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Joint Study - Giurgiu-Ruse area Joint Overview Report - project code ROBG-502



Project “Sustaining Rural Tourism in the Giurgiu-Ruse Area
Through its Cultural Heritage” is co-financed by the European Union
through the European Regional Development Fund
under the Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme
Amount of EU contribution: 306,237.24 EURO



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SUMMARY

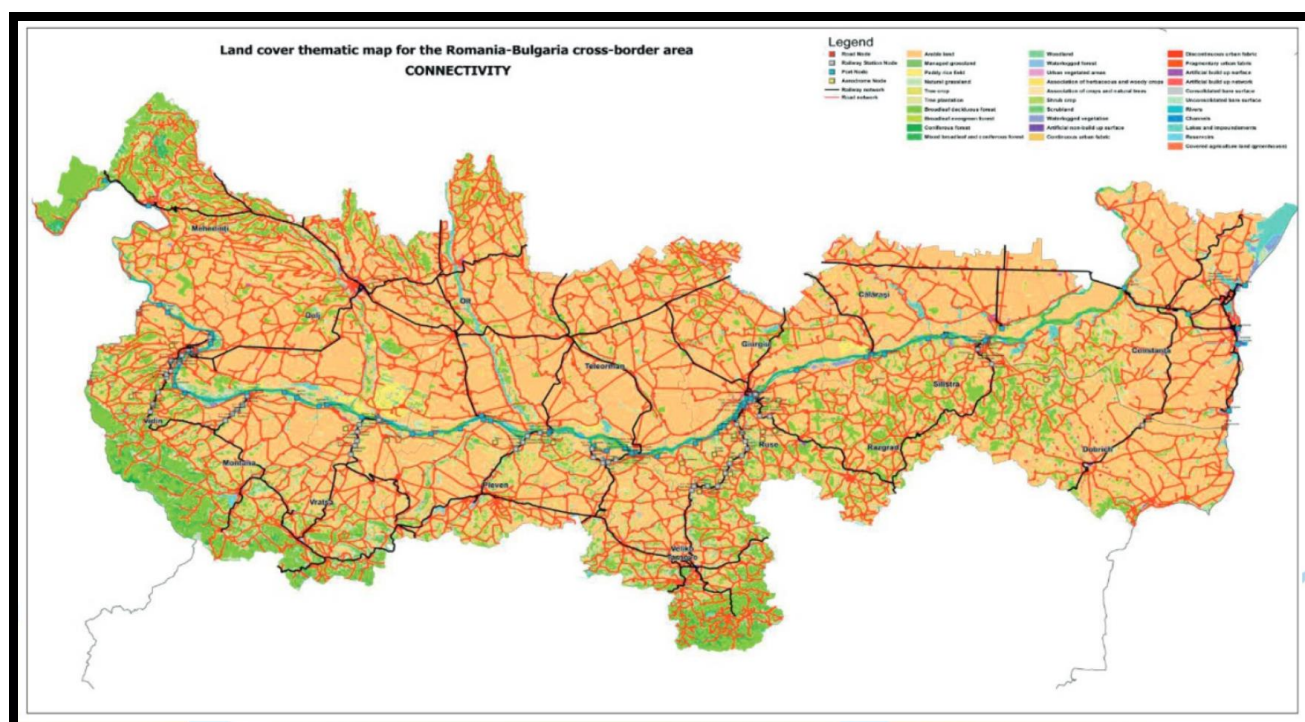
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Introduction

The project is aimed at developing an integrated approach to the promotion of the cultural and intangible heritage of rural communities from both Giurgiu and Ruse areas in order to support local economic development by focusing on rural tourism development.

The common aim was to focus on the touristic potential of Giurgiu and Ruse areas by collecting and providing pieces of information about the most important communities as attractive touristic destinations from the point of view of resources, receptiveness and sustainable development.

The panoramic map of the cross-border Romanian-Bulgarian region below shows us the central position the Giurgiu-Ruse area occupies within the touristic framework with the possibility to be developed in the next years (see the blue line).



Source: "Common Strategy for Sustainable Territorial Development of the cross-border area Romania-Bulgaria "



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The studies were conducted according to a joint methodology which was set up to help analyze and assess the information gathered on the tourist potential of Giurgiu and Ruse counties and to select ten representative villages in each of the two target areas, having the greatest potential to attract tourists and develop cross-border tourist products in the region Giurgiu-Ruse.

The recommended project methodology tools were followed in the elaboration of the analysis in order to offer a realistic and solid basis for the final common approach of the topic for both Romanian and Bulgarian areas in discussion. After selection conducted from component villages in both areas, there were identified and analysed those villages with significant touristic potential. An emphasis was put on the intangible cultural heritage while highlighting the advantages and opportunities for a tourist perspective in the counties. The results play an important role to design a future joint strategy along years to come with an eye to strong perspective for responsible tourism development and welfare for local communities in the Giurgiu-Ruse region.

During the opinion polls conducted in the field among different actors within communities, locals and organizations, we increased the awareness and interest among the Romanian and Bulgarian local people and stakeholders regarding the touristic development of the areas they live in. By being better informed and more conscious about the role of sustainable tourism in the development of their localities, they will be more committed to taking action towards protecting and promoting the cultural heritage of their region.



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Chapter 1.

Giurgiu relevant coordinates in rural sustainable tourism perspectives

General features of the Giurgiu county



Source: "<https://www.ocpigiurgiu.ro/judetul-giurgiu/>"

Surface – 3.526 sqkm

Number of cities and municipalities – 3 – of which one municipality – Giurgiu

Number of communes – 51

Number of villages – 167



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Giurgiu county is located in the southern part of Romania, on the lower course of the Danube. Its location on the left bank of the Danube facilitates river connections with riparian and Black Sea countries. Giurgiu is bordered by Călărași county in the East, Teleorman county in the West, Ilfov county and North-West Arges county and Dâmbovița county in the North. The area of the county represents 1.5% of the country's surface. Within the range of Giurgiu, there are road and railway border crossing points between Giurgiu and Ruse.

