carriages, still present in the landscape of the Romanian village, have a special attraction. Disappeared from the daily life of western countries, they are extremely picturesque and are associated with the authenticity of the Romanian village.

The hay culture[6] (the traditional way of preparing it) fits into the traditions associated with the household in the countryside. In the past, this activity was associated with social practices and festive events. The hay preparation appeared as an activity in some events organised in the mountain area, being a pretext for the tourists to experience

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[6] https://patrimoniu.ro/images/imaterial/fan/Cultura-fanului.pdf (accessed at 2.03.2022)

archaic processing techniques but also to interact with the local community and to connect to the stories of the place.

The urban and rural areas of the North-East region of Romania have so far preserved very well the **traditional customs and traditions**. There is a great diversity of crafts practised in rural communities, which can be integrated into tourism packages.

- Pottering: Oituz village in Bacău (red pottery); Poiana Deleni village in Iași County (black pottery); Marginea village in Suceava County (black pottery), Cacica village in Suceava County, Brădești village in Vaslui County.
- Egg painting: Rogojești village in Botoșani County; Brodina, Ciocănești, and Ulma villages in Suceava County.
- Manufacture of traditional costumes: Humulești, Pipirig, and Răucești villages in Neamț County; Mănăstirea Humorului, Sucevița, and Marginea villages in Suceava County.
- Traditional fabrics, embroidery, and carpets: Văratec, Agapia, Bălțătești villages in Neamț County (carpets and fabrics); Pipirig, Răucești, Bicazu Ardelean and Borca villages in Neamț County (embroidery and fabrics); Vorona village in Botoșani County (carpets); Ciocănești village in Suceava County (carpets).
- Folk masks and clay figurines: Vorona village in Botoșani County; Târpești, Timișești, Oglinzi, Pipirig, Ștefan cel Mare, Icușești, Săbăoani, Humulești villages in Neamț County.
- Wickerwork: Agapia, Bărticești, Botești, Horia, Valea Bicazului villages in Neamț County.
- Leather, waistcoats, and sheepskin coats manufacturing: Grumăzești, Pipirig, Văratec, Borca, Dămuc villages in Neamț County; Vama, Cârlibaba, Arbore villages in Suceava County; Văleni village in Vaslui County.
- Icon Painting: Bacău County, Botoșani County, Iași County, Piatra Neamț and Roman municipalities; Suceava County; Rădăuți municipality.
- Wood art: Vânători-Neamț village (iconostatis, troitsas), Pipirig village (handicraft products), Humulești (decorative carvings, rods), Grumăzești (oak sculptures), Petricani (furniture), Târgu-Neamț (wood carvings), Bălțătești (sculptures), Fundu Moldovei (folk instruments).
- Traditional wall-carpet craftsmanship: Vrancea County, Suceava county, Neamț county.

In addition to these traditions, an important comeback had the sewing of folk shirts and blouses. The folk costumes and the Romanian shirt (so called "IA") are attractive for visitors, being appreciated not only in collections but as well as souvenirs. Also, the country festivals with folk dances are again organized in the rural communities, bringing back old and picturesque traditions.

Another valuable element is the built landscape (the traditional houses) of the villages, which unfortunately are endangered by the new urban uncontrolled developments. There were initiatives at national level, from the Ministry of Culture and the Romanian Order of Architects (OAR) to document, present and organize the traditional rural architecture of each cultural region of Romania. In this regard, a series of architectural guidelines have been developed for maintaining consistency of the new constructions with the local specificity in the countryside.

In recent years, there have been initiatives at the level of the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism, to register several cultural routes, around some important topics. Some of them are recognised as European Cultural Routes. For their development were foreseen activities that could be financed through the National Plan for Resilience and Reconstruction (PNRR) in the future period.

At the date of current research (May 2022) the following cultural routes (European and national) are registered, some of them including objectives from the North-East Region:[7]

Type of cultural route	Name
Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe	1. ATRIUM Cultural Route (Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes in Europe's Urban Memory) Applicant/ Members of the route: Iași County Council, City Hall of Ștei, Bihor
Transnational routes	1. Route "Ruler Stephen the Great and Saint" in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova" 2. Route of wooden churches in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova
National routes	1. Route of wooden churches in Romania 2. The route of the ethnographic museums in the open air in Romania 3. The route "Civilization of wood in Romania" 4. The route of the multiethnic heritage in Romania 5. The route of towns and historical spas in Romania 6. The route of the museum heritage in Romania 7. Via Mariae 8. UNESCO material heritage route in Romania 9. The route of the memorial houses in Romania 10. The Destinations of European Excellence (EDEN) route in Romania 11. The route "Miracle-working icons in Romania" 12. The route "Traditional craftsmen and traditional crafts from Romania" 13. Route "Cucuteni culture – part of the national identity"
Regional routes	1. The route of the museums in Bucovina 2. The route of the memorial houses in Bucovina 3. The route "On the footsteps of the brilliant artists George Enescu – Ciprian Porumbescu" 3. The route of the multi-ethnic heritage in Romania 6. The route of the museum heritage in Botoșani county 7. The route of the memorial houses in Botoșani county 8. Route "Dowry Chest of Neamț county. The art of wood" 9. Ecumenical route from Bacău county 10. The route of the wooden churches in the county of Botoșani 11. Route of the wooden churches from Vaslui county
Local routes	1. Ecumenical route from Botoșani county 2. The route "Drumul Luceferilor" from Botoșani county 3. The route "The Hutzul Road in Bucovina" 4. The route "Civilization of wood in Bucovina" 5. The road of painted eggs in Bucovina 6. The route of the wooden churches in Bucovina 7. The route of the medieval heritage – Stephen the Great testimonies in the county of Neamț 8. The route of the memorial houses from the county of Neamț - Landmarks of the Neamț literature 9. Route "Rediscovering local traditions. Ethnographic collections from Neamț" 10. The route "Ecumenical Patrimony– Christian settlements in Neamț county" 11. Route "The treasures of the villages– Old wooden churches from the Neamț County" 12. The route of the wonder-making icons.

Table5. List of cultural routes

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[7] http://turism.gov.ro/web/rute-cultural-turistice/, (Accessed at 29.05.2022)

The Be.CULTOUR project aims to broaden the understanding of Europeanization, from a discourse on institution building and policy transfer, to a concept of inclusion, based on common histories and the acceptance of new perspectives as new layers of multiculturalism that could enrich the tourist experience. The European Commission and the Council of Europe (2011) demonstrated the economic potential of cultural routes, highlighting how they can promote Europe's image and make known places full of potential, but often on the edge of public knowledge.

In addition to the listed routes, there is an additional cultural-tourist route, also related to the personality of the ruler Stefan the Great. In 2011, the Suceava County Council registered at OSIM the trademark "The Road of Stephen the Great", with the intention of developing a pilgrimage route from Putna to the 41 establishments of Stephen the Great.[8]

Cultural tourism can be an opportunity to increase the 'sense of place' as a powerful level for deepening the European identity. Europeanisation means the recognition of common 'roots' within local identities and peculiarities, recognising the unique symbolic, historical, cultural, social, spiritual values of European populations, which are expressed in 'places', landscapes, languages, traditions and exceptional arts.

1.2. Analysis of the potential of circular cultural tourism in the North-East Region of Romania

The cultural route "The Rules Stephen the Great and Saint" covers, as mentioned above, several counties and districts in both countries Romania and Republic of Moldova. In Romania, the network of sites is distributed in the counties of Suceava, Botoșani, Neamț, Iași, Vaslui and Bacău.

Each county offers additional activities that can build a valuable tourism experience for the visitors. However, the general quality of services should be improved. Unfortunately, most tour operators are focused on outgoing tourism, incoming tourism being affected by a poor or unattractive tourist offer. Interesting tourist packages for

"Less visited than other parts of Romania, Moldavia rewards those intrepid enough to seek it out: from glorious medieval monasteries to rugged mountains ideal for hiking, this singular region combines beauth with plenty of action. Moldavia's bucolic villages and oddly endearing towns host some of Romania's friendliest locals. Beyond the hinterland, Moldavian modernity is fully displayed in Iași, one of Romania's largest cities and a vibrant student town famous for its nightlife. Bucovina, to the northwest, is home to Romania's pride and joy: a half dozen Unesco protected painted monasteries from the 15th and 16th centuries that attest to the region's artistic skills and enduring faith. Everywhere you'll find signs of Moldavian prince (and Romanian national hero) Stefan cel Mare and his epic battles with the Ottoman Empire, above all at the mitghty fortresses at Suceava and Targu Neamț".

(https://www.lonelyplanet.com/romania/moldavia)

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8   https://www.svnews.ro/flutur-anunta-inregistrarea-la-osim-a-marcii-drumul-lui-stefan-cel-mare-traseul-va-pleca-de-la-putna-catre-41-de-ctitorii-stefaniene/262270/, (Accessed at 26.05.2022)

visitors of the North-East area and of the Stephen the Great and Saint Route, could convince people to spend more time in the region, bringing an added value and benefits to the local communities. All counties crossed by the Route „Stephen the Great and Saint", Suceava, Neamț, Iași, Bacău, Botoșani and Vaslui, have unique resources that should be better exploited for the development of circular cultural tourism.

Suceava County

Suceava County is in the southern part of the historical region of Bucovina. The relief, the favourable climate, the hydrographic potential, the rich fauna and flora, as well as the existence of a highly appreciated historical, architectural and cultural heritage, led to the development of several types of tourism in Suceava County.

Pilgrimage and spiritual tourism are very important forms of tourism in Suceava county, due to the existence of eight monasteries and churches included in the UNESCO world heritage list: Moldovița, Sucevița, Voroneț, Humor, Probota, Arbore, Pătrăuți and the Church "Saint John the New" in Suceava. In addition, Putna, Dragomirna, Slatina, Bogdana, Bălinești and Baia are recognized for the long history and impressive architecture. Many of these monasteries were built by Stephen the Great, ruler of Moldavia between 1457-1504. In addition to the orthodox monasteries and churches, in Suceava county there is the Basilica Minor from Cacica, an important place for catholic pilgrimage, the Armenian church of Hagigadar and the Jewish Temple from Sereth, as important spots on the list of most appreciated and visited places from Suceava County.

Cultural tourism in Suceava is supported by the diversity of existing historical, ethno-folkloric and cultural heritage. Tourists who arrive in Suceava county can choose to visit historical objectives (such as the Fortress of Suceava or the Zamca Fortress, civil constructions (such as the Princely Inn in Suceava) or museums (such as the Bucovina Village Museum in Suceava, the History Museum in Suceava, the Wooden Museum in

"The monasteries are 100% worth going to see. The details in all the paintings are incredible and I learned a lot about local history. You also get to see the beautiful Romanian countryside, traditional Romanian wooden houses and we had added stops of black ceramic workshop and the biggest collection of painted eggs in the world."

Câmpulung Moldovenesc. As well, the area is famous for crafts such as egg decoration (Ciocănești, Vama, Moldovița, Brodina), potery (Marginea), weaving (Arbore), leather processing (Fundu Moldovei and Vama). *Ecotourism* is intensively promoted in Dorna Area (Țara Dornelor) by the Association of Ecotourism. Tourists who come to the area, can choose to spend time in numerous places ideal for active tourism or nature observation, such as: Călimani National Park, Rarău Natural Park, the secular and virgin forests of Slătioara and Giumalău. *Agritourism* and *rural tourism* in Suceava county attract tourists eager to discover the countryside, to enjoy the typical household activities, to spend time with the locals, to walk through the villages and to enjoy the local gastronomy. The Eastern Carpathian Mountains favoured the development of *mountain tourism* in Suceava. Among the main activities that tourists can practice here, we can mention hiking,

climbing, mountain biking, paragliding, horse riding, hunting, fishing, winter sports, river rafting a.o. Many tourists are choosing to practice hiking around Vatra Dornei and Cîmpulung Moldovenesc, where the moderate hights of the mountains Călimani, Rarău, Giumalău, Suhard and Bistriței offer outstanding landscapes. The secular forests from Slătioara and Giumalău offer experiences unique to the tourists that want to enjoy nature.

Botoșani County

Botoșani county is located in the northern part of the Moldavia region and is bordered to the west by Suceava county. From a touristic point of view, this county is distinguished mainly by the existence in this area of many memorial houses and by the association of the area with a large number of remarkable personalities that have influenced the Romanian culture, such as Mihai Eminescu, Grigore Antipa, George Enescu, Ştefan Luchian or Nicolae Iorga. Cultural tourism is developed with the support of numerous museums (Leon Dănăilă Museum in Darabani, the Peasant's Museum in Flămânzi, "George Enescu" Memorial Museum in Dorohoi, "Ştefan Luchian" Memorial House, "Nicolae Iorga" Memorial House, museum collections (Village Museum from Corni) or of other historical and cultural objectives (Ventura House, Botoșani County Library.

There are existing several monasteries and churches, so pilgrimage tourism is very developed in this area as well. Therefore, tourists can visit monasteries (Vorona, Zosin Băluşeni, Popăuți, Gorovei Văculesti), churches (wooden church "Assumption of Mary" in Dorohoi, wooden church "St. Voievozi" Agafton), hermitages (Bals) and old cemeteries (Jewish Cemetery Ştefănesti). Ecotourism is represented in the county mainly through the existing natural reservations: Horlăceni, Bucecea – Sereth Valley, Secular forest Stuhoasa secular forest, Ciornohal forest, Tudora forest, Ripiceni, "Stânca Ștefănești" and Peat bog from Dersca. Rural tourism and agritourism is another category of activities present in Botoșani county which offers experience at the Riding Center and the "Horses of Dreams" Pension (located in the village of Vârful Câmpului), Lake with Water Lilies Ipotești. There are several cultural institutions of great significance in Botoșani county, such as: the Botoșani State Philharmonic (built at the end of the 19 century), the Historical Center of Botoșani, the Theatre for Children and Youth "Vasilache".

Iași County

Iași County is located in the North-East of the country, in the historical region of Moldova. The city of Iași, the most significant city of the North-East area, is hosting the oldest university from Romania, the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, founded in 1860 and is a landmark of the region. Cultural tourism is the most practiced form of tourism in the county, with exquisite cultural objectives, located mainly in Iași Municipality. The most important tourist attractions are the Palace of Culture (historical monument; built between 1906-1925), the Metropolitan Cathedral (historical monument; 1833-1887), the Monastery "Trei Ierarhi" (historical monument; 1637-1639), Golia Monastery (historical monument; 1650-1660), the Central Library "Mihai Eminescu", the University (built between 1930-1934), the Library of the Technical University "Gheorghe Asachi", Roznovanu Palace. The centre of the city is hosting the Opera as well as the Theatre (first National Theatre in Romania) and the Iași Philharmonic. The Copou Hill, where the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University is situated, has a specific charm, being a romantic place for walking and enjoying the beautiful atmosphere of the city. In Copou is also located the Botanical Garden (founded in 1856). Iași city has become in the last years a vivid cultural centre, that is valuing the generation of young artists and the creative industry. Other historical tourist attractions, are the Princely Palace from Ruginoasa (built in 1804), the Sturdza Palace from Miclăuseni (1880-1904), the Memorial House of Vasile Alecsandri from Mircesti, the Memorial House "Constantin Negruzzi", the Cucuteni Archaeological Museum, the Bojdeuca[9] of Ion Creangă in Iași. The tourists who visit the county can choose to participate in various fairs (National Ceramic Fair Cucuteni 5000) and festivals (Rose Folklore Festival of Moldova, Cotnari Folklore Festival, Holidays of Iași). The touristic potential of the wine region of Iași is significant and could contribute to the development of oenotourism. In the county there are five wine cellars that place the area on the first place in the North-East Region in this regard Cotnari Winery, Cotnari Wine House, Hermeziu Winery, Bucium Winery and Gamma Winery. Moreover, the cultural landscape of the viticultural sector of Iași can be harnessed through the development of different tourism packages, that could combine diverse experiences.

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[9] An archaic term that is describing a small house

Vaslui County

Vaslui County has diversified tourism resources that attract a fairly high number of tourists. Many of the natural resources in this county have already been exploited and some of them can be the basis for the development of several forms of tourism. Walking in the forests of Bădeana, Seaca-Movileni, in the paleontological reserves Mălăușeni and Nisipăria Hulubăț, in the botanical reserve from "Movila lui Burcel", Tanacu-Coasta Rupturile and Glodeni and to the secular trees from Rafaia, Tolontan or Bunești, are an alternative activity that could be introduced in package holidays, combined with visits of rural communities. To the above list can be added the area of the wooded hills on the Similei Valley and the Racovei Valley or the arid coast of Pădureni village. In addition to the natural resources that are the basis of tourism in Vaslui County, there are also found a large number of anthropogenic resources. Religious or pilgrimage tourism is present in

this county through many Orthodox monasteries (for example, Fâstâci Monastery), wooden churches – historical monuments (for example, the Churches of Dumbrăveni or Lipovăț), but also other churches – historical monuments (as for example, the Ensemble of the Huși Episcopy). The historical, cultural and ethnographic heritage of this county contributes to the existing cultural tourism in the area. Tourists who are interested in this form of tourism can choose to visit archaeological remains (for example, the Area of the Princely Court of Vaslui), historical mansions from the nineteenth century (for example, Mălăiești Mansion and Rosetti-Solescu Mansion), buildings considered historical monuments (Mavrocordat House, Sturdza House), medieval stone bridges (The Lady's Bridge from Chițcani), sites of public interest (the Jewish cemetery in Bârlad), museums and memorial houses ("Vasile Pârvan" Museum, "Emil Racoviă" Memorial House). Also, tourists can enjoy various vineyards and wine cellars in the county (in the Huși area) and the crafts and traditions of the rural areas. There are in Vaslui County a series of tourist routes that allow visiting a large number of tourist attractions. An example of a route is the Vaslui Route – Muntenii de Sus – Solești – Micleşti – Codăești – Dăneşti – Tăcuta – Vaslui.

Bacău County

In Bacău county almost all types of tourism are present. The relief, flora and fauna have allowed the development of recreational tourism in this county, mainly due to the Trotuș Valley, which presents a succession of gorges and depression basins, the Valley and the Gorge of Uz, the accumulation lake from Poiana Uzului, but also the Bistrița Valley. The existence of buildings and objectives with historical and cultural character have allowed the development of cultural tourism. It is noted here the centre of Slănic Moldova, the Dacian fortifications Zargidava and Tamasidava, as well as the museums and memorial

houses in the area: the "Iulian Antonescu" Museum Complex, the Museum Complex of Natural Sciences "Ion Borcea", the Museum of Ethnography and contemporary art

"Dimitrie N. Ghika Comănești", the memorial house "Nicu Enea", Memorial House "Ion Borcea" and also the Vivarium from Bacău. In addition, in this county are organised various events with a popular character, festivals or openings that gather tourists in the area.

The particularities of the natural environment and the existence of a rural cultural heritage contributed to the development of rural tourism or agritourism. Religious tourism is practiced in Bacău county as a result of the presence of places of worship, important for the history of the area: the Princely Court (completed between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), the Church inside the Princely Court (built in 1491), the Răchitoasa Monastery (built in 1697), the Church in Borzești (built between 1493-1494), the Church of Cașin Monastery (built in 1655), Tazlău Monastery "Nașterea Maicii Domnului" (built during the time of Stephen the Great in 1496). The mineral springs from Slănic Moldova (dating from 1800), the mineral springs from Târgu Ocna and the salt mine from Târgu Ocna allow the practice of spa and therapeutic tourism.

Neamt County

Neamț county is located in the central-eastern part of the country, near to Ceahlău Massif. Mountain tourism is very developed in the Neamț county, mainly in the Ceahlău area (the mountains Hășmaș, Bistrița, Tarcău, Stânișoara). The tourists can choose to climb the two highest peaks of Ceahlău Mountain: Toaca (1904 m) and Ocolașul Mare (1907 m).

Also, Duruitoarea waterfall can be admired at 1021 metres altitude with waters falling on a rock wall from a height of 25 metres. Durău mountain resort is the most important in Neamț county, a place where tourists can enjoy the picturesque tourist trails, can enjoy the peaceful places and rest, but also can practice the winter sports. Neamț County is distinguished by the existence of the Nature Park of Vânători-Neamț and of the Bison Reserve "Dragoş Vodă", unique in Romania. The tourists can also visit in the county of Neamț the Bicaz Gorges (Cheile Bicazului), the lake Bicaz, lake Cuejdel or the lake Izvorul Muntelui. Religious and spiritual tourism occupies a particularly important role in tourism due to the high number of Orthodox places of worship. The most important monasteries in the county are the Agapia Monastery (the oldest in the North-East Region; built in the XIV century), the Războieni Monastery (built in 1496), the Holy

Bisericani Monastery, the Agapia Nouă Monastery (built between 1641-1643), the Durău Monastery, Sihăstria Monastery (the first foundation in 1655). Cultural tourism is present in Neamț county due to the historical and cultural objectives that remain remarkable. Therefore, tourists can visit the mediaeval fortress – Neamț Fortress, Princes' Palace, The Princely Court of Piatra Neamț, Ion Creanga's Memorial House, Alexandru Vlahuță's Memorial House, Nicolae Popa Museum. The rural cultural heritage has been very well preserved over the years, so it is possible to practice rural tourism in the county of Neamț. Tourists can enjoy the tourist landscapes and admire the traditional villages in several rural areas, such as Agapia, Tarcău, Vânători Neamț, Almaș and Tupilați and Bicazu Ardelean. Piatra Neamț and Roman are two towns that are supporting the development of business tourism, through the infrastructure and facilities corresponding to the development of business activities and various events.

1.2.1. Description of the heritage site and the analysis of the 20 objectives of the cultural touristic route "Stephen the Great and Saint"

The 20 objectives included in the cultural route Stephen the Great and Saint are presented here bellow[10], with a short description, followed by the conclusions made after the field observation undertaken in 2022. A more detailed description and documentation of the quality of on-the-spot infrastructure is comprised in Annex 1.
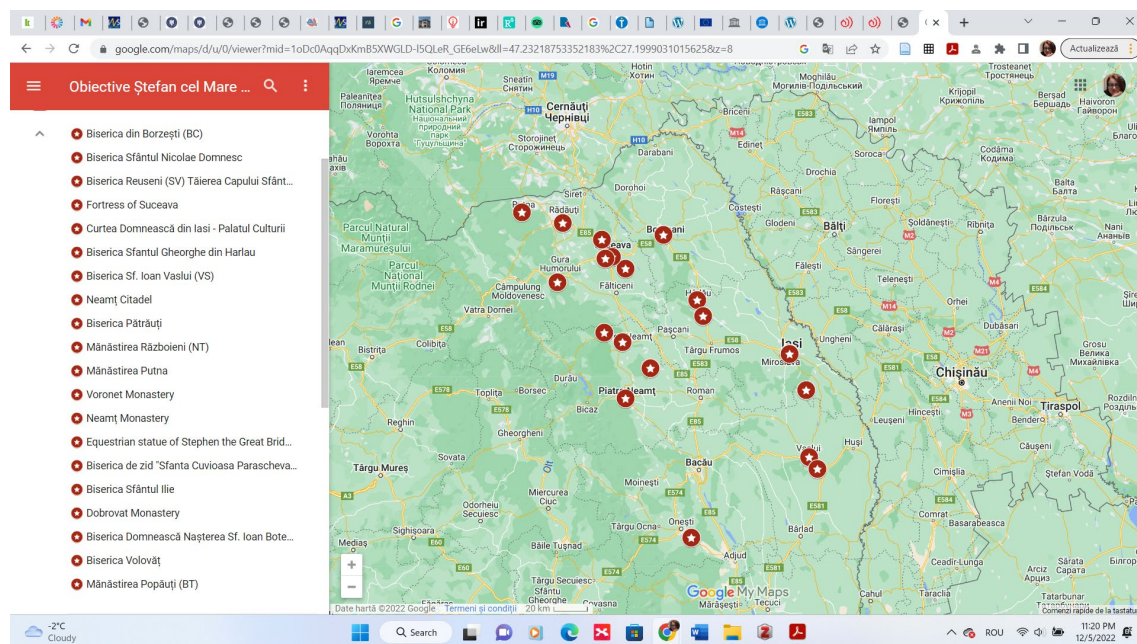
Figure no. 9. Map of the objectives listed in the Route of the Voivode Stefan the Great and Saint
Source: Google Maps (accessed on 2.11.2022)

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[10] www.stephenthegreat.travel

The church of Borzești is located at the most southern point of the route and can also be considered its starting point. Its history is also related to the beginnings of the voivode, Borzești being the place where Stephen the Great was born, where he grew up. The church is dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and was built at the behest of Stephen the Great between 9 July 1493 and 12 October 1494. The original inscription tells the story that the church is an establishment of Stephen and of his son Alexandru, being a tribute to the childhood friend of the voivode, Gheorghiță, who, according to the legend, was killed here by the Tatars. (http://bisericaBorzesti.ro/). Nearby there is also the Museum of Culture and Religious Art, founded in the former school. The location is full of stories and legends and the parish priest is offering added value to each visit. In addition to visiting the church, a special event can also be the hearing of the Byzantine music group, Filomelos. Nearby there is also the Stone Bridge built by Stephen the Great (bridge with Moldavian vault).

Saint Nicholas Monastery from Popăuți was founded by Stephen the Great in 1497. The monument is representative of the "Moldovan style" (a combination of Byzantine and Gothic elements). The ensemble of the Popăuți Monastery was included on the List of historical monuments of Botoșani County in 2015, being made up of the following 2 objectives: St. Nicholas Popăuți Church - dating from 1496, and the Bell Tower. A monastery of monks is currently serving the location. The church was part of a fortified complex, which also consisted of a royal palace. In those days, the church was in the "middle of the Botoșani woods", only later did the village with the same name appear

around it. The history of many families of Moldavian landlords and boyars is linked to this church. The bell tower from Popăuți is one of the few constructions of this kind preserved from the time of Stephen the Great.

Source: https://stephenthegreat.travel/

The church "Pious Parascheva" from Cotnari is traditionally attributed to the voivode Ștephen the Great (1457-1504). The inscription was destroyed, so that no data are known regarding the construction of the place of worship. In the list of historical monuments in Iași county 1493 is listed as the year of construction.

Source: https://stephenthegreat.travel/

The Palace of Culture in Iași is an emblematic building, built between 1906 and 1925, in the perimeter of the former Moldavian and mediaeval princely court, on the site of the former princely palace. Today, the Palace of Culture is the headquarter of the National Museum Complex of Moldova, which includes the History Museum of Moldova (1916), the Ethnographic Museum of Moldova (1943), the Art Museum (1860), the Science and Technology Museum (1955), and as well the Conservation and Restoration Centre of Cultural Heritage (1975).

The Church of St. Nicholas was built between June 1, 1492 and August 10, 1942 by Stephen the Great. The church has a Moldavian architecture and is located in front of the Palace of Culture in Iași.

The Church of Dobrovăț Monastery was built between 1503 and 1504, being the last foundation of the Voivode Stephen the Great and Saint, and the painting in the nave is considered the most beautiful in Moldavia. The church is located in the village of Dobrovăț at a distance of 25 km South-East of Iași and 35 km North of Vaslui.

The **Neamț Fortress** is one of the most impressive fortifications in Romania, which has been guarding Neamț River valley for centuries.

Built in the XIV century, in the time of Peter I, it was fortified in the XV century by Stephen the Great, to strengthen the defence system built in Moldavia against the Ottoman Empire.

Here were written important pages of heroism, as the resistance of 8 days in the front of the Ottoman siege, led by the dreaded Sultan Mohammed II, after the Battle of Războieni (1476), or the glorious episode of only 19 landsmen confronting the Polish army, led by John Sobieski, in 1691.

The Neamț Fortress is located near to town of Târgu Neamț, 46 km from Piatra Neamț, and belongs to the category of medieval monuments in Romania, of exceptional value. In 1866, the Neamț Fortress was declared a historical monument. It was subject of several restoration steps, and after the last intervention in the period 2007-2009, the Neamț Fortress offers to the visitors 21 spaces, among which we mention: the Council Hall and the Court; The secret room; Weapons Room; Black dungeons; The room of the landmen; Chapel "St. Nicholas"; The princesses' Room; Lapidarium; Cuisine; Supply room; Mint; Prison, etc. All these spaces take visitors through a history full of glory and charm of the medieval times. The Citadel Day is July 2nd, the day of the Stephen the Great and Saint.

The first documentary record of **the Princely Court of Piatra Neamț** appears to be in a document issued in 1491. The Princely Court of Piatra Neamț fulfilled its functions as a court of the rulers of Moldavia until the seventeenth century. The beautiful foundation of Stephen the Great is still preserved today in Piatra Neamț, being known as the

historical centre of the city. Located on a plateau around which the current city developed, the architectural complex consists of the "Saint John the Princely" Church, the Bell Tower and the Border Wall with the Museum of the Royal Court. The Royal Church dedicated to "Saint John the Baptist" from Piatra Neamț, was founded between July 15, 1497 and November 11, 1498, represents the most valuable edifice in the Royal Court Complex. The church is distinguished by the elements that are specific for the Moldovan style.

Source: https://stephenthegreat.travel/

According to the historical sources known to date, **the Neamț Monastery** dates back to the fourteenth century as an Orthodox monastic organisation. Located in the village of Vânători, in the county of Neamț (near the town Târgu Neamț) in a wide-open valley of the Nemțișor stream and surrounded by forested peaks, this monastery is the oldest in Moldova, being also known as the "Jerusalem of Romanian Orthodoxy".

With a rich treasure, the Neamț Monastery offers to the visitors, in the monastery museum, a rich collection of religious objects, paintings, manuscripts and various typographical pieces with a great historical and artistic value. At Neamț Monastery there is the oldest monastery library with 18,000 volumes, thus having a special contribution to the development of Romanian and mediaeval culture and art. In the church of the monastery there is, according to the legends, the miracle-working icon of Virgin Mary, dating back to 665. The icon is a processional and protective one that over time has intertwined the piety of believers and monks.

Source: https://stephenthegreat.travel/

Located in the middle of the village with the same name, the **Razboieni Monastery**, founded by the ruler Stephen the Great and Saint in 1496, was erected in honour of the soldiers who fell in the fight against the Turks, in the battle from the White Valley (1476). The inscription settled on the southern wall of the Church "Saint

Archangels Michael and Gabriel" describes the moment of Moldova's defeat in the war. The monastery has a unique character in the series of the churches constructed by the Voivode Stephen the Great and Saint. The church is as well a mausoleum that is hosting under the tiles of the altar and the narthex the bones of the soldiers who fell in the battle. Războieni Monastery is located 26 km from Piatra Neamț and 35 km from Târgu Neamț (DJ 208 Piatra Neamț -Tupilați- Hanu Ancuței), in the Neamț county.

Source: https://stephenthegreat.travel/

Suceava Fortress is situated in the city with the same name and was built at the end of the 14th century, being the first residence of Moldova's rulers for almost 200 years. Today it is declared a historical monument of national interest. Suceava Fortress was built during the reign of Petru I Mușat but the maximum development is known during the time Stephen the Great was at power. The mediaeval architectural ensemble, made up of the castle and the defence walls, was consolidated and completed within a vast project with European funding between 2010-2015, rendering it the legendary imposing aspect, and at the same time the splendour of the past. Due to a permanent exhibition made in an accessible and attractive way for the general public, with interactive multimedia systems (virtual guides, holograms, virtual book, etc.) and with nationally unique sound and light shows, the Suceava Fortress receives almost 200,000 visitors annually. Every year, in the middle of August, the Suceava Fortress hosts the Medieval Art Festival "Stephen the Great ". This festival is attended by performing groups that are recreating the mediaeval atmosphere, and attracts an important number of spectators, being the largest festival of this kind, in the country. It is followed by "Bucovina Rock Castle", an important international rock festival, which takes place in a unique location - the defensive fortification of the Suceava Fortress - and is enjoyed by over 9000 spectators.

Putna Monastery, named by the poet Mihai Eminescu "The Jerusalem of the Romanian People", was founded by Stephen the Great between 1466 and 1469, being conceived as a Royal Necropolis. The tomb of Stephen the Great, as well as thirteen other tombs belonging to the Mușatin's family can be found in the "The Assumption of the Virgin Mary" Church. The Putna Monastery Museum displays artefacts that belonged to Stephen the Great. Among them, one may see the icon of the Virgin Mary brought from Constantinople in 1472 by Mrs. Maria de Mangop, the wife of Stephen the Great, and other artefacts, given to the monastery by its founder in 1488. Putna Monastery is located 72 kilometers from the Suceava Fortress, in the Putna village of Suceava County. In the village there is as well a small museum that is comprising an ethnographic collection with items typical for a traditional Romanian household.

The church dedicated to the "Ascension of the Holy Cross" from Patrăuți was founded in 1487 by the Voivode Stephen the Great. The church in Pătrăuți is considered to be the oldest preserved church among those founded by the ruler. It is the oldest Orthodox church in Romania, which was included on the UNESCO Heritage list since 1993 (in the group of the painted churches in the north of Moldova) and the oldest church built in the Moldovan style, which is still preserved today in its original form.

The church was painted on the outside, only on the western wall, around the Gothic portal of entry into the church, and the stage represented is "The Last Judgment", the predominant colour used being yellow (ocher).The "Holy Cross" Church is situated in

the village of Pătrăuți, 13 km from Suceava. The church was transformed in 2022 in a monastery.

Source: https://stephenthegreat.travel/

Founded by Stephen the Great in 1488, the **Voroneț Monastery** with the church dedicated to "Saint George" is among the jewels of Bukovina and has been included since 1993 in the list of UNESCO World Heritage. The fame of the Voroneț Monastery is due to the amazing frescoes depicting biblical scenes, painted in harmonious colours at the outside and interior walls. The predominating colour in the frescoes is the light blue, and the beautiful scenery from the scene "Last judgement day", gave it the name of "Sistine Chapel of the East", under which it is known throughout the world. It is noteworthy that, after 530 years since its foundation, the church of Saint George of the Voroneț Monastery in which was buried in 1496 Daniil Sihastrul, the spiritual counsellor of Stephen the Great, continues to amaze the visitors with its rare and full of refinement beauty. The Voroneț Monastery is located 36 km from Suceava city and 4 km from Gura Humorului.

Source: https://stephenthegreat.travel/

St. John the Baptist Church in Reuseni is considered the last foundation of the voivode Stephen the Great and Saint, being built between 1503-1504. The church is located in Reuseni village, at a distance of about 15 km south-east of Suceava.

Source: https://stephenthegreat.travel/

The church dedicated to the **"Holy Cross"** from Volovăț was built by the Voivode Stephen the Great between 1500-1502. It is located in the village with the same name, in the county of Suceava, ~~and it is located~~ at a distance of 35 km from the city of Suceava.

Source: https://stephenthegreat.travel/

The church dedicated to "Saint Elijah" was founded by Stephen the Great in 1488. The church is located in the village of St. Ilie being situated very close to Suceava city (at a distance of about 1,5 km). Starting with 2022 it was transformed into a monastery.

The monumental ensemble "Podul Înalt" (The High Bridge) from Băcăoani, Vaslui county, is a homage and a symbol offered to Vaslui to pay tribute to one of the great battles in which Stephen the Great took part. The battle is considered the greatest victory of Christianity obtained by him against the Ottomans, because with only 40,000 soldiers the voivode defeated 120,000 Turks on January 10, 1475. After the battle of "Podul Înalt" Stephen the Great received the title of "Champion of Christ" and at the same time he consecrated the status of Moldova as the Gate of Christianity. It is located about 12 km south of Vaslui, in the village of Băcăoani, on the road that connects Vaslui to Bârlad. At the venue of the battle, a monument was erected, representing Ştephen the Great on horseback. The statue was unveiled on October 25, 1975, on the 500th anniversary of the victory of the Moldavians led by Stephen the Great against the Ottomans, and is part of the monumental ensemble Podul Înalt, located on DN24, in the southern part of the Băcăoani village, about 300 m from the town.

Situated at the crossroad of the commercial roads that are linking the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea, Vaslui consolidated its position as a commercial and urban center during the reign of Prince Alexander the Kind, who established here the royal court. In the XVth century, it was given the status of the capital of the Lower Country of Moldavia. At that time there was a princely palace, handicraft workshops, courtyard houses, pottery workshops, weapons workshops, stables and other outbuildings. Affected by the Tatar attacks, **the Princely Court of Vaslui** is redeveloped during the reign of Stephen the Great, who builds in its precincts the Church of the Cutting of the Head of St. John the

Baptist (1490) with the role of chapel, in honour of the victory at the Podul Înalt. According to the inscription, the church was built in a few months and is the oldest in the group of churches from this period. The interior painting was made during the reign of Stephen the Great and the exterior painting were made during the reign of his son Bogdan, or even Rareș and Affected by the Tatar attacks, the Royal Court from Vaslui is refurbished during Stephen the Great's period, who built the "St John the Baptist" Church (1490) as a chapel, in the honour of High Bridge (Podul Înalt) battle victory. According to inscriptions of those times, the church was built in a few months and is the oldest in the group of city churches of that period. The interior painting made during the Stephen the Great reign and the exterior painting made during the reign of his son Bogdan or even Petru Rareș have been preserved until now, representing an attraction for tourists.
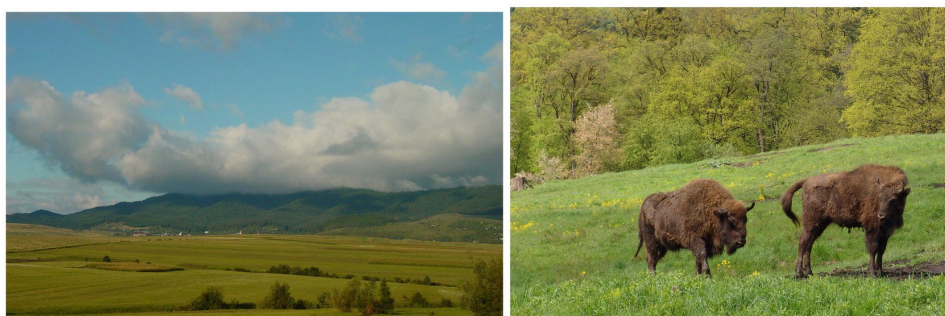
Photo source anddescription: www.viziteazaNeamț.ro

The Vânători Neamț Natural Park is situated on the eastern slope of Stânișoarei Mountains and Neamț sub-Carpathians, in the North of Neaț County, at the border with Suceava county. Covering a part of the banks of Ozana and Cracăoani rivers, the park stretches over the area of the communes of Crăcăoani, Agapia and Vânători NeamțTârgu Neamț city and Bălțătești and Oglinzi resorts.

The Vânători Neamț Natural Park has been declared a protected area since 1998 and has as objective the protection and conservation of the bison population, once a component of the Romanian wildlife. The park includes a diversity of natural, cultural and historical values and stretches over an area of 30818 hectares, of which over 26300 hectares are part of the forest fund.

The fauna of the park includes a number of rare or endangered species, such as: brown bear, wolf, lynx, otter, bison, fox, wild cat, deer, wild boar, hare, etc. As for the bison, the symbol of Moldova (the aurochs), in can be encountered it in the "Dragoș Vodă" Bison Reserve. At the same time, there are a number of 101 species of birds, some of which are strictly protected by international conventions.