Giurgiu ranks among the counties with the lowest number of people living as stable population, 281,422 inhabitants. In Giurgiu, communes hold over two thirds of the stable population, with the rural area accounting for 70.8% of the total. The stable population of its three cities: Giurgiu – 61,400 inhabitants, Bolintin Vale – 12,900 inhabitants and Mihăilești – 7,900 inhabitants. Ethnic information was available for 263,800 people, of whom Romanians were 248,400 (94.1%), Roma of 15,200 (5.8%), and other ethnicities below 1%.

The county is located in the Romanian Plain, where the Argeș, Neajlov and Sabar rivers meet.. From North to South, the county expands on a length of 94 km, and from West to East it measures 79 km. The Danube borders the county on a range of 72 km.

The relief of Giurgiu is made up mainly of plains, more specifically of five main subunits of the Romanian Plain: Burnas, Vlășia, Găvanu-Burdea, the Titu-Potlogi subsidence Plain and the Danube Meadow. The maximum altitudes reach the North - Western extremity, with values of 140 m - 142 m, on the territory of Vânătorii Mici commune. The minimum altitude is recorded in the South-Eastern extremity: 14.6 m, on the Danube, South of the Greaca village.

Also, on the territory of the county we find, to a significant extent, forests and arable land. In the North side of the county there are petroleum deposits and crude oilfields which are exploited but also sand and gravel which are extracted from the bed of Danube and the other rivers nearby.

Giurgiu has a list of protected natural areas:



- *Comana Natural Park (24.963 ha)*
- *Oloaga-Gradinari Forest and Padina Tătarului Forest (areas included in the Comana Natural Park)*
- *Cama - Dinu - Păsărica islands (2,400 ha bird and flora type)*
- *Manafu Forest (28 ha)*
- *Teșila Forest (52.5 ha)*

Giurgiu is a predominantly agricultural county, with approximately 50% of the population being employed in this sector. Its economy consists mainly of agriculture, industry and commerce – distinguished as significant activities.

Moreover, Giurgiu is one of the most important Romanian ports on the Danube. The county's residence is located on the Bucharest-Sofia-Athens and Bucharest-Istanbul routes. The Danube exit represents an important geostrategic point for Romania because it links the Western Europe with the Near East, something that counts for the high potential regarding the touristic development of the county and a good option in building cooperation bridges with Bulgarian neighbours in the area of Ruse.

Table 1. Historical monuments from the Roman era in Giurgiu county

Nr. Crt.	Code LMI	Name	Village	Location	Date
1	GR-I-m-B-14763.01	Settlement	village BRANIȘTEA, commune OINACU	"Măgura Mare", lângă brațul	The IVth. Century BChr., Roman Era
2	GR-I-m-B-14762.01	Settlement	village BILA; commune SCHITU	"La Cimitir",/ "At the Cemetery", on the Eastern side of the cemetery	Roman Era



3	GR-I-m-B-14769.02	Settlement	village CETĂȚUIA; GĂUJANI	Out of the village towards Găujani, on the middle terrace of Pasărea Bakewater	The IIIrd-IVth Century BChr, Roman Era
4	GR-I-m-B-14784.01	Archeological site	village CETĂȚUIA; village CETĂȚUIA; Găujani,	"At the Grand Channel", on the Eastern side of the village	The IIIrd-IVth Century BChr, Roman Era
5	GR-I-m-B-14787.03	Settlement	village GHIZDARU; comuna	"Gurbanului Valley", in the back of the school	The IVth. Century, Dacian-Roman Era, Culture "Sântana de Mureș" – Cerneahov
6	GR-I-m-B-14821.02	Settlement	village PRUNDU; commune PRUNDU	"Greaca Lake", at cca. 2,5 km E from Prundu, on the bank of the former lake	The IVth. Century, Dacian-Roman
7	GR-I-m-B-14827.01	Settlement	village SCHITU; commune SCHITU	At the N-NV village border, near the CAP warehouses	The IVth. Century, Dacian-Roman Era, Culture "Sântana de Mureș-Cerneahov
8	GR-I-m-B-14807.02	Settlement	village MIRONEȘTI; commune GOSTINARI	"Down the Valley", at cca. 1 km E from the village, on the	The IVth. Century Roman Era



				Argeşului border	
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Giurgiu county presents a relief and the typical climate of the Romanian Plain, therefore suitable for tourism development and benefits from the presence of tourist attractions in its territory.

But due to an inefficient tourism approach and promotion in the past years, the county registered a low number of tourist arrivals, which is offset by the fact that most of them are foreign tourists who generally benefit from a larger travel budget.¹

Giurgiu County has been affected by a neglected tourist promotion so far due to the lack of public or private bodies dedicated to this action and recorded a modest cultural activity (due to the low number of visitors). The strong summer season, especially due to the lack of a concrete offer for the winter months, represented a real threat for the future tourism development of the county.

The current „Development Strategy for the Giurgiu County 2014-2020” has a new approach regarding the tourism development as part of the whole strategy of local improvement of the living standard and economic performance.

Exploring rural communities with touristic potential in the Giurgiu region

According to the recommended methodology, there have been chosen the most culturally significant 26 communities and evaluated based on key features and indicators. They represent the tools to be considered in the further step of the analysis for the community destinations to be presented.

By following the methodology recommended in the project, there were selected 10 communities which are considered to be attractive and with touristic potential in the present and, especially, on the long run.

The target zones in the conducted survey are representative for the communities

¹ Development Strategy for the Giurgiu County 2008-2013 - GCC



living there.

By using the project methodology, the following items as content have been reviewed for each of the selected destinations. Therefore, the reference elements of the survey are:

➤ **as cultural heritage**

We've taken into consideration aspects as: built heritage (monuments, antiquities, fortresses, churches, etc.); small historical places (fountains, chapels, walls etc.); local buildings; historical items (tools, clothes, furnishings, decorations, tapestries etc.); traditions (skills, know-how, customs etc.); gastronomy (local products, recipes, production methods etc.); events and festivals.

➤ **as natural resources**

We investigated aspects as: unusual, attractive, representative locations; protected areas (national parks, natural reserves); geological features (forests, lakes, rivers, waterfalls etc.); diversity of ecosystems.

➤ **as space, surroundings and infrastructure**

We searched for: places of accommodation; public facilities (restaurants, shops etc.); access, ways of transportation and connections; marketing and communication channels.

➤ **as stakeholders, legal and administrative climate**

We also sought the existence of: public units; local tourism priorities; operational NGOs; tourism operators; development and protection related legislation; locals' activities; competitive good practices to develop a tourism product.

The Romanian team based the analysis method on scores meant to point out the



significant characteristics for an area of touristic interest and attention, considering # the capacity and potential for development, # the degree of impact as attractiveness and # the degree of change as a result of tourism endeavours.

Below are the ranking and motivation for each element of the survey:

➤ **The cultural heritage**

Measures **40% at maximum** and it is considered the most solid treasure that communities reckon as identity, the basic element to take into account and rely on when elaborating a tourism plan for the future, historical legacy built since ages ago, of indisputable value at national and international level, architectural or religious items, customs and traditions – a reference we can turn to any time, a complex asset that always attracted all kinds of tourists and a direction to consider for developing responsible tourism strategies.

➤ **The natural resources**

Measures **30% as limit**, as they represent another treasure of the territory, parts of inherited relief, always sought by people travelling in order to relax and enjoy the time spent close to nature, and meanwhile a complex asset for preserving ecosystems and keeping the region able to offer protected conditions and land continuity.

➤ **The space, surroundings and infrastructure**

Measures **20% as limit**. These aspects were considered important survey elements, too, but having in mind that apart from what already exists and is operational, those could be improved and extended by the creative inhabitants and also supported with current and future professional projects.



➤ **The stakeholders, legal and administrative climate**

Measures **10% as limit**, taking into consideration that the tourism private sector, the NGOs and interest groups, though at the beginning, could improve their activity, the number has chances to increase. Investors are always invited to involve more. The current achievements are successful on the market and the local policies in terms of tourism, local administration and environment protection are encouraged to be spread within the community.

Therefore, a whole of 100% will consist of 40 + 30 + 20 + 10. This was the algorithm used to evaluate the status and the perspectives of the communities.

As long as we took an interest mainly in anthropogenic elements, the final evaluation will also receive a percentage on this issue, as part of the tourism development general potential (calculated as percentage part of the total limit of 40).

Here are the 10 villages and the summary evaluation of their tourism potential:

<u>Village</u>	<u>Ready for tourism development</u>	<u>Assesment result in consistent cultural heritage</u>
1.Comana	83 %	87.50 %
2. Herasti	42 %	45 %
3.Izvoarele	74 %	75 %
4.Draganescu	87 %	95 %
5.Greaca	76 %	72.50 %
6.Gostinu	62 %	80 %
7.Oinacu	57 %	75 %
8.Clejani	68 %	90 %
9.Slobozia	77 %	72.50 %
10.Balanoaia	84 %	70 %



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COMMUNITIES DESTINATIONS

In details

COMANA



a) **Cultural heritage (40%=MAX)**

Evaluation: 35%

- Number of historic buildings, community sites and monuments to be found in the community and on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 8, of which to be mentioned:

The Comana Monastery

The "Gellu Naum" Memorial House

The "Neajlov Delta" Hermitage

- The number of traditions still held in the community – 3
- The number of the community's customs – 2
- Craftsmanship & crafts persons – 6, to be mentioned:

Crafts Village and Paper Mill

- The number of local events still held in the community – 5, of which to be mentioned:

Peony Festival, held annually, in May-June

b) **Natural resources (30%=MAX)**

Evaluation: 25%



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- Number of natural heritage sites that are in proximity of the community, on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 3, of which to be mentioned:

Comana Natural Park, including the Thorn Reserve

Neajlov Delta

Bird watching point

- c) Space, surroundings and infrastructure (20%=MAX)

Evaluation: 15%

- Number of attractions found in the community or on a 10 km range from the center of the community – 5, of which to be mentioned:

Comana House Complex, including a miniature "Orient Express" train

Comana Adventure Park

"Horse Kingdom" – horse riding base

- Number of public facilities (restaurants, shops, bars) found in the community – 5
- The destination is easily accessible by transportation. We took into account the state of the roads, the existence of a train station, the possibility of using alternative transport such as bicycles. Considered easily accessible as it can be easily accessed by at least 2 different transportation methods – 3
- There were quantified existent accommodation facilities in the community / on a 5 km range from the community – 4

- d) The stakeholders, legal and administrative climate (10%=MAX)

Evaluation: 8%

- Number of local entrepreneurs – 15
- Number of local products developed by locals that can be commercialized – 10
- Interest on development and protection legislation
- Locals' activities focused on responsible tourism

TOTAL SCORE:

83% is ready for tourism development

with 87,50% consistent cultural heritage



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HERASTI



a) Cultural heritage (40%=MAX)

Evaluation: 18%

- Number of historic buildings, community sites and monuments to be found in the community and on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 3, of which to be mentioned:

“Udriste Nasturel” Mansion

- The number of traditions still held in the community – 3, to be mentioned:

Folkloric Art Museum

- The number of the community’s customs – 2
- Craftsmanship & crafts persons – 1
- The number of local events still held in the community – 1, of which to be mentioned:

Peony Festival, held annually, in May-June

b) Natural resources (30%=MAX)

Evaluation: 10%

- Number of natural heritage sites that are in proximity of the community, on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 2



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c) Space, surroundings and infrastructure (20%=MAX)

Evaluation: 9%

- Number of attractions found in the community or on a 10 km range from the center of the community – 4
- Number of public facilities (restaurants, shops, bars) found in the community – 1
- The destination is easily accessible by transportation. We took into account the state of the roads, the existence of a train station, the possibility of using alternative transport such as bicycles. Considered easily accessible as it can be easily accessed by at least 2 different transportation methods – 2
- There were quantified existent accommodation facilities in the community / on a 5 km range from the community – 1

d) The stakeholders, legal and administrative climate (10%=MAX)

Evaluation: 5%

- Number of local entrepreneurs – 5
- Number of local products developed by locals that can be commercialized – 2
- Interest on development and protection legislation;
- Locals' activities focused on responsible tourism

TOTAL SCORE:

42% is ready for tourism development

with 45 % consistent cultural heritage



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IZVOARELE



a) Cultural heritage (40%=MAX)