The flora of the park includes over 50 floristic rarities, protected in the country, but also a series of endemics. Within the "Dumbrava" Oak Reserve there are secular oaks, very vigorous and aged between 150-200 years.

The natural reserve within the Vânători Neamț Natural Park:

• The Copper Forest – is located on the Filiorul hill in the Agapia village and includes secular oaks and over 300 species of plants of outstanding beauty;

• The Silver Forest – is a mixed-type forest and landscape reserve and includes old trees over the age of 100, but also trees younger than 20 to 50 years;

• The Bison and Carpathian Fauna "Dragoș Vodă" Reserve – is one of the 4 bison reserves existing in our country and is classified as one of the largest exclusive bison reserves in Europe;

- The Emerald Forest (the "Dumbrava" Oak Reserve) – is a forest reserve in an area of 56.6 ha that preserves secular oaks and 209 species of vascular plants belonging to 50 families.

Different activities are organised by the Park administration: from simple tours of the visitor centre, to educational exhibitions on biodiversity. Thematic classes are organised for children, and several events are organised over the entire year in cooperation with Bison Land Eco-destination. In the 2nd chapter there is an argumentation for the inclusion of the Vânători-Neamț Park in the Route of the Voivode Stephen the Great and Saint, which highlights of other attributes of uniqueness.

1.2.2. Analysis of the quality of the visitor experience, for the objectives included in the Route "Stephen the Great and Saint"

In order to analyse the quality of the tourist experience on the route of the Voivode Stephen the Great and Saint, a field research was carried out, between March and June 2022. On this occasion, the relevant actors in the field (objective managers, guides, museum guides, locals, tour guides) were consulted and evaluation sheets were filled in for each objective. The evaluation sheet was adapted after the tool that was used by *the Investment Agency of Moldova*, in the early stage of route creation. The following pages present the results of the field evaluation, summarised on the different factors. For each criterion, a rating was given, and comments were made on the situation identified on the spot (see Annex 1). The weaknesses identified were integrated into the SWOT Analysis and were in the same time addressed in the action plan with particular proposals.

No. crt.	Indicator of the evaluation sheet	Results of statistics			
		FB	B	S	NS
I.	**Quality of access infrastructure**				
1.	Easy accessibility between national roads, with proper signalling	8	7	5	0
2.	The access space to the objective is clean and there is no garbage stored	8	7	5	0
3.	The location is easy to find, based on the street signage	9	5	4	2
4.	There is parking in proximity where buses can enter / arranged / undeveloped	5	7	6	2
5.	There are toilets in the vicinity	1	9	4	6
	Total	31	35	24	10
II.	**Quality of on-site tourist information and interpretation**				
1.	There are information panels on the site	1	4	8	7
2.	On the panels, reference is made to Stephen the Great	2	5	8	5
3.	The billboards and information are bilingual (at least in Romanian-English)	1	5	6	8
4.	Attractiveness and quality of information panels	1	2	3	14
5.	There is QR codes with information that allows connection to additional online informational resources	0	1	0	19
6.	Static – monitor, LCD, panels, shelves with leaflets available	0	2	1	17

No. crt.	Indicator of the evaluation sheet	Results of statistics			
		FB	B	S	NS
7.	On the move – guides, teachers, archaeologists, actors, volunteers	1	4	5	10
	Total	**6**	**23**	**31**	**80**
III.	**Community ownership**				
1.	The locals know the significance of the objective and location	7	12	1	0
	Total	**7**	**12**	**1**	**0**
IV.	**Quality of touristic services / Quality of cultural product**				
1.	There are facilities and specific arrangements (benches in proximity)	6	3	4	7
2.	The programme of operation is displayed	7	4	3	6
3.	Tourist services offered on the site (if any and what they are)	4	0	4	12
4.	There is a museum or a collection that can increase the quality of interpretation (museums, galleries)	4	2	2	12
5.	General quality for Romanian tours	5	10	5	0
6.	The overall quality for foreign tours	1	5	10	4
	Total	**27**	**24**	**28**	**41**
V.	**Attractiveness of the destination and of the area**				
1.	There is an opportunity to do other activities in the area, leading to an increase in the duration of stay	3	6	3	8
2.	There are possibilities for accommodation in the vicinity	5	7	3	5
3.	Available tour guides	2	6	5	7
4.	There are annual events connected to the route	0	3	2	15
5.	There is a tourist information point in the locality or at the location	4	3	0	13
6.	There is restaurant in the proximity or possibility of dining in the community	4	7	4	5
7.	Accessibility of people with disabilities and interpretation for people with hearing/ visual impairment	2	0	15	3
	Total	**20**	**32**	**32**	**56**

Table 6. Centralization of the evaluation of the objectives of the Route "Stephen the Great and Saint", based on analysis criteria

Of all five factors assessed, the quality of access infrastructure and community involvement have an overall good outcome. This is a positive aspect, given that poor infrastructure has often been brought into discussion by workshop participants, being kept as a weakness. However, some goals were evaluated with a poor score. It was the case for those located in rural areas to which access makes it harder. Such disadvantages could be addressed through an appropriate information/communication policy and should also become a priority for future improvements along the path.

Overall quality according to the used evaluation factors (in %)

	I. Quality of access infrastructure	II. On-site tourist information and interpretation	III.Community engagement	IV.Quality of tourism services	V. Attractivenes of the destination
■ Very Good	31%	4.28%	35.00%	22.50%	14.28%
■ Good	35%	16.42%	60%	20%	22.85%
■ Satisfactory	24%	22.14%	5%	23.33%	22.85%
■ Poor	10%	57.14%	0%	34.16%	40%
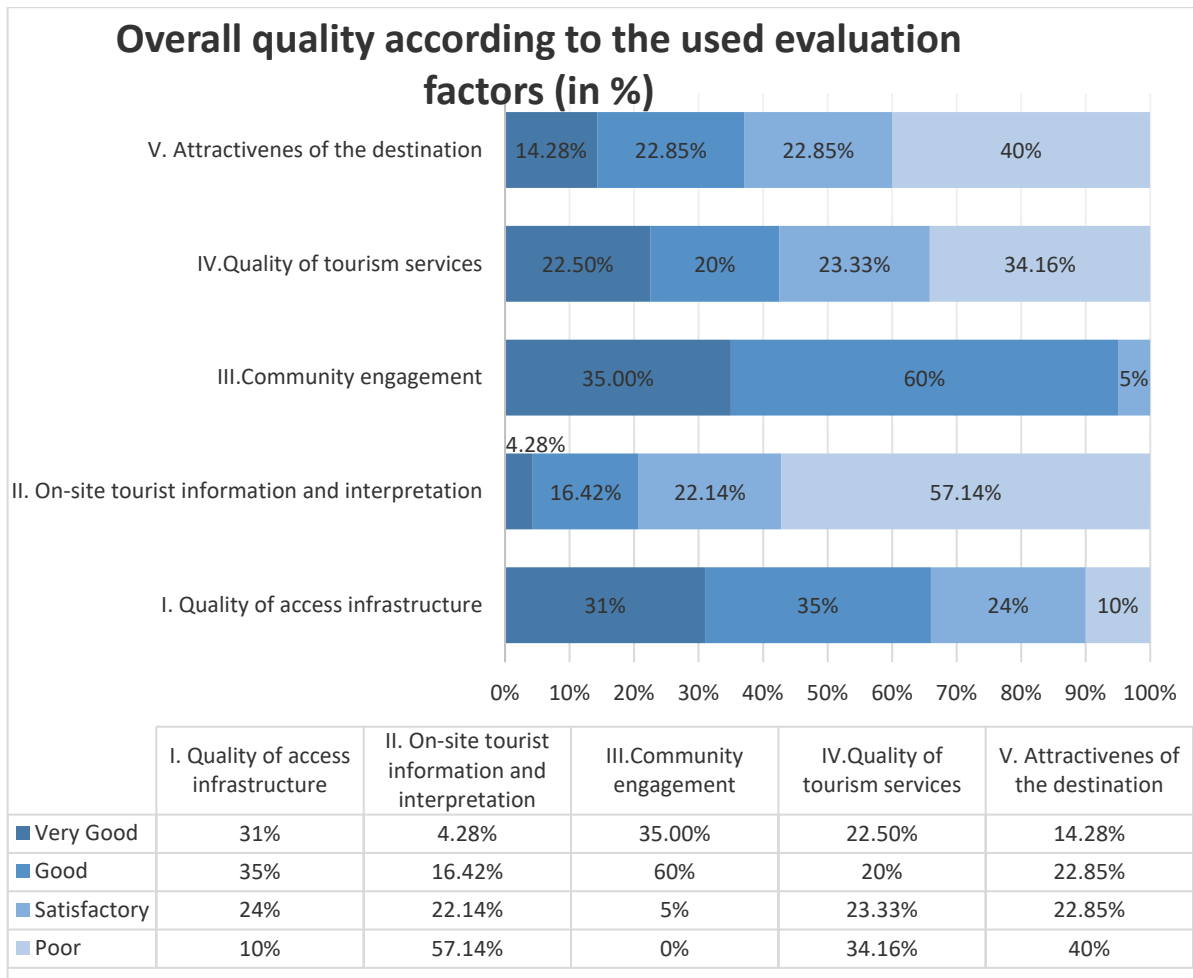
Figure no. 10. The perceived quality of the touristic experience, for the objectives of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route

Source: Authors' own processing

Also, the good score for "community engagement" is encouraging, if we consider that interacting with locals is very important for the cultural traveller. At the same time, the item indicates that the locals are aware of the significance of the tourist attraction and its importance.

The lowest score was recorded for the 'tourist information and interpretation on the spot factor. The effort of administrators and route supporters should be directed towards actions aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the location through interpretation panels, information materials available on a website and online (which can be accessed with QR codes or mobile applications). Usually, information about a tourist attraction, which can be accessed on the general pages of the Internet, is limited. There is a need for a coherent presentation of the objectives of the routes, with associated stories and valuable information. We must consider that the profile of the cultural traveller requires an adequate quality of content and that the expectations on this subject could be high.

The results presented in Table No. 8 are depicting a simple and coherent overview of the points that should be improved and could be a valuable tool for policymakers, tour planners and route managers. The individual assessment sheets (Annex 1) together with the images collected indicate the gaps and the areas for improvement.

Summary of evaluation sheets[11]

List of assessed objectives:

1. The "Assumption of the Virgin" Church in Borzești, Bacău county
2. Monastery of Saint Nicholas Popăuți, Botoșani county
3. "Saint George" Church in Hârlău, Iași county
4. The church "Pious Parascheva" and the ruins of the Royal Cellar from Cotnari, Iași county
5. Palace of Culture in Iași, county of Iași
6. The church dedicated to "Saint Nicholas", Iași
7. Dobrovăț Monastery, dedicated to the "Descent of the Holy Spirit",Iași County
8. The Fortress of Neamț, from Târgu Neamţ, Neamţ county
9. The Royal Court and the Church dedicated to "Saint John the Baptist" from Piatra Neamţ, Neamț county
10. Neamţ Monastery, Neamț county
11. Războieni Monastery, Neamț county
12. Suceava Fortress, Suceava, Suceava County
13. Putna Monastery – "Assumption of the Virgin" Church, Suceava county
14. "Holy Cross of Pătrăuți" Church, Suceava county
15. "Saint George" church of the Voroneț Monastery, Suceava county
16. "Beheading of St. John the Baptist" Church from Reuseni, Suceava county
17. The church dedicated to "Raising of the Holy Cross" from Volovăț, Suceava county
18. The church dedicated to "St Elijah", Sf. Ilie Village, Suceava county
19. Monumental ensemble "Podul Înalt", Vaslui, Vaslui county
20. The ensemble of the Royal Courts of Vaslui, Vaslui County

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[11] The individual field evaluation sheets can be found in Annex 1.

Quality of access infrastructure

Evaluation sheet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Easy accessibility between national roads, with proper signalling	🙂	🙂	😐	😐	🙂	🙂	😐	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	😐	🙂	😐	🙂	🙂
The access space to the objective is clean and there is no garbage stored	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	😐	🙂	😐	😐	😐	😐	🙂
The location is easy to find, based on the street signage	🙂	😐	😐	😐	🙂	🙂	😐	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙁	🙂	🙁	🙂	🙂
There is parking in proximity where buses can enter / arranged / undeveloped	😐	🙂	😐	🙂	🙂	🙂	😐	🙂	😐	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	😐	🙁	🙁	😐	🙂
There are toilets and lavatories	🙂	🙂	😐	🙁	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	😐	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	🙂	😐	🙁	🙁	🙁	🙁	🙁

Quality **of on-site tourist information and interpretation**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
There are information panels on the site	🙂	😐	🙁	🙁	🙂	🙂	🙁	🙂	😐	😐	😐	🙂	😐	😐	🙁	🙁	🙁	🙁	😐	😐
On the panels, reference is made to Stephen the Great	🙂	😐	🙁	🙁	🙂	🙂	🙁	🙂	🙂	😐	😐	🙂	😐	😐	😐	🙁	🙂	🙁	😐	😐
The billboards and information are bilingual (at least in Romanian-English)	😐	🙁	🙁	🙁	🙂	🙂	🙁	🙂	🙂	😐	😐	🙂	🙁	🙂	😐	🙁	🙁	🙁	😐	😐
Attractiveness and quality of information panels	😐	🙁	🙁	🙁	🙂	😐	🙁	🙂	😐	🙁	🙁	🙂	🙁	🙁	🙁	🙁	🙁	🙁	🙁	🙁

There is QR information that allows connection to additional online information resources	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🟢	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴
Static – monitor, LCD, panels, shelves with leaflets available	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🟢	🔴	🔴	🟢	🔴	🔴	🔴	🟡	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴
On the move – guides, teachers, archaeologists, actors, volunteers	🟢	🟡	🔴	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🔴	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟡	🔴	🟡	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴
Community ownership																				
Locals know the significance of the objective and location	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟢
Quality of touristic services / Quality of cultural product																				
There are specific facilities and facilities (benches in proximity)	🟡	🔴	🟡	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢
The programme of operation is displayed.	🟢	🟢	🔴	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟡	🔴	🟡	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴
Tourist services offered on the site (if any and what they are)	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟡	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟡	🟡	🔴	🟡	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴
There is a museum or museum collection that can increase the quality of the interpretation (museums, galleries)	🟢	🔴	🟡	🔴	🟢	🟡	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴

Overall quality for Romanian tourists	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟡
The overall quality for foreign tourists	🟢	🟡	🔴	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔴	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟡

Attractiveness of the destination and of the area

There is an opportunity to do other activities in the area, leading to an increase in the duration of stay	🟡	🟢	🔴	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟢	🔴	🔴	🟡	🔴	🔴
There are possibilities for accommodation in the vicinity	🟡	🟢	🟡	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	🔴	🟡	🟢	🟢
Available tour guides	🟢	🟡	🟡	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟡	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟢	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🟡
There are annual events connected to the route	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🟡	🔴	🟢	🔴	🔴	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟡	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴
There is a tourist information point in the locality or at the location	🟢	🟢	🔴	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🔴	🟢	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴
There is restaurant in the proximity or possibility of dining in the community	🟡	🟢	🟡	🔴	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟡	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	🔴	🟡	🟢	🟢
Accessibility of people with disabilities and interpretation for people with hearing/ visual impairment	🔴	🟡	🔴	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔴	🟡

1.3. Identification and analysis of the stakeholders in the field of circular cultural tourism in the North-East region of Romania

In the development of the project, actors from both public and private sectors, but also from the civil society, were invited to be part of the Be.CULTOUR community. In the workshops, the public sector was better represented (54% of the participants) and 46% of the participants represented the private sector. From the point of view of the geographical distribution, there were several participants from the Iași, Neamț and Suceava counties, while the counties of Bacău, Botoșani and Vaslui were underrepresented.

Figure no. 11. Innovation ecosystem map
Source: Project documents. The first workshop Be.CULTOUR

The distribution of the actors involved in the co-creation process, by category of organisations, is shown in the table below.

Public and semi-public sector: **4 county councils** (CJ Bacău, CJ Neamț, CJ Suceava, CJ Vaslui) **9 local/city councils** (Botoșani City Hall, Iași City Hall, Piatra Neamț City Hall, Gura Humorului City Hall, Cotnari City Hall, Palanca City Hall, Moinești City Hall, Târgu Ocna City Hall, Baia City Hall) **2 museums** (the Complex of National Museum of Moldova, the Complex of National Museum Neamț) **2 tourist information centers** (Iași, Botoșani) **2 national parks** (Călimani, Vânători Neamț) Directorate of public services, sport, and leisure Regional Office for Cross-Border Cooperation Iași International Airport Europe Direct Information Centre
Academic/educational sector: **3 universities** (Suceava, Iași, Târgu-Jiu) **3 research centres** (CERC, INCDT, Innovative Creative Business Incubation Centre) **1 college** (Câmpulung Moldovenesc) **1 cultural centre** (Bucovina)
Private sector: **7 travel agencies** **1 catering organisations** **1 village museum** **6 companies in fields indirectly related to tourism** (Bytex International SRL, Eco Net Consulting SRL, Digital Innovation, Bright Mind Solution S.R.L., Brandweb – Poloniq)
14 NGOs in the field of culture and tourism (Colinele Iașilor GAL Association, Sucevița Putna ,GAL Association, Association for Entrepreneurship and Social Responsibility (APARS), Alt Iași Cultural Association, Asociația de Dezvoltare Locală Eco-Land, Local Development Association, Țara Dornelor Ecoturism Association, Montpesa Tourism Development Association, Sunetul Munților Association, IaBucovina, Creative Industries Association, Ținutul Zimbrului Association, Proguide Romania Professional Association of Guides, incoming Association, Bâtca Doamnei Association).
2 OMDs (Iași Destination, Bucovina Tourism Association)
1 press/media organization (Radio Romania Iași)
4 religious entities (Episcopate of Suceava and Rădăuților, Church of Borzești, Church of Hârlău, Mitropoly of Moldova and Bucovina)
2 chambers of trade and industry (Suceava, Bacău)

Table7. Distribution of stakeholders involved in the co-creation process

The destination is the most complex entity in the tourism industry, due to the fact that it is difficult to be managed: if in a simple travel company we have tools to achieve our objectives, the management of the destination should be based only on the commitment of the interested parties, on communication, transparency and on participatory planning processes. For this reason, the methodology recommended by the Be.CULTOUR consortium had in its centre the involvement of all the stakeholders of the tourist ecosystem of the North-East region, not only to access all the valuable knowledge and trends they have, but also to obtain their commitment to the future implementation of the action plan. Due to the large territorial expanse of the Route "Stephen the Great and Saint", the number of participants involved was quite large (about 68 organizations participating in LWS1).

1.4. Analysis of the action plans and the strategies in the North-East region which refer to the development and promotion of cultural tourism or/ and the application of the circular economy in the field of tourism, according to the areas of innovation

In the analysis of plans and strategies, the principles of circular tourism described in Chapter 5.1 and the areas of innovation proposed in the Be.CULTOUR project were taken into account

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Areas of innovation Be.CULTOUR

1. **Rural co-living**. Promoting authentic rural experiences in traditional cultural landscapes, defined by peasant households and the hospitality of villages' inhabitants, stimulating the interaction between them and visitors, through their participation in traditional activities.
2. **Sensorial heritage.** New ways to enjoy and learn about the intangible heritage, such as local gastronomy, wine, crafts, music, language and traditional skills for an immersive experience in the destination.
3. **Contemporary meanings of heritage.** Opening to the public of a less known cultural heritage, through contemporary interpretations and artistic creation, connecting past and future perspectives and regenerating the "intrinsic value" of the heritage, its meanings and direction, while generating an intense emotional experience that addresses at the same time to citizens and visitors; the development of new forms of cultural tourism, such as virtual tourism, creative tourism, "deep" tourism.
4. **Spiritual travel experiences.** The pilgrimage and appreciation of religious heritage, connected to the joy of spending time in nature, with the improvement of physical and spiritual health.
5. **Nature as heritage.** Solutions for ecological tourism, hiking, sports, active and adventure tourism in natural heritage sites.
6. **Industrial heritage.** Innovative ways to create an audience for industrial heritage sites, such as iconic architectural sites and "modern cathedrals" that tell the story of the thriving European industrial period.

STRATEGIES AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

The transition to a circular economy has been promoted by the European institutions over the years, with greater concern over the past decade. *The thematic strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources* in 2005 laid the foundations for the development of current strategies based on the principles of the circular economy in Europe. The starting point for implementation was *the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe* (European Commission, 2011), which is part of the Europe 2020 emblematic initiative on resource efficiency. This was the first step towards designing a coherent framework for actions across different policy areas and sectors. The document also set out the focus on integrating the logic of the circular economy into policy-making

at EU level and highlighted the importance of involving a wide range of stakeholders in establishing the priorities, implementation and governance as a success factor.

Subsequently, the European Commission's support for the circular economy was highlighted in the Manifesto for a Resource Efficient Europe (European Commission, 2012), which calls for the transition towards a circular, resource-efficient and resilient economy.[12]

In 2015, the Circular Economy Action Plan was adopted by the European Commission. This package of measures aims at transitioning to the circular economy, boosting global competitiveness, promoting sustainable economic growth with low CO_2 emissions and creating new jobs.[13]

The latest package of measures is the New Circular Economy Action Plan adopted by the European Commission in March 2021. This is one of the main building blocks of the European Green Deal, Europe's new agenda for sustainable growth. The transition to a circular economy at European level will reduce pressure on natural resources and generate sustainable growth and new jobs.[14]

The Committee on Transport, in its notice for the Environment Committee, Public Health and Food Safety on a new action plan of circular economy, recommends including the following suggestions with a direct reference to the field of tourism in the resolution motion:

- whereas the transport, tourism and logistics and supply sectors have a high potential for improving resource efficiency by optimising the logistics and value chains, including by developing digital or IT based solutions; Whereas an increasing volume of goods transported and goods used in the tourism sector are being packed in disposable materials;

- whereas incorporating the principles of the circular economy and eco-design into tourism products and services will improve the quality of tourism experiences, reduce environmental impact and promote consumers' access to sustainable products and services;

- calls on the Commission to include the tourism sector in its circular economy objectives in order to make progress in promoting innovation in the sector, as well as its sustainability and resilience; recalls the 2010 Commission Communication on a new policy framework for European tourism, in which sustainable tourism was envisaged; and tourism companies have been called on to reduce the waste of drinking water, their GHG emissions and environmental footprint, to use energy from environmentally friendly sources and, more generally, to make responsible use of natural resources; urges the Commission to support the member states in implementing European environmental legislation and the objectives of the new CEAP in their national strategies regarding tourism and their individual projects; highlights the fact that tourism enterprises must be encouraged and stimulated to participate in the EU Eco-Label scheme and the EU Eco-Management and Environmental Audit Scheme (EMAS); underlines the importance of incorporating environmental principles into new

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[12] Circular economy strategies and roadmaps in Europe Identifying synergies and the potential for cooperation and alliance building Final Report, p. 6 (Accessed at 16.04.2022)

[13] Plan of Development Regional Northeast 2021-2027, p. 186

[14] Circular economy action plan, https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan_en (Accessed at 16.04.2022)

tourism services, both in terms of the goods used to provide these services and in terms of processes and the environmental impact of their provision;

- emphasises the importance of developing a comprehensive circular infrastructure that encourages businesses in the tourism sector, such as hotels, to produce and purchase energy from renewable sources; calls on the Commission to develop a strategy on the wider use of recycled water; robust infrastructure, in particular for SMEs, which do not have the financial and organizational means to develop such infrastructure on their own; encourages initiatives such as the European bicycle route network, which supports tourism experiences by promoting healthy activities and of contact with the environment; calls on the Commission to encourage the creation of small-scale tourism networks that respect biodiversity and are inclusive, benefiting local communities and having links with territorial centres for tourism development, enabling links to tourism operators, local producers, public authorities, local businesses and craftsmen;

- notes that various studies show that the hotel sector generates a disproportionately high level of food storage and highlights the role of the tourism sector in carrying out public policies to fight against food waste; encourages the involvement of tourism professionals in improving the collection of data on this issue, in raising awareness of the population and in disseminating and implementing measures to prevent food waste; it highlights the potential of the sector to be at the forefront of creating solidarity networks that turn the problem of food waste into an opportunity for solidarity and promotion of the circular economy; initiates the creation of training systems for chefs to reduce food waste; calls for food waste to be reused to a greater extent as animal food or for biogas production; considers that SMEs in the public food sector have a high potential for innovation and the development of new circular solutions; calls on the Commission to work with the member states to remove institutional barriers that prevent the creation of a circular food system, such as regulations prohibiting the distribution of surplus food in the tourism sector.[15]

Circular tourism is not yet approached in European policies as a distinct branch of the economy, but these recommendations touch on the main points through which this area can go from the linear model to the circular model, providing concrete starting points for this transition.

At Community level, the new strategic guidelines for the 2021-2027 programming period emphasize the importance of energy efficiency in terms of the contribution of this goal to the horizontal objectives of the European Union on carbon reduction, environmental protection and the rationale use of resources. Thus, one of the five policy objectives is **'A low-carbon and greener Europe – The transition to non-polluting and equitable energy, green and blue investments, the circular economy, adaptation to climate change and risk prevention'**

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[15] Report on the new action plan regarding the circular economy https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0008_RO.html#title6, (Accessed at 18.04.2022)

Romania adopted in September 2015 **the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,** *a global action programme in the field of development with an universal character and which promotes the balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental,* and has revised the National Strategy for Sustainable Development to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals[16]

The transition to a circular economy provides an opportunity to create a more sustainable economy, thereby contributing to achieving the objectives set out in the 2030 Agenda.

Objective 12. Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns of the 2030 Agenda makes a direct reference to development based on the principles of the circular economy. A direct reference to the field of tourism was also under objective 12.b Development and implementation of tools to monitor the impact on sustainable development for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.[17]

The Territorial Agenda 2030 sets out two major objectives: *a Just Europe (fair)* and *a Green Europe*, as well as priorities for the development of the European territory as a whole and of all its territories:

- *A Just Europe (fair)* – offers prospects for the future of all places and people with the following priorities:

> • *Balanced Europe*
> • *Functional regions*
> • *Integration across borders too*

- *A Green Europe* – protecting common livelihoods and shaping societal transition.

> • *Healthy environment* – Better ecological livelihoods, cities and regions that are resilient and climate-neutral. Develop nature-based solutions and green infrastructure networks linking ecosystems and protected areas in the area of spatial planning and other relevant policies. Respecting the natural limits of shared living and increasing the resilience of all territories to the impact of climate change. Focus work on strengthening the coherence and empowerment of local and regional communities to protect, rehabilitate, use and reuse (built) environments, landscapes, cultures and other unique values.

> • *Circular economy* – strong and sustainable local economies in a globalized world. Supporting Europe's transition into a circular economy and developing industrial symbiosis processes based on a territorial approach. Supporting the development of local and regional circular economy strategies connecting local economies to the global economy. Encouraging the diversification of local economies and efforts to strengthen innovation capacities in all regions.

> • *Sustainable connections* – sustainable digital and physical connectivity of territories. Initiating dialogues between relevant actors on the need for appropriate access to high-speed and mobile internet networks in all territories and the need for a digital infrastructure with a low carbon footprint. Further improving the link between regional planning and the development of trans-European networks (TEN), as the connection of all territories with major transport hubs supports international commercial connections and local development opportunities. Space planners and transport planners will explore new models for local and regional mobility as a service and will work together for multi-modal and environmentally friendly access to urban centres.[18]

The European Commission and the European Parliament have been actively involved in tourism development through various initiatives to finance sustainable projects in this field, as well as various other initiatives. One of these is the creation of networks between the main European tourist regions.

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[16] 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development https://www.mae.ro/node/35919 (accessed at 18.02.2022)

[17] Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, pp. 25-26

[18] Territorial Agenda 2030, pp 17-25

EDEN, **the network of the European excellence destinations**, is an initiative of the European Commission, launched in 2006, and aims to promote the European member countries destinations, and is the largest network in the world in the field of sustainable tourism. From Romania, the North-East region, Neamt county is part of the members association of the EDEN network.

Through **the Carpathian Convention**, adopted in 2003, the parties have committed themselves to pursuing policies and strategies on the national territory aimed at the management of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians, with a view to preserving natural and cultural values, as well as to improving the quality of life in this area. In 2011, the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism was also signed to ensure balanced and efficient tourism development of the ecosystem.[19]

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Romania's National Strategy for Tourism Development 2019-2030 includes in the general principles the sustainability of the cross-cutting aspect, emphasising the principles suggested by the World Tourism Organization (UNTWO) and namely:

A. Making the best use of environmental resources, which is a key element in the development of tourism, maintaining essential ecological processes and supporting the conservation of natural heritage and biodiversity;

B. Respect for the socio-cultural authenticity of the host communities, the preservation of their built and intangible cultural heritage and traditional values, their contribution to intercultural understanding and tolerance;

C. Ensuring viable long-term economic activities, providing socio-economic benefits to all the actors involved, to be fairly distributed, including stable employment opportunities and income acquisitions, and the stability of social services for host communities; all these factors contribute to the reduction of poverty. [20]

Also, under principle 6 *Climate resilience, an essential factor to be considered for proposed investments,* without direct reference to the circular economy, mentions the need to transition from traditional models to new ways of creating and delivering more environmentally friendly touristic experiences and the implementation of the solutions identified should also support the accomplishment of the ambitious goals of tourism development in a way that minimises the carbon footprint.[21]

The National Recovery and Resilience **Plan** comes with three reforms for the Tourism and Culture field of intervention.

Reform	Investments
R1. Operationalization of the Destination Management Organization (DMO)	I1. Promotion of the 12 touristic/cultural routes
	I2. Modernization/creation of museums and memorials

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[19] Regional Action Plan for Culture and Tourism North-East 2021-2027, p. 28
[20] National Strategy of Romania for Tourism Development 2019-2030, pp.22-23
[21] National Strategy of Romania for Tourism Development 2019-2030, p. 24

R2. Creating the framework for the operationalization of the cycling routes at national level	I3. Establishment of the Velo National Coordination Centre
	i4. Implementation of 3000 km of bike trails.
R3. Reforming the financing system of the cultural sector	i5. Increasing access to culture in culturally disadvantaged areas
	I6. Developing a digital system for financing culture processes
	I7. Accelerating the digitalization of film production and distribution

The 12 touristic/ cultural routes proposed are:
- The route of the castles,
- The route of the curia,
- The route of the manors (Ro: cule),
- The route of traditional gastronomy,
- The route of the fortified churches,
- The route of the wooden churches,
- Route of monasteries in the area of Moldova,
- Route of Saint Ladislau,
- The route of the Roman fortifications,
- The route of the fortresses,
- Restoring the cultural landscape of the Danube Delta in order to increase the attractiveness of the area,
- The route of villages with traditional architecture.[22]

For the North-East area, there is a development potential for the traditional gastronomy route, the route of the monasteries in the Area of Moldova and the route of the villages with traditional architecture.

The implementation of the investment to develop 3 000 km of new national cycling routes throughout Romania (the placement being a priority along the main tourist routes), can contribute to the development of circular tourism by encouraging transport using bicycles at the expense of cars, thus reducing fuel consumption and pollution.

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania 2030 determines in the context of Romania, the 17 sustainable development goals, defined at international level. The strategy proposes to follow different stages to a new development model, by introducing elements of the circular economy, increasing the productivity of resources, reducing food waste through: reducing waste generation, consumption at all levels; recycling and re-use; encouraging companies to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate information on the sustainability of their activities into the reporting cycle; to promote sustainable procurement practices; to build awareness among citizens on what constitutes a lifestyle in harmony with nature.[23]

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[22] National Plan for Recovery and Resilience, Pillar IV, Component 11 Tourism and Culture, p. 3
[23] National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania 2030, p. 77

By aligning with European legislation and the Sustainable Development Goals stability in the 2030 Agenda, the areas directly concerned by the transition to a circular economy are agriculture, sustainable water management, industrialization, integrated waste management, conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable forest management, fighting against desertification, restoration of degraded land and soils, including land affected by desertification, drought and flooding, development of green infrastructure, conservation and protection of wetlands, ensuring the conservation of mountain ecosystems, supporting research in the field, sustainable forest management, abusive deforestation.[24]

The strategy **does not stipulate measures directly linked to the transition to circular tourism**, but it is seen as an important area of the economy, so it is an integrated part of the transition to a circular economy and supports the development of sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes cultural diversity, local products and respect for traditions and the environment which we live in.[25]

Thus, between the 2030 aims foreseen under the objective D*ecent work and economic growth*, it appears: "*The achievement of a long-term tourism, the development of agrotourism, ecotourism, rural, treatment and cultural tourism and the improvement of Romania's image as a touristic destination*[26]"; and from the subordinate aims of the *Sustainable Communities and Cities* objective is noticed: "*The strengthening of the efforts to protect and safeguard the cultural and natural heritage, of the urban and rural landscape features*".[27]

The conclusions **of the Evaluation Report on sectorial policies, plans and strategies in relation with the National Strategy for Sustainable Development objectives** concerning the emergence with high frequency of relevant strategic documents associated with the SDS2030 aims reflect in a good extent the orientation towards a green transition and the development of sectors with a tendency to specialize towards the green economy, but without identifying key areas such as Circular Economy, Clean Economy, Biodiversity Restoration and Pollution Prevention (Green Deal)[28]

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

The elaboration of an action plan/development strategy for the entire North-East region faces particular challenges resulting from the unique character of the region, its large area and population, as well as due to the administrative model (the region is only an associative structure, lacking legal personality and its own investment budget, while it is the local authorities – town halls and county councils that manage most of the infrastructure and public services at the level of the cities, having exclusive tasks of strategic and urban planning at the local level).

In this context, in order to ensure the institutional sustainability of the regional plan and to increase its implementation opportunities, it is often chosen to divide it into local action plans.

In developing the **Regional Action Plan in the field of Cultural Heritage in the North-East Region**, ADR NE has chosen, in agreement with the representatives of the municipalities in the region, that it would be composed of six local action plans, one for each municipality that is the residence of the county, in the region.[29]

The themes assumed by the 6 main municipalities of the North-East region are:

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[24] National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania 2030, p. 91
[25] National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania 2030, p. 56
[26] National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania 2030, p. 59
[27] National Strategy I for Sustainable Development of Romania 2030, p. 75
[28] Evaluation report of the policies, plans and sectorial strategies in relation with the objectives of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania 2030, p. 116
[29] Regional Action Plan for Cultural Heritage in the NE Region, p. 12

- Bacău: "The city of the young";
- Botoșani: "Revitalization of historical centers";
- Iași: "European funds – the key to success in promoting, preserving and protecting cultural heritage";
- Piatra-Neamț: "Smart City – the city of citizens and tourists;
- Suceava: "Traditions. Gastronomy. Folklore";
- Vaslui: "Excellence in the arrangement of green spaces, parks and playgrounds". [30]

The local action plans for the 6 municipalities include numerous measures to reduce anthropogenic pressure on the environment, especially private motorised traffic, but in the case of other proposed types of actions the positive impact on the quality of natural factors is not as explicit and needs to be explained in more detail.

In their draft, the local action plans have placed great emphasis on tourism as the main purpose of these documents. Although the development of tourism plays an important role in the economic growth of the North-East region, it should be seen as a consequence of more general measures aimed at improving the sustainable accessibility, mobility and urban services for all audiences, starting with the residences.[31]

The thematic priorities of the **North-East Regional Development Plan 2021-2027** that refer to the circular economy are:

Priority 1 – Developing a competitive economy

Measure 1.1.2: Supporting private and public research for the development and exploitation of integrated solutions

In the context of that measure, the actions will aim both at boosting the research and development sector and at an effective transfer of research results to the economic environment and it includes:

o The development of research, development, innovation projects oriented towards the circular economy, reduction of carbon emissions and adaptation to climate change;
o Development of consultancy, design and auditing services addressed to new firms with activities oriented towards increasing energy efficiency, circular economy, adaptation to climate change.[32]

Priority 3 - Protecting the environment and optimizing the use of resources

Specific objective 3.3 – Promoting the transition to the circular economy

Measure 3.3.1 - Developing integrated waste management systems and stimulating the circular economy

The indicative actions considered in the framework of this measure shall concern, among others, the following:

o Development of a voucher scheme for companies that want to change their business model and make the transition to the circular economy, to implement circular economy principles – assistance for identifying and developing solutions, mentoring services, etc.
o Develop a grant scheme for companies that aim/commit to high rates of recycling and reuse in their production processes.[33]

The strategic directions identified in **the Regional Action Plan for Culture and Tourism North-East 2021-2027** are:

1. culture – a factor in the development of the region

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[30] Regional Action Plan for Cultural Heritage in the NE Region, p. 11
[31] Regional Action Plan for Cultural Heritage in the NE Region, p. 99
[32] Regional Development Plan North-East 2021-2027, pp. 340-341
[33] Regional Development Plan North-East 2021-2027, p. 364-365

2. sustainable use of tourism potential

This strategic direction supports the reduction of the carbon footprint by encouraging new ways to create and deliver more environmentally friendly tourism experiences. By 2030, most of the tourism destinations in the European Union should implement their sustainability strategy to reduce GHG emissions. The way the tourism ecosystem contributes to climate neutrality, to circular economy and other sustainability objectives will be monitored.

The adoption of the following measures is necessary for the development of the region's tourism around the principles of sustainable development:

o Sustainable valorisation of cultural, historical, religious heritage (rehabilitation, protection and promotion of these cultural goods for the benefit of tourists and local communities, without degradation of biodiversity);

o Development of railway tourist routes.

3. supporting the digitalization of the cultural and tourism sector
4. development of human resources working in the field of tourism
5. development of management structures of the destination.[34]

At the regional level, **the Regional Action Plan for North-East Tourism (PRAT-NE) 2017-2023** proposes 5 strategic directions for the development of tourism in the region:

1. Development and modernisation of tourism infrastructure;
2. Development of tourism products;
3. Tourism promotion;
4. Development of human resources in the tourism sector;
5. Supporting the development of sustainable tourism.[35]

Strategic Direction no 5, through the recommended measures, includes part of the principles of circular tourism:

- attain of the "green labels" by the tourist accommodation structures in order to adopt various "green" practices (local organic food, use of renewable energy sources, recycling, etc.);

- implementation of greening campaigns for tourist areas;

- the development of environmental education activities in relation to the effects of environmental damage on the attractiveness of tourism destinations;

- the protection, rehabilitation and creative development of cultural landscapes.[36]

The **Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization of the North-East Region** emphasises that tourism is a sector where the link between **research and development** is unclear, being part of the category of sectors that **do not create technology but use it**. In the context of smart specialisation, the diversification of the sector's activities would consist in its association with other sectors that are catalysts for innovation, such as: IT&C, creative and cultural industries, environmental protection, agro-food (healthy food), bio-technologies (medical recovery and special nutrition).[37]

In the revised RIS3 North-East edition for the 2021-2027 programming period, the areas and smart specialisation niches for the North-East Region have been identified; the circular economy being a specialisation niche in the field of the environment, and for the field of tourism

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[34] Regional Action Plan for Culture and Tourism North-East 2021-2027, pp. 96-97
[35] Regional Action Plan for Culture and Tourism North-East 2017- 2023, p. 112
[36] Regional Action Plan for Culture and Tourism North-East 2017- 2023, p. 118
[37] Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization of North-East Region, p. 104

the potential for specialisation are: ICT solutions for tourism, creative marketing and promotion, tourism for a healthy lifestyle, ecotourism, business tourism and cultural tourism. [38]

COUNTY AND LOCAL STRATEGIES

The priority strategic objectives of the **Sustainable Development Strategy of Botoșani county 2021-2027** include: tourism development - an important stake of the strategy, being a stimulating factor both for the general economic development of the entire county and for the increase of the living standards;[39]

Botoșani county is one of the counties that is distinguished by important cultural resources, being linked to personalities such as Mihai Eminescu, George Enescu, Nicolae Iorga, Ștefan Luchian or Grigore Antipa, which qualifies it as the favourite destination for cultural tourism.[40]

The strategic objectives with regard to the transition to a circular economy include: [41]

O.S. 1 - A smarter county, by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and through large-scale initiatives in the field of tourism.