Evaluation: 30%

- Number of historic buildings, community sites and monuments to be found in the community and on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 3, of which to be mentioned:

“Cover of the Mother of God” Hermitage

- The number of traditions still held in the community – 3
- The number of the community’s customs – 3
- Craftsmanship & crafts persons – 5
- The number of local events still held in the community – 3

b) Natural resources (30%=MAX)

Evaluation: 22%

- Number of natural heritage sites that are in proximity of the community, on a range of 10 km from the



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center of the community – 2, of which to be mentioned:

Izvoarele Natural Reserve with Fishing bays

Manafu Forest

c) Space, surroundings and infrastructure (20%=MAX)

Evaluation: 15%

- Number of attractions found in the community or on a 10 km range from the center of the community – 12
- Number of public facilities (restaurants, shops, bars) found in the community – 3
- The destination is easily accessible by transportation. We took into account the state of the roads, the existence of a train station, the possibility of using alternative transport such as bicycles. Considered easily accessible as it can be easily accessed by at least 2 different transportation methods – 2
- There were quantified existent accommodation facilities in the community / on a 5 km range from the community –1

d) The stakeholders, legal and administrative climate (10%=MAX)

Evaluation: 7%

- Number of local entrepreneurs – 14
- Number of local products developed by locals that can be commercialized – 4
- Interest on development and protection legislation;
- Locals' activities focused on responsible tourism

TOTAL SCORE:

74% is ready for tourism development

with 75 % consistent cultural heritage



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DRAGANESCU



a) Cultural heritage (40%=MAX)

Evaluation: 38%

- Number of historic buildings, community sites and monuments to be found in the community and on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 12, of which to be mentioned:

The Church painted by Priest Arsenie Boca

- The number of traditions still held in the community – 2
- The number of the community's customs – 1
- As craftsmanship, as crafts persons there were identified – 1
- The number of local events still held in the community – 2

b) Natural resources (30%=MAX)

Evaluation: 27%



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- Number of natural heritage sites that are in proximity of the community, on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 12

c) Space, surroundings and infrastructure (20%=MAX)

Evaluation: 9 %

- Number of attractions found in the community or on a 10 km range from the center of the community – 2
- Number of public facilities (restaurants, shops, bars) found in the community – 1
- The destination is easily accessible by transportation. We took into account the state of the roads, the existence of a train station, the possibility of using alternative transport such as bicycles. Considered easily accessible as it can be easily accessed by at least 2 different transportation methods – 2
- Existent accommodation facilities in the community / on a 5 km range from the community – 0

d) The stakeholders, legal and administrative climate (10%=MAX)

Evaluation: 4%

- Number of local entrepreneurs – 4
- Number of local products developed by locals that can be commercialized – 3
- Low level of local development facilities, but priorities to be considered in connection with Mihailesti' policies

TOTAL SCORE:

78% is ready for tourism development

with 95 % consistent cultural heritage



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GREACA



a) Cultural heritage (40%=MAX)

Evaluation: 29%

- Number of historic buildings, community sites and monuments to be found in the community and on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 9, of which to be mentioned:

„Sfinții 40 de Mucenici” Church (built in 1907)

Gorski Mansion

Four (4) archeological sites with artefacts of Neolithic and Early Middle Ages

- The number of traditions still held in the community –1
- The number of the community’s customs – 1
- Craftsmanship & crafts persons – 1
- The number of local events still held in the community – 1



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b) Natural resources (30%=MAX)

Evaluation: 20 %

- Number of natural heritage sites that are in proximity of the community, on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 1, of which to be mentioned:

Greaca Lake and surroundings

c) Space, surroundings and infrastructure (20%=MAX)

Evaluation: 19 %

- Number of attractions found in the community or on a 10 km range from the center of the community – 4, of which to be mentioned:

„Domeniile Greaca” resort

- Number of public facilities (restaurants, shops, bars) found in the community – 2
- The destination is easily accessible by transportation. We took into account the state of the roads, the existence of a train station, the possibility of using alternative transport such as bicycles. Considered easily accessible as it can be easily accessed by at least 2 different transportation methods – 2
- Existent accommodation facilities in the community / on a 5 km range from the community – 1

d) The stakeholders, legal and administrative climate (10%=MAX)

Evaluation: 8%

- Number of local entrepreneurs – 3
- Number of local products developed by locals that can be commercialized – 2
- Local tourist development under promising process; responsible tourism has good chances to burst

TOTAL SCORE:

76 % is ready for tourism development

with 72,50 % consistent cultural heritage



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GOSTINU



a) Cultural heritage (40%=MAX)

Evaluation: 32%

- Number of historic buildings, community sites and monuments to be found in the community and on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 1
- The number of traditions still held in the community – 4
- The number of the community's customs – 3
- Craftsmanship & *famous crafts people* – 3
- The number of local events still held in the community – 2, of which to be mentioned:

County Festival "Handicraft Get Together" ("Sezatoarea") – Romanian Traditions and Customs

b) Natural resources (30%=MAX)

Evaluation: 15%



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- Number of natural heritage sites that are in proximity of the community, on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 2

c) Space, surroundings and infrastructure (20%=MAX)

Evaluation: 9%

- Number of attractions found in the community or on a 10 km range from the center of the community – 3
- Number of public facilities (restaurants, shops, bars) found in the community – 1
- The destination is easily accessible by transportation. We took into account the state of the roads, the existence of a train station, the possibility of using alternative transport such as bicycles. Considered easily accessible as it can be easily accessed by at least 2 different transportation methods – 2
- There were quantified existent accommodation facilities in the community / on a 5 km range from the community – 1

d) The stakeholders, legal and administrative climate (10%=MAX)

Evaluation: 6%

- Number of local entrepreneurs – 2
- Number of local products developed by locals that can be commercialized – 4
- Locals' activities – a good base for responsible tourism development

TOTAL SCORE:

62% is ready for tourism development

with 80 % consistent cultural heritage



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OINACU



a) Cultural heritage (40%=MAX)