O.S.2 - A greener, low-carbon county by promoting the transition to clean and fair energy, green and blue investment, the circular economy, adaptation to climate change and risk prevention and management.

In order to achieve strategic objective 1, a number of development priorities have been proposed, for which several directions of action are set out, which are subsequently translated into measures/actions and investment projects from which, in addition to investments in specific infrastructure and programmes of emergency measures in order to stop the degradation of the monument constructions or spotted as having an ambient value, it is noted:

- o Creating thematic trails in the network of the new recreational areas where users can go through guided routes in which to learn how to practice different customs.
- o Valorisation of the potential of all geographical areas of the region by developing innovative tourism products and packages.
- o Measures for the certification of agricultural and non-agricultural products and their quality in accordance with European standards.
- o Creating a web app for the promotion of tourist attractions and gastronomic products and events.
- o Increasing investments in non-polluting technologies and equipment and implementing the mechanisms of the circular economy in companies. [42]

From the directions of action in order to achieve strategic objective 2 which aligns with the principles of the circular economy, it is noted:

- o The rehabilitation of public buildings (including those with historical monument status) and residential buildings in order to ensure / improve energy efficiency according to the potential for reducing consumption, respectively reducing carbon emissions, including their consolidation according to the identified risks (including seismic ones).[43]

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[38] Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization of North-East Region, pp. 116-117
[39] Sustainable development strategy of Botoșani County 2021-2027, p 13
[40] Sustainable development strategy of Botoșani County 2021-2027, p. 62
[41] Sustainable development strategy of Botoșani County 2021-2027, p. 122
[42] Sustainable development strategy of Botoșani County 2021-2027, p. 123-126
[43] Sustainable development strategy of Botoșani County 2021-2027, p. 127

At the level of Botoșani county, there is a need to improve the smart city- smart village-digitization coordinates. In relation to tourism, given the lack of smart city elements in the county, it was considered vital to create a platform / application of Botoșani - TOUR by collaborating with entrepreneurs in the field of tourism for a better promotion in the online environment, both of the county itself and of local businesses operating in tourism.[44]

The strategic development directions set out in the **Tourism Strategy of the Iași municipality and of its metropolitan area 2018-2030** are:

1. Building the brand image and promoting the Iași destination
2. Convergence of tourism actors in Iași
3. Developing visitors' experiences
4. Development of tourism infrastructure
5. Urban revitalization

Under strategic direction 5 the formulated goals include:

• A series of industrial or non-spaces will be regained, through creative integration in the tourist circuit and transformation into *Creative Districts*.

• The creative industries and independent culture will integrate organically into the local urban and tourist life, through large-scale events, street exhibitions/representations, etc.[45]

At county level, the development strategy over the 2021-2027time horizon is being developed and should be completed later this year.[46]

According to **the Suceava County Development Strategy 2021-2027**, the economic pillar on which the county's economy will be supported will be:

- on the one hand: agriculture, trade and small industry.
- capitalization for tourism purposes of the natural and cultural-historical heritage in the county, as well as the development of the alternative energy production sector and of the research sector.[47]

Specifically, regarding the development of tourism in the period 2021-2027, the Suceava County Council aims to access European funds for the establishment of the tourist resort Bucovina (financing of the public transport infrastructure between localities – Vatra Dornei resort, Câmpulung Moldovenesc and Gura Humorului and inside the resorts – by train, for example; investing in increasing the comfort of tourists, diversifying services, building a leisure base, arranging hiking trails, parking lots, campsites and parking spaces, etc.). The project also envisages the transformation of former mining areas into tourist areas and, after their greening, to make investments in tourism.[48]

As far as the CDI activity is concerned, we note at the county level the project on "Establishment of the East European Border Siret University and Technology Park" (...), it will address the fields of *information technology, Industry 4.0 and Smart Destination.*

The activity of the park on the Smart Destination domain will consist of consultancy in the field of smart destination (smart city + smart tourism). Apply smart solutions in the field of urban development and tourism (e-tourism).[49]

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[44] Sustainable development strategy of Botoșani County 2021-2027, p. 145-146

[45] Tourism Strategy of Iași Ciy and Metropolitan Area 2018-2030, p. 48

[46] https://apix.ro/judetul-Iași-va-avea-o-strategie-de-dezvoltare-pe-urmatorii-sapte-ani/, (Accessed on 10.05.2022)

[47] Suceava County Development Strategy 2021-2027, p. 221

[48] Suceava County Development Strategy 2021-2027, p. 224

[49] Suceava County Development Strategy 2021-2027, p. 227-228

The strategy includes the objective: O.S.2 – a greener, low-carbon county by promoting the transition to clean and fair energy, green and blue investments, the circular economy, adaptation to climate change and risk prevention and management. [50]

Under the development priority *The innovation of the economic potential of the* county*: the competitive County of Suceava* appears as a Measure/ Action: "Increasing investments in clean technologies and equipment and implementing the mechanisms of the circular economy in companies". [51]

The Tourism Master Plan of **the Neamț County 2020-2030** establishes 6 specific objectives /strategic directions of development:

SO1: Cooperation and trust between tourism actors
SO2: Strategic positioning on the market and promotion
SO3: Boosting the tourist resource
SO4: Development of tourism-specific infrastructure
SO5: Revitalization of built and natural heritage
SO6: Transport infrastructure and mobility

From these objectives OS5 presents specific characteristics of the circular economy by reusing/ rethinking the way in which the already built spaces are used: The built and natural heritage is the basis on which the tourist activities are built in a destiny. The awareness of its value is essential for the proper functioning of the destination. Neamț County will benefit from preservation of the natural environment and rehabilitation of the heritage buildings that can be included in the tourist circuit initiatives. Thus, lifeless spaces at present, will be restored to the community and, implicitly, will support the development of tourism.[52]

By aligning with the EU Cohesion Policy 2021-27 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the **Vaslui County's Economic and Social Development Strategy 2021-2027** includes in its vision the strategic objective *A greener Europe* and the transition to a circular economy.

Vaslui County's development vision is structured into 11 priorities, with associated preferences for 2027, of which we mention[53]

Priority	Aims for 2027
Connected Vaslui	72% of the roads in the county modernised
Touristic Vaslui	35% accommodation capacity utilisation index
Cultural and recreational Vaslui	7.1% of the resident population participating in shows and concerts with the purchase of a ticket

The construction of bicycle lanes between localities is one of the passed measures to achieve the objectives of the priority *connected Vaslui*, a measure that would have a positive impact on the level of pollution, but this is only of a general nature since in the development of these measures by establishing responsibilities, estimated budgets and quantifiable aims for 2027 there are no actions aimed at developing velo routes.

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[50] Suceava County Development Strategy 2021-2027, p. 233
[51] Suceava County Development Strategy 2021-2027, p. 235
[52] National Tourism Master Plan 2020-2030, p. 185
[53] Strategy of Economic and Social Development of Vaslui County 2021-2027, p. 258

The measures proposed under the priority of *Tourist Vaslui* are:
- o Elaboration of a tourism development and promotion strategy, including the touristic brand of the county;
- o Development of a portal for tourism promotion of the county;
- o Identification, marking and proper signalling of tourist routes and attractions in the county;
- o Promoting the county as a domestic and international tourist destination (promotional materials, participation in national and international fairs in the field, organizing events for agencies, tour operators, bloggers, etc., designing regional and cross-border routes, etc.).
- o Certification and development of tourist resorts of local interest;
- o Supporting private investments in tourism infrastructure (accommodation, leisure, etc.);
- o Development of tourism infrastructure;
- o Creation of facilities for the introduction of cultural and historical monuments in the national / international tourist circuit;
- o Diversification of the touristic offer of Vaslui County, especially by capitalizing on the existing touristic potential (cultural - historical, ecumenical, wine and enotourism, spa, hunting / fishing, events, etc.).
- o Establishment and functionalization of an associative structure with the relevant tourism actors at county level.[54]

From the measures proposed under the Priority of *Cultural and recreational Vaslui* with relevance for the field of tourism, it is noted:
- o Restoration of historical monuments in an advanced state of degradation and their introduction into the cultural and touristic circuit.
- o Proper regulation of the protection of historical monuments in PUG's and PUZ's;
- o Supporting archaeological research activity.
- o Digitization of the mobile cultural heritage of libraries and museums.
- o Supporting the activity of performing arts institutions.
- o Supporting the activity of NGOs in the field of culture and creative industries, by providing non-refundable financing, logistical support, etc.
- o Organizing cultural events, including in inter-institutional partnership and with NGOs.

The objectives related to the circular economy are found in the Romanian strategies but, both nationally and in Europe, the circular economy is mainly understood in the fields of management of wastes, sustainable water management, agriculture and industry.

Discovering and capitalizing on the potential in all geographical areas of the region through the development of innovative products and the digitization of the value chain in tourism (applications, marketing, promotion, etc.) are the development objectives that are most often found in the development strategies – both at regional and county level. This confirms the challenges identified in the workshops, but at the same time it is an opportunity to shape the evolution of tourism in line with the principles of the circular economy.

Even if the measures included in the current strategies and action plans do not directly target the field of tourism, their implementation at the level of the North-East Romania-Moldova region will bring important benefits in this sector as well. Tourism in the pilot reference area is based in a very high proportion on the natural heritage, which in the current economic model is put under great pressure. The transition to a circular economy will improve the conservation of natural resources and landscapes, the main resources of the local tourist offer.

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[54] Strategy of economic and social development of Vaslui County 2021-2027, p 268-269

1.5. Identification of existing tourism projects and products in the North-East region, aimed at developing and promoting fully, partially, or tangentially the objectives of the cultural route Stephen the Great and Saint.

In the next section are presented the public projects aimed at developing and promoting the objectives of the route of the Ruler Stephen the Great and Saint and, as well, the projects that present elements specific to the circular economy and to cultural tourism. They are grouped by the objectives of the Route and by the counties in the NE region. During the second seminar (LWS2) a series of proposals were developed, using the identified needs and challenges. The proposals will also be exposed in this subchapter.

BACĂU COUNTY PROJECTS

Objective	Projects	Organiser/ Project leader
Assumption of the Virgin Mary Church in Borzești		
OTHER PROJECTS		
Project of Touristic Promotion of the entire MONTPESA area Includes: EVENTS (slow food, local products, crafts, competitions of the best promoter of the circular economy, etc.)		Moinești City Hall

BOTOȘANI COUNTY PROJECTS

Objective	Projects	Organizer/ Project leader
Sfântul Nicolae Church in Popăuți		
OTHER PROJECTS		
Arrangement of a new park in the municipality of Botoșani through the functional reconversion of a land from the perimeter of the former Polygon – the area is affected by landslides		Botoșani City Hall
Smart Village pilot projects		CJ Botoșani
Projects of touristic route Botoșani – Ipotești- Suceava (monasteries), introduction in regional tourist circuits, tourist guide in English		Botoșani Metropolitan Area

IAȘI COUNTY PROJECTS

Objective	Projects	Organizer/ Project leader
"St. Gheorghe" Church in Hârlău	**Development of the touristic and cultural axis: Cucuteni – Cotnari – Hârlău** *Rehabilitation and preservation of the tourist attractions from the Neolithic (Cucuteni) – ancient era (Cotnari fortress) – Middle Ages (the royal court and the church from Hârlău)*	Iași County Council, City Halls and Local Councils of Cucuteni, Cotnari, Hârlău, County Directorate for Culture, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University

	Back in the past – the development of cultural tourism, by creating a network of thematic historical parks Establishment of theme parks, through reenactments: Cucuteni archaeological park (reconstitution of a Neolithic village); Cotnari Archaeological Park (reconstitution of the Dacian fortress on Catalina Hill) The Royal Court of Hârlău WW2 Park (reconstitution of the front line from Heleşteni) Moldavian Village Museum	CJ Iași

| Palace of Culture | **Underground Iași – Rediscovered Histories - http://undergroundlași.ro/**

The project aims to capitalise on the local heritage by making an innovative and interactive exhibition at the Palace of Culture in Iasi, in one of the spaces of the Museum of History of Moldova, to present to the public an unseen part of the history of mediaeval Iași. The aim is to educate and integrate the public through culture in order to capitalize on its role in local and regional development, starting from a heritage that will be subject to non-invasive and reversible selection and conservation-restoration operations, in order to ensure the transmission to future generations.
The specific objectives of the project are aimed at increasing the interest in the historical past of Iași and implicitly, at increasing the visitors' numbers at the Museum of History of Moldova, by creating an interactive exhibition of the mobile heritage coming from archaeological excavations in the surrounding areas of the historical centre of Iași.
Through this project, for the first time, the emphasis will be placed not on the religious life, not on the life at the court, about which there is numerous and consistent information, with the possibility of corroborating the data from the documents with the archaeological ones, but on the surrounding area of the yard, where craftsmen, traders, were living their lives and carrying out their activities, according to their own rhythm, dependent only to a certain extent on that of the court. The innovative exhibition will include 105 recently discovered objects that will be restored within the project, as well as 30 previously restored objects that require new interventions. It will be open to the public for 6 months and will attract a minimum of 5000 visitors. During the project, at least 6 specialists will be trained through exchange of experience. The project will benefit from the expertise of the Institute of Archaeology in Reykjavik, which will involve 3 specialists in the project. | |

	Arrangement of the Park and the Palace of Culture Square Rethinking the arrangement of the green space in front of the Palace of Culture (removing chaotically grown trees and shrubs, prohibiting the parking of cars, etc.), changing its function in a relaxation and leisure space, which would also capitalise on the archaeological remains of the Lordly Court of Moldova and the logical connection with the pedestrian area Stephen the Great/	Iasi City Hall

OTHER PROJECTS

International Centre of Contemporary Art Iași Rehabilitation, consolidation and rethinking the destination of the building of the former Turkish Bath	Iași City Hall, Cultural associations
Institute/Centre for research, development and innovation processes, products, services for sustainable environment, circular economy and resource conservation	Technical University "Ghe. Asachi" Iași
Cycling routes in the Metropolitan Area Capitalizing on the variety of landscape in the Metropolitan Area of Iași by arranging cycling routes that connect a series of tourist attractions, rural practices and natural landscapes.	Iași Metropolitan Area, Iași County Council, Environmental Protection Agency Iași
Proposing and implementing regional paths built around personalities or characters Development and touristic arrangement of thematic routes (cultural and historical) around characters (e.g. Cuza, **Stephen the Great**, Queen Maria, M. Eminescu and Junimea Society Members). This activity will aim at developing local brands and businesses around prominent personalities (e.g. names of hostels, restaurants, local products), arranging and signalling routes.	Iasi City Hall, Destination Management Association
Iasi - City Gallery The project proposes the transformation of abandoned or uncared buildings or spaces into spaces of expression of art with the help of local artists. The project includes the following actions: a. Mapping of areas requiring revitalization, b. Identifying a number of artists who can highlight these spaces in an artistic manner, c. Identification of sponsors or funds for materials necessary for the revitaliation process, Media coverage of the resulting projects.	Iasi City Hall, Destination Management Association
Revitalization of industrial spaces The project aims to reactivate a number of industrial areas with the help of artists, students or civic initiative groups. The effects of a	

project of this kind include increasing the value of the land in that area and the occupation of an area by artists that can be triggered by change, by these taking place its transformation into an attractive area. The actions of this project are aimed at (a) identifying an industrial area suitable for cultural activities, (b) creating a legislative framework between the owner, the City Hall, cultural institutions and civic initiative groups, (c) carrying out creative activities that regenerate the area. (d) the inauguration of a Museum of Iasi Industry, which would highlight the industrial activities of the period between the two wars and the period of the communist regime. (e) the transformation of a former blast furnace or industrial tower into a panorama point.	

NEAMT COUNTY PROJECTS

Objective	Projects	Organiser/ Project leader
Neamt Fortress	**Preservation, protection and promotion of the Neamţ Fortress** Protection against water infiltration in walls and museum spaces at the Neamț Fortress, supplementing the toilets, extending the museum route, making arrangements for people with disabilities and for meeting the fire safety requirements, a project proposed for funding through the ADR PNDR N-E 2021-2027 (ongoing project).	CJ Neamţ
	Fortress Days – MedievArt Fest Organizing a festival that aims to promote the Fortress of Neamţ and the city of Târgu Neamţ	Târgu Neamţ City Hall
	"Jazz at the Fortress" Festival in Târgu-Neamţ Organizing a Local Jazz and Gastronomy Festival at the Neamț Fortress. Its purpose is to create a strong link between the musical events and the special historical value of the fortress niches. The clientele specific to jazz music is tailored to the dimensions of the spaces available in the fortress and to the appetence for the careful, refined, traditional gastronomy, specific to the Târgu-Neamţ area.	UAT Târgu-Neamţ, CJ Neamţ CMN-NT, CCACS-NT

	The (Extinct) Fortresses of Neamţ The project aims to make a digital simulation of the boyar fortresses and mansions in Neamț County, with the help of 3D technology (virtual or physical models, depending on the needs of the moment). The project involves the 3D digitization of the main fortresses and mansions that still exist in a certain state of conservation on the territory of Neamț County. These fortresses (Neamț Fortress, New Fortress of Roman, Cneji Palace of Ceahlău) or mansions (Făurei, Timișești, Grumăzeşti, Gâdinţi etc.) will be replicated in the state they were in their moment of glory and will be exhibited both in exhibition spaces in the county and in the immediate vicinity of the objectives, visualized through "binoculars to the past".	CJ Neamţ, The UATs that hold the objectives
	Hiking trail of Neamţ Fortress – The Monument of the Mountain Hunters Arranging and marking the hiking route Neamţ Fortress - Monument of the Mountain Hunters - Târgu-Neamţ. It also involves the rehabilitation of the monument, the touristic arrangement of the square around the monument (amphitheater rehabilitation, preparation of paths, stabilization of slopes, landscaping to permit the observation of the panorama of the city, lighting of the square with motion sensors, etc.)	UAT Târgu- Neamţ
The Royal Court and the Church dedicated to "St. John the Baptist" from Piatra Neamt	**Mini-workshops of crafts in the area of the Royal Court** Arrangement and organisation of creative spaces of mobile craft workshops at the base of the Royal Court. The project proposes to bring some folk craftsmen to the Royal Court in Piatra-Neamț to offer experiences and tourist animation (summer weekends).	UAT Piatra-Neamţ
	Implementation of a seasonal programme of free guided tours. Organization of free guided tours in Piatra-Neamț, Târgu-Neamț and Roman, for groups of tourists, by CIT staff and / or certified tour guides (minimum 2 guided tours per week (Friday and Saturday or Thursday and Friday - to attract tourists) in the May - September season months, in each city).	UAT Piatra-Neamţ, Roman, Târgu- Neamţ, Tourist promotion associations
	Restoration, consolidation, protection and preservation of historical monuments in the area of the Royal Court of Piatra-Neamț	UAT Piatra-Neamţ

Vânători Neamţ Natural Park	**Thematic circuits in Vanatori- Neamt Natural Park** The project aims to diversify the touristic offer in the area of the Vnători-Neamţ Natural Park by creating 2 thematic routes: (a) Bison History in Romania and Europe and (b) Identification of tree species on thematic routes. Thus, other hiking routes will be introduced in the tourist circuit that will decongest the pressure exerted on the routes currently used. Also, by introducing these thematic routes, tourists will choose other forms of active tourism.	Admin. PN Vânători- Neamţ
	Natural Park Vânători - Neamţ - National Center of Ecological Awareness and Education Creation of an Eco-education and sustainable development centre, through the development of touristic and educational infrastructure (pedagogical forest) within the Vânători-Neamţ Natural Park.	PN Vânători-Neamţ
	Inclusion of the monastic area of the Vânători-Neamţ Natural Park in UNESCO. The action involves the preparation of documentation for the inclusion of the monastic area of the Vânători Neamţ Natural Park in the UNESCO World Heritage Centre under the title "Monastic Cultural Landscape of Vânători Neamţ", this area being included in the Tentative List,	Metropolitan church of Moldavia and Bukovina, UATs in the area, PNVN, DJC-NT, CJ Neamţ
OTHER PROJECTS		
Neamţ Tourist Card Making an e-card through which discounts and freebies will be granted to visitors, to encourage them to access as many attractions and activities / experiences as possible. The card also has the role of connecting the actors providing touristic services in a collaborative network. The purchase of the card will offer the following benefits to tourists: (1) Discounts on intra-county public transport, (2) Discounts or gratuities for visiting tourist attractions (museums, fortresses / castles, recreational structures, National / Natural Parks, etc.). (3) Discounts on cultural events. The cashings will be used for soft projects for tourism promotion of the county, by OMD Neamţ or by CJ-NT. The project can be submitted through the RIS appeal of ADRNE.	OMDs, ADPT's, CJ Neamţ, ATUs	
Consolidation of tourism area associations Creation of a non-refundable financing line through the mechanism Law nr. 350/2005 for the initiatives of the tourist promotion associations in the county or NGOs, with the following eligible expenses: promotion of the tourist areas in the county and of the Destination of Neamţ as a	CJ Neamţ	

whole, the formation of the human resource, the elaboration of tourism products in partnership, actions to raise awareness of the local heritage at the community level, the organisation of events, the development of digital tools, etc.	
Network of traditional households Creating a network of traditional, authentic households and villages, which have a high architectural-touristic potential. Traditional households, tourist sheepfolds and agritourism farms fall into this category. The activities related to the project are as follows: (1) Identification of all local people who own such households/ sheepfolds/ farms; (2) Their integration into a tourist network; (3) Their promotion, through signalling in the territory and information brochures. The goal is to increase the visitation of localities through slow walking tours, with the access of experiences to locals and to support the sale of household products, thus contributing to the development of local communities.	CJ Neamţ
Involvement of local communities in the development of thematic routes Integrating and promoting households on thematic tourist routes in the tours organised in the county for the supply of products, meals, services or information to tourists who will go through these routes. The goal is to grow the local economy and ensure an authentic experience for tourists.	CJ Neamţ UATs
Brunches in traditional households Identification and inclusion in promoting associations of traditional households to make it possible for tourists to serve meals within them. The initiative will add authenticity to the tourists' experience and will diversify the public catering offer.	CJ Neamţ UATs
Sightseeing presentation panels in English Making presentation panels in languages of international circulation (minimum English), at important tourist attractions, so as to support international tourists, museographers. The presentations will also be available in online format by QR code.	CMN-NT, CJ Neamţ, UATs, OMD-NT
Sustainable services in Neamț (accommodation, food, leisure, etc.) Development of a pilot program to monitor the implementation of sustainable measures for min. 10 accommodation and tourist leisure units and create a plan to optimize the management of resources used in the hotel flow. This project aims to achieve a sustainable management model in the touristic reception sector (water management, waste reduction, short supply chain, important percentage of local products and with ecological certification, a certain percentage of renewable energy from total consumption, towel washing during the stay only at the request of the guest, bulk detergents with refill devices, zero-plastic, returnable packaging, etc. Following the process, the units will receive a 'Sustainable Accommodation' label which will lead to the creation of a domino effect in the application of sustainable measures.	OMDs, APDT-NT

Conversion of industrial sites and degraded lands in Piatra-Neamţ into cultural spaces Arrangement of industrial sites and their degraded lands in the municipality of Piatra-Neamț in order to create spaces for cultural activities (experimental theatre, film, dance, etc.)	UAT Piatra-Neamţ

SUCEAVA COUNTY PROJECTS

Objective	Projects	Organiser/ Project leader
The Fortress of Suceava	**The Fortress of Suceava – restoration** Restoration and preservation of the Fortress of Suceava	National Museum of Bucovina
	Suceava Fortress Marathon The project envisages: promoting the municipality and historical monuments at national level, among marathon runners; promotion of mass sports at the level of the municipality; developing the spirit of helping the children in need. Annual organisation of the event. Project promoter: Through the project "Suceava Fortress Marathon", a continuity is achieved with the cross-border project "Mediaeval Pearls" - Soroca, Suceava, Hotin Fortresses. More specifically, it is desired to highlight the Suceava Fortress through other events such as tournaments, sports competitions, demonstrations of culinary and craft products, mediaeval festivals of songs and theatre, etc., all of which lead to an increase in the number of tourists, not only from the three countries. The ultimate goal of the project is to help children in need through various donations at the end of the marathon festival.	Suceava City Hall Partner: DTS Suceava Save the Children Organization, Suceava branch
Putna Monastery, Assumption of Mary Church	**Restoration, consolidation, rehabilitation of heritage objectives and their introduction, where is appropriate, in the tourist circuit.** Restoration of the wooden church "The Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple" in Putna	UAT – Suceava County through CJ Suceava (Tourism Office (CINPT))
	Putna Museum	MMB – ARS
	The thematic path "The historical and religious heritage of Putna" Arranging a route that will connect the 3 monasteries located in the area of Putna commune	Association for Tourism Bucovina
The Holy Cross Church in Pătrăuţi		

Voroneț Monastery "St. George" Church	**Emergency intervention at the external wall on the sides N,E,V – Voronet Monastery**	MMB - ARS
"Beheading of St. John the Baptist" Church in Reuseni	-	
The church dedicated to The Ascension of the Holy Cross in Volovat	-	
The church dedicated to "St. Elijah" from Scheia commune	"**Consolidation, restoration and preservation of the ensemble of St. Elijah's Church ,** (Church, Bell Tower and surrounding wall) in the village of St. Ilie, Scheia Commune, Suceava County" Implemented between 05.12.2017 – 04.12.2020	
OTHER PROJECTS		
Smart Travel Bukovina		CJ Suceava
Green Pilgrimage – Supporting Natural and Cultural Heritage		CJ Suceava
Museums for the community		CJ Suceava
T.E.T. – Traditions, ecology, tourism		CJ Suceava
Integrated management of cultural heritage		UAT – Suceava County through CJ Suceava (Directorate of County Architect)
Measures and activities to protect the built heritage and traditional houses in rural areas		UAT – Suceava County through CJ Suceava (Directorate of County Architect)
Rehabilitation and introduction in the tourist circuit of the Former Sulphur Mining Exploitation in the Calimani Mountains		UAT – Suceava County through CJ Suceava (Tourism Office (CINPT))
Tourist mobility in Bucovina - the extension of the touristic infrastructure and the related infrastructure between the city of Suceava and the touristic resorts Gura Humorului, Câmpulung Moldovenesc, Vatra Dornei by introducing a tourist train to perform regular rides between the same poles of tourist development, during the touristic season, contributing to the decongestion of the car traffic on DN17		UAT – Suceava County through CJ Suceava (Tourism Office (CINPT))
Preservation and valorisation of the intangible heritage (traditions and customs) specific to Bucovina - supporting all the local manifestations that come to preserve and highlight the Cultural		UAT – Suceava County through CJ

Landscape of Bucovina (examples: Hora Bucovinei, Easter in Bucovina, Christmas in Bucovina, The Feast of the Mountain, Medieval Festival, etc.)	Suceava (Tourism Office (CINPT))
3D scanning UNESCO monuments	UAT –Suceava County
Electric charging stations for vehicles on tourist routes and/or in monasteries' parking spots	UAT –Suceava County
Conversion of former mining areas (trails/ski areas)	UAT –Suceava County
Development of websites: "Monasteries and Churches of Bucovina" – virtual tour	MMB - ARS
The Stephen the Great Programme (RO: Programul Stefanian). Stephen's Road (Drumul lui Stefan) Capitalising on the cultural heritage of Suceava County by modernising the infrastructure and specific arrangements at the main foundations of the voivode Stephen the Great.	CJ Suceava

VASLUI COUNTY PROJECTS

Objective	Projects	Organizer/ Project leader
Monumental ensemble of High Bridge	**Stepehn the Great, Common history - common heritage**, Soroca-Vaslui	The Vaslui County Museum "Stefan cel Mare", CJ Vaslui and the Soroca District Council of the Republic of Moldova
	On the footsteps of the Stephen the Great	CJ Vaslui
	Restoration of the monumental ensemble "Equestrian statue of the ruler Stephen the Great" Introduction of a historical monument representative for Vaslui County in the local / regional / national tourist circuit.	Vaslui County Council, Vaslui County Museum "Stefan cel Mare"
The Ensemble of the Royal Courts of Vaslui and of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist Church		
OTHER PROJECTS	-	
Acquisition of old houses with traditional architecture, but also of privately owned historical monuments that are abandoned and their improvement for tourist purposes		Vaslui County Council, "Stefan cel Mare" Vaslui County Museum

2. Circular cultural tourism developed on the subject of cultural heritage marked by the personality of the Ruler Stephen the Great and Saint

The Be.CULTOUR action plan is based on the contribution of tourism actors, that were involved in the activities of co-creation, that started already with the first workshop. The network of stakeholders, involved in the analysis of the potential and challenges of the area, contributed to:

- Identification of known resources and their associated challenges;
- Identification of hidden resources and other unique elements;
- Generating actions to solve the identified problems.

The Be.CULTOUR community will remain connected to the action plan and to the general objective, of extending and promoting the Route of Stephen the Great and Saint.

Developed during the first two workshops, the challenges and problems were systematised in the SWOT Analysis, presented in point 2.1.

2.1. The participatory co-creation process, carried out during the workshops. SWOT analysis.

The information that consolidated the points included in the SWOT analysis, was extracted from the worksheets filled during the field research (evaluation of the 20 tourism objectives, part of the route) and during the workshops carried out within the Be.CULTOUR project. The discussions held by the participants were considered, in order to identify the resources known and explored in the tourist programs. As well, there were integrated the discussions related to the "hidden" resources, which could be used in the development of circular cultural tourism on the Route Stephen the Great and Saint.

S – Strengths	W – Weaknesses
-The existence of unique tourist attractions that are not found in other parts and which could be explored optimally for the development of the circular cultural tourism. -Lack of effective local partnerships with all stakeholders involved in the tourism development activity. -The diversity of landscapes and landforms covered by the route, which allows the organization of a diverse range of tourist activities.	-The cultural route Stephen the Great and Saint covers a very large area, various destinations. This leads to the difficulty of a unitary coordination of the development of the route, on all its segments (currently the branding and promotion are done more at the local level, at most the county level); -There is no unified strategy to develop the current network and to promote the route, for different segments of tourists.

-Connecting the Vânători-Neamț Natural Park to the route Stephen the Great and Saint.

-The presence of a unique monastic landscape (Agapia-Văratec), which can be explored for the development of circular tourism products and quality experience, connected to the values of nature and spirituality.

-The existence of the bison reserve and the possibility to admire in freedom this animal associated with the history of Moldova and the heraldry of the province.

-Integration of craft workshops in touristic packages and events that connect the tourist themes with the theme of Prince Ruler Stephen the Great and Saint.

-En route coverage of rural and urban communities, with a multitude of cultural locations, from museums and historical centres to monasteries and memorial houses, craft centres and art galleries.

-Accessing authentic experiences in the countryside (naturally everyday);

-Proximity of important wine cellars in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, with the potential to connect the route to the offers of oenological tourism.

-The existence of good practices in the field of circular economy, which could be explored as examples of good practices (The Better Association in Iași, with the "Cuib" and "Redu" centres, the Eco-destination of the Bison Land and the Eco-destination of Țara Dornelor);

-The existence of initiatives at the level of the region to protect the cultural heritage and the cultural landscape in Suceava (the project Save the Bucovina Village) and in Neamț (Neamț Culture Directorate);

-Initiatives to digitise some resources of the rural heritage (museums in rural areas: muzeedelasat.ro, traditional houses in Bucovina www.portcultural.usv.ro) and online access to digitired resources.

-The existence of organizational structures for tourism management in certain destinations on the Route (Bison Land Ecotourism Association, Destination Iași, APT Bucovina, Gura Humorului Tourism Development Association, Putna Local Development Association and future OMDs: Neamț, Botoșani, Suceava etc.)

- The experience offered by the route is mostly limited to just watching the buildings / objectives included in the route, without extending the stay to visit the area.

-The unsatisfactory state of some monuments (degree of degradation);

-Unsatisfactory state of the public space, given by non-compliant arrangements and inappropriate architectural changes.

-The transport infrastructure between the monuments that are part of the Route is deficient: on certain segments the movement is difficult, and a cross-county effort is needed to improve the existing situation, especially on the county roads;

- There is no unitary visual identity of the objectives part of the Route in Romania.

-There is no adequate street signage of the route and the tourist attractions included in it, on national roads.

-Poor signposting of targeting towards the en-route objectives.

-The cultural route Stephen the Great and Saint does not appear in the programmatic documents as being a priority.

-There are a number of tourist activities that are promoted, but are not accessible / operational (raft rides, workshops for crafts, buildings, etc.);

-Unequal promotion of the objectives that are part of the route: some enjoy better recognisability, others "are well known even at local level");

-Unattractive outlying areas of villages, with landscape deserts and deposits of construction debris, which affect the attractiveness of the landscape.

-Affecting the proximity areas of some monasteries by not respecting the rules of urbanism, aggressive intrusions into the landscape (sometimes at the limit of the protection zone), abandoned constructions.

-Difficult access by public transport to the tourist attractions on the route.

-Limited accommodation offer for many areas along the route.

-Poor state of access roads, especially in rural areas.

-Online ratings with a few testimonials – raise the issue of credibility.

-Various festivals and events, both in urban and rural areas, which have as subject the personality of the Voivode "Stefan cel Mare şi Sfânt" (Putna, Suceava, Neamţ);

-Cross-border route coverage (may generate a flow of visitors from the two neighbouring countries);

-The internet connection is good in the region, which is important for digital nomads but also for millennial tourists.

-Ethnic diversity in some communities, with the possibility of exploration in the development of cultural tourism packages of cultural diversity of minorities.

-Existence of three airports with domestic and international flights in the target area.

-The existence of initiatives (in Iași especially) in the field of creative industries, with the potential for developing creative tourism.

-The existence of local actors and local travel agencies with incoming programs and touristic packages that promote cultural tourism.

-Highlighting the Palace of Culture in Iași and the princely ruins by connecting to the mediaeval history of Moldova.

-Declare Suceava as a European destination of excellence for tangible cultural tourism.

-Awarding Iași as the Destination of 2022.

-Inclusion of Bison Land destination in the Top 100 sustainable destinations worldwide (Green Destinations);

-The existence of gastronomic "local brands", which can be the basis of gastronomic tours associated with the Cultural Route.

-The existence of tourism locations that have developed by applying the principles of circularity (upcycling old houses: Vatra Boierească, La Roată, Hai la Saivan etc.);

-Involvement of tourism departments (UAIC; USV) in developing the themes of the Route and supporting its expansion in future programs.

-The existence of the Stephens Road, provided that in the future synergies between the two routes are achieved and a differentiation that suggests complementarity. Otherwise, the use of both routes may give rise to confusion.

-The presence of various cultural festivals to valorize the popular culture, but also to promote the major culture: literature, music, theatre, etc.

-Poor quality of human resources on different segments of the tourism services chain.

-The current form of the stephanthegreat.travel site does not provide complete information to facilitate the organisation of a stay (information about transport, how to get from one objective to another, information about the accommodation locations in the area, events, tourist activities, etc.);

-Poor presence of the route in the digital environment (information is centralised on the stephanthegreat.travel website);

-Lack of specialised and foreign language-speaking staff (e.g. museum specialists);

-Staff of transport companies (attitude, spoken foreign languages);

-The souvenirs available have been at the same level of development for a long time; they are not diverse, attractive.

-Difficult access to some objectives (lack of visiting hours).

-Large distance between the sights.

-Poor road infrastructure.

-Although the local gastronomy is diverse, there are few possibilities to find traditional products in locations near the en-route objectives.

-The non-valorisation of the Princely Court of Suceava.

-Poor state of the bus stations in the vicinity of the en-route objectives.

-Poor public transport network in rural areas: the use of public transport to visit the route objectives is far from being an optimal solution, despite the recommendations of circular tourism.

-Poor offer of public transport options and the difficulty of finding and booking tickets online.

- The members of the local community in which are the objectives of the Route Stephen the Great and Saint are not informed about the existence of the Route;

-Insufficient presence in restaurants of traditional local products.

-The questionable quality of souvenirs, with the predominance of kitsch and plastic.

-Travel agencies do not have the Route on offer as a ready-to-sale experience.

-Organisation of the international summer "Tristan Tzara and Dada Culture" in Bacău County;	-There is no unitary list of all events and festivals directly connected or associated with the personality of Stephen the Great and Saint. -Online accessibility and public transport between destinations (information online); -Poor tourist signposting for many tourist attractions in the pilot area. - In many places, only cash payments are accepted. -Conservation / Inappropriate interventions in the area of protection/ proximity of tourist attractions (including UNESCO monuments); -There are not (enough) variants of dining and accommodation in the proximity of some places. -In most situations (except for the "established" locations) additional activities are missing to increase the quality of the tourist experience: at the moment the visitor-objective interaction is often limited to simply viewing the objection of the hem; -Lack of trust between local public and private actors. -Overcrowding of some attractions in season. -Intense traffic in some areas during the high season and roadblocks in the proximity of important tourist attractions. -Lack of cycling routes / infrastructure for cycling in rural areas. -Alternative forms of transport restricted and limited in number (small number of filling stations for hybrid or electric vehicles); -Insufficiently capitalised built heritage. -Population migration, depopulation and ageing population. -Massive deforestation and natural areas that lose their value. -Inadequate condition of some hiking trails in the vicinity (of the segments that travel through the forest roads in particular); -Deterioration of the local cultural landscape; -The disappearance of some practices and communities of some ethnic minorities (German, Jewish), extinction that would culturally impoverish the cultural resources of the area. -Difficulty in visiting Cotnari Wineries.

	-The disappearance of popular craftsmen (the need to pass on the old occupations to the future generations); -Non-existent facilities for the separate management of waste that is collected from pensions in rural areas. -Insufficiently approached sustainable tourism in the tourism strategies developed by the counties from the NE area. -The principles of the circular economy and the changes that will be imposed by the European Green Deal are very little known. -Insufficient knowledge of circular economy principles at different levels of the value chain of services. -The first impression at the entrance to the destination is unfavourable in many situations, due to the inhospitable public spaces (airports, railway station, bus station). -The quality and standards of cleanliness of public transport.
Strengths found in the field evaluation of objectives – Objectives that are already part of the Route	**Weaknesses found in the field evaluation of objectives – Objectives that are already part of the Route**
-Some objectives may offer unique cultural experiences, which could be explored in original tourist packages (Palace of Culture, Church of Borzesti etc.)	-Deficient offer of tourist interpretation at most of the locations that are part of the route. -Limited activities that can be offered to the objectives of the route, with few means of interpretation that will thrill and connect with the legendary figure of the voivode. -Lack of adequate minimal tourist facilities, near many objectives on the route. - The proximity area near several spots from the route is not attractive, landscaping projects are needed. -Lack of operating schedule at some objectives (it is not displayed). -Lack of information about the site and lack of references related to the personality of the voivode. -Insufficient parking spaces in the proximity of some locations. -Lack of online applications that would allow "just in time" access to information (QR codes).