Evaluation: 30%

- Number of historic buildings, community sites and monuments to be found in the community and on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 3
- The number of traditions still held in the community – 5
- The number of the community's customs – 2
- Craftsmanship & crafts people – 1
- The number of local events still held in the community = 2, of which to be mentioned:

County Festival "Handicraft Get Together" ("Sezatoarea") – Romanian Traditions and Customs

b) Natural resources (30%=MAX)

Evaluation: 12%

- Number of natural heritage sites that are in proximity of the community, on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 1



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c) Space, surroundings and infrastructure (20%=MAX)

Evaluation: 9%

- Number of attractions found in the community or on a 10 km range from the center of the community – 2
- Number of public facilities (restaurants, shops, bars) found in the community – 1
- The destination is easily accessible by transportation. We took into account the state of the roads, the existence of a train station, the possibility of using alternative transport such as bicycles. Considered easily accessible as it can be easily accessed by at least 2 different transportation methods – 2
- There were quantified existent accommodation facilities in the community / on a 5 km range from the community – 0

d) The stakeholders, legal and administrative climate (10%=MAX)

Evaluation: 6%

- Number of local entrepreneurs – 5
- Number of local products developed by locals that can be commercialized – 2
- Locals' activities – a good base for responsible tourism development

TOTAL SCORE:

57% is ready for tourism development

with 75 % consistent cultural heritage



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CLEJANI



a) Cultural heritage (40%=MAX)

Evaluation: 36%

- Number of historic buildings, community sites and monuments to be found in the community and on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 9
- The number of traditions still held in the community – 3
- The number of the community's customs – 2
- Craftsmanship & crafts people – 7

The oldest genuine folklore singer

Famous Clejani Folk Music Band

- The number of local events still held in the community – 4

b) Natural resources (30%=MAX)

Evaluation: 12%

- Number of natural heritage sites that are in proximity of the community, on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 1



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c) Space, surroundings and infrastructure (20%=MAX)

Evaluation: 12%

- Number of attractions found in the community or on a 10 km range from the center of the community – 5
- Number of public facilities (restaurants, shops, bars) found in the community – 2
- The destination is easily accessible by transportation. We took into account the state of the roads, the existence of a train station, the possibility of using alternative transport such as bicycles. Considered easily accessible as it can be easily accessed by at least 2 different transportation methods – 2
- There were quantified existent accommodation facilities in the community / on a 5 km range from the community – 0

d) The stakeholders, legal and administrative climate (10%=MAX)

Evaluation: 8%

- Number of local entrepreneurs – 5
- Number of local products developed by locals that can be commercialized – 6
- Locals' activities – a good base for responsible tourism development

TOTAL SCORE:

68% is ready for tourism development

with 90 % consistent cultural heritage



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SLOBOZIA



a) Cultural heritage (40%=MAX)

Evaluation: 29%

- Number of historic buildings, community sites and monuments to be found in the community and on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 4, of which to be mentioned:

“St. John the Russian” Monastery

- The number of traditions still held in the community – 3
- The number of the community’s customs – 2
- Craftsmanship & crafts people – 1
- The number of local events still held in the community – 4

b) Natural resources (30%=MAX)

Evaluation: 27%

- Number of natural heritage sites that are in proximity of the community, on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 2, of which to be mentioned:

The Natural Reserve “Camadinu Island” on Danube river



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c) Space, surroundings and infrastructure (20%=MAX)

Evaluation: 14%

- Number of attractions found in the community or on a 10 km range from the center of the community – 2
- Number of public facilities (restaurants, shops, bars) found in the community – 1
- The destination is easily accessible by transportation. We took into account the state of the roads, the existence of a train station, the possibility of using alternative transport such as bicycles. Considered easily accessible as it can be easily accessed by at least 2 different transportation methods – 2
- There were quantified existent accommodation facilities in the community / on a 5 km range from the community – 1

d) The stakeholders, legal and administrative climate (10%=MAX)

Evaluation: 7%

- Number of local entrepreneurs – 5
- Number of local products developed by locals that can be commercialized – 4
- Locals' activities – potential for ecological tourism development

TOTAL SCORE:

77% is ready for tourism development

with 72,5 % consistent cultural heritage



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BALANOIA



a) Cultural heritage (40%=MAX)

Evaluation: 28%

- Number of historic buildings, community sites and monuments to be found in the community and on a range of 10 km from the center of the community – 7
- The number of traditions still held in the community – 3
- The number of the community's customs – 2
- Craftsmanship & crafts people – 1
- The number of local events still held in the community – 4

b) Natural resources (30%=MAX)

Evaluation: 29%

- Number of natural heritage sites that are in proximity of the community, on a range of 10 km from the



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center of the community – 3, of which to be mentioned:

Balanoaia Forest

“Hanul Cosminului” (Inn) – fishing and rest resort

c) Space, surroundings and infrastructure (20%=MAX)

Evaluation: 18%

- Number of attractions found in the community or on a 10 km range from the center of the community – 5, of which to be mentioned:

“Stejarul” (The Oak Tree) Leisure Centre

- Number of public facilities (restaurants, shops, bars) found in the community – 2
- The destination is easily accessible by transportation. We took into account the state of the roads, the existence of a train station, the possibility of using alternative transport such as bicycles. Considered easily accessible as it can be easily accessed by at least 2 different transportation methods – 2
- There were quantified existent accommodation facilities in the community / on a 5 km range from the community – 2

d) The stakeholders, legal and administrative climate (10%=MAX)

Evaluation: 9%

- Number of local entrepreneurs – 5
- Number of local products developed by locals that can be commercialized – 3
- Locals’ activities – potential for ecological tourism development
- Interest on local tourism development

TOTAL SCORE:

84% is ready for tourism development

with 70 % consistent cultural heritage



SWOTT Analysis after evaluating the Romanian communities

In the Giurgiu county we found significant cultural heritage and also important natural resources that become useful elements to be included within urban and rural touristic programs in order to attract visitors from all over the world. Our findings revealed the following:

Strengths

- The elements which are to be included in the tourist circuits – historical sites, valuable monuments with a unique touch – are generated by the territory's complex history.
- The selected villages are to be found near the Danube river, with increased tourism traffic possibilities and economic development.
- The relief offers a valuable asset: the forests. Five forest areas covering 1067 ha, of which one has a layout that can operate as a tourist facility - children's camp and three of these forests (belonging to the communities of Bălanu, Guțu, and Turbatu) can fulfill the functions of recreation as they are less than 25 km distance from the municipality (according to forest rules). The riverside forests of the Danube, with the ecosystem in balance, fall under the subgroup of forests for the protection of genetic-fund and forest eco-fund and can be used partially in the ecotourism activity.
- Touristic programs and development carried on in Giurgiu happen at a local and also national level.
- Preserving and promoting the national identity through craftsmen keeping the skills and traditions alive, through Romanian art, by attending local



festivals or through the cultural centers and public institutions to display artefacts, handicrafts and old and modern work of arts.

- In order to reach a significant number of visitors in the area, the selected communities from the Giurgiu county collected a multitude of cultural assets.
- The existence of unique cultural-religious monuments (as the painted Church in Drăganescu village) becomes tourist attraction just by presence, apart from promotion circuit possibilities.

Opportunities

- From the geographical point of view, the Giurgiu county is the best located among all other South Romanian areas to border Danube so that to become integrated in a tourist Bulgarian-Romanian project.
- With the Danube river bordering the county on a range of 72 km, there is the change for developing economic activities on long term.
- If responsible tourism management applied, the cultural assets existing in villages or communes with poor current development could boost the local community development by attracting visitors.
- People working in the agricultural sector could be directed to work more on producing specific foods, genuine local products to become attraction for community visitors, increase labor and become a direction for local responsible tourism development. Already in planning – register the local “Caprita” and “Dulangaci” pies as Romanian brand products in gastronomy field, elements of attraction to develop folklore branded festivals.
- While thinking about the advantages that can be brought in the community, people are receptive and willing to host tourists and visitors.



- Several touristic complexes already developed as oasis within the region offer a good base to attract tourists and, at the same time, fine places for people with jobs in tourist services to practice and improve professional behavior.

Weaknesses

- The stable population in the localities of the county accounts low numbers.
- The accommodation and public facilities are still underdeveloped for the touristic offer, with two thirds of the population living in the rural areas.
- There are shortcomings in the naval traffic and cruises to carry tourists for sightseeing are not provided.

Threats

- Approximately 50% of the people are employed in agriculture, a sector in which the weather could determine blockages.
- The chances for locals to attend training courses in the field of tourism services could be threatened by low performances in handling local, national or international projects.
- The planning for the localities can be delayed by group interests and difficulties in investments and funding regarding the restoration work for preserving and safeguarding the monuments.



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**Basic guidelines for future tourism from the Romanian part of the Danube,
easy to mix in common Romanian-Bulgarian tourist circuits and joint events**

- ❖ Nature oriented activities and sports could also become a significant point of development, with the multiple forms of relief – plains, fields, forests, paths and spots near water.
- ❖ There are perspectives for the religious tourism to develop on long term.
- ❖ The historical buildings and monuments open the chances to benefit of a number of interested tourists.
- ❖ The county's traditions, customs and forms of art also have good perspectives.
- ❖ The local gastronomic products and craftsmanship fields should be taken into consideration for developing a comprehensive sustainable touristic strategy.



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Chapter 2.

Ruse relevant coordinates in rural sustainable tourism perspectives

General features of the Ruse county

> Population (2015)	226,680
> Area (sq. km)	2,803.4
> Number of settlements	88
> Villages	74
> Share of urban population (%)	77.4



Population (2015)	226,680
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In terms of nature, the Ruse region has the characteristics of the typical Danubian hilly plain, and of the significantly higher in altitude and markedly hilly-plutonic nature of northeastern Bulgaria. Against the backdrop of this transient nature, there is an impressive presence of a large water artery that directly connects Bulgaria with Europe - the Danube.

The Danube River, together with the Ruse Lom river, which flows along Ruse, with its remarkable valley, are tourist sites. Ruse is in itself a huge and important tourist attraction not only for the population from the nearby and more distant surroundings, but also for the whole country. Especially advantageous is the transport-geographic position of the city. Besides the busy harbor, it is also a crossing point on the road and railway connections of Bulgaria with all of Eastern Europe and parts of Central Europe. It is also an important national transport hub in the direction of Sofia - Varna and Western Dobrudzha with the eastern part of southern Bulgaria. For these reasons, there's a huge tourist flow through Ruse, including foreign tourists heading to our North and South Black Sea coasts, and an even larger number of transit travelers going to and from Turkey and the Middle East.

The cultural and historical heritage, as a major tourist resource in the region, is heavily concentrated mainly on the territory of the municipalities of Ruse and Ivanovo. In the Municipalities of Dve Mogili, Borovo, Slivo Pole, Byala and Vetovo it has smaller concentration points. The sites of cultural and historical heritage in the villages around the regional town of Ruse have tourist potential, although their current status (physical condition, exposure, mode of operation, accessibility, provision with accompanying tourist services) does not allow for optimal realization of this potential.

Out of the anthropogenic tourist resources of Northern Bulgaria, there are about 30 objects which can be considered tourist resources and which are only partially close to monuments of culture, being situated on the territory of Ruse region.



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The Rocky niches of the Polomie, populated by a sophisticated bird choir, were used in the past as a holy abode by the monks who settled in the area. In the thirteenth century in the rocky limestone rocks they began to dig dozens of chapels, monasteries and cells of different heights. For centuries the area was one of the largest spiritual and cultural centers in Bulgarian lands. Later, the caves were abandoned by their inhabitants and left to the mercy of natural elements. However, in some of them magnificent frescoes and inscriptions have been preserved. Nowadays, this invaluable historical heritage is under the protection of UNESCO and is one of our most famous tourist attractions. However, most of the former rock monasteries are inaccessible due to poor infrastructure.

The unique canyon in the Rusenski Lom Nature Park along with the rest of the territory is a destination for adventure, sports, cognitive and eco tourism.