	-Outdated information about certain objectives, for which the historical truth should be verified. -There isn't a good connection between the sub-sectors involved in the cultural and tourism industry (e.g. history, role models, we do not have a good connection between industries (e.g. creative with digitalisation), -Several details from the history/interpretation of some monuments are not scientifically solid (need to involve experts in formulation of promotion / presentation messages). -Overcrowding of some areas over the weekend, which leads to discomfort for the local community. -In the presentation of the route, on the promotion materials, the guide has to point out for each objective, what is the connection with Stephen the Great and Saint. -Accessibility for the large mass with public transportation. - Visiting hours are reduced; sometimes on weekends (Saturday, Sunday) there is no working / visiting programme; -The locations are not adapted for new technologies (POS, bike/ride sharing, electric driving, Wi-Fi, multi-media presence a.o.). -Interpretation areas/means for children are insufficient (interpretation of cultural resources); often children lose patience; -Difficulties in communicating in English with the staff associated with the en-route objectives, especially in rural areas.
O - Opportunities	**A – Threats**
-The effort to promote the route is carried out in cooperation with the Republic of Moldova, this leading to better chances for international visibility. -Numerous circular tourism projects both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova. -Aligned legislation with the objectives of the European Green Agenda, which will facilitate the shift towards the implementation of circular economy principles.	-Lack of an unitary system of management and development of cultural routes in Romania, that could lead to an increased attractiveness. -The region is well known internationally. -Proximity to the border area with Ukraine and regional insecurity, leading to a decrease in foreign tourist arrivals in the short and medium term.

-The concern of the Ministry of Tourism for the registration of cultural routes; -Establishment of Destination Management Organizations at local and regional level. - The area of Moldova is a destination visited by Romanian tourists from other regions, especially the area of monasteries in Neamț and Bucovina. -The outstanding personality of Prince Stephen the Great and Holy can coagulate (with the right marketing policies) a nucleus of important interest among tourists from Romania and the Republic of Moldova; -Young generation is open to volunteering / Inclusion of local community and volunteers in future development / development / development / rehabilitation projects -Inclusion in the future lists of UNESCO heritage (Orheiul Vechi Reservation, Vânători Neamț Natural Park, the painted houses from Ciocănești, the fortified monasteries from Iași) -Availability of European funds for the restoration of tourist attractions. -Existence of a national ecotourism certification system, dedicated to various categories of tour operators, which put into practice the principles of the circular economy (with concrete recommendations and implementation guides www.eco-romania.ro); -Interest of the new generation for sustainable travel and tourism alternatives. -Determination of the partner country for the registration of the route of Stephen the Great and Saint at the Council of Europe; -The availability of the Archdiocese of Suceava to provide advice on the ecclesial side through its own team of specialists; -Potential for the development of modern camping areas and youth hostels.	- Romania's image in the external markets remains a disadvantage. -Difficulty in bringing out the route Stephen the Great and Saint (there are already 33 cultural routes in the North-East region); -The relatively high cost of technology and equipment that would allow the use of green energy. -Difficulties in the implementation of state-funded projects for the implementation of ecological energy supply solutions.

Table8. SWOT analysis generated by the co-creation process in LWS1 and LWS2

Based on this information, were outlined the actions and the portfolio of innovative solutions, presented in chapters 3 and 4.

2.2. Proposals of new destinations on the topic of the route, which could be part of a new circular cultural tourism route in the Nord-Est Region (centralisation of the conclusions of the participatory creation process carried out during the workshops)

During the second workshop, the participants made proposals for a series of sites that were considered to be included in the Stephen the Great and Saint route. In this first stage, it was carried out their centralization and a first analysis of their connection with the theme of the cultural route. As a second step, it was undertaken an analysis of the opportunity of their inclusion on a shortlst, for the future extension of the Route.

County	Proposals made in the second local workshop (LWS2)
Bacău	Sf Paraschiva from Hangani Church (originally a fort of Stephen the Great) "Razesilor Gazari" Museum Tg Ocna Salt Mine Rosetti-Tescanu Mansion from Tescani Slănic Moldova Ghica Palace from Comăneşti Ghica Castle from Dofteana Bogdana Monastery from Oneşti Măgura Monastery Răducanu Monastery Precista Church from Bacău
Botoşani	The Bridge from Coşula – the monastic complex from Coşula Old historical center (medieval ovens, cellars) The Vârgolici wooden church (Dorohoi) "St. Nicolae" Church, Dorohoi The 4 oaks of Stephen the Great and Saint from Darabani
Iași	Iași woods The castles and mansions from Iași county The Royal Court of Hârlău
Neamț	Tazlău Monastery (founded by Stephen the Hreat) Bistriţa Monastery (the tower founded by Stephen the Great and Saint) Vânători Neamţ Natural Park Hanul Ancuței (Inn) The Timișești stallion depot (the legend says that it would be on the place where Stephen's studs were) The New Fortress of Roman
Suceava	Slatina Râșca The White Church in Baia Bogdana Church, Rădăuţi St. John Monastery in Suceava
Vaslui	Huși Episcopy The vineyards and wine cellars in the area of Huși and Averești, viticulture museum at the Agricultural High School in Huși Stephen the Great County Museum in Vaslui Burcel's Hill (Movila lui Burcel)

Table9. Proposals of the participants in the co-creation workshops. New objectives that could be included in the Route of Stephen the Great and Saint Voivode
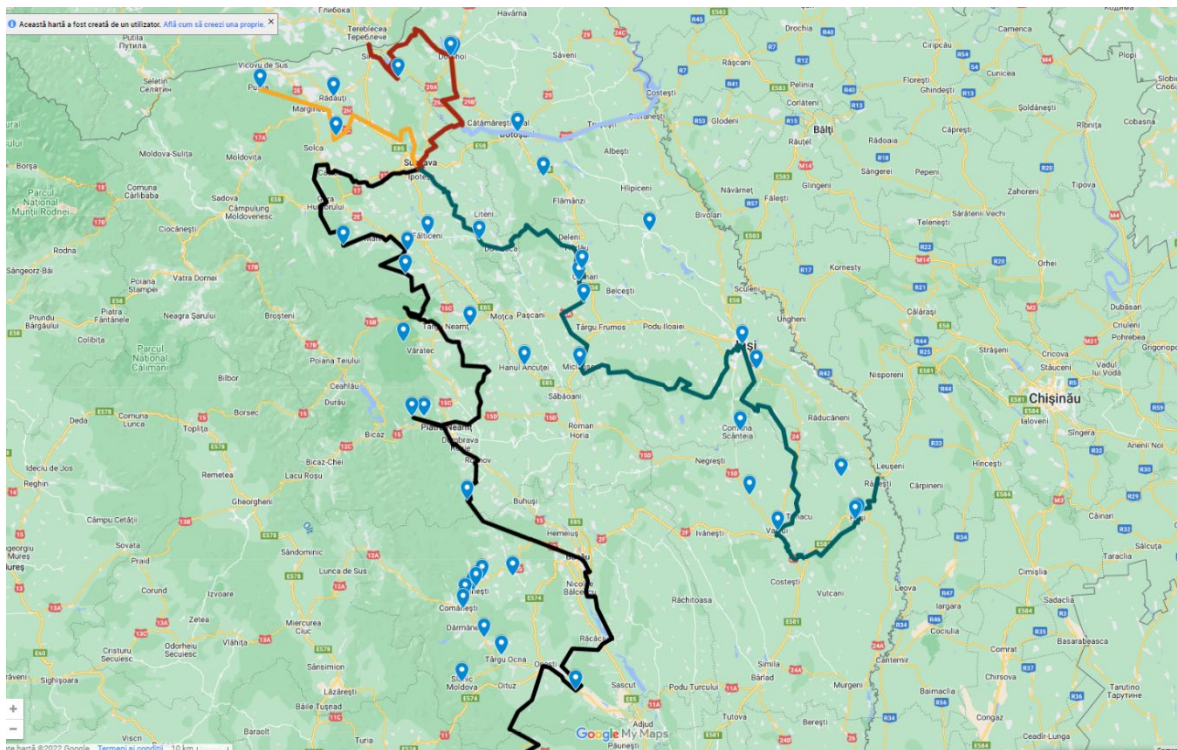
Figure no. 12. Map of the proposals for new objectives for the Stephen the Great and Saint Route (results of the second workshop Be.CULTOUR)
Source: Google Maps (accessed on 2.11.2022)

From the total proposals made in the workshops, thirteen are heritage objectives directly connected to the history and to the period of the Stephen the Great and Saint. In the table above each objective is described in relation with the significance that has for the pilot route.

No.	County	The objectives description
1.	Botoşani	**The bridge from Coşula** **Location:** Commune of Coşula, Coşula village, Botoşani county. The bridge is located on DJ 208 H, km 35+850. GPS Coordinates: 47.622154, 26.775511 The medieval bridge of Coşula is a stone bridge built in the XVII century in the village of Coşula (Botoșani county), which crosses the Miletin River. It is included on the List of historical monuments from Botoșani county since 2015, having the classification code BT-II-m-B-01958. The first stone bridge was built in 1503, during the reign of Stephen the Great and Saint. The current stone bridge in Coşula was built in the XVII century over the Miletin River, at the same time with the establishment by the Greek monks at the Coşula Monastery. In 2001, rehabilitation

		works were carried out through co-financing from the Romanian Government and from Phare funds.
2.	Botoșani	**Old historical centre (medieval ovens, cellars)** **Location:** Botoșani city, Botoșani county The Old Town of Botoșani gathers 60 buildings and historical monuments and offers to visitors the image of a small Leipzig. The Old Town of Botoșani is a collection of "symbol" buildings that combine almost perfectly history and modernism. It is over 100 years old and is the only architectural ensemble of this type in the counties of Moldova. The four Mediaeval Ovens used for reducing ore and burning pottery are located in the Historical Centre of Botoșani and have been preserved during the restoration works. The ovens were built in the XV century. In the past, the Ovens Ensemble was part of the old crafting area of the Botoșani fair, probably from the reign of one of the most famous Rulers of Moldavia – Alexandru cel Bun (1400 – 1432). In the mediaeval age, Botoșani was an important commercial centre, located on the road that connected the Black Sea ports, Poland and those of the Baltic Sea. Therefore, the Ovens discovered during the rehabilitation works of the Historical Centre and the pedestrian area are unique in our country and are currently part of the preserved urban ensemble of the Old Centre in the municipality of Botoșani. The ovens have survived as if by magic for five years. Until funds for the arrangement of a glass dome with conservation equipment were found, the restorers struggled so that the winters or the dry summers would not destroy the ovens. Near to the ovens, ceramic pieces were also discovered that attest the artistic level and the technique used by the craftsmen from the mediaeval Botoșani. Alongside with these, the mediaeval fountain of that period was also rehabilitated. Now, the Ovens have already entered the Tourist Circuit of Botoșani municipality and can be visited.
3.	Botoșani	**The oaks of Stephen the Great from Darabani** **Location, coordinates:** Darabani, 715100, Botoșani county In the north of Botoșani county, in Darabani, there is a place of legend and a monument of nature. It's a meadow guarded by three oaks of more than 500 years old. The legend of the place says that they were planted personally by Stephen the Great, returned from a battle with the Tatars.

		Almost 80 kilometres from the city of Botoșani, near Darabani, the most northern city of Romania, there is Teioasa Meadow. The way to the glade is on a soil road, difficult to reach, which is also built on the banks of the Prut River. In the middle of the fields scorched by the sun in summer or beaten by winds and covered with drifts in winter, is one of the oldest forests of Moldova. Foresters and staff from the forest district in Darabani say that Teioasa is the oldest forest known by locals, of over 500 years old. The Battle of 20 August 1470 One of the most interesting legends about the three oaks is related to the name of the voivode **Stephen the Great**. In fact, the locals and historians of the place say that the Moldavian voivode would have planted the oaks with his own hand 545 years ago. The story is related to a military campaign of **Stephen the Great** over Prut. In the summer of 1470, the Tatar Chief Mamac, which had its camps on the Volga, advanced in search of prey and reached the Dniester. He divided his army of horsemen into three columns which he sent after the prey in three different directions. The first went to Zhytomyr, to today's Ukraine, the second to Terebovlea, also in the Ukraine of today, and finally, the third – in the northern area of Moldova. Today there are concerns about protecting the sensitive objective. In 2014, the North Association (Asociația Nord), within the first Northern Days festival, managed to clean and rearrange the meadow, with the support of a landscaping company. The Darabani City Hall and the Forest Department supported the rescue activity and the project in order return to the tourist circuit this location.
4.	Botoșani	**Saint Nicolae Church in Dorohoi[55]** **Location, coordinates:** 61 Ştefan cel Mare Street, Dorohoi 715200. It is located in the North-Eastern extremity of the country, at about 35 km from the Popăuţi Monastery, the only objective from Botoșani County, that is registered in the Stephen the Great and Saint Route. **The "Saint Nicholas" Church** is known as the oldest architectural monument in the city, dating back to 1495. The edifice was founded by the voivode Stephen the Great and Saint. The church was restored in the past, at the end of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century, more precisely between 1896-1921, but it has fully preserved its former walls and original form. The church "Saint Nicholas" is built in the old Moldavian style, with solid walls of brick and stone, thick of 1.3 metres. The construction has round abbeys, small and narrow windows, as well as a tower that rises imposingly on two bases, and the dome is like a calotte.

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[55] www.ro.wikipedia.org; description provided by CNIPT Botosani.

		This holy sanctuary is a real architectural gem. It has one of the most beautiful exterior decorations, made in Byzantine style, of enamelled brick, of different colours. It also has a precious interior painting made about 500 years ago, but which has endured until these days.

The ensemble of the Royal Church is included on the List of historical monuments in the county of Botoșani having the classification code BT-II-a-A-01984 and consisting of the following two objectives:

- Church of St. Nicholas - dating from 1495 and having the code BT-II-m-A-01984.01 (RAN: 36015.13.01) and
- The Bell tower - dating from the XVIII century and having the code BT-II-m-A-01984.02 (RAN: 36015.13.02).

In the National Archaeological List, the monument appears with the code 36015.13.

The construction has a triconic plan (the shape of a cross), with a tower on the narthex and a fragmented roof, having the narthex overgrown over the nave. It is built of grey sandstone, lightly carved, and the necks and buttresses of waist stone. The spire rests on a double base, the first is octagonal and the second star, with eight peaks. The discs are coloured in shades of yellow and green and are ornamented with fantastic motifs, geometric motifs, and the coat of arms of the country. The entrance to the church is through a broken arch-shaped portal with cylindrical and uniform mouldings that start from small differently ornate bases. Above the door there is the niche intended for the icon of the patron. In ancient times it was on the west side of the building, being later moved to the place where it is today. This was discovered at the time of the restoration work carried out on the monument.

The interior of the church consists of the nave, the narthex and the altar. The narthex is separated from the nave by a wall provided with a narrow door from where the border disappeared. It is the only church among the city's foundations where the wall between the nave and the narthex is kept. The narthex is vaulted with a spherical dome supported on four arches, two longitudinal and two wider, transversal. The painting also preserves some frescoes of an exceptional artistic value, being attributed either to the era of **Stephen the Great**, or to Petru Rareș period. From the painting of the nave emerges the votive painting that depicts the voivode Stephen, Maria, Bogdan, Stephen the Younger, and his brother Petru. The Royal Church in Dorohoi is the only case in Moldova where the votive painting is extended on the southern wall; Jesus is painted on this wall and not on the western one, as usual, and the founder with his family is on the west wall with his eyes pointing from right to left. The iconostasis was rebuilt in 1795, and the current brick bell towers were built in 1871.

5.	Bacău	**Saint Paraschiva Church in Hangani** **Location, coordinates:** 605400, 110 Avram Iancu Street, Moinești 605200

		It is located a few km from the municipality of Moineşti and the Comăneşti city, between the Carpathian and Subcarpathian part of Bacău county. Construction date: 1703.Painting: 1928 - F. Lucia, rebuilt in 1994, Renovation: 1960-1962. The church is classified as a historical monument and is registered under no. 191. The origins of the Hangani location is related to the estate received by the Illaşi Sanga (boyar of Stephen the Great and Saint) for his worthiness, the Ulminiş estate. Around the year 1700, the church from Hangani appears in documents, being connected to Sandu Leondariu, a member of the family Illaşi Sanga who built the church in the village between 1700 and 1706. On the place of the current church there was a fortress converted into a church. The boils in the walls, that were used for the defence weapons, can be still seen/
6.	Bacău	**Precista Church in Bacău** **Location, coordinates:** Str. 9 Mai nr. 48, 600023, Bacău municipality, Bacău county The Precista Church in Bacău is a historical monument located in the city of Bacău, Bacău county, built in 1491. It is on the new list of historical monuments under the LMI code: BC-II-m-A-00757.01. From the written sources, but also from the archaeological research it appears that the Precista Church in Bacău was built during the reign of Stephen the Great by his energetic and pious son Alexander, between 1489–1490, later than the Princely House and the Defence Tower (built between 1476-1478). The completion works on the church was finished on January 1, 1491, as evidenced by the inscription of the church, deciphered for the first time by Bishop Melchidesec Ştefănescu, (Bishop of Roman between 1879-1892) and was sanctified by the of Moldavia at that time, Gheorghe I de Neamţu (1477-1508). The Precista Church was built using stone and brick, in the style specific to the era of Ştefan cel Mare. Alexandru Voievod wanted this holy place to be balanced from an artistic point of view, being well proportioned and worked with a lot of workmanship. All this made the Precista church resist the centuries. It was the only explanation of how it lasted for 150 years, until 1641, without requiring major repairs. During the expedition undertaken in Moldavia by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, in 1538, for the removal from the reign of Petru Rareş and, the Princely House, the Defence Tower and the other annexes were burned. As a witness stands the archaeological investigations carried out at the Princely House, between 1970-1973.

		Since the beginning of the XX century, more precisely on July 1, 1907, due to the steps taken by the priests, but also by historians of that time, the church has been declared a historical monument. In 1924, the Commission for Historical Monuments sent the architect Gheorghe Lupu to investigate the historical objective, which had reached a state of advanced degradation. He commissions for restoration one of the best specialists of the time, the architect George Sterian, who demolished the bell towers from the narthex and the added porch, restored the roof and windows, restoring the church's original shape. The painting inside the church originally made in 1854, remade on several occasions in the XX century, cleaned in 1933 and restored in 1966 did not resist in time, because the support of this painting, the plaster, was broken. That is why, in 1979, the parish priest of that time, Constantin Mardare, together with specialists in the field of restoration and painting, decided that the church should be painted again in the "fresco" technique. The painting started in 1984, and was completed in 1990.
7.	Neamț	**Tazlău Monastery** **Location, coordinates:** Str. Stefan cel Mare nr.188, Tazlău village; Tazlău commune, Neamț county. Tazlău Monastery is located at the lap of the Măgurii Tazlăului and at 36 km south of Piatra Neamț. The ensemble consists of five monuments: • "Birth of the Holy Mother" Church • Palace ruins, cellar ruins • Bell tower • Watchtower • Enclosure wall. The celebration of Tazlău Monastery: "Birth of the Holy Mother" celebrated on September 8. Year of construction: founded in 1497 by **Stephen the Great** on the site of a wooden church built by Alexandru cel Bun. The monastic embodiment from Tazlău appears mentioned for the first time in a document from October 30, 1458, when **Stephen the Great,** at the request of the abbot of the Bistrița Monastery, Eustatie, strengthens the borders of the Tazlău Monastery up to Răchitiş. Between 1496-1497 there was constructed the Birth of the Holy Mother church from Tazlău (on the site of the old wooden church built by Alexandru cel Bun), being one of the most monumental foundations of the voivode **Stephen the Great**.

		From the architectural point of view, the monastery church from Tazlău is built according to a trifled plan with rounded lateral dimensions, but of small dimensions, compared to the elongated apse of the altar.
		Like a fortress, the church of Tazlău monastery was surrounded with stone walls, provided with ramparts and buttresses on the outside. In 1514, the church was plundered, and towards the end of the seventeenth century it was dedicated to the patriarchates of Constantinople and Jerusalem, following a period of economic and spiritual degradation.
		Petru Rareș has built the bell tower at the entrance and has rebuilt the damages caused to Tazlău monastery over time, bringing it to its original state. Alexandru Lăpuşneanu built the porch from the narthex, and Jeremiah Movilă placed a door worked in alder wood in 1596".
		In 1879, the monastic life of the Tazlău Monastery was interrupted as a result of a fire. The sanctuary was rebuilt in 1894, and the church that became a parish will serve with priority the needs of the village. The belltowers that were also destroyed by flames were rebuilt in 1902, but in a style influenced by Russian art. The entrance to the monastery is arched and under the bell tower, located at sunrise, and inside there are still preserved traces of the royal house.
		Since 1990, the church of Stephen the Great and Saint becomes again a monastery.
8.	Neamț	**Bistrița Monastery (Stephen the Great foundation tower)** **Location, coordinates:** DJ155H, Neamț county, Bistrița village, Alexandru cel Bun commune Bistrița Monastery is included in the List of Historical Monuments in Romania, having the classification code NT-II-a-A-10593. Bistrița Monastery was built before 1407 (the first documentary attestation) by prince Alexandru cel Bun of Moldavia (1400-1432), who endowed it with expensive villages and estates. In 1498, **Stephen the Great** built a chapel with a bell tower, with fresco paintings of great artistic and iconographic value, which are preserved until today. In 1546, Petru Rares restored the monastery and built a wall around it. He also gave it to the Mojestii village. In 1554, Alexandru Lapusneanu renovated the monastery completely. Bistrița Monastery was founded by four voivodes from Mușatini princely familly: Alexandru cel Bun (1400-1432), **Stephen the Great** (1457-1504), Petru Rareş (1527-1538, 1541-1546) and Alexandru Lăpuşneanu (1552-1561). Although the Bistrița Monastery is one of the most important foundations of Moldavia, founded by four rulers, more than centuries old and had a significant spiritual and cultural role, it is unfairly little known. The Bistrita Monastery, along with other

		monasteries and old places of worship, is representative of the Romanian history, architecture and feudal art.
9.	Neamț	**The stallion depot from Dumbrava Timișești** **Location, coordinates:** Timişeşti commune, Neamț county Access to the area: is made on DN 15C from Piatra Neamț in the direction of Piatra Neamț - Târgu Neamț or on DN 15B from Poiana Largului on the route Poiana Largului – Humulești - Târgu Neamț. **Description:** The Dumbrava stallion depot also known as "The royal stud farm" is located 10 km from Târgu Neamț on the location of the princely stables and of **Ștefan the Great**, shepherded by the commissar Manole Jder, as it was described in Sadoveanu's novel. The construction of the current stallion depot began in 1910 and belonged initially to the Ministry of Defense, and then to the Ministry of Agriculture. After 2000 the Stallion Depot from Dumbrava passes to the administration of the Neamț Forestry Directorate. Located in an area with a touristic potential, the Dumbrava Stallion depot has a modern infrastructure, at international standards, consisting of: administrative headquarters, shelters and horse racing base. Currently, here you can find 100 heads that are part of 8 special breeds with a very great biological importance. The Dumbrava Stallions depot offers opportunities to practice equestrian tourism: carriage rides, recreational horseback rides, riding lessons and rites over obstacles lessons.
10.	Roman	**The New Fortress of Roman** **Location: Gâdinţi commune.** The fortress was built in 1466, undergoing changes until 1675. Located 5 km from the town of Roman, in the Gâdinţi commune. It is a foundation of Stephen the Great and was built in 1466, being one of the fortifications that compiled the defence plan of Moldavia. The first fortress of Roman had been made of wood and earth. Unlike other fortresses, it is located in a straight plane. The fortification included seven towers linked together by 4 m walls. Unfortunately, the state of degradation is advanced and access is difficult. Inclusion in the Route would require significant rehabilitation and enhancement efforts.
11.	Suceava	**The White Church in Baia** **Location, coordinates:** Preot Dăscalescu Street 3, 727020, Baia commune, Suceava county The "Saint Gheorghe" (White) Church in Baia is an Orthodox church founded, according to local tradition, by **Stephen the Great** in the XV

		century in the village of Baia (Suceava county). It would have been built after the Battle of Baia on December 14-15, 1467 between the Moldavians led by the ruler **Stephen the Great** and the Hungarians led by King Matthias Corvinus. Damaged over time, the White Church in Baia was saved from extinction through the restoration of the Historical Monuments Commission between 1907-1914. During that period, the architect Nicolae Ghica – Budești made in Bucharest a copy of the monument, materialized in the edifice of the St. Basil the Great Church on Polona Street. The "Sf. Gheorghe" - White Church in Baia has been included on the List of historical monuments of Suceava county since 2015 at position 196, having the classification code SV-II-m-A-05489. On this list is specified as the dating period of the XV and XX centuries. According to the local tradition, the "Sf. Gheorghe" - White Church from Baia was built by the ruler **Ştefan cel Mare** (1457-1504) after the battle of Baia (1467). The year of construction of the church is not known in the absence of inscription and other references in medaeival chronicles.
12.	Vaslui	**Arhidiocese of Huși (Diocesan Museum of Religious Art)** **Location, coordinates:** Str. Stefan cel Mare, nr.1, Huși municipality, Vaslui county, Cod: 735 100 The diocesan museum of religious art is located in Huși, Vaslui County. The house was built by a family from Huși in 1889 and had a rich, troubled history, especially in the second half of the XX century, when it was used for various random purposes and was not taken care of with the attention it was due, so it practically reached at the end of the XX century a state of ruin. Because it is an extremely valuable edifice, the house was placed in the care of the bishop of Husi, being fully restored. The Diocesan Museum of Huși (Casa Berea) is an eclectic building of Huși city, a representative historical monument of the flowering period of the city. The restoration of this monument meant an extensive project that was realised by uniting several specialists from several fields who tried to restore the former splendour of this construction. The Huși Museum is an invitation addressed not only to the locals but also to the tourists of this country, to live for a few moments the historical air tof this building saved from destruction.
13.	Vaslui	**Burcel's Hill from Vaslui county** **Location, coordinates:** Micleşti commune, Vaslui county 46.8451, 27.8022 The national road (DN24) - Vaslui - Moara Domnească - Văleni - Solești - Satu Nou, after the intersection with the county road (DJ244E - which

leads to the village of Micleşti), on the left side the reservation can be reached.

The Natura 2000 site 'Movila lui Burcel' with an area of 13 ha is not assigned in custody to a specific organisation and has no management structure. According to the Natura 2000 Standard Form, the body responsible for the management of the site is the Town Hall of Micleşti (Vaslui county). The natural area is located in the Moldavian Central Plateau, near the Vaslueţ river, at an altitude of 390 metres in the northern part of Vaslui county and the north-western part of Micleşti village. In the territory of the reservation there is the historical site The Hill of Burcel (RO: Movila lui Burcel), but also the St "Constantine and Helena" Monastery.

Burcel's mound was documented in 1498, as the property of the boyar (postelnic) Purcel (Burcel) and became known through the legend that is presenting him as a peasant endowed with land by the ruler **Stephen the Great** (1457-1504).

The natural reserve was declared a protected area by Law No. 5 of March 6, 2000 (on the approval of the National Landscaping Plan - Section III - protected areas) and represents an area (hill, meadow) of great botanical interest, due to the rare floristic species in the grassy layer.

In the development of the route, it is desired to include a natural park, in order to diversify the tourist experiences and to establish a framework in which activities corresponding to the innovation area "nature as heritage" can be carried out in an organised way. A Natural Park has the advantage of having – through the park administration and the related staff – access to the necessary infrastructure, but also to biodiversity and interpretation of nature specialists.

In Neamț County there are two national parks: Ceahlău National Park (7,742.5 ha) and Bicazului-Hășmas Gorges National Park (3,315.82 ha on the territory of Neamț County and 3,621.27 ha on the territory of Harghita County). The largest protected natural area is the Vânători-Neamț Natural Park, with 30,631 ha.
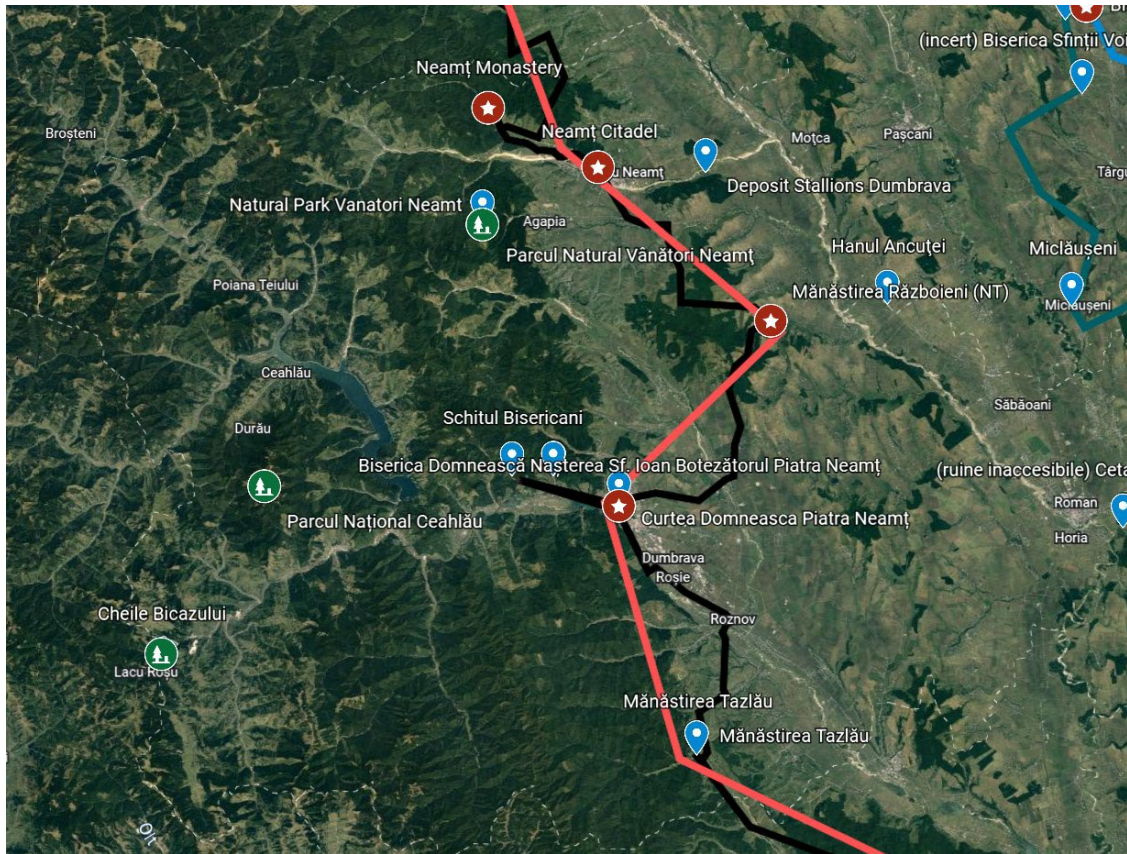
Figure no. 13. Map of the national and natural parks in the vicinity of the Stephen the Great and Saint Route
Source: Google Maps

In the figure above are presented the three parks located in the proximity of the cultural route "Stephen the Great and Saint". The Vânători Neamț Natural Park is a protected natural area established in 1999, with the status of a natural park, designed to protect the natural, spiritual and cultural heritage of the area, to sustainably manage forests, to preserve the local landscape and traditions, to reintegrate the bisons in their former natural areas and to encourage tourism based on these values. Located in the North of Neamţ County, at the border with Suceava County, the park covers as an administrative limit, the communes of Agapia, Bălţăteşti, Brusturi, Crăcăoani, Vânători Neamţ, Răuceşti, Pipirig and the city of Târgu Neamţ. As can be seen in the figure above, the Vânători-Neamț Natural Park is at a shorter distance from the existing route of the " Stephen the Great and Saint " Route.

From a geographical point of view, the park stretches on the eastern slope of Stânisoara Mountains, Neamţ Mountains subdivision, in the eastern part of the Eastern Carpathians and over the Neamţ Subcarpathians, covering a part of the basins of the Neamțu and Cracău rivers, between 47°03'10" and 47°18'20" North latitude and 26°4'20" and 26° 22"32"" East longitude. The surface of the Vânători Neamț Natural Park is of 30631 hectares, of which 26351 hectares are forested (Administration of the Vânători Neamț Natural Park, n. d.).
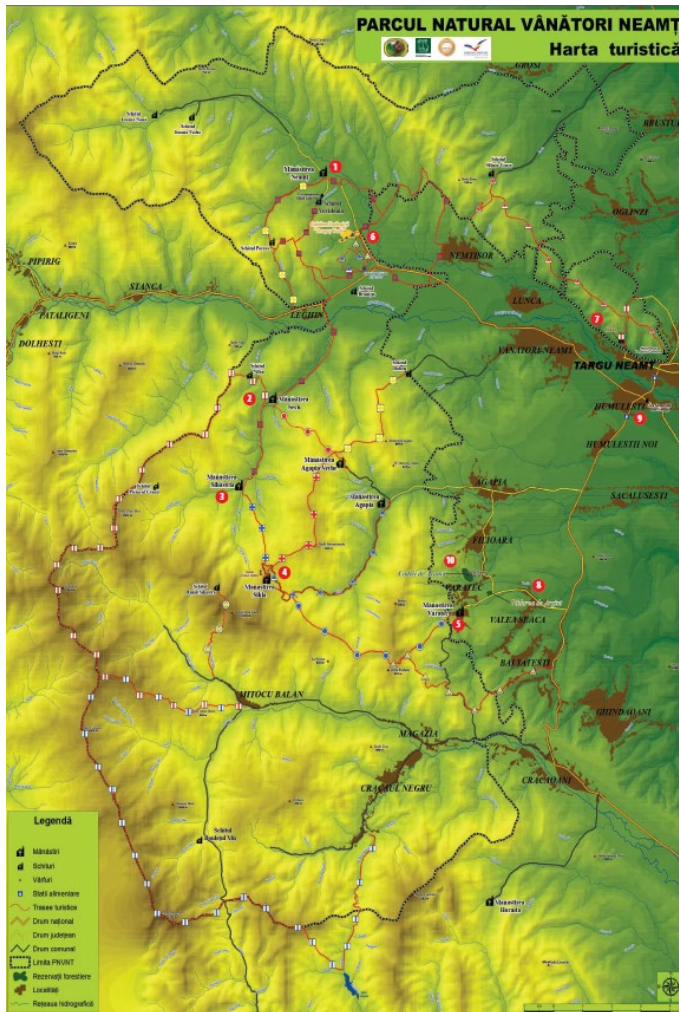
Figure no. 14. Map of the Vânători-Neamţ Natural Park

Source: The Management Plan of the Vânători Neamţ Natural Park and of the Natura 2000 Sites (Administration of the Vânători Neamţ Natural Park, n.d.-a)

The proposal to include the Vânători-Neamț Natural Park among the objectives of the route, is based on several arguments, among which we mention: (1) special attractiveness and the extension of the park area; (2) the proximity of monastic settlements and the possibility to address two areas of innovation: spirituality and nature as heritage; (3) the existence of an eco-destination with experience in the management of tourism programs and in the development of tourism with the involvement of the community: "Ţinutul Zimbrului" (Bison Land)[56]. As it is clear from the name of the micro-region and the destination, the emblematic figure of the Park is the bison, the central element in mediaeval heraldry: the symbol is found on the coat of arms, seal and currency of Moldova. The very legend of the appearance of the principality is connected with this majestic animal. The main points of attractions, besides the picturesque nature, are also the Bison and Carpathian Fauna "Dragoș Vodă" Reserve, the 21 monasteries and hermitages in the destination. The visiting infrastructure is significant, with 18 hiking trails, cycling and thematic trails.

Naturally, it appears the need to connect the Route to this space that is rich in nature and spirituality, which hosts so many places of worship, models of spiritual living, places of pilgrimage to which many tourists are heading. Another advantage is given by the proximity of the Neamţ

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[56] www.tinutulzimbrului.ro (accessed 03.10.2022)

Fortress, located on the north-western edge of Târgu Neamţ, an emblematic place for the history of Moldova, but also for the Route.

According to the Sustainable Development Strategy of the ecotourism destination Bison Land, the main competitive advantages, related to the spiritual and cultural historical resources are (Administration of the Vânători Neamț Natural Park, n.d.-b):

- the existence of a protected area in which natural values are intertwined with the religious and cultural-historical ones;
- unbroken monastic tradition for 600 years. Starting with the "Marea Lavra" of the Romanian Orthodoxy, Neamț Monastery, a series of famous monasteries and hermitages, places of faith and culture, architectural monuments reflecting the evolution of religious architecture have been established over time;
- high concentration of Orthodox places of worship, comparable to that existing in sites such as Athos or Meteora;
- the most important monastic concentration in the Carpathian Mountains; exemplification of monastic living in forest areas;
- all the monasteries and hermitages in the area are "alive", in them taking place an active monastic life, also there is an impressive number of pilgrims.
- the largest monasteries of nuns in the Orthodox world, Văratec and Agapia;
- monastic villages of nuns and monks, following ancient rules of behaviour, cohabitation.
- Neamș fortress represents a reference point of our national history, being at the same time a masterpiece of the defensive constructions specific to the XV century.
- multitude of museums and memorial houses (Sadoveanu, Vlahuță, Creangă, Micle, etc.).

It is also worth noting that, due to the concerns regarding the conservation of cultural and natural resources, the destination was included in the top of the 100 sustainable destinations, made by the prestigious organization Green Destinations (https://www.greendestinations.org/).

The presence of the Vânători-Neamț Park can be beneficial from several points of view: on the one hand, it can enrich and diversify the tourist experience, on the other hand, it can help promote the route, increasing the duration of stay in the area.

One of the concerns of the destination management unit[57] was the creation of interesting tourism products that would integrate in a "holistic" manner the existing resources. In the table below you can see there are different experiences that associate natural attractions with cultural ones and with events.

Natural attractions	Cultural Attractions	Monasteries/ Hermitages	Experiences	Hiking/ cycling thematic trails	Events
Vânători Neamţ Natural Park	Neamţ Fortress	The Văratec and Agapia monastic villages	Bison Safari	Agapia – Sihla	New Year's Festival of Customs and Traditions –

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[57] In the situation eco-destinations, the phrase UMD is used – Destination Management Unit, equivalent to OMD - Destination Management Organization

Natural attractions	Cultural Attractions	Monasteries/ Hermitages	Experiences	Hiking/ cycling thematic trails	Events
					January 2, Târgu Neamţ
The natural reservation "Codrii de Aramă"	Mausoleum Monument of the Mountain Hunters	Neamţ Monastery	Cycling	Agapia Veche – Dobru	Medieval Festival – July, Neamţ Fortress
The natural reservation "Silver Forest"	Ruins of old war fortifications	Văratec Monastery	Birdwatching	Agapia Veche – Secu	Autumn fair – October, Târgu Neamţ
The natural reservation "Emerald Forest"	"Ion Creangă" Memorial House	Agapia Monastery	Workshop with a folk craftsman	Agapia Veche – Sihla	B – folk fest areas – May, Târgu Neamţ
Bison and Carpathian Fauna Reserve Dragoş Vodă	"Veronica Micle" Memorial House	Secu Monastery	Cooking workshop with a local	Mitocul Bălan – Calea Mare – Cuejdel Lake – Cracăul Negru	Bison Day – August, Visitor Center of Vănători Neamţ Natural Park
Cuejdel Lake	"Mihail Sadoveanu" Memorial House	Sihăstria Monastery	Forest baths	Mitocul Bălan – Calea Mare – Nifon Hermitage – Secu	The Enchanted Cauldron
The Slatina Spring – Vănători Neamţ	"Alexandru Vlahuţă" Memorial House	Sihla Monastery	A day at the sheepfold	Mitocul Bălan – Daniil Hermitage	Eco Brunch, Bison Land
The Vărata Spring – Bălţăteşti	Târgu Neamţ Museum of History and Ethnography	Horaiţa Monastery	Bison Brunch	Bălţăteşti – Vârful Bradului	
Corugea Fountain – Oglinzi	The Museum of Vânători commune	Dobru Monastery	Eco Brunch	Neamţ Fortress - Oglinzi Resort	
Puturosu Spring, Vânători Neamţ	Vivant Museum	Brădiţel Monastery	Hiking	Neamţ Monastery - Pocriv Hermitage - Leghin	
The Butii Ravine – Valea Seacă	The "Vasile Găman" Museum of Ethnography, Vânători Neamţ	Pocrov Hermitage	In the home of local producers	Heroes Monument – Neamţ Fortress – Slatina Spring – Sfânta Cruce Monastery	
Coroi's Ravine – Agapia	"Nicolae Popa" Ethnographic Museum, Târpeşti	Icoana Veche Hermitage		Sihăstria Monastery - Sihla Monastery	

Natural attractions	Cultural Attractions	Monasteries/ Hermitages	Experiences	Hiking/ cycling thematic trails	Events
Visitor Center of the Vânători Neamţ Natural Park	"Nicolae Grigorescu" Museum, Agapia	Icoana Veche Hermitage		Poiana Sihla – Poiana Ciungi – Văratec Monastery	
	Synagogue and Jewish Cemetery	Nifon Hermitage		Târgu Neamţ - The Monument of the Mountain Hunters – Oglinzi Resort - Târgu Neamţ	
	Văratec Spiritual Cultural Center	The Hermitage of Sfântul Daniil Sihastru		Târgu Neamţ - Monument of the Mountain Hunters - Neamţ Fortress - Izvorul de Slatină - Nemţişor village - Lunca village - Târgu Neamţ	
		Vovidenia Hermitage		Târgu Neamţ (stadium) – Lunca village – Izvorul de Slatină – Cărbuna Hermitage – Reserve of Bison and Carpathian Fauna Dragoş Vodă – Procov Hermitage – Leghin village – Nifon hermitage – Secu Monastery – Sihla Monastery – Agapia Monastery	
		Cărbuna Hermitage		Târgu Neamţ (stadium) – Lunca village – Dobru Monastery – Agapia Monastery – Văratec village	
		Branişte Hermitage		Târgu Neamţ (stadium) – Lunca village – Izvor Slatină – Cărbuna hermitage – Bison and Carpathian Fauna Reserve Dragoş Vodă –	

Natural attractions	Cultural Attractions	Monasteries/ Hermitages	Experiences	Hiking/ cycling thematic trails	Events
				Procov Hermitage – Leghin village – Secu Monastery – Sihăstria Monastery – Agapia Vehe Hermitage – Agapia Vehe Monastery – Agapia Monastery	
		Agapia Veche Hermitage		On the footsteps of bisons	
		Poiana lui Ioan Hermitage		Literary route	
		Nifon Hermitage		Through deciduous forests	

Table10. Natural and cultural attractions. Events organized in the Vânători-Neamţ Natural Park
Source: Management Plan of the Vânători Neamţ Natural Park and of the Natura 2000 Sites
(Administration of the Vânători Neamţ Natural Park, n.d.-a)

Source: author's archive
The road to access to the Visitor Centre of the Vânători-Neamț Park.

A very diverse range of activities is also carried out at the Visitor Centre of the Vânători-Neamț Park. For those visiting the centre for the first time, the direction panel can be easily overlooked. A pre-signposting of it would be useful.

The arrangement is attractive, both building and of the proximity area (sensory paths, the observation bridge that requires repair for the time being).

The exhibitions are interesting and highly educational, and the facilities are suitable for various categories of visitors. The presence of souvenirs and some local products, displayed for sale, are a plus, thus connecting visitors to local producers.

Source: own takeover

Educational activities room inside the Visitor Centre, Administration of Vânători Neamț Park

Source: own takeover

The access area to the Bison and Carpathian Fauna Reserve Dragoş Voda

Source: own takeover

Information panels. It would be appropriate to place directional information to the Park's Visitor Center.

Source: own takeover

Stands for presentation and interpretation of biodiversity. The visitor centre of the Vânători-Neamţ Park.

The outdoor space and the observation bridge are attractive in any season, the presence at the centre facilitating access to the professional guidance made by the associated staff.

The events organised in recent years have already become known and are an extra motivation for visitation. The Ecobrunch organised by the Bison's Land association is a fortunate opportunity to combine the gastronomic experience with the cultural one, and with the relaxation in nature.

Source: www.tinutulzimbrului.ro/tururispeciale *Source: www.viziteazaNeamț.ro*

In 2021, the Bison Land destination was the subject of a Green Destination evaluation (Chasovschi, 2021), which aimed to analyse the destination, to be included in the list of sustainable destinations awarded at European level (Top 100 Green Destinations). The report was also complemented by the field evaluation of the park and of the visitor centre by the team of experts in June 2022. In addition to a number of aspects that facilitate an exceptional experience in nature and an interaction with relevant information within the Visitor Centre of the Park, a series of recommendations have been formulated to optimise the management of the destination:

-inclusion in the strategy / activity/destination management plan of some sustainable development optimisation activities at communities and members UATs level;

-the continuation of the consulting the communities' activities, which have been carried out so far in the activity of the association;

-developing a plan for monitoring public areas, in cooperation with representatives of local public authorities, in order to solve issues that have a negative impact on the landscape (abandoned construction waste in the public space, border areas of local roads that should be embellished / groomed);

-encouraging responsible interactions with nature, by developing mini-procedures and guides dedicated to the community and visitors.

-optimizing the online presentation of the park (https://Vânătoripark.ro/harta-parcului/), with explanations that facilitate access to the park's visitor centre;

-developing soft-mobility solutions for different age categories;

-continuation of collaboration with AER and other bodies (EETLS) in order to certify the locations in the destination in ecotourism;

-long-term development of a visitor management system and monitoring their satisfaction (similar to the studies already conducted by UMD).

2.3. Local Pact Framework

Vision and strategic priorities

The Local Pact Be.CULTOUR for the Heritage Innovation Network is a cooperation platform, assumed at institutional and individual level by the members of the Be.CULTOUR community, a multi-agent collaborative structure for circular cultural tourism in the pilot heritage site along the Stephen the Great and Saint Cultural Route.

Developed during the first two workshops, it was formalized within the third workshop, held in the Republic of Moldova, by signing the cooperation agreement by the organisations and persons in the table below.

Item No.	Organisation	Name/ Surname
1.	Ministry of Culture, Republic of Moldova	Chistol Andrei
2.	North-East Regional Development Agency, Romania	Şlemco Roxana
3.	North-East Regional Development Agency, Romania	Albu Alexandra
4.	Community Association (Asociația obștească) "Verde e Moldova", Republic of Moldova	Chiriac Ion
5.	Community Association (Asociația obștească) "Verde e Moldova", Republic of Moldova	Olesea Vulpe
6.	General Directorate for Economy, Commerce and Tourism, Chișinău (Direcția Generală de Economie, Comerț și Turism), Republic of Moldova	Popa Irina
7.	Investment Agency "Invest Moldova", Republic of Moldova	Ceban Valentin
8.	Cultural-Natural Reserve "Orheiul Vechi", Republic of Moldova	Ciobanu Ion
9.	National Cultural Reserve "Orheiul Vechi", Republic of Moldova	Solomon Doina
10.	Wine Tourism Promotion Centre of Moldova, Republic of Moldova	Tomescu Veronica
11.	The Association "iaBucovina", România	Grădinariu Magda
12.	Museum or. Călărași / Tourist Information Centre, Republic of Moldova	Iurcu Mariana
13.	Community Association (Asociația Obștească) "Nistru de Jos – Meleag Natal", Republic of Moldova	Onici Dorina
14.	A.O. Tourism Development Association	Miron Viorel
15.	Botoșani City Hall, Național Center of Tourism Information, the Association for Promotion and Development of Tourism "Țara de Sus", Romania	Gheorghiă Florentina
16.	The "Bison Land" Association, Romania	Cătănoiu Sebastian
17.	Muzeedelasat.ro, Romania	Murărașu Cosmin
18.	"Bâtca Doamnei" Association	Mîndru Corina
19.	E-Circular Association, Republic of Moldova	Aurelia Bahnaru
20.	General Directorate for Economy, Commerce and Tourism, Chișinău (Direcția Generală de Economie, Comerț și Turism), Republic of Moldova	Bejenaru Cristina

Item No.	Organisation	Name/ Surname
21.	CERC TOUR (Centre for Research and Competences in Tourism) - "Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, Romania	Chaşovschi Carmen
22.	Alta Consulting	Sofian Sorina

Vision

The route "Stephen the Great and Saint" will be a model of sustainable and regenerative cultural tourism in 2030, which will promote sustainable and equitable regional development. It will harness unique cultural and natural resources, used in a sustainable way through circular economy models, centered on communities and their members. The experiences included will reduce the current pressure on the over-exploited territories in the region, and the activities carried out will be unfolded with the rational use of natural resources (energy, water, soil, biodiversity) and with the enhancement of local food and artisanal products. The route will arouse the interest of Romanian and foreign tourists and will lead to the increase of the well-being of the local communities, to the improvement of the ecosystems, to the improvement of the local identity of all those who are part of the Romania-Republic of Moldova cross-border area.

The objectives of the collaboration, agreed upon through the Local Pact and formulated during the three workshops are:

Assuming the support of the circular cultural tourism development in the route area;

- Supporting the common vision of development of the Route of the Ruler Stephen the Great and Saint.
- Supporting efforts to extend the Route to facilitate its registration in the European Cultural Routes network.
- The mutual support of the quality enhancement of the tourist experience efforts along the route.
- The initiation and organisation of actions meant to ensure the transition from linear to circular tourism, with the support of the tourism industry and decision-makers.
- Dissemination of the action plan's priorities and support in the implementation of the plan of action in joint effort of destination management.
- Identification of technical and financial resources to enable the implementation of the identified actions.

Strategic priorities

Based on the moderated discussions of the first workshop (LWS1) and the application of the Be.CULTOUR co-creation methodology, the following challenges were identified and the priorities were established, according to the following table (according to the number of votes received at the first workshop).

Priority	Resources for which it is relevant	Who will address this challenge according to their skills/ abilities/ resources?
No: 1 (11 votes) The collaboration and creation of effective local partnerships with all the stakeholders that are involved in the tourism promotion activity	The entire cooperation area related to the Route Stephen the Great and Saint	CERC, Iași Tourist Information Center, ICLEI
No: 2 (6 votes) Promoting the area and the objectives that are part of the route, optimising the presence in the online media and diversifying the digital promotion tools	House of Museums, Theatre Festival for Young Audience Iași, Open-air Village museum Ciocănești, Moldova Delta, Royal Court of Neamț All the objectives that are part of the Route Stephen the Great and Saint	Agency Invest Moldova, CERC, ICLEI, CIT Iași, Bucovina Cultural Centre, Botoșani County Council
No: 3 (5 votes) Preparation of human resources in the field of circular cultural tourism	The open-air village museum of Ciocănești, churches and monasteries, Moldova Delta, Țipova Monastery All the objectives that are part of the Route Stephen the Great and Saint	CIT Iași (Anca Zota), Bucovina Cultural Centre
No: 4 (4 votes) Preservation of patrimony objects / of touristic objectives	Dobrovăț Monastery, Vatra Dornei Casino, Open Air Museum Commune Ciocănești, Palace of Culture, Nicolae Domnesc Church, Cotnari Area, Fortresses of Moldova (Soroca and Tighina)	

	All the objectives that are part of the Route Stephen the Great and Saint	
No.5 (4 votes) "Hyper-map" of the tourist resources. A map that includes a centralization of all the information of tourist interest, including sightseeing events, crafts etc.	The whole route area	CIT Iași, Botoșani County Council, ICLEI, Bucovina Cultural Centre

Governance structure and responsibilities

The governance structure will be organised on several layers of responsibility (multi-level governance). Therefore, at the level of the project, the results and activities will be ensured and coordinated by:

- The North-East Regional Development Agency, as the local coordination structure of the Be.CULTOUR project for Romania
- The Association "Verde e Moldova", as local coordinator of the Be.CULTOUR project for the Republic of Moldova.

These institutions will coordinate and dynamize the process, as well as the actions that the signatories of the pact intend to take within the project time-frame and beyond.

In addition, the governance structure also includes institutional decision-makers (support structures):

- For the Republic of Moldova: The Invest Agency and the Ministry of Culture;
- For Romania: The County Councils of Iași, Suceava, Bacău, Vaslui and Botoșani and the departments responsible for the tourism activity.

The actors will interact at different administrative and territorial levels:

(1) Between their respective national authorities (horizontally).
(2) Between different levels of local/regional, national/regional authorities (vertically).
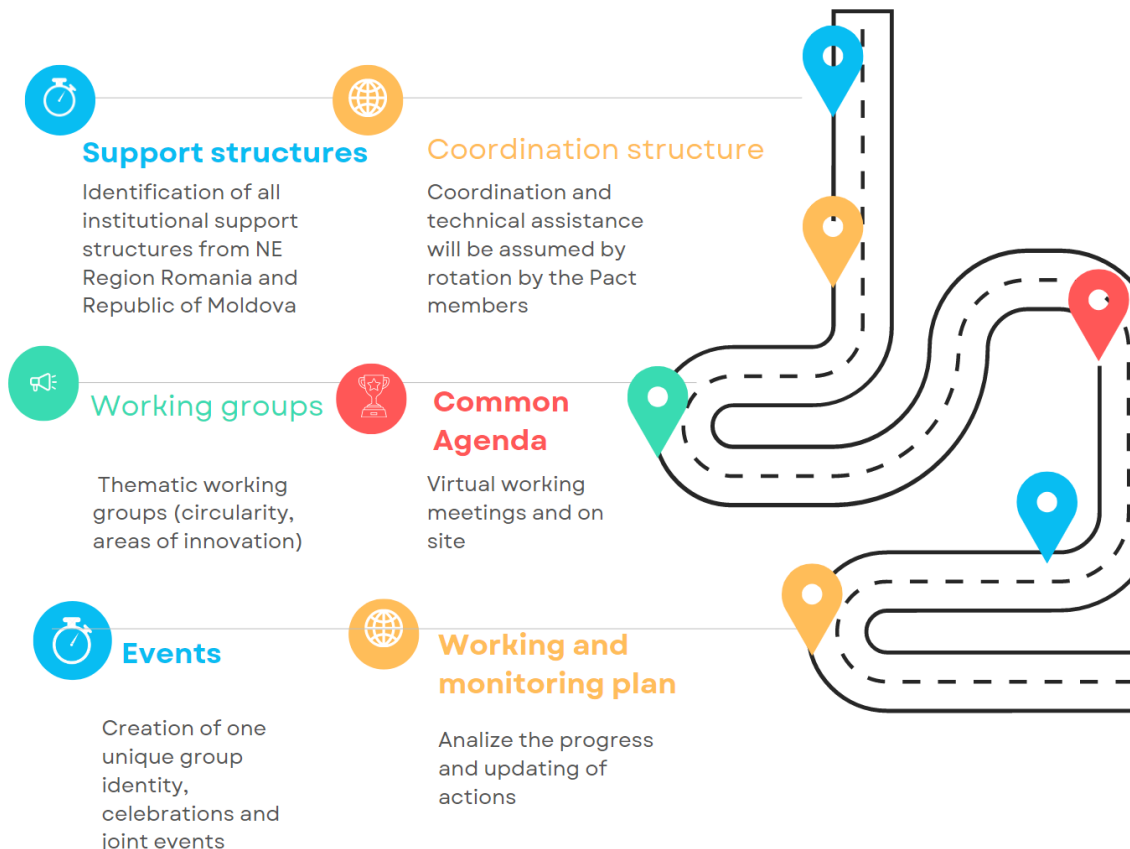(3) Between different actors at local and regional level (horizontally).

Figure no. 15. Activities and structures within the Local Pact
Source: authors' own representation

The principles of the Local Pact, which will form the basis of the working group's activity, are:
- The local community is involved in the implementation of one or more actions.
- The activation of public-private and public-private-individuals partnerships.
- Minorities and marginalized groups are respected and taken into account.
- For each action, there is a group of stakeholders involved in implementation (signatory of the local plan/ of an action plan for implementation).

Key concepts. Elements that ensure the development of tourism beyond the current limits ("Beyond cultural tourism")

- 4 innovative cross-cutting approaches: circular tourism, cultural Europeanization, responsible, equitable and centred on people tourism, intelligent management of destinations.
- 4 emerging trends – transformative journeys, teleworking destinations, proximity journeys, post-cultural tourism (alternative elements that represent a niche for tourism).
- 6 areas of innovation (rural cohabitation, sensory heritage experience, contemporary heritage significance, experience of spiritual journey, nature as a heritage, industrial heritage experience).

3. Portfolio of innovative solutions for the development and promotion of circular cultural tourism in the North-East Region of Romania

The portfolio of innovative solutions includes a series of ideas that have been proposed by the participants in the Be.CULTOUR workshops, that will be implemented either by the companies / organizations they represent, or in a partnership with other regional or local actors. These solutions, in addition to valuing innovative ideas that respond to the different areas of innovation proposed in the project, are taking into account the principles of the circular economy, directly, in the implementation of the business idea, but also indirectly, by creating and connecting results at the level of the target group. The innovative ideas were also presented at the contest organized within the project Be.CULTOUR. Two from them were selected to receive advice from ICHEC Brussels partner, as part of a Hackthon, and, subsequently as part of an acceleration process.

Action 1. Digital marketing and optimized online presence of the territory and cultural resources, that are part of the Route Stephen the Great and Saint

The marketing of destinations has changed in the last two decades. Nowadays, technology allows people to access information about the destinations located anywhere in the world, leading to a fierce competition between the destinations. The tourists are pre-testing the tourism experience, by accessing images and information before their trip. Like this, the tourism promotion has shifted from the teasing and attention/interest rising to information and virtual visit of destinations. At the same time, the DMOs are able to assess the right segments of tourism, their interests, and can anticipate their travel behavior, by using the information collected from the internet.

The optimisation of the online presence should encompass: (1) the digital promotion (online presence on social media channels, improvement of the quality of the digital presence/pictures/storytelling/presentation; (2) integration of digital marketing research, in profiling the potential visitors and developing appropriate selling messages and channels; (3) digitalisation through AI, AR and VR solutions of the heritage and natural resources from the pilot site; (4) increased loyalty and connection in post-consumption stage, through gamification solutions (interactive solutions, rewards / incentives, discounts and discount policies). All these measures are connected to the national tourism strategy, as well as with the regional and local development strategies. The action is also a result of the co-creation activities from LWS1 and LWS2, as a response to the challenge "limited existing tools for digital marketing", "reduced marketing intelligence in order to connect the tourism offer with the tourism needs".

The cultural heritage assets that will be valorised by the action, encompasses the objectives registered in the Cultural Route of Stephen the Great (StGS), 9 tourist attractions in the Republic of Moldova and 20 tourist attractions in Romania but as well other associated resources, as vernacular architecture, immaterial heritage related to the traditional way of living in the rural area,

household occupations, events, and festivals. The area covered by the route includes activities and resources belonging mainly to the rural areas, but as well to urban settlements, with a coherent and attractive tourism offer. There is a possibility to include other points that will be incorporated later in the Route.

The timeframe that will be envisaged for the implementation of the action is four years, and the geographical space that will be covered is the Cultural Route of Stephen the Great.

Sub-activity 1.1. Virtual route "Stephen the Great and Saint"

Objective 1.1. An enhanced promotion of the Route at EU level, with the support of a VR application that will include 29 virtual tours and will be developed in a timeframe of 4 years (field documentation, digitalization of field resources, film production, platform development and testing).

Description of the **sub-action**

The VR ROUTE will integrate a total of 29 virtual tours, that will encompass 9 tourist attractions in the Republic of Moldova and 20 tourist attractions in Romania, all integrated into an online platform constituted as a 3D map of the pilot heritage site. The platform offers the possibility to identify the tourist routes, the locations of the activities included in the circular tourism solutions, and the natural environment and will attract at least 200 tourists in the first year, for each of the objectives presented. Special attention will be given to the promotion of circular tourism initiatives. The impact of this promotion is expected to be high, as more and more members of the virtual community will be targeted. The VR Route aim is as well to increase the interest of new generations and younger generation in traditional and cultural values. It can be a tool for learning (thanks to the scientific and historical data presented in it) and for cultural education.

The VR ROUTE will offer an additional tool for the promotion of the destination, for new tourists, or for the new multimedia-consumers and millennials. Through the platform, and its integrative character in the local and international context, will be achieved the valorisation of the pilot heritage site, through interdisciplinary approaches in the local and international context, and granting access to digital promotion of less advantaged sub-areas, re-balancing the access to the tourism markets.

Another innovative attribute of the solution is given by the educational side that can also be exploited (the application can be the basis of interactive history lessons). The social impact on the area, apart from increasing the number of tourists, could be achieved by involving and mobilising the local community firstly by carrying out the interviews necessary for the tours and secondly by further developing the platform with the help of local professionals. As well, a "participatory" storytelling can be implemented, with the support of translation functions that can be added to the interviews with the locals.

Activities

1. Documentation in the field and online.

2. Development of documentation tools and technical research.
3. Documentation and design of the final list of characteristics of the sites/objectives that are relevant for visual documentation (filming).
4. Scenario writing.
5. Field activity and documentation (photography, filming, interviews);
6. Pre-montage, montage.
7. Quality management and final review.
8. Creation of a self-financing mechanism to ensure the functionality of the platform (self-sustainable).

The sub-action proposes the creation of virtual tours of the locations and objectives within the pilot heritage site, integrated into an online platform that facilitates their visualisation in a 3D environment, i.e. with the help of a 3D map of the area, which is intended to function as an interface between the user and the virtual tours available.

The interactive virtual tour will contain info points with texts/pictures/video/action buttons, information about the sites within the route. It will be bilingual and will interlink images recorded at each objective and then interlink all objectives. To this end, drone footage will be used, interviews and 360 video, with the help of a professional 360 video camera (Insta360 PRO 2). This solution aims to widen access to culture through new media technologies. Thus, the protection, preservation and promotion of the pilot heritage site is done by involving social and cultural elements of each site. It also aims to promote and present circular economy solutions implemented within the local and regional tourism ecosystem.

The service will be accessible for free, making it possible to interconnect tourists with heritage, as well as with the possibilities of accommodation or transport within the pilot heritage site. In addition to virtual tours, documented with the help of historical and academic sources, users will also find information about local producers on the platform.

The platform will be accessible from any device with internet connection, will offer the possibility to create their own itineraries, as well as act as a guide for tourists interested in discovering the pilot heritage site on their own. The sub-action objectives are aligned with the following strategic development goals: SDG4 Quality education, SDG5 Gender equality, SDG8 Decent work and economic growth; SDG9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG11 Sustainable cities and communities.

Implementation period	2023-2025 (field work 6-8 months)
Field(s) of innovation of Be.CULTOUR	Sensorial Heritage Experience; Contemporary Meanings of Heritage; Spiritual Travel experience; Nature s Heritage; Industrial Heritage Experience; "Solo" Tourism. **Sensory heritage experience**

	Starting from the goal of attracting tourists, a virtual tour offers a sensory experience by translating the real environment into the virtual environment, by creating an integrated virtual community, accessible according to the user's preferences.
	Contemporary meanings of heritage
	The pilot heritage site currently contains both elements of history and tradition and contemporary aspects of its preservation as well as recent cultural elements that complement the cultural space of the pilot heritage site. Transposing them into the virtual environment using our proposed solution, represents a testimony to the future of the spatial and temporal context of identity and culture in which we find ourselves at the moment. Interviews about the development intentions of the area, and circular tourism are other relevant and innovative elements of the virtual community creation solution.
	Spiritual travel experience
	The main aim of the solution is to attract tourists. Watching virtual tours just for information and knowledge can easily turn into a special spiritual experience, given the use of modern 360 3D filming technologies and reporting techniques.
	Nature as heritage
	360 3D technology involves recording an object, showing the natural setting in which it is located, and nature becomes an integral part of the site.
	Industrial heritage experience
	The platform will present data on the economic activities of the site, especially those with heritage value (e.g. traditional arts, and crafts specific to the area).
	Transformative travel
	Whether you choose the virtual tour as a learning experience or to choose a tourist destination, the experience offered is transformative. In the first case, through the accumulation of integrated information and the development of knowledge about European cultural heritage, and in the second case through the novelty of the presentation of the tourist destination.
Identified local challenge(s)	Reduced digital presence on the internet of the destination. Low awareness about the tourism potential. Most recent statistics have shown that the younger generation prefers to learn using online applications, virtual environments, and new technologies.

Cultural heritage assets(s)	Locations and objectives within the pilot heritage site, integrated into an online platform that facilitates their visualisation in a 3D environment, i.e. with the help of a 3D map of the area served by the pilot heritage site, which is intended to function as an interface between the user and the virtual tours available.
Target group(s)	Tourists of all ages Small and less accessible communities that will take advantage from the online promotion Younger generation of tourists Scholars/students Multimedia consumers
Responsible party(s)	NGO "BATCA DOAMNEI"; Tourism departments of the selected communities; Public authorities; Museums; Management of all heritage sites on the StGS route.
Responsible stakeholder(s)	Text editor, Project manager, Videograph, VR editor, Actors, Local guides, Museums, Community members.
Raw budget estimation	20.000 EURO
Funding source (European, National, local funds)	Start-Up Nation (RO); Creative Europe (EU); COSME (EU); Regional and local budget of public authorities.
Other resources needed	Drone Filming equipment Scenario Transportation Accommodation for team members
Indicator(s) for success (also considering circularity, diversity and inclusion)	Number of tours included; Number of tourism attractions; Number of circular businesses included in the presentations; Number of small, remote communities, interesting for the local heritage; Surface included on the 3D map of heritage maps;

	Activities included in the circular tourism solutions, and the natural environment. At least 200 tourists in the first year for each of the objectives presented. The impact of this promotion is expected to be high, as more and more members of the virtual community will be targeted.

Sub-action 1.2. Cultural heritage. A virtual journey

Objective 1.1. An improved quality of the virtual promotion of the StGS Route and a broader international presence of the 29 cultural heritage sites and circular tourism initiatives, through a platform that will integrate Matterport interactive 3D virtual tours, developed in two years, as a full option solution (virtual tours and interactive elements).

The ultimate goal of this project is to create the desire of the website user to "turn" into a physical visitor, who pays and supports culture, but also to provide the opportunity for those who cannot physically travel to explore the cultural sites.

Description of the sub-action:

The Matterport 3D interactive virtual tour is the main tool for the promotion and preservation of cultural sites. The technology used by us in the realisation of interactive virtual tours is less used in Romania (especially in the cultural field), because it is more expensive and requires much more effort and technical knowledge than the one used for the realisation of classic "virtual tours" - which either use only 360 photos or the "virtual tour" has no interactive elements.

Among the main features of the virtual tour offered by the team are:
- it can be accessed anytime and anywhere from any internet-connected device (laptop, PC, smartphone, tablet), without the need to install another app;
- the user can explore both the inside and outside of the museum.
- it can be navigated using VR (virtual reality) glasses.
- it digitally preserves heritage assets. The virtual tour cannot be altered, it presents the reality exactly as it is when scanned. In addition to the virtual tour, the page for each cultural site also includes informative text, which helps it to be indexed more appropriately in Google, a set of detail and landscape photos, and information about the program, contact and geographical location.

The cultural sites will be linked together on a web platform, which will be available in both Romanian and English. Each cultural site will benefit from an Matterport interactive 3D virtual tour made with high-performance equipment, which will be available for two years on the web platform. The virtual tour will also be integrated on Google Street View, Google Maps and Google Earth, with no expiry date. In addition, each museum will also benefit from a set of 15-20 professional interior/exterior detail and landscape photographs. Using the website's interactive interface, the user will be able to view the online page of each cultural object included, read about it and view/explore the 3D virtual tour and photos.

Activities:

1. Meetings with stakeholders and content negotiation.
2. Offline and online documentation.
3. Field research and data collection (3D scanning and photography).
4. Data processing.
5. Sending the data project to the beneficiaries for content approval.
6. Creating the platform that will aggregate all touristic services (on stop shop version).
7. Monitoring and quality control during the first year of implementation.

Implementation period	2023-2025
Field(s) of innovation of Be.CULTOUR	It establishes the contemporary meanings of the heritage. Experience of spiritual travel. Experience of industrial heritage.
Identified local challenge(s)	The state of emergency over the past two years and the pandemic have accentuated the need for an online presence of cultural institutions, an updated and interactive presence. Major museums and art galleries around the world have responded to this need by creating interactive virtual tours with information points and videos integrated into the virtual tour. Matterport 3D interactive virtual tours will increase the visibility of cultural objects and attract more physical visitors. Although virtual tours are not a completely new technology, in recent years they have seen rapid growth with the introduction of innovative elements that have significantly improved interactivity with users. Thus, the project defines new valences and expressive approaches in the cultural-artistic field, the starting point being a set of problems and needs that the public feels acutely at the moment.
Cultural heritage assets(s)	The Route "Stephen the Great and Saint", the cross-border area of North-East Romania-Moldova includes churches, fortified fortresses, royal cellars over 500 years old and museums - buildings of major cultural importance. Scanning them with the help of high-performance equipment and creating interactive Matterport 3D virtual tours leads to heritage conservation in the most complete form and, at the same time, promotes the route to a wide audience.

Target group(s)	The virtual tour and the photographs will attract not only mature audiences - 35-50 years old, but also (and especially) younger audiences - under 18 and 18-34 years old. It is well known that young people have much higher technological expectations and to be convinced to visit a cultural site or museum, it is necessary for the cultural institution to have a very good relationship with the new technological wave - to be visible on social media, to have high quality photos, to show clarity and to offer interactivity and uniqueness. At the same time, the project also addresses people with disabilities for whom a visit to the museum can be difficult, especially in rural areas. The project will attract new physical visitors to the cultural venues on the route and increase revenue for them. The project will become an important resource for the educational environment - pupils, students and teachers can make online visits to the sites and museums in question when physical visits cannot be made for financial or other reasons. The experience of visiting a virtual cultural objective is greatly enhanced, taking place at the user's pace, without being in any way constrained by other visitors who would have been simultaneously physically in the same place. Focusing on the user, the project aims to combine learning with leisure time in a balanced way. Furthermore, the cultural objectives targeted by the project will be able to use the virtual tour provided as a form of training for new employees or to preview the location when planning events. The web platform and virtual tours have the potential to support a permanent dialogue between the public and the museum institution. The interactive Matterport 3D virtual tours will preserve the cultural heritage for an indefinite period of time. With online exposure, the audience for cultural objectives will be much more diverse and developed.
Responsible party(s)	Real Tour Romania. Local authorities.
Responsible stakeholder(s)	Tourism departments at regional and local level. TICs (Tourist Information Centres); Museums administrators. Cultural site curators. Tourism business sector.

Raw budget estimation	EUR 45,000 (EUR 1500 is the estimated expenditure for documenting and creating the application for an objective)
Funding source (European, National, local funds)	-Start-Up Nation Program (RO). -AFCN (Administration of the National Cultural Fund), with the support of PNRR. -Creative Europe (EU) -COSME (EU) -Regional and local budget of public authorities
Other resources needed	Informational resources Human resources: videographer, copywriter, 3D Scanning Operator, Photographer. Matterport technology and equipment Means of transport;
Indicator(s) for success (also considering circularity, diversity and inclusion)	Number of tourism attractions; Number of circular businesses included in the presentations; Number of small, remote communities, interesting for the local heritage; Activities included in the circular tourism solutions, and the natural environment. At least 200 visitors in the first year for each of the objectives presented.

Action 2: Improved tourism information and heritage interpretation along the Stephen the Great and Saint Route

The field research undertaken in May and June 2022 at all the objectives of the Route, showed that the interpretation and promotion of the tourism objectives included in the route should be improved. There are disparities in terms of tourism signposting, tourism interpretation and information systems existing on the spot. The tourism experience should be enhanced by a combination of both physical and digital communication instruments, harmonically combined to respond to the requirements of different target groups, taking in consideration the specific needs related to age and accessibility. The design and layout of the information systems should be in line with the requirements of circular principles, in terms of materials, construction techniques but as well in the messages formulated for the visitors. The integration of the route to the European network of cultural routes could be facilitated by a multi-lingual (at least bi-lingual) information, and with references in the digital displays related to the distance to the main European cultural routes nearby. The action is sustained by the strategic actions from PRACT Nord-Est and regional tourism strategies. More than that, the layout for the physical displays is assured by the Moldova Investment Agency, which has proposed the format and the structure for the information. As a timeframe, it is estimated a 2-year implementation period, with the support of stakeholders from Romania and Republic of Moldova. Within this action are subordinated a series of innovative ideas that have been proposed by community members from Romania and the Republic of

Moldova. One of them is presented in the following pages, another two were presented in the action plan carried out for the Republic of Moldova.

Objective 2.1. Improved information services and information infrastructure for the visitors of the Route StGS Romania-Moldova, by building a pilot Tourism Information Centre (TIC) in Botoșani, as a near-zero-energy building (nZeb standard), with a surface of 100 square metres, fully digitised, within a timeframe of 12 months.

Additional benefits:

- preserving the intangible spirit of the mediaeval era through digital and interactive methods that make full use of renewable energy and the circular economy;
- testing the use of nature-friendly construction materials and building a new sustainable building;
- promoting a touristic important areal that will lead to the growth of the local economy;
- support for the tourism SMEs from the city centre of Botoșani, that has an impetuous need of financial infusion (they will be indirectly supported by a better promotion of tourism businesses);
- integration of the vulnerable Roma community that lives in the city centre.

Sub-action description:

The innovative element of the project consists in the construction of an nZEB fully digitised tourist centre, green construction according to Regulation (EU) 2020/852 on taxonomy, equipped with digital screens and hologram, with the option to access the information in both, Romanian and English, in order to assure the international promotion and the Europeanization of the cultural assets from the cultural route.

Tourists and groups of children will be guided by its promotion through a digital totem placed at the Saint Nicholas Monastery of Popăuți, part of the Route of Stephen the Great and Saint, North-East Romania – Moldova cross-border area, which will also be promoted online through a web page dedicated to this action, accessible to both options, Romanian and English. It is proposed to preserve the intangible spirit of the mediaeval era through digital and interactive methods that use renewable energy.

The connection with the circular economy will be given by the solutions that will be implemented: the promotion of the CIT nZEB tourist centre. These activities do not require energy consumption and contribute to the development of circular tourism. Moreover, containers for selective recycling will be placed near the tourist information centre.

Activities:

1. TIC project development.
2. Establishing the interpretation concept.
3. Detailed inventory of digitization resources (informational, technical);
4. Project for digital totem.

5. Implementation of construction works.
6. Data collection and database conception for the tourism spots that will be promoted.
7. Promotion and integration of CIT in the information network.
8. Official launch and pilot testing.

Duration of implementation	2023-2025
Field(s) of innovation of Be.CULTOUR	Spiritual travel experience
Identified local challenge(s)	Reduced attractivity of some cultural objectives included in the Route StGS, due a lack of information or due out-dated promotion messages and tools. Lack of interactive interpretation infrastructure.
Cultural heritage assets(s)	Saint Nicholas Monastery of Popauti, part of The Route of Stephen the Great and Saint, North-East Romania – Moldova cross-border area.
Target group(s)	Tourists and groups of children will be guided by its promotion through a digital totem placed at the Saint Nicholas Monastery of Popauti, part of The Route of Stephen the Great and Saint, North-East Romania – Moldova cross-border area. The centre will also be promoted online through a web page dedicated to this action, which will have access to both options, Romanian and English. It is proposed to preserve the intangible spirit of the mediaeval era through digital and interactive methods that use renewable energy.
Responsible party(s)	Botoșani City Hall, CNIPT Botoșani
Responsible stakeholder(s)	Local tourism ecosystem Project team: Manager, European Legislation, Local tourism development manager, Chief Architect of the Botoșani City Hall, Architect
Raw budget estimation	150.000 EURO
Funding source (European, National, local funds)	Local budget PNRR funding (PNRR/2022/C5/2/B.2.1/1).
Other resources needed	Human resources specialised in nZeb constructions. Equipment for the digital promotion solutions. Tourism experts specialised in cultural heritage interpretation.

Indicator(s) for success (also considering circularity, diversity and inclusion)	Number of tourists that have visited the CIT; Number of tourists that have accessed the web site of the CIT;

Action 3. Creative use of existing natural and anthropogenic resources, to create new circular tourism products and experiences

The tourism industry is a resource-intensive-consumer sector. As well, the footprint of tourism on the environment is significant, not only due the tourists movement, but also due the impact that tourism infrastructure (accommodation, transportation a.o) has on nature and the local authentic culture. We should focus in the future to identify modalities for the re-use of the resources, to prolong the life-cycle of the raw resources and materials in tourism services, to shorten the path from the producer to end consumer. In the cogeneration process implemented in LWS1, LWS2 and LWS3, these topics were discussed, in search for future business models that will fulfil these goals. The present action, is responding to the strategic direction "How can European cities and regions relaunch and implement sustainable tourism based on CH attractiveness? How to make full use of the geographical diversity economies, green innovation, and actions taken towards a green new deal?" (ESPON, 2020). [58]

Sub-action 3.1. REVE heritage (REvitalization of the VErnacular heritage). Network of heritage centres for the interpretation of material and immaterial patrimony, using displaced wooden houses

Objective 3.1. The project will directly contribute to the preservation of the cultural landscape, part of the touristic product, through at least 4 workshops organised yearly, starting with 2023, using the support infrastructure that will be built in at least one village on the Route of Stephen the Great and Saint, using recycled wood from traditional disassembled houses. The REVE project will increase the understanding of local communities and visitors regarding the built landscape of rural areas crossed by the cultural route.