The majority of the municipalities in the Ruse county have access to the Danube River and have other natural (Lomove) and artificial ponds. This creates the traditions of fishing, fish farming, fish and fishery products. The exotics of the environment and the lifestyle in the so-called "Fishing villages" in the village of Mechka, Ryahovo, Nikolovo (also existing as a possibility for future construction), combined with the opportunities for development of water sports represent a significant resource for enriching the offered tourist product. The preserved traditions of local crafts can be offered as a tourist attraction - barrel making, carpentry, extraction and processing of stone by traditional means, weaving, hand knitting and embroidery with traditional motifs. The utilization of the potential of this characteristic of small municipalities and settlements into a tourism product, however, is hampered by the low level of development and the lack of acceptable sanitary and hygienic conditions.

Several fields in the county's economy have the potential to enrich the current offered tourist packages with specific attractions. Those are:

- fish farming and fishing - opportunities for organizing sport fishing;
- viticulture, wine-making and fruit-growing - opportunities for local wine tasting,



participation in grape harvests, etc. attractive forms of agricultural work;

- cultivation of mushrooms in artificial and natural caves and organization of tastings;
- participation in hunting game breeding activities; hunting in hunting farms;
- participation in riding, training and equestrian activities (village of Nikolovo).

Exploring rural communities with touristic potential in the Ruse region

The resources in the 74 villages in the Ruse county have been assessed according to approved project methodology.

The selected 10 Bulgarian villages are as follows:

<u>Village</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Assesment result</u>
1.Ekzarh Yosif	Borovo	496
2.Karan		
Varbovka	Dve mogili	676
3.Pepelina	Dve mogili	702
4.Ivanovo	Ivanovo	807
5.Mechka	Ivanovo	583
6.Nisovo	Ivanovo	672
7.Cherven	Ivanovo	603
8.Basarbovo	Ruse	501
9.Nikolovo	Ruse	543
10.Ryahovo	Slivo pole	693



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COMMUNITIES DESTINATIONS

In details

Ekzarh Yosif Village, Borovo Municipality



Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unique and preserved natural environment and climate. Good geographical location, the region is part of the international cultural corridors "Eastern Trans-Balkan Road", "Danube Road"• protected areas near the village• Good strategic location close to major urban and tourist centers;• Low prices of tourist services• Presence of a unique annual product: Apple holiday• Existence of interesting tourist attractions – open museum exposition; zoo;• Consensus of the community on the formation and consolidation of the territory of the municipality as a center for sport, recreation and tourism (youth,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making tourism a sustainable industry based on ethnographic, natural and cultural-historical potential;• Attracting investments for the development of all the villages located on the territory of the municipality by offering a unique high quality tourist product including: all types of ethnographic, youth, culinary, industrial, extreme and rural tourism;• Opportunity for the development of tourism on the territory of the municipality and the development of cultural corridors;• Building a new and expanding existing technical infrastructure.



<p>culinary, extreme and rural).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A hospitable attitude towards foreigners. • Good ecotourism infrastructure. • Unique cultural and historical features. • The existence of a significant fund for the development of eco-tourism. • Strategic location - proximity to international roads and highways • New investments in the field of tourism and tourist infrastructure. • Having a cultural calendar of events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a sustainable ecological environment. • Diversification of forms of tourism. • Development of certain branches of the food industry on the basis of the opportunities for development of suitable sub-sectors in agriculture.
Weakness	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underdeveloped and poorly maintained communal infrastructure. • Lack of development of the technical infrastructure in relation to the development of the new tourism areas. • Low qualification degree of the local workforce in the field of tourism. • Underdeveloped transport infrastructure. • Low energy efficiency. • Low quality of tourist marketing on the territory of the municipality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unreliable transport connections • Instability (seasonality) of tourism demand • Incomplete financial security of the investment municipal and regional projects • Delay in improving the quality and diversity of the tourist product • Leakage of labor.



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Karan Varbovka Village, Dve Mogili Municipality



Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good geographic location; • Availability of natural resources sufficient for the development of tourism (climate, forests, varied opportunities for tourist routes, etc.); • Presence of protected areas as a prerequisite for development of ecological and cognitive tourism; • Existence of forests as a prerequisite for the development of hunting tourism; • Rich cultural and historical heritage; • The existence of already established tourist facilities, which are well-known; • Interest in buying property in the region by Bulgarians and foreigners; • No major industrial pollutants to air, soil and water; • Existence of water basins (rivers, dams, dams) and natural landmarks for the development of fishing tourism; • Traditions in folklore and artistic amateur activity, presence of art troupes ready for performances with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a comprehensive tourist product on the territory of the municipality; • Insufficient tourist infrastructure; • Lack of a tourist information center; • Low qualification of the service staff; • Lack of a specific place where handicrafts, culinary and other typical local products are exposed; • Lack of a local tourism association; • Insufficient bed base of different type; • Lack of sewerage network in the settlements leading to pollution of rivers, groundwater and soil from untreated municipal waste water; • Lack of sewage treatment plants in the settlements



diversity of genres and programs at the Community Center in the town of Dve Mogili and the surrounding villages. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good coexistence of different ethnicities, religions and cultures.	
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of hunting and fishing tourism;• Development of rural and ecotourism;• Using the funds of national and European funds to finance projects;• Creation of a tourist information center;• Organizing traditional events throughout the year, devoted to different local customs, products, etc.;• Developing and offering standards for local tourist services;• Advertising and promotion of the local tourist product.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Danger of uncontrolled misuse of natural resources - forests and water sources;• Opportunity for chaotic and decentralized development of tourism;• Development of overly uniform supply;• Possible disappointment of the visitors due to the state of the infrastructure and / or insufficient level of services;• Insufficient financial resources.