Sub-action description

The visitors will relate to the cultural heritage values, with the support of a network of interpretation centres, built in respect with nature and the principles of circular tourism. The REVE Heritage centres will serve as workshop and training centres in heritage, offering the chance to the tourists to "test" and "experience" the old construction techniques, associated with vernacular architecture from the rural communities situated along the cultural route StGS. With the support of storytelling and with members of rural communities, they will discover the handicrafts and will reconnect with nature and heritage. The action is mainly related to Putna Monastery, where a Heritage Interpretation Centre was initiated with the support of the local community. Within a 2-year-timeframe, another centre will be functional in Cacica and in Bilca. The circular principles are respected, all the buildings being made from recuperated / upcycled wood, old houses being

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[58] ESPON 2020. Synergetic relations between Cultural Heritage and Tourism as driver for territorial development: EPON evidence, October 2020. (Accessed at 02.10.2022)

relocated and refunctioned to serve the heritage centres. The Reve Heritage will respect the diversity in terms of gender and age, will involve elderly workers, specialists in traditional construction techniques. They will be mentors for the tourists. As well, the centres will host and accommodate tourists that will act as volunteers and will be involved in current work of the centre and in the cultural activities of the centre.

The principles and main values of REVE Heritage are **re-circulation, re-location, re-invention, re-discovering, re-connection**. The project would like to engage resources for recirculation of the old traditional houses that, through re-location will become new valuable assets for the community. The wood is recirculated and reintroduced in the consumption flow. The locals will rediscover the value of the wooden houses, and the community will re-learn to respect the traditional and vernacular heritage. (1) Circular Economy Aspects: REVE will reinclude in circulations stories, houses, traditions. From circular economy point of view, the REVE activities will reuse the old buildings and old materials; (2) Human-centred, fair and responsible tourism aspects: all the activities will involve the local communities, that will become co-authors of the activities (tours, workshops a.o.); the workshops will educate the members of the local communities in old and forgotten construction techniques; the resources and materials will be nature-friendly, non-polluting (clay, stroh, local food a.o.); (3) Cultural Europeanisation: the vernacular cultural heritage is part of the European culture; the best-practices can be extrapolated to other EU areas.

Link to cultural Europeanisation will be assured by the involvement of international volunteers and volunteers, and through the international dissemination of the workshops and activities that will be organised in the REVE centres.

The actions are related with the European Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century 2017 (Council of Europe), the New European Agenda for Culture 2018, the European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage 2019 (European Commission), European Union Urban Agenda: cluster Culture and Cultural Heritage (orientation paper), Territorial Agenda 2030, PRACT Nord-Est 2021-2027.

Activity. 3.2.

1. Guidelines for building with reclaimed wood.
2. The execution of the architectural plan for the adaptation of the functionality of a former building to the new needs of a cultural centre.
3. Construction works for the extension of the Putna centre (with the support of volunteers).
4. Catalogue of crafts and human resources mapping (trainers and mentors).
5. Catalogue with tourism programs and offers.
6. Training of local guides in the heritage interpretation (members of the local community).
7. Seminars in the field of circular tourism and circular economy for different target groups in the community.

Implementation period	2023-2025
Field(s) of innovation of Be.CULTOUR	(1) Rural co-living: the tourists will share their space with a rural community selected for activities. (2) Sensorial Heritage Experience: the village and rural life will be experienced

	and interpreted with the support of the tourism guides. (3) Contemporary Meanings of Heritage: the archaic handicrafts are reinterpreted. (4) Spiritual Training experience and Nature as Heritage will be tackled in the tours and packages what will be developed;
Identified local challenge(s)	The business will contribute to the rescue and recirculation of traditional houses that are in present intensively demolished and destroyed, in a large number of villages.
Cultural heritage assets(s)	Vernacular architecture of the villages along the route StGS; Cultural landscape of the rural communities.
Target group(s)	Volunteers. Member of communities. Artisans. Voluntourists (volunteer-tourists) Member of communities. Handcrafters. The role of the tourists will be changed from a CONSUMER-USER to a VALUE-PRODUCER. The tourists will contribute to cultural activities and interact with the community. The business has as well a strong social support side, the people involved as lectures for the artisans workshops, are elderly people. Similarly, the interpretation activities will be developed with the support of young people, will act as community supporters, story tellers. The gastronomy workshops will promote local food, local consumption, in respect to a wise use of all resources. The upcycling of old houses will lead to the reduction of new wood and new resources, with a deep impact on the entire production chain.
Responsible party(s)	iaBucovina Association; ADER Association; Putna Local Development Association.
Responsible stakeholder(s)	Local communities; Putna City Hall.
Raw budget estimation	50.000 EURO
Funding source (European, National, local funds)	LEADER funds; Cultural projects of the GALs in the area; AFCN; PNRR; Crowdfunding.

Other resources needed	Experts in restoration; Experts in website design for volunteering-tourism.
Indicator(s) for success (also considering circularity, diversity and inclusion)	Number of participants in training courses; Number of relocated houses; Number of visitors to heritage centres.

Action 4. Creation of new tourism activities, centred on nature experience. Holistic approach to natural and cultural heritage.

According to Plog (1974), tourists consider a tourist destination to be a place worth visiting, as long as they have the impression that they can enjoy a lot of activities. Visitors should have the opportunity to "experience" the destination and discover its beauty. An important asset of the Route Stephen the Great and Saint is the diversity of the landscape and the alternation of the urban-rural space during it. The countries included in the route are cultural objectives, which are associated with a visiting itinerary, with little possibility of extending the stay and of increasing the duration of stay in the area. This should be a desideratum of the working group for the next period: the creation of activity and experience packages to be associated with visiting the route, in order to determine the tourists to stay in the area for a longer period.

Action 4 'Creation of new tourism activities centred on experience in nature' will make the best use of the resources of the environment, combined with the cultural resources of the rural communities. It will highlight the socio-cultural authenticity of the host communities, create opportunities for the preservation of the built cultural heritage and contribute to the diversification of the sources of income and social benefits for all members of the community.

Extrapolating the objectives of UNWTO (https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development), we could affirm that a 'key element in the development of tourism should be connected with the optimal use of environmental resources' and to the 'essential ecological processes' for the conservation of natural heritage and biodiversity. One of the most important sub-actions proposed for the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan is related to the Vânători-Neamț Natural Park. The duration of the implementation of the activities will be of approximately 24 months and harmonized with the process of accreditation of the area as a Green Destination (www.greendestination.org). Also, the sub-action is subordinated to the Tourism Masterplan of Neamț county 2020-2030 and PRACT Neamț. Europeanisation will be ensured through the exchange of best practices with other important destinations, part of the Green Destination Network.

The 'Digital Nomads' action will develop facilities and activities for a new group of visitors, which could contribute to the visibility of the destination, but also to the increase of the quality of the tourist experience within the destination of the country. All the resources used will be environmentally friendly and will be purchased in accordance with the principles of circular tourism.

Sub-action 4.1. The Bison's Land Cultural Heritage.

Objective 4.1. Creation of a unique package of 'slow' experiences that allows consumers to have a high-quality stay, through a diversity of tourism activities that can be accessed as predefined solutions ('ready-to-use'), which will be developed within 20 months.

This solution will allow the communities within the destination to highlight the natural, cultural and spiritual heritage of the area, to benefit from their correct exploitation and therefore to contribute to the sustainable development of the area. The specific characteristics of the area allow the integration into the proposal of natural, cultural and spiritual elements. This will generate an advantageous situation for both parties (guests and tourists) in terms of the protection of nature, the well-being of communities and spiritual aspects.

Sub-action description:

In the proximity of the route, the Vânători Neamț Natural Park is situated, which by its attributes is an unique area, which combines the spiritual experience given by visiting the "Country of the Monasteries" with a natural area of unique beauty. The presence of bisons, an emblematic element associated with the history of Moldova, is an attribute of uniqueness, which can thematically connect the Park to the Route "Stephen the Great and Saint". With an optimal visiting infrastructure, the park is already part of a destination management network and can host in the future various activities associated with tourism in nature, cultural tourism, with the integration of circular economy elements.

The Bison's Land covers the territory of the Vânători-Neamț natural reserve (the Vânători-Neamț Natural Park and the surrounding areas), which was proposed for introduction in the route Stephen the Great and Saint. The list of activities described in this sub-action is part of a plan developed by the park administration, and the aim is to improve the experience of the tourists and to increase the length of stays in this destination.

Due to the large number of monasteries and monastic settlements, the area is known as the "Romanian Athos". The natural heritage is represented by huge wooded areas and 3,000 species of plants and animals, including the large carnivores of the Carpathians and the iconic European bison, reintroduced 10 years ago.

Nowadays, tourists are mainly interested in monasteries, neglecting the natural heritage and the traditional aspects of the area. This can be turned into a huge opportunity and will make it possible to strengthen local identity, the well-being of communities, local entrepreneurs and help protect species and ecosystems.

The main purpose of the solution is to provide a unique experience for the tours of the Bison Land, trying to combine in a holistic way certain natural, cultural and spiritual characteristics of the area.

Given the spiritual interest of the tourists, they will be encouraged to spend their free time connecting to nature, creating new routes or networks, participating in events, and experiencing rebirth, peace of mind and heart. Small infrastructures are needed for activities such as the "forest bathing[59]": rest benches, panels that display an adequate presentation of the attractions of nature as a timeless witness of history and as a creation of God. In addition to what is mentioned above, local rangers will offer guided tours for wildlife observation, especially for tracking or observing

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[59] In 1982 the Japanese named it as Shinrin-yoku – „Forest bathing" – „divulging in the atmosphere of the forest", that activity that involves deepening in the forest, using all the senses to connect to the tranquillity of the forest.

bison. Treasure hunting experience will be launched by using a mobile app, which allows visitors to discover the Bison Area for themselves.

Culinary events will be organised, based on local traditional networks and products, which will highlight the natural decorations or the human heritage. The events will include workshops with folk craftsmen, exhibitions selling local products and various artistic moments with local performers.

This modern holistic approach will attract more people to the area and the Route Stephen the Great and Saint, helping to achieve a common progress and to develop a sustainable, healthy destination. Last but not least, due to the change in the behaviour of the tourists, who will spend more time in the area, using local products and services, will not only increase local businesses, but will also have a great contribution to the preservation of the cultural, spiritual and natural heritage of the area. The accentuation of traditional values, cultural and spiritual aspects of nature are necessary steps to ensure the sustainable development of the area.

The business will highlight the passion and talent of the community members, promote them and help them increase their income thanks to their favourite activities (crafts, handmade products, traditional dances and gastronomy).

Promoting local culture will increase the local pride and authenticity of the community, triggering the need to convey these values and capitalise on them.

The events promoted will have little impact on the environment. Local products, materials and ingredients with low CO2 emissions will be used. Reusable materials will also be promoted and, at the same time, harmful plastics and potential materials will be avoided.

The proposal allows for the reduction of tourist pressure in crowded areas, which entails certain benefits in terms of reducing waste. Walking on trails accompanied by a local guide will provide the necessary ecological education for the conservation of habitats and species.

The main idea of the project is to prepare the locals to take over some of the positions in the organising team and to be paid for these activities. This would also be a way to increase not only their income, but also their motivation. Local agriculture is one of subsistence, using traditional methods, oriented towards the supply of products at local level. For this reason, gastronomic events, which use only local products, are an example of a circular economy. Resources are managed in an environmentally friendly way, products are made using sustainable methods and materials, in which no packaging is involved, with a minimum of organic waste. In the case of routes and facilities to optimise the rest infrastructure, local raw materials such as stone, wood that are found nearby will be used. Walking, cycling, or treasure hunting involve minimal use of raw materials. The existence of a calendar of events to promote activities in the off-season will make it easier for tourists to plan visits to the area.

Sub-activities

All the events will be included and promoted through a calendar of events with a unique identity. There is also talk of a long list of activities to prolong the stay in the destination and to ensure a slow pace of experience:

- Identification of the locations.
- Development of walking and cycling routes and organisation of specific infrastructure.
- Development of a "Treasure Hunt" mobile app application.
- Promoting culture and local products by including them in the routes to be designed.
- Implementation of the Albergo Diffuso concept in the surrounding villages (rehabilitation of traditional houses to create authentic accommodation structures);
- Creating a calendar of events.

- Encouraging local producers and small producers to use specialised platforms for the sale of their products.

Implementation period	2023-2026 (24-36 months)
Field(s) of innovation of Be.CULTOUR	The areas of innovation that this solution addresses are: "Sensorial Heritage Experience" (food, music, dance, crafts), "Spiritual Travel Experience" (walking and cycling in a spiritual area, with a lot of monastic tourist attractions, benefiting by a proper guiding), "Nature as Heritage" (forests, wild fauna, the landscapes as an effect of interaction between traditional communities and nature etc). The cooperation at the local level and the involvement of different categories of stakeholders, based on the experience of the team's members regarding the cooperation with the community, will allow to successfully intermingle the 3 innovation areas.
Identified local challenge(s)	Due to the current orientation of tourists the natural heritage and local traditions are underused. In particular, the presence of European bison (in captivity, in semi-freedom and in wilderness) is not capitalised at its true value, taking into consideration that a European bison hunting is related to the founding of the mediaeval state of Moldavia. The proposal will facilitate the reduction of tourism pressure on the crowded areas, with certain benefits regarding the reduction of wastes. Travelling by foot or bike riding and using local products will decrease the overall pollution. The current problems, for this area, but also for others in the cross-border destination, are: ● Mass tourism, seasonality, religious tourism with short stays; ● Depopulation of rural areas; ● Loss of authenticity; ● Short-stay accommodation in the targeted area; ● Reducing the pressure exerted by excessive tourism in neighbouring areas; ● Poor offer of tourist activities in the area; ● Poor data collection regarding the tourist's profile; ● Endangered species and ecosystems. The actions will take place in a predominantly rural area. Through our solution, we will promote cooperation and encourage the creation of added value, highlighting the unique features of local people, who will learn that it is always better to cooperate. This will also improve the social life of the community.

Cultural heritage assets(s)	• The Bison Land, Vânători Neamț and the surrounding villages (Agapia, Filioara, Crăcăoani, Ghindăoani and Bălțătești). • Monasteries in the Neamț county; • Neamt Fortress ; • Intangible heritage: folklore, crafts, local gastronomy.
Target group(s)	The Bison's Land focuses on preserving local authenticity, biodiversity, in order to ensure the well-being of the local community. Tourists of all ages.
Responsible party(s)	Bison Land Ecotourism Association. Vânători Neamț Park Administration. Foresters and managers of tourist attractions.
Responsible stakeholder(s)	The local authorities of the aimed territory. SMEs and tourism organizations. Local producers.
Raw budget estimation	200.000 EURO
Funding source (European, National, local funds)	RAF – Romanian American Foundation. National sponsors. PNRR
Other resources needed	IT specialists. Specialists in interpretation.
Indicator(s) for success (also considering circularity, diversity and inclusion)	Length and number of interpretations trails. Number of visitors. Length of stay. Number of events. Application of treasure – hunt defined.

Sub-action 4.2. Digital Nomads Platform

Objective 4.2. The development of the region as a destination for highly skilled people who can work remotely (digital nomads) through a curatorial experience involving local actors in tourism. It is aimed at creating facilities that allow those who choose remote work, in an attractive destination, to have a spiritual and transformative journey, with unique experiences, different from the solutions currently existing on the market.

Local communities will particularly benefit from the fact that highly skilled and well-paid people will join them for a period of 6 months, being actively involved in the community.

Sub-action description

Implementation period	2022-2024
Field(s) of innovation of Be.CULTOUR	Spiritual travel experience; Transformative travel; Remote Working Destination
Identified local challenge(s)	Lack of unique and interesting services and experiences for new groups of visitors (in this case digital nomads).
Cultural heritage assets(s)	All the objectives of the route.
Target group(s)	Employees in urban areas, millennials, DINK (double income, no kids), single people.
Responsible party(s)	The companies that will have as task the development of IT solutions. The travel agency that will develop the digital platform.
Responsible stakeholder(s)	Small tour operators. Other accommodation units. Local authorities.
Raw budget estimation	50.000 EURO
Funding source (European, National, local funds)	PNRR, Creative Europe
Other resources needed	Partners in business promotion;
Indicator(s) for success (also considering circularity, diversity and inclusion)	Number of visitors. Number of beneficiaries registered in the programme.

The visitors will be part of the community in a sustainable way for at least 6 months, filling a skill gap for the SMEs within the region. All the experience will be supported by a digital platform, that will act as an attraction for people looking for a remote working destination, an area different from their residence or from where the headquarters of their company is located. The platform will also function as a guide for orienting in-person experiences and as a marketing tool for the region, collecting feedback and attracting other remote working visitors - digital nomads from their organisations.

The experiences will be designed as sustainable as possible, with one of the personas being the green hero. By focusing on longer stays the solution will help reduce carbon footprint from airplane / car travel for digital nomads, since most platforms encourage spending a week or

two in the same destination. We will include a carbon calculator in the platform counting the savings for the period spent in the region.

The Digital Nomads platform - Hero's Journeys in Northeast Romania is based on the common template of stories that involve a hero who goes on an adventure, is victorious in a decisive crisis, and comes home changed or transformed. In the highly volatile today's work environment, the team aims to develop a one-stop-shop solution for highly skilled digital workers (individuals and their families), to choose the region as a work - live - explore destination for up to 6 months.

The platform will explore everyone's unique needs and skill set through a hero lens that will match their profile with a recommended journey as a digital recipe (from local accommodation to tourism experiences to freelance local jobs). Each hero's journey will be connected to history bits from Stephen's route. In their journey, the digital nomads have access to an authentic experience, created by local actors and carefully curated on the Digital Nomadic Platform. The project is unique due to the gamification of the user's experience, facilitating early immersion in the region by taking over roles (personas) from the local heritage, while offering a complete work-in/live-in package. The solution can be easily scaled and adapted to other regions, adapting the characters to local history.

4. Innovative actions selected for the Be.CULTOUR Hackathon

4.1. The digital nomads

Introduction

The Covid crisis has led to important changes in society. Working from home and the flexibility of working times has led to the appearance of new needs and new tourist products: accommodation services with working specific facilities placed in the middle of nature, associated with optimal conditions for those who have opted to work from a distance. Work from home or from other locations (remote-work) has been accepted by companies, initially as a solution to ensure much-needed social distancing during the medical crisis. However, there have been studies which have shown that, in the long run, the alternation of work from distance with the work in companies can increase the satisfaction of employees.

The proposed business idea responds to this type of need, for an important category of customers: young people in the workforce, with above-average wages, willing to retire in nature for relaxation and for activities related to their workplace.

"Digital Nomads" will consider strengthening the region as a remote work destination for highly skilled people - digital nomads, through an experience specially organised with the help of local actors operators in tourism, focused on a transformative and spiritual journey. The local communities will benefit from highly qualified and well-paid people, who will join them for a period of 6 months to go through their work schedule, but also to get involved as volunteers in the community.

The estimated start date of the business is January 1, 2023, the implementation duration being of two years, until December 31, 2025. The innovation areas considered are: (1) nature as heritage; (2) the experience of spiritual travel.

Opportunity existent on the market

The current context has led to the appearance of a new need, and according to the studies carried out, the situation generated by Covid will persist for a long time. Working remotely in non-conformist spaces will continue to be a trend. This situation has led to the emergence of a new category of customers – the "digital nomad", who wants to optimally combine the tasks given by the workplace with the personal life quality.

The innovative character is given by the integration into the community of people with significant incomes, with a higher level of training, who will interact with the local actors and will contribute to the well-being of the community, both through their involvement in its development and through the services purchased expenses they will make in the area.

Digital nomads will be a part of the community and will contribute in a sustainable manner to solving the need for specialised personnel in certain fields, at the level of SMEs in the area. The experience will be supported by a digital platform, which will have a role of:

- promotion, for people who are looking for a place where they can retire to work from a distance (remote destination);
- guidance, for the personal experience's orientation (in-person experiences);
- marketing tool of the region (collecting feedback and attracting other remote working visitors (digital nomads), from the same or similar organisations).

The problem / the need to which the business idea will respond

The city of Iași and its surroundings represents a very appealing area from a tourist point of view, but too little exploited in an integrated way. Close to each other, tourist attractions of different categories are not included in unitary tourism products and offers. To this we can add the economic disparities in the administration and the lack of highly specialised workforce of local SMEs, which lead to low economic competitiveness.

A partial list of identified problems would be:

- the extensive geographical coverage of the heritage pilot site, with several relatively unknown attractions and/or difficult to reach in a single journey.
- high diversity and reduced training of local tour operators.
- lack of predictability for some events.

The business solution / solutions to be implemented

Through the implementation of this project, cultural and historical heritage objectives will be connected and combined with some belonging to active tourism and with others that highlight the traditions of the places. Attractive tourism products will be created for active, curious people who want to try new experiences and go beyond the framework of classical tourism.

The inclusion in the project of community producers and service providers, local bicycling associations or associations that encourage tourism or environmental activities, will respond to the circularity of the project.

The "Digital Nomads –Hero's Journeys in North East Romania" platform is based on the structure of some stories that have as their central point a hero who goes on an adventure, is victorious in critical crises and returns home changed and transformed. In the ever-changing work environment, the team also aims to develop an integrated" one-stop-shop" solution for highly skilled digital workers (individuals and their families) to choose the region as a place of job-life-exploration, for a period that can be up to 6 months.

The platform will explore the unique needs of each individual and the set of skills, through the lens of a hero, and will create a stay, in the form of a digital "network", which will include a complex package of services, from accommodation services to tourist experiences and local jobs. Each travel will be connected to the historical sequence associated with the route Stephen the Great and Saint.

Sub-activities:

Digital nomads will have access to the authentic experience co-created by local actors and managed in detail by the Digital Nomads Platform.

The project is unique through the gamification of the user's experience which, with the offering of a complete "work in/live in" package, will facilitate an immersion in the region from the very beginning, by appropriating some roles (personas) belonging to the local culture.

The objectives included in the offer for digital nomads will be:

- historical/spiritual cultural objectives – Dobrovăţ Monastery, St. Nicolae Domnesc Church, Palace of Culture from Iași;
- natural objectives – Codrii Iașului, Codrii Paşcanilor – hiking trails and trails for bikers;
- traditional activities – beekeeping (archaic occupation), wine production (there are many local wineries with a tradition of hundreds of years), traditional cuisine, but also workshops that reproduce mediaeval occupations.

Potential for development and growth

The solution can be easily scaled and adapted to other regions by changing their character/persons that need to be connected to the local history. Alternatively, other tourist attractions from Iași and its surroundings will be included in order to complete and diversify the cultural offer (museums, parks, memorial houses). Emphasis will be placed on the permanent updating of the events calendar, on the offers of tourism operators in the area and of the providers of leisure and business tourism products and services.

Market and customers

Customers will be people who work from a distance, especially from the IT industry, but not exclusively. Also, in addition to individual clients (single, or unmarried couple) another category is represented by families with children.

Tourist packages will put visitor face-to-face with the local producers, suppliers of products and services.

Competition

There is no direct competition in this segment of tourism services. Similar products, which would meet similar needs, are the active tourism packages offered in the isolated, picturesque destinations. However, these do not include the territory associated with the Stephen the Great and Saint cultural route.

Different platforms for nomads/isolated/expatriates that usually provide information about the destination, legislation, accommodation, insurance, events of destinations where "retreats" on certain topics are organised.

Financial resources

The financial estimation is 50.000 EUR: The financial sources considered are: European funds, SEE grants, NEXT Interreg Romania-Republic of Moldova, AFCN in the field of Culture (Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Exchange), other types of grants. After the launch, a financing mechanism will be provided in the business area.

The success indicators will take into account:

- number of local producers involved in the project.
- number of new tourist attractions included in the touristic offers.
- number of new touristic programs created.
- number of digital nomads attracted to the region.

The necessary team/human resources.

- tour operators,
- event organisers,
- local authorities in the targeted communities,
- local producers,
- providers of leisure services,

- tour guides.

4.2. Bison Land Heritage. Creating new touristic activities that will enrich the nature experiences, within the destination.

Brief overview of the business

An important resource of the cultural route Stephen the Great and Saint is the very beautiful nature. Extrapolating the sustainable development objectives formulated by UNWTO (https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development) we can say that a 'key element in tourism development should be the optimal use of natural resources' and the use of 'ecology-oriented processes' for nature conservation and biodiversity.

The business idea is focused on the territory of the Vânători-Neamț Natural Park and is based on the activities that can be carried out within its exceptional natural setting.

"Bison Land Heritage. Enhanced Nature Experience" will combine environmental resources with socio-cultural resources and the authenticity of the area, with activities to preserve cultural heritage and contribute to supplementing incomes and increasing the well-being of the host communities.

All the resources used will be friendly to nature and will be purchased in compliance with the principles of circular tourism.

The duration of the implementation will be 24 months and is part of the plan for the accreditation of the park as a recognized Green Destination area (www.greendestination.org), but it is also subordinated to the strategy of Neamț county and PRACT Neamț.

Europeanisation will be ensured through an exchange of practices with other important destinations, members of the Green Destination network.

The opportunity on the market.

Following the Covid crisis, more and more people are turning to packages that are considering relaxation in nature and various experiences in the midst of it. In this context, the enchanting setting of Vânători Neamț Park represents the ideal space for spending a holiday in the middle of nature, but also in an extremely dense area in important objectives for cultural tourism and spirituality. In this context, the Bison Land destination can become a reference point for experiencing the beautiful nature and cultural heritage of the area.

Nowadays, tourists are especially interested in monasteries, neglecting the natural heritage and traditional aspects of the area. This can be turned into a huge opportunity and will allow for the improvement of the local identity, the well-being of communities, local entrepreneurs and will contribute to the protection of species and ecosystems.

Given the spiritual interest of the tourists, the area is perfect both for spending time in a dynamic way in nature, going through new routes or participating in events, and for connecting to the lines and the spirituality of the places.

It is intended to create a non-invasive infrastructure that contributes to orientation in nature, to the enhancement of the quality of experience in nature. For example, it is intended to arrange spaces for "bathing in the forest", to place rest benches, panels with an adequate

presentation of attraction or nature, as a timeless witness of history.

The Problem / The Need to which the business idea will respond

In recent years, it has been found that nature and cultural heritage, natural traditions are under-utilised. In particular, the presence of the bison (in captivity, in semi-freedom or in the wild), is not capitalised as a value in the true sense of the word, taking into account the fact that the constitution of the mediaeval state of Moldova is also linked to this legendary animal.

The business proposal will facilitate the reduction of the pressure made by tourism in crowded areas, which benefits on the tourist experience, but also on the (reduction) of the environmental pollution (reduction of fishing, reduction of degradation of natural resources). Travelling by foot or by bicycle, as well as using local products, will also help reduce pollution.

The current problems that will be addressed (directly or indirectly) by the proposed solution are:

- o Mass tourism, seasonality, predominant religious tourism, associated especially with very short durations of stay or with excursions / transit visits.
- o Depopulation of rural areas.
- o Short duration of stay in target areas.
- o Pressure of mass tourism (overtourism) in proximity areas.
- o Reduced tourist offer in the area.
- o Reduced information (data collection) on the profile of tourists.
- o Endangering some species and ecosystems.

The business will focus mainly on rural areas. With the help of the solutions that will be developed, cooperation and added value creation will be promoted by highlighting local communities, which will be supported to collaborate better.

The solution / business solutions to be implemented.

The creation of a unique package of 'quiet' experiences, which will allow consumers to enjoy a quality stay, various activities that will be offered as ready-to-use solutions, which will be developed over the period of 20 months.

This initiative will allow communities in the vicinity to interact more with the natural, cultural and spiritual heritage, and to obtain benefits from their valorisation, benefits that can later contribute to the sustainable development of the area.

The events promoted will have little impact on the environment. Local products, materials and ingredients with low CO_2 emissions will be used. We will also promote reusable materials and, at the same time, avoid harmful plastics and other potential atrial materials. For example, we will use our own cups and cutlery. The proposal makes it possible to reduce tourist pressure in crowded areas, bringing benefits in terms of reducing the waste.

Visiting the trails, with a local guide, will provide the necessary ecological education for habitat and species conservation.

The main idea of the project is to prepare the locals to take over some of the functions of the organising team and to be paid for these activities. Local agriculture is one of subsistence, using traditional methods, being oriented towards the supply of products at local level. For this

reason, gastronomic events, which use only local products, are an example of a circular economy. The resources are managed in an environmentally friendly way, the products are made using sustainable methods and materials, with the avoidance of the use of packaging and with a minimum of organic waste.

In the case of dedicated small routes and infrastructure, local raw materials such as stone, or wood found nearby will be used. Walking, cycling or treasure hunting involves minimal use of raw materials.

With a calendar of events to promote activities in the low season or in the less busy periods, it will be easier for tourists to plan their visits to the area. All the events will be included, promoted through a dedicated calendar, which will have a unique identity. A long list of activities is also being discussed to prolong the stay of tourists in the destination and to ensure a slow ('quiet') experience in the area.

Sub-activities and steps in business implementation.

o Identification of the locations that could be included in the accommodation network,
o Development of hiking and cycling routes and other relevant elements necessary for the optimization of infrastructure,
o Development of a mobile application for interactive activities such as treasure hunt,
o Promotion of local culture and products (short list, professional images, specific tools),
o Implementation of the "Albergo Diffuso" concept in the surrounding villages (rehabilitation of traditional houses in order to arrange authentic accommodation structures),
o Creating a calendar of events,
o Encouraging local producers (especially small producers) to use specialised platforms to sell their products.

The development and growth potential of the business

The specific characteristics of the area allow the integration of the proposal into the existing resources and the creation of a business from which all the parties involved will benefit. Due to the large number of monasteries and monastic settlements, the area is known as the "Romanian Athos". The natural heritage is represented by huge wooded areas, 3,000 species of plants and animals, including the great carnivores of the Carpathians and the emblematic European bison, reintroduced 10 years ago in the park's territory.

In addition to what we mentioned above, we could add that the proposed actions are in synergy with the activities carried out by the Administration of the Vânători-Neamț Natural Park. Local rangers will offer guided tours for wildlife observation, especially for tracking bison. Treasure hunting experiences will be launched using a mobile app, which will allow visitors to discover Bison Land on their own. These activities can be multiplied and diversified in the future in order to preserve the interest of tourists to return in the years to come.

The activities will promote the members of the local community and help them to increase their incomes, thanks to their activities, in which we intend to involve the country (in the practice of crafts, making hand-made products, traditional dances and gastronomy). Promoting local culture will increase the pride and authenticity of the community, triggering the need to convey these values and preserve them in the future. We must keep in mind that everyday worries can

lead, over time, to the risk of losing the precious local values that give colour, charm and uniqueness to the area.

Market and customers

Tourists of all ages, who want to spend quality time, consume authentic experience and products. Those who are interested in a healthy life, but also about the health of the environment. Who prefer activities in nature, as well as the interpretation of nature. They want to connect to their own spirituality and the spirituality of the world.

Customer segments:
- educational institutions/ teachers
- parents/families
- event organisers
- travel agencies
- public institutions
- companies - (teambuilding, health care)

Competition

Similar activities are carried out in Transylvania, in villages with fortified churches. A number of similar activities are also beginning to be organised in the Danube Delta Biosphere.

Financial resources

The financial estimation is EUR 200,000: The sources of funding envisaged are: EEA grants, AFCN in the field of Culture (Cultural Entrepreneurship, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Exchange).

The success indicators will consider:

- number of local producers involved in the project.
- number of new tourist attractions included in the touristic offers.
- number of new tourism programs created.

- **The necessary team/human resources.**
- tour operators,
- local authorities of the aimed community,
- local producers,
- providers of leisure services,
- tour guides.

5. The cross-border character of the pilot area of the Stephen the Great and Saint route, in Romania and Republic of Moldova.

5.1. Destination development plan. List of priorities for the development of the circular cultural tourism on the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route. Relationship with the areas of innovation

Strategic vision

The route "Stephen the Great and Saint" will be a model of sustainable and regenerative cultural tourism in 2030, which will promote sustainable and equitable regional development. It will harness unique cultural and natural resources, used in a sustainable way through circular economy models, centered on communities and their members. The experiences included will reduce the current pressure on the over-exploited territories in the region, and the activities carried out will be unfolded with the rational use of natural resources (energy, water, soil, biodiversity) and with the enhancement of local food and artisanal products. The route will arouse the interest of Romanian and foreign tourists and will lead to the increase of the well-being of the local communities, to the improvement of the ecosystems, to the improvement of the local identity of all those who are part of the Romania-Republic of Moldova cross-border area.

The cooperation of the partners from Romania and the Republic of Moldova, within the Be.CULTOUR project, was preceded by inter-institutional cooperation partnerships, in the frame of numerous cross-border projects. Both partners involved, ADR Nord-Est and "Verde e Moldova" Association recognized the importance of the pilot area of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route, by proposing it in the Be.CULTOUR project.

The cultural-touristic route " Stephen the Great and Saint " covers about 2,000 km and crosses twenty localities in Romania and nine localities in the Republic of Moldova, offering tourists a lesson of history and spirituality through the sights represented by the monasteries founded, their fortified fortresses, over 500 years old royal cellars (hrubelor), whose continuity has been preserved until today and, last but not least, of the museums where exhibitions with vestiges from the reign of the Stephen the Great and Saint are organised.

This is the first cross-border route in the region, and promotes the following tourist attractions: fortresses (Suceava, Soroca, Neamț, Tighina), areas of vine cultivation and wine production, vineyards and royal cellars (Cotnari, Mileștii Mici, Cricova, Purcari, Et Cetera, Panciu-Odobești, etc.), monasteries founded by the voivode (Putna, Pătrăuţi, Voroneţ, Volovăţ, Reuseni, Sfântul Ilie, Dobrovăţ, Sfântul Nicolae Domnesc, Hârlău, Sfântul Nicolae Popăuţi, Cuvioasa Parascheva, Tăierea Capului Sfântului Ioan Botezătorul Church, Adormirea Maicii Domnului Church in Borzești-Bacău, Căpriana), museums (The Museum of vine and wine in Hârlău and the Museum of Stephen the Great in Vaslui, the Museum of History and Ethnography in Mereni), The

Palace of Culture in Iași, built on an old foundation of the voivode, the Princely Courts of Tg. Neamț and Vaslui, the cave complex from Ţîpova, Orhei, Saharna and the Monument of Stephen the Great in Chisinau, as well as the High Bridge (Podul Înalt) to celebrate the victory obtained in the fight with the Ottoman Empire.

The new route " Stephen the Great and Saint " is based on the existing route. In its development, two objectives will be pursued:

O1. Extending the route by **including other objectives both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova;**

O2. Extension of the route in Ukraine, in order to create the conditions for the registration of the route in **the Network of European Cultural Routes.**

To be considered international, the cultural-tourist route " Stephen the Great and Saint " must cross 3 states, so the extension of the route in Ukraine is a natural step of promotion and internationalisation of the route.

At the launching conference of the route, Sergei Humeniuk, counselor at the Ukrainian Embassy in the Republic of Moldova, mentioned: Stephen the Great and Saint " *We have at least 2 tourist attractions that are in Ukraine, that have a direct connection with Stephen the Great and can be included in the route: the White Fortress from the Odessa region and the Hotin Fortress from the Chernivtsi region. Therefore, if these expansion efforts continue, then we can say that this route could become an extraordinarily good example for new cross-border projects, such as those in the field of viticulture*"[60].

"*The route «Voivode Stephen the Great and Holy» seems to be very promising, based on culture, traditions and history. I am very pleased to see this initiative, especially in countries where the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe have developed quite significantly in recent years. I am also pleased that the governments of Romania, The Republic of Moldova and Ukraine are interested in cooperating in this regard; 47 countries are currently party to the Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. We hope that Moldova and Ukraine will join shortly.* "

Stefano Dominioni, Director, European Institute of Cultural Routes,
Council of Europe:

Several proposals for Romania, the North-East Region were made by the workshops' participants. They are represented in the image below, on the map developed with the help of Google Map, by ADR Nord-Est experts, where the red dots represent the objectives contained in the current version of the route, and those with blue represent the proposed locations.

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[60]   https://www.natura.md/ruta-cultural-turistica-voievodul-stefan-cel-mare-si-sfant-ar-putea-deveni-un-traseu-international (accessed 2.09.2022)
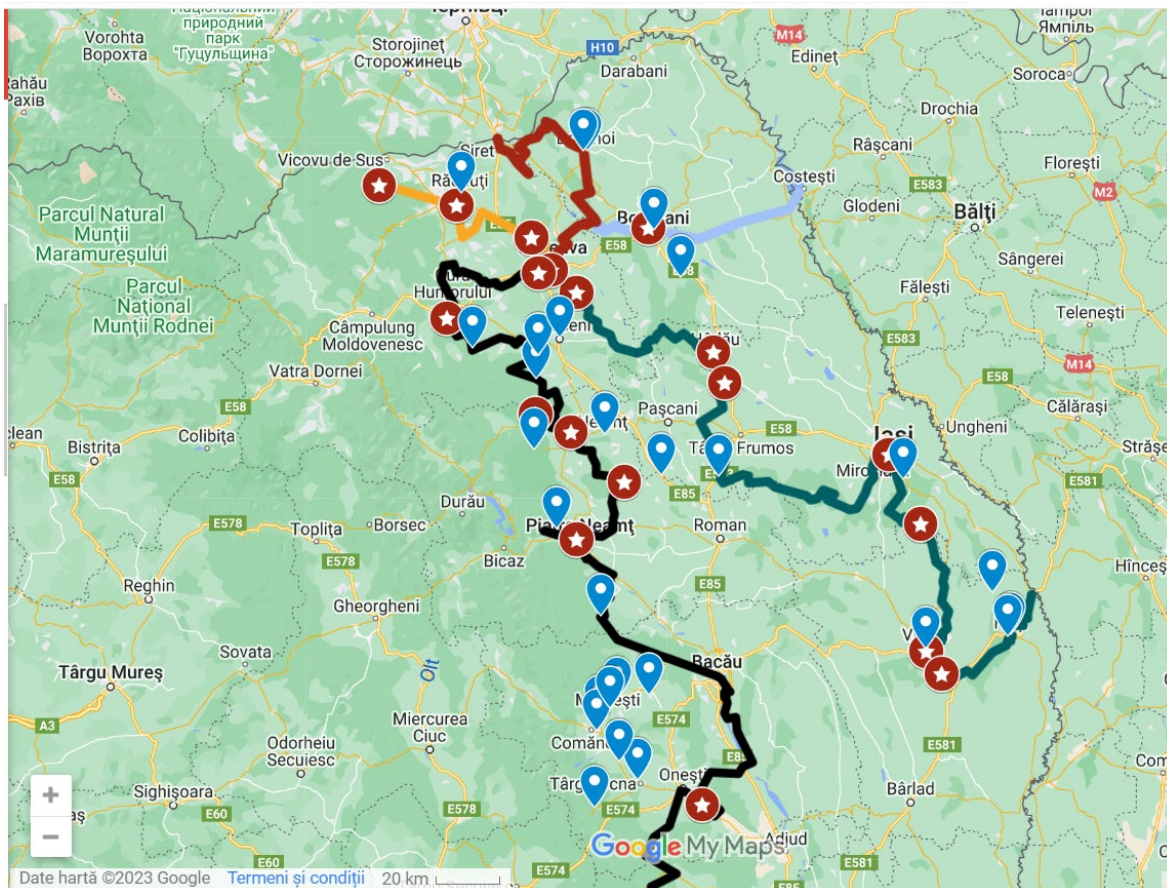
Figure no. 16. Localization of the objectives of the North-East Region, proposed within the Be.CULTOUR workshops to be included in the Route of the Voivode Stephen the Great and Saint (signalled with blue pine), related to the objectives of the current Route (signalled with a red badge)

The new tourist attractions proposed for Romania during the workshops are the following:

County	Proposals made in the second workshop (LWS2)
Bacău	St. Paraschiva Church from Hangani (originally a Stephen's the Great fort) "Răzeșilor Găzari Museum Tg Ocna Salt Mine Rosetti-Tescanu Mansion from Tescani Slănic Moldova Ghica Palace from Comăneşti Ghica Castle from Dofteana Bogdana Monastery from Oneşti Măgura Monastery Răducanu Monastery Precista Church from Bacău
Botoşani	The Bridge from Coşula – the monastic complex from Coşula Old historical centre (medieval ovens, cellars)

| County	Proposals made in the second workshop (LWS2)
	The Vârgolici wooden church (Dorohoi) ST. Nicholas Church, Dorohoi The 4 oaks of Stephen the Great, from Darabani
Iași	Iași woods The castles and mansions from Iași county The Princely Court of Hârlău
Neamț	Tazlău Monastery (founded by Stephen) Bistriţa Monastery (the tower founded by StGS) Vânători Neamţ Natural Park Hanul Ancuței (Inn) The Timișești Stallion Stable (the legend says that it would be on the same place where Stephen's stallion stablle was) The New Fortress of Roman
Suceava	Slatina Râșca The White Church in Baia Bogdana Church, Rădăuţi St. John Monastery in Suceava
Vaslui	Huși Archdiocese The vineyards and wine cellars in the area of Huși and Aerești, viticultural museum at the Agricultural High School in Huși Ștefan cel Mare County Museum in Vaslui Burcel's Hill
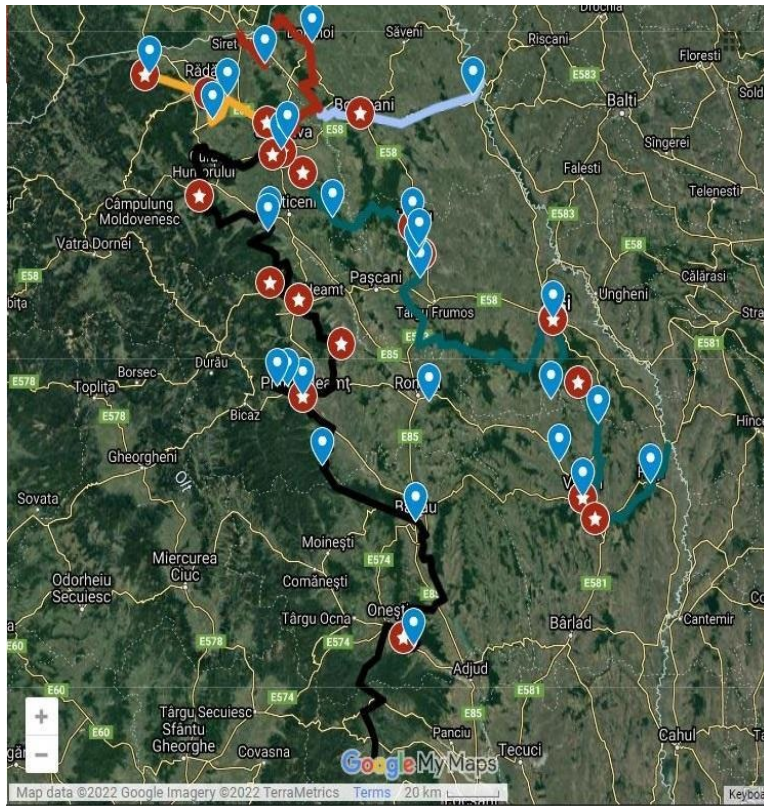
Figure no. 17. Localisation of the objectives of the North-East Region, proposed within the Be.CULTOUR workshops to be included in the Route of the Voivode "Stephen the Great and Holy". Googs Earth

As far as the Republic of Moldova is concerned, no new objectives have been proposed by the "Verde e Moldova" Association. Instead, for a list of tourist attractions, made at the establishment of the Voivode's Route "Stephen the Great and Saint" was recommended. They are located near the 9 objectives that are already part of the Route. We insert them in the table below, with the description made on the stephenthegreat.travel website, their presence being important in the plan for the future capitalization of the Route.

Nearby objective	Tourism attractions
Căpriana Monastery, founded by Stephen the Great, Strășeni district	***Vatra Ethno Cultural Complex,*** 36 km from Chișinău. The complex hosts fairs, shows, artisanal exhibitions, folk costumes, traditional gastronomy, workshops, master-classes, playgrounds for children, sports fields and a camping area, weekend hiking events, thus practically creating an industrial-cultural park. Moreover, the celebrations: Children's Carnival, Medieval Festival, Festival of National Identity are held here.
	"Chateau Cojușna" Winery, 18 km from Chișinău. It is one of the largest producers and exporters of wines in the Republic of Moldova. In addition to the production part, they have a tourist complex equipped with four halls decorated in different styles, a museum, a summer terrace, an observation terrace on the roof of the castle, with a spectacular view over the surrounding area. The tourist route also passes through the underground town.
	The "Poiana" winery, 56 km from Chișinău.

Nearby objective	Tourism attractions
	Here, in the Poiana winery vineyards was filmed one of the most famous films produced in the Republic of Moldova, with the participation of Moldovan actors – "Gypsies Are Found Near Heaven " ("O șatră urcă la cer"), directed by the Moldovan director Emil Loteanu.
	Zamfirache Ralli Mansion, Dolna, 36 km from Chișinău. Zamfirache Ralli's mansion is a former boyar's residence built by the wealthy Greek boyar Zamfirache Ralli. The place became especially known since it was often visited by the well-known Russian poet Aleksandr Pushkin, exiled in Chișinău between 1821 and 1823. It is impressive that in the nearby Forest of Dolna are located the "Izvorul Zamfirei" and "Poiana Zamfira", there Pushkin met the Roma small community and the beautiful Zamfira, followed their traditions and customs for 2 summer months, and then created the poem *Gypsies*.
	"Manuc Bey" Manor, 36 km from Chișinău It includes the following buildings: Manuc's Palace, Old House, Countesses Building, Hunting Castle, Watchtower. The mansion is an architectural monument registered in the Register of Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Moldova. According to history, after the end of the Russo-Turkish war of 1806–12, Manuc Bey left Bucharest and his numerous businesses in the hands of trusted people. He moved for a short period to Sibiu, then, in 1815, Manuc moved with his family to Chișinău in Bessarabia, where he bought the Hîncești estate with 300,000 lei of gold.
Cultural-natural reservation Orheiul Vechi, fortress and fair administered by the boyar (pârcălabul) Vlaicu, uncle of Stephen the Great	***Cave Monastery***, 54 km from Chișinău. The ensemble includes about 350 cave vestiges (of which around 100 represent rooms dug by human hand and the rest of the karst formations) grouped in six complexes. [1] Two of these represent well-defined monasteries, with underground churches, galleries and adjacent cells, while the others are – proportionally, of a more modest scale.
	Brănești Winery, 49 km from Chișinău. Brănești Winery is arranged in an old limestone mine. Tourists have the opportunity to discover the underground galleries, to taste wine in the halls specially arranged for tastings, to rent spaces for wine preservation/storage, to participate in cultural events, which will be organized in the auditorium of the tourist complex and to experience life in the Stone Age.
	"Alexandru Donici" House-Museum, 43 km from Chișinău. It is a museum of national rank. This is the house where the Bessarabia fabulist poet Alecu Donici was born. The house is placed in the middle of a small park, and nearby there is a small church of Donicilor, built by the poet's father, the family tombs, as well as the "Stânca" spring, arranged by the family of Dimitrie and Elena Donici. Moreover, a collection of publications of those times is gathered, as well as documents and images that, in one way or another, are related with the life of the fabulist.

Nearby objective	Tourism attractions
	The touristic pensions from Orheiul Vechi, 50-60 km from Chișinău. Among them are: Eco Resort Butuceni, Villa Roz, Casa Mierii, Hanul lui Hânganu, Casa de sub Stancă, Vatra Strămoșească, Celciul Vechi, Casa din Luncă, Casa Veche, Casa Părintească.
	"Chateau Vartely" Winery, 49 km from Chișinău. The origin of the name Vartely is found in the name of Orhei, a word that in Hungarian means "place of the fortress". Château Vartely has a special architecture and presents a true landscape delight, being located on a hill from where a dizzying view opens.
	The "Arta Rustică" Crafts Complex, 67 km from Chișinău. It is one of the most representative craft centres in the Republic of Moldova. Here you can discover the collection of the folk costume, the collection of bessarabian carpets, the collection of Moldavian carpets. It is also the place where the Carpet Festival takes place, and for those interested in crafts there is the Training Centre in the field of craftsmanship - the only centre in the Republic endowed with special training programs coordinated and approved by the Ministry of Education and the Union of Folk Craftsmen of Moldova.
Soroca Fortress, a fortification from the time of Stephen the Great	***Constantin Stamati's Mansion***, 237 km from Chișinău. It is an architectural monument of national importance. The mansion belonged to Constantin Stamati, who towards the end of his life, "retired" to the domain, where in 1869 he died. The museum complex includes: the mansion-museum, the bust and an old linden tree. The museum has 350 articles, including: furniture, books, photographs, newspapers and magazines of that era.
	Gypsies Hill / Dealul Ţiganilor, 156 km from Chișinău. The (unofficial) capital of the rroma community throughout the ex-soviet area. It is said that all the building of the Gypsy residential complex from Soroca, a huge work, but lacking architectural good taste, was done by the construction craftsmen brought from Russia specifically for this purpose.
	Museum of History and Ethnography of Soroca, 153 km from Chișinău. The museum happily completes the history lesson told by the walls of Stephen's fortress with an impressive numerical collection of exhibits that attest to the age and traditions of inhabiting these lands: objects discovered during the archaeological excavations at Soroca, Trifăuţi and Vărvăreuca, vintage furniture, weavings, braids, ceramics and folk costume.
	The Candle of Gratitude (Lumânarea Recunoștinței), 157 km from Chișinău. This extraordinary epopee is dedicated to all the destroyed monuments of the Moldavian culture. "The Candle of Gratitude", growing from the depths of our past, is a tribute to all the anonymous heroes, who have preserved the culture, language and history of Moldova in the polychrome palette of human civilization, enveloping, at the same time, the memory of the great author of the ballad "Miorita" – Ion Druță.

Nearby objective	Tourism attractions
Mereni village, a village founded by Stephen the Great in 1475	**"Șerpeni Bridgehead" Memorial Complex,** 61 km from Chișinău. The right-side shore of the Dniester was raised in the memory of the Soviet soldiers who died during the Iași- Chișinău operation in 1944, during which the Soviet troops forced the Dniester. The battle of Șerpeni was one of the bloodiest in the history of The Second World War.
	Mimi Castle, 40 km from Chișinău. Mimi Castle is included in the top 15 most beautiful wineries in the world. Moreover, it is the only castles in The Republic of Moldova. The "Mimi Castle tourist complex" includes a museum, an art gallery for young artists, a conference room, a hotel, SPA, a restaurant, several creative workshops, both for folk arts and cooking, as well as halls for events.
	Asconi Winery, 29 km from Chișinău. It is a family winery where there is a tourist guesthouse that consists of 12 rustic houses with traditional Moldovian architecture and a reed handmade roof.
	Museum of History and Ethnography of Mereni village, 26 km from Chișinău. It is included in the register of historical monuments protected by the state. It represents a unique jewel through the history that carries it over the years. He faced several trials, because after collectivization he served as a House of Culture, then a gym, a library, then since 1989 in this building there is the Museum of History and Ethnography.
Chișinău/Buiucani Fair, locality, former property of Pan Vlaicu, Stephen's the Great uncle	***Winery "Mileștii Mici"(Combinatul de Vinuri de Calitate)***, 14 km from Chișinău. It has a collection of wines that marked the fame of the enterprise on the domestic market and on the international wine arena. In August 2005, the "Golden Collection" Mileştii Mici was recognized by *Guinness World Records* as the largest wine collection in the world with about 1.5 million bottles. The same year, the *Parliament of the Republic of Moldova* declared it the "National-Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Moldova".
	National Museum of Art of Moldova One of the most prestigious museal institutions in Moldova. It is located in the centre of Chișinău, in three buildings: Hertza House, Kligman House and Dadiani Headquarters. The museum also holds in its custody one of the most valuable historical monuments of the XVI century, *the Assumption fo the Virgin Mary Church from Căuşeni* with a painting - unique for the Republic of Moldova, made in 1763.
	Monument of Stephen the Great and Saint It is a monument dedicated to the Moldavian lord Stephen the Great (1457-1504), made between 1925-1928 by the sculptor Alexandru Plămădeală and placed in the Stephen the Great and Saint Public Garden in Chișinău.
	National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History Was created in October 1889 on the basis of the collection of exhibits of the first agrarian exhibition in Bessarabia, organised under the initiative of Baron A. Stuart. The edifice of the museum (officially –

Nearby objective	Tourism attractions
	"The building of the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History, formerly a zoo-agricultural museum and of folk crafts") is an architectural monument of national significance, introduced in the Register of monuments of history and culture of the municipality.
	History Museum of Chișinău – Water Tower Also called **the Water Castle** is a monument of architecture and art of national significance, introduced in the Register of monuments of history and culture of Chisinau municipality. The edifice was built in the late nineteenth century after a project drawn up by Alexander Bernardazzi, on the highest point of the city at that time. The museum is known as the Water Tower, because the institution supplying drinking water from the "guberniya" city had its first headquarters there.
	National Museum of History of Moldova The National Museum of History of Moldova is among the most important museal institutions in the Republic of Moldova, both in terms of its heritage and scientific prestige. Today, the National Museum of History of Moldova holds 348,619 patrimony pieces, whose diversified typology captures the profile of Moldova over the centuries, from prehistoric eras to the present, attesting the human habitat, facts, events, portraits of personalities.
	The "Cricova" Winery, 16 km from Chișinău. It represents a unique underground complex, known throughout the world for its huge labyrinths and especially for its excellent wines. It was awarded with the highest state distinction *order of the Republic*, the Cricova winery being the only wine-making company that holds this prize.
Tighina Fortress, an earthen fortification from the time of Stephen the Great	*"Heroes' Square" Memorial Complex*, 78 km from Chișinău It is recognized as the tomb in which more than 800 soldiers were buried, Red Army workers who fell during the liberation of Bender city in 1944.
Țipova Monastery, a cave complex on the Dniester, associated with legends of Stephen the Great	*Hânganu's Inn*, **97 km from Chișinău** It is the touristic guesthouse of the Hânganu family, which offers accommodation rooms decorated in rustic style with archaic elements and décor in traditional style.
	Saharna Monastery, 106 km from Chișinău It is one of the oldest monastic settlements within the Orthodox Church of the Republic of Moldova. The monastic ensemble is composed of two monasteries: one as a cave (Bunavestire) and another terrestrial (Holy Trinity/Sf. Treime).
The Oak of Stephen the Great from Cobâlea	

Nearby objective	Tourism attractions
Ştefan-Vodă, a wine region with a protected geographical indication	***The household of the popular craftsman Pavel Ţăranu***, 126 km from Chișinău Pavel Ţăranu builds houses made of reeds. A few years ago, the craftsman decided to create a workshop, "Meșterul-Faur", where over 90 children learned to weave with the loaves. In addition to baskets, toys and woven from the lodge furniture, the craftsman organises as well workshops.
	Purcari Tourist Complex, Purcari Winery, 112 km from Chișinău The château is recognized worldwide for its super-premium wines, which have gathered over the centuries over 200 awards at the most prestigious international competitions – Decanter, Challenge International du Vin, Concours Mondial de Bruxelles, International Wine and Spirit Competition, but also the legendary appreciation at the royal court of Great Britain.
	"ET Cetera" Wine complex, 119 km from Chișinău It is a family winery whose purpose is the cultivation of grapes and the production of wine, which reflects the authentic character of the Moldavian land

The members of the Be.CULTOUR community were consulted regarding the new routes that could be developed in the cross-border area, in cooperation with the Republic of Moldova. The proposals for new routes were as follows:

	Cultural routes and themes
Anima Holidays	The "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Route The War Zone Route The Jewish Route
Bison's Land Association	Cucuteni, Writers, wars period
Bonaventura Travel	"On the footsteps of Stephen the Great", from Borzești to Putna.
Tourist Information Center Iași	Cucuteni Culture Mihai Eminescu Itinerary
Neamţ County Council	Route of archaeological sites in Moldova The Route of the Cucuteni Civilization on the territory of Romania The route of cultural personalities (literary, artistic, scientific). Personalities from Moldova
CNIPT Botoșani	The route of crafts and traditions
Botoșani County	Personalities' route
Iași City Hall	Cucuteni Culture
Piatra Neamț City Hall	The route of the wooden churches in Romania The route of the wood civilization in Romania
NN	The Wines of Stephen the Great

Source. Questionnaire conducted at the development stage of the Action Plan, EU SURVEY, the answers to the question *"Do you think there would be a new cultural route that would promote new tourist attractions and destinations, able to enrich cultural tourism in the North-East Region of Romania?"*

5.2. Destination development plan, following the circular economy principles

A **management plan** is a declaration of intention, for the management of a destination over a period of time, articulating the roles of different stakeholders, identifying the actions to be taken and the resources that should be involved.[61]

In the situation of the pilot area of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" route, due to the extention of the territory and the multitude of stakeholders, the destination management, to favour the transition to the circular economy, should involve a distribution of responsibilities to the tourism actors who must, each of them, take appropriate measures to move from the linear economy to the circular one.

Therefore, the shift to the principles of the circular economy and the European Green Deal must be assumed on all the levels of the tourism services chain.

As a result, the activity management for the pilot area, will consider:

(1) **The Action and priorities plan for the development of th**e "Stephen the Great and Saint" **Route (chapter 5).**

(2) **Actions and responsibilities plan assumed by the different categories of actors, from different levels of the value chain of tourism services (presented below).**

The transition to the circular economy involves the focus on its principles (*Best Practices of Circular Economy in the Tourism Industry. CenTOUR Guide*, 2022), presented in the following table:

Recycling of garbage and avoidance of pollution	A circular economy reveals and projects the negative impact of the economic activity that causes damage to human health and natural systems, such as emissions of CO_2, hazardous substances, non-recyclable materials;
Maintaining the use of products and materials	Products and materials should be kept in the economy for as long as possible. By designing and using products and components so that they can be reused, repaired and remanufactured;
Regeneration of natural systems	In nature, there is no concept of waste. Everything is food for something else. Instead of simply trying to do less harm, we should aim to do good. By returning valuable nutrients to the soil and other ecosystems, we can improve our natural resources. But, also, by ceasing the use of non-renewable resources or actively acting as a supervisor of the earth.

Also, the management system must take into account a dynamic perspective on the situation and the present but also on the trends in tourism. According to the OMD, the OECD and the WTTC, these are (EcA, 2021):
- Cultural and local experience.

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[61] www.visitlondon.co.uk

- Option for personalised travel.
- Wellness tourism.
- Option to nearby destinations.
- Concern for safety/health.
- Digitalization on all stages of the service chain.
- Openness to local culture and experience.
- Concern for sustainability.

Tourist behaviour evolves in the transition to the circular economy. Tourists are an active part in the organisation of the travel, in the phase of transport or choosing accommodation options, which are environmentally friendly. However, circular sustainable options must be available at the industry level, at all levels.
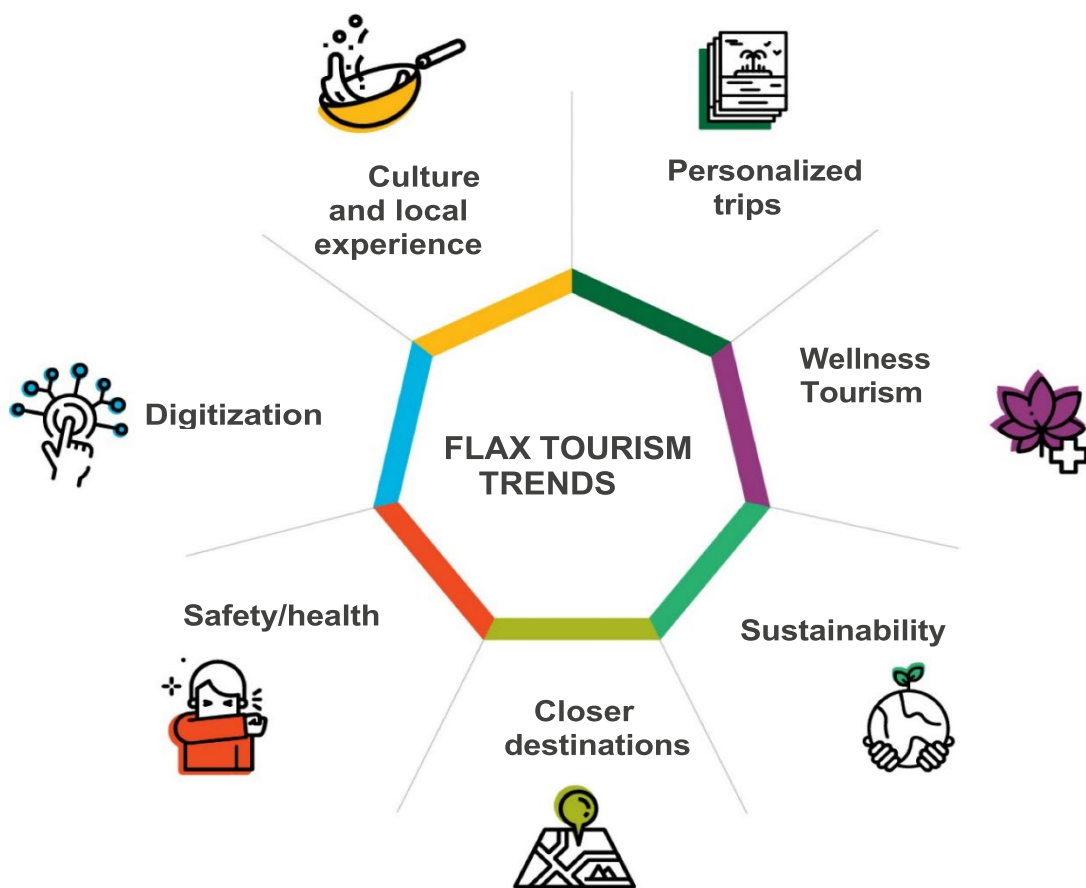
Figure no. 18. Trends in tourism

Source: ECA, based on analysis of documents provided by the WTO, the OECD and the WTTC (ECA, 2021).

Many times, tourism actors do not understand the complexity of this sector. The involution or stagnation in tourism is often also due to the preconceived idea that "doing tourism is simple" and that "if you were a tourist, you can do business in tourism." Romanian tourism needs the professionalisation of all actors involved in this complex eco-ystem. Perhaps more than in other areas, a wrong action influences the course of a subsequent stage in a chain.

Tourism value chain for North-East Area

Suppliers - Indirect economic impacts

Goods and services relating to promotion of destination

Promotional activities, ICT, banking and insurance

Communications and PR, press and media

Direct economic impacts

Travel organisation and booking

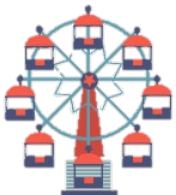In origin and in transit to and from the final destination(s)

| Internet | Travel Agents |
| Call centres | Airlines |

Tour operators & wholesalers

From country of origin to destination

Supporting institutions: e.g. Ministries of Tourism, Trade, Commerce, Infrastructure, Environment, Climate Change, Culture, etc.

Trade promotion organizations: e.g. Chambers of Commerce, Banks, Investment Agencies, Licensing and Standards Bodies

| Energy | Water | Natural Environment | Food & Beverages | Other materials | Cultural Assets |

Infrastructure support for the tourism sector

Customs Office	Construction and Real Estate				Trade Companies
Port Authority	Goods & services suppliers: furniture, ICT, food, textiles, furniture, etc.		Site signage	Wellness equipment	Wholesalers
Ministry of Transport	Consumables	Food & Drink Production	Manufacturers & cottage industries	Site Restoration	Wellness Services	Technology Shops & Imports
Immigration Dept	Maintenance	Storage & Distribution		Site Management	Goods & Services for Guides	Manufacturers
Cars, bikes, buses, boats	Back office ICT	Food & Drink Suppliers	Handicrafts, arts, etc. suppliers	Site Maintenance	Brochure Production	Fuel/energy suppliers

| Transportation | Accommodation | Food & Beverage | Creative Industries | Tourism Assets | Leisure, tours & excursions | Support Services |

Car, bike, boat rental companies	Hotels	Bars & Restaurants	Handicraft & Art Shops	Cultural Assets: archaeology, music, museums, festivals, etc.	Shows & Events	Information Centres
Bus, train & tram companies	Apartments	Night Clubs	Music & Dance		Tourism Packages	Grocery Shops & Retail Outlets
Taxi Companies	Guest Houses	Fast/Street Food	Theatre, Artists, Performers, etc.	Natural Assets: lakes, rivers, reefs, mountains, plants, wildlife, etc.	Guided Tours	Laundry & Cleaning Services
Ferry Companies	Youth Hostels	Artisan Foods	Photography & Video Studios		Visitor Attractions	Security & Banking Services
Informal transportation	Family Stays	Food Kiosks & Cafes		Built Assets: architecture, infrastructure, utilities, etc.	Day Trips & Short Stays	Internet Cafes
Horse-riding		Food Souvenirs			Wellness & Spas	Maintenance Services

In and around the destination

Environmental impacts

Direct emissions / outputs

GHG emissions (tCO$_2$e)

Air pollution (Sox/Nox)

Wastewater (litres/m^3)

Food waste (tonnes)

Packaging waste (t)

Other solid waste (t)

Chemical wastes (t/l)

Land use (hectares)

Biodiversity loss

Noise & odour nuisance

Environmental impacts

Please remember to include **all** stages of the product / service lifecycle when identifying any environmental impacts in your value chain

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| Supporting institutions & tourism assets | Tourism industry | Tourism value chain businesses | Environmental impacts |

Adapted using the model developed by UN Environment from ITC UNWTO {2015}

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In the figure above are presented the stages of the touristic services chain, from the moment the tourist plans his holidays, continuing with the stage corresponding to the time spent in destination, consuming tourism products and services, enjoying the time, until the back-trip, the return to the locality of residence. The total satisfaction of a stay is given by the sum of partial satisfactions, which correspond to the interactions that the tourist has in each location, when visiting each tourist attraction, in discussions with local community members, etc.

For this reason, due to the multitude of actors involved in this process, managing a destination is perhaps the most difficult activity from the tourism sector, the only tools at their disposal being consensus, communication, participatory planning, participatory governance.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the Be.CULTOUR plan of circular cultural tourism, the table below lists a number of concrete ways of implementing the pillars of circular tourism into practice, as well as a series of examples of good practices that could serve as inspiration for several types of organisations in the tourism sector. The shift to circular tourism should be a mission assumed by all the segments of the value chain.

Booking the trip	Transport	Accommodation	Leisure
Connecting with customers and promoting circular tourism principles in the offers of tour operators (sustainable accommodation booking platform).

Selection of platforms that contribute to the reduction of the CO2 footprint. | Focus: reducing energy consumption, reducing pollution.

Replacement of fuels and motor vehicles with electric/hybrid cars.

Use of green energy.

Encouraging the use of public transport to the detriment of individual transport.

Green mobility for tourists who have electric cars at their disposal in the destination.

"Shared" vehicles in destination. | Focus: Reduction, Redesign/Redesign,

Waste and pollution disposal,

Reduction of plastic packaging,

Reuse of building materials and furniture,

Certification in ecotourism,

Installations with rational use of resources (taps, lighting systems),

Installation of rainwater collection pits;
Selective waste sorting, | Use of renewable means of transport and resources,

Introduction of collaborative consumption programs, through which residents are involved in the tourist experience,

Use of on-site produced energy, |

		Use of renewable energy resources. Educating employees and raising awareness of sources of loss. EMAS-compliant procurement procedures and circular economy criteria. Reinternalization of activities for the control of stocks and consumption (laundry, bread production.	
MICE*	**Food& Beverage**	**Tourism in nature**	**Cultural objectives**
Focus: refuse. Replacement of plastic folders and plastic badges with recyclable materials. Removal of plastic straws. Reuse of furniture. Donating furniture that is no longer used. . *MICE=Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Events*	Focus : reuse. Reuse of surplus food. Keeping products and materials in use. Reducing food waste. Reducing food waste by introducing specialised applications. Growing vegetables for personal consumption.	Regeneration of natural systems. Zero Waste Adventure programs (organisation of zero-waste excursions). Delimitation of some "zero carbon" destinations. Nature resorts with green energy sources. Introducing certifications such as the Environmental Label (FR) that explain the impact of	Use of furniture made of non-invasive materials. Signposts and info panels made from recycled wood and other display systems made of recycled materials (upcycling). Visitor management to avoid intense consumption of resources. Upcycling of old cultural locations/sites and abandoned mansions for museums, info-

		each action on the environment.\n\nNon-invasive constructions, with the use of materials and local architecture.\n\nReintroduction of endangered species for the regeneration of natural systems.	centres or accommodation locations.

Developed by the authors. Adapted from: https://circulartourism.eu/resources/handbooks

The journey from linear to circular tourism for the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route should be assumed by all the actors involved in the tourism value chain, or at least by a large part of them, by changing the route and rethinking the way in which resources are used. We present the actions structured on stages of the chain of services, structured on the phases that the tourist goes through in making the trip, and on the organisations involved.

5.3. List of priorities in the development of circular cultural tourism, on the route of the ruler "Stephen the Great and Saint". Relationship with the areas of innovation

The co-creation process carried out during the three workshops led to the realisation of the destination development plan, based on the principles of the circular economy.

PRIORITIES.\n\nBUSINESS ACTIONS AND SOLUTIONS	CHALLENGES ADDRESSED	AREAS OF INNOVATION	ACTORS INVOLVED
1. Digital marketing and optimised online presence, of the territory and cultural resources that are part of the Route of the Stephen the Great and Saint (Innovation-technology-digitization)	Online information and promotion should be qualitative, relevant and inspirational, connected to the needs/specificities of the tourists who are responsible with the environment and with the resources of the destination;\n\nLack of statistics and information generated by online applications that would allow tourism products to be	Sensory heritage experience\n\nSpiritual travel experience\n\nIndustrial Heritage\n\nNature as heritage\n\nRural co-living\n\nContemporary meanings of heritage	The NGO "BÂTCA DOAMNEI"; Real Tour RO; Tourism departments of the selected communities; Public authorities; Administration of all heritage sites on the route StGS. CIT (Tourist Information Centers);

		adapted to the needs of different categories of tourists; Low digital presence in the online Inconsistent marketing/ promotion;		Museum administrators; Curators of cultural sites; The business sector of tourism.
1.1.	**Virtual route "Stephen the Great".** Realisation of a virtual reality (VR) application, which will include 29 virtual tours and will be developed in a period of 4 years (field documentation, digitization of field resources, production of filmed material, development and testing of the platform);			
1.2.	**Cultural heritage. A virtual journey.** An improved quality of virtual promotion of the Stephen the Great and Saint Route and an extended international presence of the 29 sites and circular tourism initiatives, through a platform that will integrate interactive Matterport 3D virtual tours[62], developed in two years, as an application that offers complex presentation solutions (virtual tours and interactive elements);			
1.3.	**Optimising the site stephanstravel.info** by adding additional the information on the site sections (access information, open hours and visiting schedule of the tourism spots, local guides who can share the history of the place, etc.);			
1.4.	**Development of an application based on user-generated-content** and the creation of a mechanism for the visitors, to upload information and content.			
1.5.	**Improved digital presence on the internet**: - on the main booking platforms, by describing the route and the crossed destinations. -on the route website (www.stephenthegreat.travel), with additional activities and experiences that may raise the interest of tourists for longer stays;			
1.6.	**Creation of a digital information system about the circular nature of products, based on QR solutions**. The application will ensure the traceability of products. The tourists will be informed about the circular component of the products / services (the database will be operated by an IT specialist / correlated to travel sites);			
1.7.	**Online application (APP) for the interpretation of tourist information and locations on the StGS route**, in different foreign languages, with detailed presentation of the objectives and with the promotion of additional tourism experiences in the destinations. Connecting the application to QR codes that will be placed in the locations promoted in the route.			

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[62] a visual product that translates any built-up space into a digital model, Immersive and interactive.

1.8.	Integration of an online monitoring system (integrated in the APP solutions or on the website) to analyse the tourist satisfaction, to compile data about the profile of the visitor of the Route and their visiting motivation.			
2. Improving tourist information and heritage interpretation along the Cultural Route " Stephen the Great and Saint "	Reduced visiting hours of some touristic objectives, with unclear information of access and schedule; Difficulties in visiting some objectives (e.g. Cotnari Wineries); Non-existent or inappropriate signalling; The lack of public transport networks between the route's objectives; The poor condition of some monuments; Lack of information in other foreign languages. Small number of specialised guides and difficult access to information from the local community); Difficult access to some locations. The promotion strategies were created during the communist period and do not correspond from a theoretical point of view with the initial meaning of the monuments. Some of the information presented at monuments (e.g. fresco making	Sensory heritage experience; Contemporary meanings of heritage; Spiritual travel experience; Nature as heritage; Industrial heritage experience;	The CNIPTs on the route; Local authorities; Faculty of Geography "Al. I. Cuza University" of Iasi Regional Tourism Associations / OMDs; SMEs in tourism and creative industries. CERC – Tourism Resources and Research Center, University Stefan cel Mare Suceava.

	techniques) is not scientifically validated Need for additional documentation of the connection of the monuments with the personality of the Voivode " Stephen the Great and Saint "		
2.1.	**"Know your history, know yourself!"** Pilot tourist information centre, fully digitised, built according to nZEB standards, in the municipality of Botoșani;		
2.2.	**Development of an interactive map (of a "mega-map"** that includes all the objectives of the North-East Region that inter-correlate all tourist offers, events and experiences in the field of tourism and circular tourism;		
2.3.	**Improved quality of services delivered to visitors in the field, taking into account different age profiles, in the different stages of the value chain (correlation with the principles of circular tourism):** -information; -accessibility; -interpretation; -guiding services; -souvenirs; -signaling. All products and services will be developed using reused/recycled materials (such as, for example, old wooden panels, souvenirs) produced with respect for the environment (from natural or recycled materials).		
2.4.	**Creating an info-sheet that includes the access schedule of the monuments included** in the route. Posting this information on the route's website.		
2.5.	**Creating a personalized tourist signposting / signage system** (access, street, proximity, etc.), in addition to the signalling of the Route, which will be carried out by partners from the Republic of Moldova (The Investment Agency of Moldova).		
2.6.	**Monitoring the quality of the information** provided at the objectives that are part of the Route and, where is needed, the scientific validation of some elements of tourist interpretation.		
2.7.	**Optimizing the tourist information** at each objective, according to the field evaluation sheets, carried out in 2022 within the Be.CULTOUR project.		
3.Mainstreaming the principles of the circular economy and disseminating good	Pollution of the natural and cultural landscape The loss of traditions and the	Sensory heritage experience. Spiritual travel	Tour operators Local NGOs

practice models at regional level. Creative use of existing natural and anthropogenic resources to create new products and circular tourism experiences.	disappearance of popular craftsmen Lack of multilingual tours on various types of tourism Difficulty visiting some objectives (e.g. Cotnari Wineries)	experience. Nature as heritage	The CNIPT's existing on the route. Local authorities. Regional Tourism Associations / OMDs. Bison Land Association. Vânători-Neamț Park Administration. SMEs in tourism and creative industries. Directorates of Agriculture. Directorates of Culture.
3.1.	**REVE Patrimony (REvitalization of VErnacular patrimony).** Heritage centres network for the interpretation of tangible and intangible heritage, with the use of displaced wooden houses, that are receiving a new functionality is given.		
3.2.	**Local pilot market that will include local food and products in circulation**, near of at least 2 important heritage sites in the countryside of the Route " Stephen the Great and Saint "; Extension of the models existing in Iași (Gust de Iași) and Suceava (Local market "Din Drag de Bucovina").		
3.3.	**Integration of re-cycling and up-cycling initiatives into the packages sold by tour operators** (displacement of old houses, use of old recycled wood, old, reused furniture, etc.); Promoting the existing initiatives (Bucovina Brunch, Ambulanţa Căsuţelor Bucovinene, iaBucovina, Asociaţia Mai Bine). Multiplying the examples of REDU and Cuib initiatives in the tourism industry, with the involvement of the creative industries from the urban settlements from NE Area.		
3.4.	**A green public transport line**, providing at least bimonthly transport between the most important places of the route.		
3.5.	**Encouraging the initiation of car-sharing initiatives, with electric vehicles,** in the destinations with a large flow of visitors.		

4.Creating new tourism activities centered on experience in nature. Holistic approach to natural and cultural heritage	Relatively limited touristic offer along the Route; Insufficient capitalization of the natural heritage of the area;	Sensory heritage experience Spiritual travel experience Nature as heritage Rural co-living	Botoșani County Council and CNIPT (velo trails) and other local authorities Tour operators Local NGOs Local authorities; Bison Land Association; Vânători-Neamț Park Administration; SMEs in tourism and creative industries; Tourism Research Centers.

4.1.	**The Bison's Land cultural heritage** The cooperation at local level and the involvement of different interest groups will be achieved starting from the team members's accumulated experience in communicating with the community, will allow the successful combination of the 3 areas of innovation.
4.2.	**Digital Nomads platform** The development of the region as a destination for highly skilled people who can work remotely (digital nomads) through a curatorial experience involving local actors in tourism. It is aimed to the creation of facilities that allows those who choose to work at a distance, in an attractive destination, to have a spiritual and transformative journey, with unique experiences, different from the solutions currently existing on the market.
4.3.	**Increasing visitors interactivity and loyalty by developing a geocatching and treasure hunt application**, with prizes at the end of the experience and a reward system for tours that go through the entire Route, or certain segments.
4.4.	**Development of workshops in the field of rural culture**, in rural communities, to increase the duration of stay and to develop "slow" experiences in nature / slow tourism (traditional culture, activities in nature,

		building techniques with natural materials, local gastronomy, etc.).			
4.5.		**Creating a network of velo trails for the Cultural Route**, that will connect the objectives from the Route and will run especially through rural destinations, that would reveal stories related to the history of the places to the tourists. The velo network will use eco-lodges and products related to circularity principles as an accommodation facility.			
4.6.		**Development of tourism activities in rural communities along the Route.** Development of workshops for designing touristic packages with tourism agencies interested in promoting the Route from Romania and the Republic of Moldova.			
4.7.		**Extension of the route "** Stephen the Great and Saint **"** by including other additional tourist attractions to the existing route, according to the proposals recorded in the local action plan Be.CULTOUR and according to the agreement with the Republic of Moldova.			
4.8.		**Harmonization of the Route** Stephen the Great and Saint with the Stephens Road ("Drumul Stefanian"), developed by Suceava County Council. **I**dentification of complementarity of the circular tourist experiences with the offer of the StGS Route.			
4.9.		**Organisation of wine tasting events,** organised using the principles of circular tourism on at least 80% of the service chain. Developing tourism packages in oenotourism.			
4.10.		**The inclusion of the Vânători-Neamț Natural Park in the Route** "Stephen the Great and Saint" and the integration of the associated experiences in the touristic offer of the Route.			
5	Innovative management of the Route " Stephen the Great and Saint" and development / management of the destination with the development of circular tourism. General measures and strengthening of institutional competences	Limited interest regarding the circular economy and the sustainable development of tourism The lack of effective local partnerships with all the stakeholders involved in tourism promotion; Overcrowding on weekends of some locations	All the innovation areas	Stakeholders identified in the first LWS1 workshop Community members Be.CULTOUR ADR Nord-Est Tour operators Local authorities;

5.1	**Creation of a cross-border centre of excellence in sustainable tourism** with the support of universities and regional clusters.
5.2	**Formulating a set of values (and of some convincing messages for the tourism industry) that reflects the position of regional tourism in relation to sustainable and circular tourism;** Their dissemination and inclusion in the county's strategies and on the associated websites, in the next period (as a chance for quality tourism in the NE Region).
5.3	**Development of an annual communication plan with tourism stakeholders** on circular tourism, which will include information, promotion and consultation activities.
5.4	**Research / marketing study on the tourist segments** attracted by the StGS Route, their profile, the type of experience desired, their expectations, but also vis-à-vis their "circular tourism" consumption behaviour.
5.5.	**Webinars organised for the members of the regional tourism ecosystem**, to promote the principles of circular tourism (1 seminar every 2 months, organised by rotation by tourism research centres, research institutes, and other relevant stakeholders for circular tourism at regional level / members of the local community Be.CULTOUR).
5.6.	**Informing and encouraging the destinations (DMOs or local administrations) to join the initiative of the MST – Measuring Sustainability in Tourism,** coordinated by the UN Statistical Commission, and to use the **European Tourism Indicator System**, which specifically targets tourist destinations. It is designed as a process of monitoring, managing and ensuring the durability of a tourist destination, controlled and coordinated at local level (European Commission, Enterprise and Industry General Directorate, 2014).
5.7.	**Create a common policy of relevant actors from Romania and the Republic of Moldova**, for the development and cross-border promotion of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route.

| 6 | Optimising the competences of tour operators in the development of circular tourism products | Reduced competence of local actors in circular tourism.

Lack of specialised staff, knowledge of foreign languages (cultural institutions especially) | All the innovation areas | Regional tourism associations

Local public authorities

Tour operators

ADR Nord-Est

Universities in the NE Region and tourism research and |
|---|---|---|---|---|

				training centres
6.1	**Organising micro-credentials training programs** in the field of circular tourism, for the employees of tourism operators.			
6.2	**Promoting the types of certifications in ecotourism and green tourism** and promoting the principles/alternatives in the collaboration with the certification institutions.			
6.3	**Development of an accessible and attractive guide with recommendations for the implementation of circular cultural tourism** for SMEs in rural areas.			
6.4.	**Development of guidebooks, with the principles of the circular economy, for different segments of the tourist chain** / tourism sector (accommodation, agencies, events, restaurants, etc.).			
6.5.	**Improved knowledge on the topic of circular tourism** by introducing relevant topics in the study curricula of high schools or in the programs of some subjects; training of high school teachers in the field of circular tourism.			
7	Repositioning of the heritage pilot area to support circular tourism, community-centred and open to Europeanisation	Relatively low interest for sustainable development and circular tourism in the regional strategies of the areas situated along the Stephen the Great and Saint Route	All the innovation areas	Regional tourism associations Local public authorities Tour operators Museum institutions Administrators of the objectives included in the Stephen the Great and Saint Route
7.1	**Loyalty program for visitors**, through a system of recognition (Stephen the Great Passport) for visitors, as an incentive for the tourists to visit all the sites included in the Route.			

7.2	**Extension of merchandising and visual identification elements,** by creating a souvenir kit and personalised objects, made from recyclable materials (reused old wood, old textiles, etc., designed by an object designer) on the theme of Stephen the Great.
7.3	**Organising a cross-border event "Good Practices in Circular Tourism"** to highlight and promote positive examples from the two countries.
7.4	**Increase of the support and responsibility for non-invasive tourism** through the following actions: • 5 events / campaigns • Flyers or educational messages in accommodation units (comics, a form to attract attention, storytelling, cartoons). • Notifications on mobile applications and social media campaigns.
7.5	**Support for tourism SMEs to become much more 'circular'** by developing a self-assessment tool/checklist that will also serve as a tool for self-correction on current practices in the organisation.
7.5.	**External validation of local products with the help of testimonials made by personalities or influencers,** highlighting the circular qualities associated with products and tourist experiences.
8. Increasing the tourist experience quality on the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route	Insufficient promotion of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route	Sensory heritage experience Spiritual travel experience Industrial Heritage Nature as heritage Rural co-living Contemporary meanings of heritage	Regional tourism associations Local public authorities Tour operators Museum institutions Administrators of the objectives included in the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route
8.1.	**Organising a procedure for the management of the sites that are part of the Route StGS**, with recommendations for an unitary landscaping of the proximity area, for example, the information of the tourists to be done in a coherent manner, with access to easy-to-use digital information.

8.2.	**Creation of a network of the custodians of the objectives on the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route, for a better administration and monitorisation of the objectives** included in the route. They will be activated as contact points for the future strategic meetings, and as well will be and to be actively involved in the administration and promotion of the objectives.
8.4.	**Creating a system for the recognition of the tourism experiences and products** using the principles of circularity, included in the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route.
8.7.	**Connecting the creative industry initiatives from the area** and the circular tourism initiatives, for the inclusion in a tourism package for creative tourism; Development of packages for digital nomads and for the new generations of tourists (millennials, etc.).
8.8.	**Identification of events of urban culture and major culture** and their inclusion in the tourist experience offered (e.g. the continuation of the international festival "Tristan Tzara and Cultural Dada", which has reached its 10th edition and of other festivals in Iași, Botoșani, Bacău, Suceava, Vaslui, Neamț).
8.8.	**Voluntourism activities that will** allow the arrangement of thematic paths, through the picturesque villages, located on the territory or in the proximity of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route.
8.9.	**The association of cultural and touristic events with the Route (thematic harmonisation) and the development of a calendar of events** that can be promoted to/by tour operators, tourism agencies and can be posted on the route's website.
8.10	Promotion in the rural area of opportunities for the development of experiential tourism through information sessions addressed by farm owners, agro-touristic pensions, local gastronomic points. Organising a seminar **"Gastronomy and tourism harmonised to the environment and people. How to recirculate and save resources? "**
8.11	Development of a **list of circular tourist experiences** in the area of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route, which can be developed or implemented in the proximity of the main objectives of the route.

9. Changing the mindset regarding the principles of circularity and in *the field* of nature protection and the creation of a community spirit that fosters circular tourism and the circular economy (measures to educate and inform rural communities) through exhibitions, displays, events.	Community mentality Lack of visibility	Sensory heritage experience Nature as heritage Rural co-living Contemporary meanings of heritage	Regional tourism associations Local public authorities Tour operators Administrators of the objectives included in the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route Local and regional OMDs OAR- The Order of Architects or local urbanism offices of the town halls Directorates of Agriculture Associations and networks of local producers

9.1	**Attracting the support of local authorities for the sanitation of the public space, to increase the attractiveness of the tourist destination**. Development of facilities adapted to the needs of tourists in the area of proximity of the objectives, but as well of the public spaces from the rural areas, especially.
9.2	**Recommendations for landscaping /** arrangement and elaboration of signposting layouts, definition of appropriate materials for panels, information stands, resting places for visitors, QR system for route objectives, through other projects or through the activities of the Be.CULTOUR community.
9.3	**Arranging local temporary markets** to facilitate the connection of the tourists with the local products and to encourage the local producers to interact with the visitors. Guidebook for the development of such local markets, with reusable furniture and equipment adjusted according to circular principles.

9.4	**Mapping the gastronomic points existing along the route and promoting the products of local farmers;** A monitoring program of local products will be introduced, to harmonise the activity and the principles of the circular economy.
9.5	**Identification of local events related to circular tourism** (such as eco-brunch in Bison Land, Bucovina Brunch) and the development of a calendar of events, agreed with the organizers.
9.6	**Elaboration of a guidebook** for the management of events, based on the principles of circular tourism. The guide will be disseminated among the interested parties in the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route.

Result: improved knowledge of event organisers (events are important waste producers and the impact of the large events will be major in the next time, in all the regions). |
9.7	**Connecting the workshops of folk craftsmen and museums /ethnographic collections** from the countryside of the Route, in order to facilitate their visit and to encourage the production of themed souvenirs.
9.8	**Information campaigns that will remind tourists and host communities to respect the local values and natural resources** (principles of the circular economy but also of sustainable development). Finding the right arguments to persuade community members to adhere to the principles and spirit of the circular economy.
9.9	**Development of a business with tableware leasing services** for events, in order to encourage the replacement of plastic and paper materials. This will increase the quality of the events and will provide reusable materials with a long-life cycle (glass, ceramics, metal, etc.).
9.10	**Supporting rural communities by providing support and know-how, to the public authorities and relevant stakeholders,** to ensure a sustainable development of tourism, based on respect for the valuable resources of the village, consultations, fair partnership that can eliminate poverty and increase the well-being of local communities The ways of action can be: inclusion in projects, piloting of good practices, consultation of the community in the development of local strategies and businesses. Consider the *UNWTO Recommendations on Tourism and Rural Development* guide, 2020.

6. Methodology for implementing and monitoring the activities of the Be.CULTOUR Action Plan

In the monitoring process, the relevant indicators measure the success of the implementation of an action plan in relation to the initial objectives and the expected results, aiming at a balance between qualitative and quantitative indicators.

The monitoring process will mainly use internal data, external data and internal surveys. The information providers will be the coordinators of the innovative actions, who will report on the progress of the implementation of actions.

The action plan will be followed and monitored during the implementation period of the Be.CULTOUR project by the project team from ADR NE, in collaboration with the created Be.CULTOUR community. The following issues will be monitored:

- Tourism/economic development strategies, at region and county level, and the extent to which chapters or references to circular and cultural tourism are found;
- The results related to the portfolio of innovative actions in the area of circular cultural tourism (quantitative result indicators);
- Quantitative indicators on the application of circular economy principles in the member organisations of the Be.CULTOUR Community (monitoring will be carried out by means of a questionnaire applied annually);
- Identification of good practices and their dissemination.

The monitoring tools are:

- Questionnaires for the analysis of qualitative indicators;
- Reporting data for projects that are part of the Action Plan;
- Quantitative reporting questionnaire / research at the level of the Be.CULTOUR Community.

Monitoring will be done by:

- Monitoring and Evaluation Scoreboard – a scoreboard will be developed to report and monitor progress in the implementation of the action plan.
- Online meetings for reporting and disseminating good practices in circular cultural tourism, at county level ("Stephen the Great and Saint" Route).
- The establishment of a joint committee composed of representatives of several organisations from the Be.CULTOUR stakeholder list, which take over the monitoring and evaluation tasks.
- Quarterly reporting the progress made in implementing actions.

The following shall be considered:

- Animation of the Be.CULTOUR community through the whatsapp group, set up during the workshops held between December 2021 and June 2022.
- Communication by Email.

The three important considerations in monitoring are:

- <u>Efficiency</u>: Are the activities realised on time and on budget? Are they sufficiently detailed?
- <u>Effectiveness</u>: Are the activities executed properly? Is the budget appropriate? Do the products and final achieved results correspond to the desired needs/products and results?
- <u>Relevance</u>: Are the activities progressing as expected?

The data and information used in the monitoring process will enable the Agency of Regional Development North-East and the Be.CULTOUR implementation team to take corrective actions. They focus on improving implementing measures, recommendations on allocating or reallocating resources, design of new or alternative activities to support the achievement of the desired final results.

The data and information used in the monitoring explain how the activities relate to the results, what are the conditions for the success and what are the factors that determine

or hinder change. This information will also provide sufficient depth and significance to the products/services resulting from the activities.

The data and information used in monitoring shall provide information on the following aspects:

- If all financial, human and other resources that have been planned and budgeted for the implementation of each strategy are (a) available, (b) consistent as specified and (c) on time.
- If all the activities that have been planned under each strategy are (a) processed, (b) as specified and (c) on time.
- If all the resources made available for the implementation of each strategy are used (a) fully as planned and (b) efficiently.
- If the real costs of the strategy implementation are in line with those anticipated and estimated.

Evaluation:

- is focused on results and should study the impact of changes that could lead to delays in the achievement of the Be.CULTOUR action plan's objectives.
- analyses the positive and negative consequences of implementation.
- investigates the conditions and effects of the activities on the region as a whole.

The evaluation examines the entire chain of results to understand the effect of the action plan on actors and tourist attractions, respectively on the target areas from the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route.

The following **principles** will be evaluated**:**

1. Analysis and interpretation of data, based on results, accompanied by critical evaluation of activities. It is an effective tool for managing execution and it provides timely information and recommendations for decision-makers for the process of management, strategies and project policies implementation.

2. Institutional cooperation was vital from the beginning in development of the Local Action Plan. It is necessary to consolidate the partnership within the Be.CULTOUR Community, in order to identify common objectives and to find ways to avoid duplication of efforts in implementing the plan actions.

3. Planning is an integral part of M&E. This is the process that sets out the resources and actions needed to achieve the results defined in the action plan.

4. Breakdown of objectives into work-packages with activities, tasks and sub-tasks. This is a necessary factor in planning, helping to define the actions, resources and time needed to carry out the activities and obtain the final products and results. It also supports complementarity and institutional cooperation.

5. Responsibility. An important principle in the development and application of the M&E Methodology is that the working groups from Be.CULTOUR community, responsible for implementing the actions of the Action Plan, are the core of M&E activities.

6. Transparency is a key factor for an effective M&E process, as it ensures the visibility of actions, risks, products and of the final results. Evidence-based monitoring and evaluation reports can be used to inform realistic and clear all the stakeholders, about the achieved progress.

Risk management includes the identification and analysis of relevant events that could prevent the achievement of objectives and the implementation of innovative ideas from the Be.CUTOUR portfolio. Their management is important in order to obtain the anticipated results at consortium level. In the table below are presented the risks that can affect the smooth running of the activities. Along with the possible risks, a number of proposals for

managing them are also presented in the table below. The risk categories have also been harmonised with the projected risks at consortium level[63].

Risk	Description	Management measures
R1	Discontinuities in implementation due to the project leadership, caused by other responsibilities within this project, or other projects in implementation.	The coordinator at national level is involved in the coordination of each WP and may temporarily be in charge of coordinating the local action plan. Alternatively, the national coordinator will delegate the tasks to other members of the project team.
R2	Discontinuities in implementation due to inadequate involvement of partners.	Special support measures, with reallocation of time and budget, if necessary. Request to supplement the partner's project team with other additional human resources.
R3	The data about the implementation stage of innovative ideas, are not available or are incomplete.	Creating a structure of constant communication with the authors of innovative actions. In this way the information will be accessed more easily, and a cohesion will be created between the implementation teams and the project team. Exchange of information with other heritage sites in the project (PHS-s) on the same theme, in order to identify good practices. Accessing information available to partners in the region.
R5	Difficulty in identifying and implementing financing instruments and in assisting the development of the innovative projects.	The innovative ideas selected for the local action plan already have relevant experience in developing business models and accessing financial instruments. This previous experience constitutes a real support for the identification of financing instruments, and for the development of innovative businesses. Coordination with ICHEC, the Be.CULTOUR partner responsible for accelerating and developing innovative ideas, as well as with ICLEI, the mentor assigned by the project.
R6	Failure in attracting and involving a critical mass of local stakeholders/ interest groups in the Be.CULTOUR innovation network.	NERDA will lead the process and strengthen the Local Pact and the concluded protocol. Close coordination with ICLEI, which has the role of mentor, experienced in engagement mechanisms, will

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[63] Gravagnuolo, A., Apirceni, V., Deliverable D6.1. Be.CULTOUR, "Management Handbook, Monitoring AND Evaluation Plan AND Risk Management Plan", 2021

Risk	Description	Management measures
		improve and identify any emerging issues, that may cause stakeholders to leave the process. It will be able to offer advice to alleviate these problems, as they arise.
R7	Failure in developing prototypes and testing innovations for sustainable and circular cultural tourism, on the theme of "Stephen the Great and Saint"	ICHEC (responsible for the process of accelerating and coaching the innovative ideas) will adopt advanced methodologies to support this work. The coordinator and other technical partners will closely monitor innovations for the North-East region and will identify and address the critical issues.
R8	Failure in bringing together, to the major events of the project, the representatives of local authorities (municipal, regional and national level), as well as other organisations and institutions with responsibilities in the field of preservation the cultural heritage.	The project partners, and especially NERDA, have a long experience in organising events for the dissemination and development of tourism at regional level (Tourism Gala of the North-East Region and other regional events).
R9	Difficulties in communication and dissemination of the information within project team organisations (NERDA, Verde e Moldova Association) and between the project team and other partner organisations, in the implementation of the Local Action Plan.	The project coordinator will facilitate the creation of a climate of cooperation in which it is expected that the communication will take place optimally; This will eliminate possible gaps in the implementation of activities, by applying rules of good communication and support, including modern communication technologies (Zoom, Meet etc.).
R10	The Covid-19 outbreak, the Crisis in Ukraine as well as any other major cause that could prevent the project activities from being carried out.	The consortium partners have developed enough experience to deal with a possible crisis generated by other Covid-19 outbreaks, which could affect the development of activities in a physical format. As an alternative, it will be resorted to remote work and communication with the help of MS Teams, Zoom and other solutions. A number of delays may occur and may be generated by the crisis in Ukraine, which could affect the mobility of the partners in the Republic of Moldova.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

Be.CULTOUR is a transnational European research and innovation project, in which the partner that coordinates the development of activities in Romania is the North-East Regional Development Agency. The project is funded by the European Commission through Horizon 2020 and is coordinated by CNR-IRISS (Italy).

The name *Be.CULTOUR* represents *Beyond CULtural TOURism*, a concept and a desideratum that envisages the realisation of a network of heritage innovation, as a factor of Europeanization and of transit to a circular economy, in the tourism sector. The objective of the project is to promote the development of tourism through a human-centric development perspective, which, in the long term, can improve the values of cultural heritage.

The project aims to contribute to the post-Covid recovery of the tourism sector in Europe and to identify alternative cultural tourism services and products, in line with the circular economy model, contributing primarily to the recovery of trust and cohesion within local communities.

The researchers in the project tried to identify those elements that can lead the remote tourism areas (that are far from the major tourism flows) towards a sustainable, circular tourism development. These are:

- o 4 innovative cross-cutting approaches: circular tourism, cultural Europeanization, responsible, fair and human-centred tourism, smart destination management;
- o 4 emerging trends – transformative travel, remote destinations, proximity trips, post-cultural tourism;
- o 6 areas of innovation (cohabitation in rural areas, sensory experiences connected to heritage, contemporary significance of heritage, spiritual experiences of the journey, nature as heritage, experiences in the field of industrial heritage).

All these elements were taken into account in the development **of the "Be.CULTOUR North-East Romania Plan – The 2023-2027 Action Plan of the North-East Region of Romania for the development of circular cultural tourism on the topic of the cultural route "the Ruler Stephen the Great and Saint", in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova".**

This document is the result of a participatory planning process and is structured according to the objectives set by the North-East Regional Development Agency.

1. Presentation of the potential of circular cultural tourism in the North-East Region of Romania through applied research on 20 objectives included in the Route "Stephen the Great and Saint" in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova" and of the Vânători Neamț Natural Park;

2. Identification and analyse of the stakeholders network, in the field of circular cultural tourism, in the North-East Region of Romania, compiling an exhaustive list of potential members of the Be.Cultour Community, who were invited to be part of the Be.Cultour Project Working Group;

3. Identification of tourism projects and products existing in the North-East Region, aimed at developing and promoting in full, partially or tangentially the objectives of the cultural route "Stephen the Great and Saint" and drawing up a descriptive list of these projects highlighting the circular economy elements presented by them;

4. Drawing up a list of proposals for new tourist attractions and destinations on the topic of the mentioned route, which could be part of a new route of circular cultural tourism in the North-East Region of Romania, by centralising the conclusions of the participatory creation process carried out within the workshops.

5.   Identifying and presenting a number of 7 innovative solutions from the North-East region, that could define the new route of circular cultural tourism, based on the existing route and the new objectives identified within the project; presentation of 2 solutions that were submitted by their initiators to the Hackaton organised in Brussels, between 7-9 September 2022;

6.   The analysis of the proposals made for extending of the existing Route, that could be included in the Route, using the conclusions of the research, defining a Strategic Vision and a Destination Development Plan.

The efforts made by different "actors" for the development of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" route are justified, taking into account that a development and a good promotion of the route can have positive effects on numerous communities in the rural area, polarising positive various categories of stakeholders, in the six counties of the North-East Region from Romania.
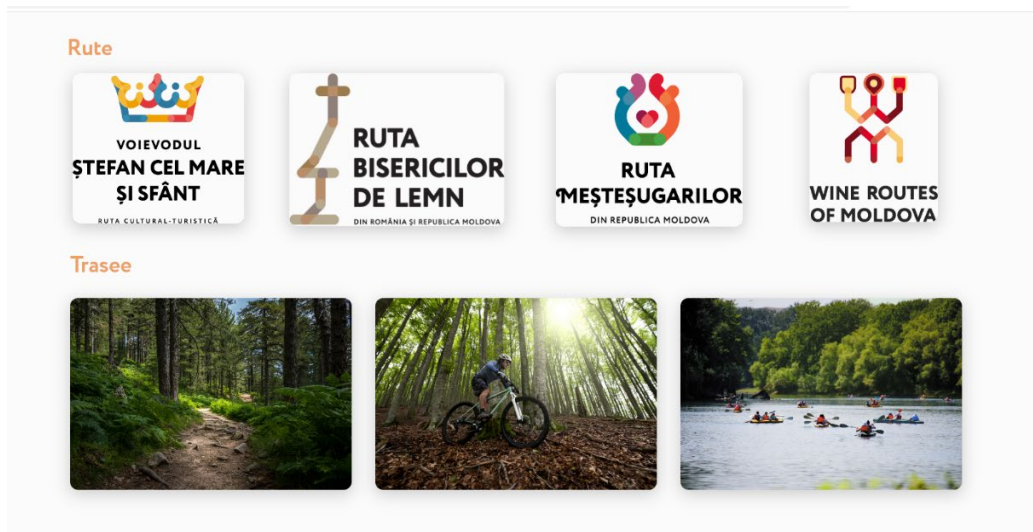

Figure no. 19. The internet web page of the Investment Agency Republic of Moldova, that is promoting the Route of Stephen the Great and Saint

An important advantage of this Route is the support at the level of central governance, both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova: The "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route appears first on the list of the Entrepreneurship and Tourism Ministry from Romania, in the list of transnational cultural tourist routes, and it also appears on the first page of the Investment Agency of Republic of Moldova. Both organisations have repeatedly declared their desire to support the expansion to Ukraine, in order to create the necessary conditions for the registration of the route in the European Cultural Routes Network, discussions in this regard having already been held at the highest level.[64]

The Be.CULTOUR project brought a new perspective on the development efforts of the Route, namely the principles of cultural-circular tourism, facilitating a transition to the green economy, according to the European Commission's agenda, for the horizon 2030 (European Green Deal).

In general, at the level of the tourism industry, the concept of circular economy has not yet attracted much interest in the two partner countries, the concept "circular tourism" being a more general one: "sustainable tourism / sustainable economy". As a result, the workshops organised within the project had as an additional purpose to raise the participants' awareness about this topic.

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[64]   https://turism.gov.ro/web/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/TRANSNATIONALE.23.02.2023.pdf (accessed 02.11.2022)

Managing the route in the future can be a challenge for all the actors involved and for the entities that will assume its management. Several recommendations in this regard have been made in chapter five of the Action Plan, and they are particularly aiming at the need to involve all the elements of the route's value chain. Only in this way is it possible to transform the Route into a coherent, attractive tourist experience, which will increase the notoriety of the area.

The destination is the most complex entity in the tourism industry, being difficult to be managed: if a simple travel company has management tools to achieve the objectives, the management of the destination must be based only on the commitment of the stakeholders, on communication, transparency, co-creation and shared governance. For this reason, the stakeholders were involved in the workshops, not only to access all the valuable knowledge they have, but also to achieve their commitment to the future implementation of the action plan.

Constant evaluation of the objectives of the route is vital. Monitoring the route objectives and segments should be a permanent task of the administrative bodies involved in the route management (Crivillers et al., 2015). We believe that not only the public authorities are carrying this responsibility, but an appropriate governance structure should be empowered, that should distribute the responsibility between different partners and stakeholders. The concluded local pact may be the starting point for such a governance structure, which should be based on the following principles:

- Any public-private organisations or partnerships can join the local pact, as well as individuals cand bring added value or expertise to the activity of the community.
- The existence of a coordination structure that can be periodically changed in a participatory manner; this will animate and ensure the management of the activities based on an operational activity plan (Local Action Plan Be.CULTOUR).
- The existence of an extensive support structure, namely Be.CULTOUR Community, which could be structured similarly to NGOs, having an extended assembly, an executive committee.
- The establishment of thematic sub-committees, to streamline the activity and to create expert core-groups, on the central themes or areas of innovation (digitization, promotion, nature as heritage, spirituality, etc.).
- Establishing a calendar of technical working meetings.
- Establishing a calendar of field monitoring.
- Organisation of events and celebrations of good practices, for strengthening the network and shaping the culture and identity of the Route.

Future stakeholder discussions should bring to attention the fragile link between the performance of tourist objectives (quality of local experience), tourist satisfaction and the route's chances to become a competitive tourism product, that could help communities thrive. A difficult topic that should be addressed, is whether there should be an average standard or a minimum admitted quality standard, for the objectives that are part of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" route. The new emerging routes are made up of tourist attractions that offer different quality standards (tourism infrastructure, tourism services). This could lead to dissatisfaction and a negative image of the route, a perception that could be difficult to be modified later, in the future years.

Other recommendations may consider:
- Implementation of the actions formulated in the destination management plan and in the action plan, which reflect the opinion of the actors involved in the co-generation sessions of the plan.

- The objectives of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" route must be regarded as individualities, but also as part of a system. The quality of the route is not given only by the general quality of the tourist experience at the singular objectives, but also by the quality of the network and of the public spaces in the territories crossed by the route. This aspect must be placed on the agenda of the discussions with the public authorities that are administrating the access ways, the route area being distributed between the counties of Botosani, Suceava, Iași, Neamţ, Bacău and Vaslui.
- Creating a network of custodians of the objectives, that are part of the Route, in order to create a synergy between the organisations that manage the objectives.
- Development of other innovative ideas (similar to the Digital Nomads proposal) for the categories of young tourists, in order to bring the modern/ contemporary elements of promoting and presenting the Route; therefore, will create chances for the route to remain attractive for a longer period of time for new generations of tourists.
- Continuous usage of the elaborated questionnaires, developed within the Be.CULTOUR project, for the analysis of the tourist motivation.
- Continuation of the initiatives of North-East Regional Development Agency, to promote the circular economy and circular tourism, to promote national and international good practices at the Tourism Gala of the North-East Region, or through other events.
- The connection of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route with some touristic objectives promoted by the "Crafts and Craftsmen of the Republic of Moldova and Romania" Route, the intangible heritage being important for a diversification of the touristic experience.
- Synergies in promotion with other national routes[65] in Romania, with objectives that are also part of the of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route:
  o The Cultural-Touristic Route of the Wooden Churches in Romania, which includes objectives from Suceava, Neamţ, Vaslui, Iași, Botoșani.
  o The route of open air ethnographic museums in Romania (Bucovina Village Museum, Wood Art Museum).
  o The route of the multiethnic heritage in Romania (Botoșani, Suceava).
  o The route of wood civilization in Romania (Suceava, Neamţ).
  o The route of the museum heritage in Romania (Suceava, Neamţ, Iași).
  o UNESCO material heritage route in Romania (Suceava).
  o The route of the memorial houses in Romania (Suceava, Neamţ, Botoșani).
  o The route of folk craftsmen and traditional crafts in Romania (Neamţ, Suceava, Iași).
  o The route "Cucuteni Culture – part of the national identity" (Bacău, Botoșani, Iași, Suceava, Neamţ and Vaslui).
  o The route of the traditional villages in Romania (Suceava).
  o Cultural and tourist routes developed regionally and locally – all counties. [66][67]

Funding sources for the proposals

The main sources of funding, available at national level, take into account the European funds allocated to the development of tourism, accessible through:

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[65] https://turism.gov.ro/web/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/NATIONALE.23.02.2023.pdf

[66] https://turism.gov.ro/web/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/LOCALE.23.02.2023.pdf

[67] https://turism.gov.ro/web/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/REGIONALE.23.02.2023.pdf

- **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) – Component 11 - Tourism and Culture (93,475 mil. EUR)**[68];
- **The Regional Operational Plan (POR)**:
  - 8 Regional Operational Programmes 2021-2027 active at national level in the 8 Development Regions;
  - Strategic Objective 5 – Supporting the integrated local development by harnessing and promoting existing local potential.

The Ministry for Investments and European Projects will launch a new call for projects within the first *Investment Line* – "Promotion of the 12 tourist/ cultural routes", Component 11 – "Tourism and Culture", from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan of Romania.

The financing of tourist routes is done through Pilon IV. Social and territorial cohesion, *Component C 11 - Tourism and culture. Investment 1. The promotion of the 12 tourist/cultural routes*[69]. Taking into account that some objectives of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" route are part of other routes, they could benefit from the funds for the infrastructure optimization. From the routes that are in the development stage, there is compatibility with: (1) The route of traditional Romanian gastronomy, (2) The route of wooden churches, (3) The route of monasteries in the area of Moldova, (4) The route of the fortresses, (4) The route of villages with traditional architecture.

Among the activities that will be financed are the digitization of the sites included in the routes, the creation of applications dedicated to visitors, the marking and signposting of the trails / sites included in the route and the creation of new common cultural offers. Activities of restoration and revitalization of buildings, creation of exhibition spaces and arrangement of access roads, which allow at least pedestrian access, are also considered. These activities have been identified as needs in many of the ideas of *the Portfolio of innovative solutions for the development and promotion of circular tourism in the North-East Region*, in chapter 3 of the Local Action Plan.

In the **component C11 - Tourism and Culture there are two other investments dedicated to tourism: I2 and I3.**

PNRR I2 is considering **Upgrading / creating museums and memorial houses**, with the following eligible activities:
- Real estate acquisition (land or building);
- Inventory, documentation, design, rehabilitation, restoration, conservation and valorisation of representative monuments/objectives/assemblies by using energy-efficient building materials and reducing greenhouse emissions.
- Construction of museums, new exhibition spaces and their endowment.
- Digitization of heritage objects and their online publication, ensuring access for all those interested in the heritage of these museums.
- Access from DN/DJ to the monument/objective.

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[68] **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)** in Romania follows the general objectives of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (MRR), a mechanism created at European Union (EU) level as a temporary financial instrument to support the recovery from the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The rules and principles on which the implementation of the NRPS is based are laid down in Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery Mechanism, and Resiliency 2021-2027, as well as in the Council Implementing Decision of 3 November 2021 approving the assessment of the Recovery and Resilience Plan. The Romanian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) comprises a reform package and Investment public to be implemented by 2026. The total financial allocation for Romania is eur 29.2 billion, of which EUR 14.24 billion in grants and EUR 14.94 billion in loans.

[69] https://mfe.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2aeab499bcb48baf35a0b2b692894db5.pdf (accessed 02.11.2022)

- Marking and signalling of the trail(s) included in the route.
- Development of infrastructure on a small scale (resting points, lookout places).
- Greening, sanitising and the landscape rehabilitation of areas with negative impact.
- Marketing, management and digitalisation.
- Development and delivery of cultural offer.

Considering that a series of proposals from the Local Action Plan also envisage the development of cycling routes (Iaşi, Botoșani) relevant are also **the Investments within the PNRR Reform 2 of C11 "Creating the framework for the operationalization of the cycling routes at national level".** The objective of this reform is to contribute to the economic development of small towns and rural areas by adopting a legislative, institutional and investment framework for achieving cycling routes and practicing sustainable forms of tourism.

The relevant *investments* are**: I3. The establishment of the Velo National Coordination Center** which: a) will elaborate the study on cyclotourism routes at national level; b) will ensure the digitization of velo tracks and routes by developing a National eVelo Platform that includes an integrated digital application for all cycling routes and a dedicated website; and **I4. Implementation of 3000 km of bike lanes.** The objective of this investment is to develop sustainable transport by developing the infrastructure of cycling routes.

Reform 3 of the C11 refers to **reforming the financing system of the cultural sector".**[70] It aims to create a more stable, predictable and sustainable long-term legal and administrative framework for the non-public (private/independent) cultural sector and cultural workers, to create data collection tools that will allow, in the future, public policies based on these data and to start a process that contributes to the socio-educational and cultural development of the rural and "small" urban, by bridging the gaps with the "big" urban". **Investment I5** can be considered, because it refers to **increasing access to culture in culturally disadvantaged areas** and considers:

- A pilot funding programme in partnership with local authorities to support cultural, annual or multiannual programmes implemented at local level.
- A pilot programme to finance cultural education projects, whose beneficiaries are schools in rural areas and in small towns.

PNRR programs in the field of culture and heritage are managed by the Administration of the National Cultural Fund, AFCN.[71]

The investments of POR 2021-2027 are relevant through the **Priority - A competitive region through innovation, digitalization, and dynamic enterprises,** which allocates dedicated financing to SMEs from the 8 development regions with a total budget of EUR 100,000,000. In the **Priority: An attractive region** are eligible:

- Funding dedicated to APLs, NGOs, places of worship, partnerships in the 8 development regions - in accordance with the provisions of regional POR 2021-2027;
- (re)arrangement / rehabilitation / modernization / extension of public spaces, in historical centres and their neighbourhoods.
- restoration / consolidation / protection / conservation / endowment / digitization of cultural heritage, adaptation for hosting cultural and creative events and activities.
- construction / extension / modernization / rehabilitation / endowment of buildings with cultural functions, cultural centres, museums, theatres, libraries, educational-scientific parks.

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[70] https://monitorpnrr.eu/componenta-11-turism-si-cultura/ (accessed on 02.11.2022)
[71] https://www.afcn-pnrr.ro/ (accessed on 03.11.2022)

- construction / rehabilitation / modernization of treatment bases, spa centres with integrated services, networks for capturing and transporting mineral springs, salt mines with therapeutic potential, adventure parks, aquaparks, supporting entrepreneurs in creative industries, developing green public transport infrastructure to objectives, interconnected with existing networks.
- promoting sustainable tourism, capitalising tourism projects, promoting creative industries, investing in quality, sustainable tourism products and services.
- increasing the involvement of local actors and civil society, increasing the capacities of cities to facilitate local and regional development.
- realisation of best practices exchanges, which promote collaboration between actors in the region and stakeholders in the cross-border area.
- development of innovative models of institutional development of local communities.

Smart Growth, Digitalisation and Financial Instruments Operational Programme - (POCIDIF) Total budget: 2.2 billion euro
- Through POCIDIF, will be financed interventions for the digitization of culture and the creation of a platform on the location and state of cultural heritage objectives, while issues aimed at social inclusion, combating marginalisation; marginalised communities will be addressed through POIDS, the local development component placed under the responsibility of the community.
- The interventions are complementary to those of the Creative Europe Programme, with the cultural and creative sectors being able to reach the economic potential - generating sustainable growth and jobs - by accessing new opportunities, markets and international audiences.

At the same time, the actions foreseen in the LIFE programme focus on sustainable forms of tourism, including aspects of circular economy, energy efficiency and climate neutrality.

Another PNRR funding line envisages Digitalisation of SMEs. The 350 million EUR call will be launched from February 2023, of which the allocation for the North-East will be of 44978494.27 EUR. Acquisitions [72]of ICT hardware; purchases of automation and robotics equipment for technological flows, integrated with digital solutions; development and/or adaptation of software applications/licences, including RPA software automation solutions, are eligible, respectively Robotic Process Automation; blockchain technologies acquisitions; artificial intelligence systems acquisitions, machine learning, augmented reality, virtual reality; presentation website purchase; acquisition of cloud and IoT services; training of the staff that will use the ICT equipment; consultancy/analysis to identify the technical solutions that SMEs need, etc. Some of these activities could support actions related to digitalisation.

Regarding the international programs that have funding compatible with the identified needs, we can list the Horizon 2020 Programme, the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 programme, the COSME Programme and the NEXT Romania-Ukraine, Romania-Moldova cross-border programmes.

Horizon 2020 international research programmes are highly competitive and can be accessed in partnership with a public administration institution, a research or higher education institution.

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[72] Guide is available on https://mfe.gov.ro/ghidul-specific-consolidat-pentru-apelul-de-proiecte-numarul-1-digitalizarea-imm-urilor-grant-de-pana-la-100-000-euro-pe-intreprindere-care-sa-sprijine-imm-urile-in-adoptarea-tehnologiilor/ (Accessed at 02.10.2022)

At the beginning of 2023, the NEXT Romania-Ukraine program[73] will be launched, and it could respond to the intentions of expansion of the Route to Ukraine. In Policy Objective 4 - **A more social and inclusive Europe,** Measure VI aims to 'Increase the role of sustainable culture and tourism in the economic development, social inclusion and social innovation'. The same measure is found in the NEXT Romania-Republic of Moldova program.[74]

All these financing instruments could create optimal conditions for the implementation of at least a part of the actions of this plan and the achievement of the central objective of developing circular cultural tourism along the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route.

Naturally, this route has every chance to turn into a successful tourist product. According to Ramchamder, (2004) the term "cultural tourism" is sometimes used synonymously with the term "tourism of special interest". Since 2004, when this statement was made, we have witnessed a steady increase in visitors travelling to familiarise themselves with the heritage and cultures of other nations.

It is almost impossible to separate "culture" or "cultural experiences" from travel, no matter what the main purpose of the trip is. Cultural tourism seems to be omnipresent (Richards & Pereiro, 2006, Richards, 2007) and for many destinations it seems to be a sure path to long-term success.

It is no wonder that the European Cultural Routes initiative has been enthusiastically embraced by a large number of European countries. Cultural routes can highlight places with their cultural identity; can invite tourists to explore cultural sites and resources (local gastronomy, crafts, folklore, architecture) and to "reinvent or activate strategies for the proper exploitation of the cultural, natural and economic landscape" (Trono, 2022). Moreover, for several destinations they have become an alternative way to improve their image and promote themselves among other destinations.

Almost 90% of the European cultural routes pass through rural communities, integrating lesser-known areas. The Covid-19 crisis has changed the perspective, bringing new challenges (Dominioni, 2021): the need to gain the trust of the travellers, the quality of the experience, on the whole, finding ways to recognize and respond to the new emerging types of tourists. All these challenges call for the implementation of the right tools for sustainability and resilience, the need for training and capacity building, the transition to digital marketing (research and promotion) and the provision of financial support.

The results of the Be.CULTOUR workshops will serve for the planning and development of the "Stephen the Great and Saint" Route, in the decision-making process and policy formulation phase, for the consolidation of the partnership and for future improvements of the touristic experience.

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[73] https://oportunitati-ue.gov.ro/programul-interreg-next-romania-ucraina-2021-2027/ (Accessed at 10.12.2022)

[74] https://ro-md.net/ro/2021-2027 (Accessed at 10.12.2022)

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