Pepelina Village, Dve Mogili Municipality



a summer garden, a parking lot and a children's playground.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good geographic location; • Availability of natural resources sufficient for the development of tourism (climate, forests, varied opportunities for tourist routes, etc.); Orlova Chuka cave 2 km from the village; • Presence of protected areas as a prerequisite for development of ecological and cognitive tourism; • Existence of forests as a prerequisite for the development of hunting tourism; • Existence of Cultural and historical heritage nearby Pepelina. • No major industrial pollutants to air, soil and water; • Existence of water basins (rivers, dams, dams) and natural landmarks for the development of fishing tourism; • Traditions in folklore and artistic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient tourist infrastructure; • Lack of tourist information center in the area; • Low qualification of the service staff; • Lack of a specific place where handicrafts, culinary and other typical local products are exposed; • Lack of a local tourism association; • Insufficient bed base of different type; • Lack of sewerage network in the settlements leading to pollution of rivers, groundwater and soil from untreated municipal waste water; • Lack of sewage treatment plants in the settlements • Danube strategy



amateur activity, presence of compositions with readiness for diversity in genres and programs at the community center in the town of Dve Mogili and the neighboring villages. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good coexistence of different ethnicities, religions and cultures.	
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of hunting and fishing tourism;• Development of rural and ecotourism;• Using the funds of national and European funds to finance projects;• Creation of tourist information center;• Organizing traditional events throughout the year, devoted to different local customs, products, etc.;• Developing and offering standards for local tourist services;• Advertising and promotion of the local tourist product.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Danger of uncontrolled and misuse of natural resources - forests and water sources;• Opportunity for stranded and varied development of tourism;• Development of overly uniform supply;• Possible disappointment of the visitors due to the state of the infrastructure and / or insufficient level of services;• Insufficient financial resources.



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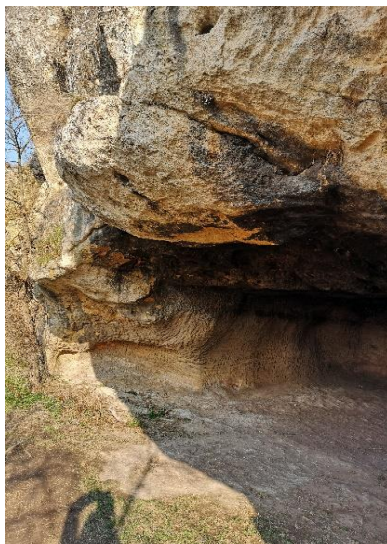
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Ivanovo Village, Municipality of Ivanovo



Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rich and internationally recognized cultural and historical heritage and preserved traditions;• Good geographic position;• Geographic proximity to major target markets;• mild climate and moderate temperatures;• Easy travel for EU citizens and Romania;• Low prices for tourist services;• Existence of monuments related to Russian history;• Existence of tourist sites,• accessible to tourists;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of specialized tourism types, both individually and in combination;• Possibilities for diversification of the offered tourist products;• Existence of tourist potential for diversification of the opportunities for tourism - eco and rural tourism;• Continued interest in cultural, eco, and rural tourism;• Building a positive image of the region as a tourist destination;• Diversification of the cultural calendar with events, with active participation of the Library and NGOs in the region.• Utilizing European funds for the



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential for attracting Bulgarian tourists;• A hospitable attitude towards foreigners.	<p>development of infrastructure and tourism;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunities to increase the additional tourist services offered;• Unutilized opportunities for internal tourism and tourism from neighboring countries for short trips;• Improving the qualifications and skills of the staff in tourism;• Establishing an effective link between early planning and demand and supply of the tourism product through the development of effective communication channels;• Opportunities to attract foreign investments in tourism;• To attract more tourists by building appropriate infrastructure for them;• Active work with tour operators;• It is necessary to look for ways to maximize the effect with minimal costs.
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of rational solutions for cultural and historical managing heritage sites, leading to lack of care;• Insufficient number of accommodation and meals;• Insufficient experienced and trained staff;• Untapped potential of tourism resources;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Campaigns of competitive destinations in Romania, Serbia, Turkey, Greece• Creating a bad image of the village or municipality as a tourist destination resulting from unqualified staff in accommodation and catering;• Strengthening of unfavorable trends in demographic indicators;



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor tourist infrastructure;• Lack of attractions, initiatives, events, etc., related to the presentation of the cultural and historical heritage and the traditions of the region;• Lack of tour operators;• Insufficient advertising of available tourism resources;• Lack of funds to promote the destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of encouragement, state support and funding for improvement and development of rural areas and infrastructure; Global environmental threats;• Risk of deterioration of environmental parameters.• Strong competition from other municipalities;• Recessions, economic and financial crisis leading to stagnation and recession in major emitting markets, resulting in strong price sensitivity;• Increasing the price of the offered tourist services, leading to the loss of one of the strongest competitive advantages - the low price;• Lagging behind in the development of tourism compared to other Bulgarian municipalities;• Insufficient advertising campaigns due to insufficient funding;
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Mechka Village, Ivanovo Municipality



Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good geographic location near the Danube; • Geographic proximity to major target markets – Romania – Rousse • Mild climate and moderate temperatures; • Easy travel for EU citizens and Romania; • Low prices for tourist services; • Existence of monuments related to Russian history; • Existence of tourist sites, accessible to tourists; • Potential for attracting Bulgarian tourists; • A hospitable attitude towards foreigners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of specialized tourism types, both individually and in combination; • Opportunities to attract both groups of tourists and individuals • Possibilities for diversification of the offered tourist products; • Existence of tourist potential for diversification of the opportunities for tourism - eco and rural tourism; • Continued interest in cultural, eco, bicycle, sightseeing, culinary, wine and rural tourism; bird watching, photo safari, extreme tourism, etc. • Building a positive image of the region as a tourist destination; • Diversification of the cultural calendar



	<p>with events, with active participation of the Community Center and NGOs in the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilizing European funds for the development of infrastructure and tourism;• Opportunities to increase the additional tourist services offered;• Unutilized opportunities for internal tourism and tourism from neighboring countries for short trips;• Improving the qualifications and skills of the staff in tourism;• Establishing an effective link between early planning and demand and supply of the tourism product through the development of effective communication channels;• Opportunities to attract foreign investments in tourism;• To attract more tourists by building appropriate infrastructure for them;• Active work with tour operators;• It is necessary to look for ways to maximize the effect with minimal costs.
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient number of accommodation and meals;• Insufficient experienced and trained staff;• Untapped potential of tourism resources;	<p>Campaigns of competitive destinations in Romania, Serbia, Turkey, Greece</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating a bad image of the village or municipality as a tourist destination resulting from unqualified staff in



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor tourist infrastructure;• Lack of attractions, initiatives, events, etc., related to the presentation of the cultural and historical heritage and the traditions of the region;• Lack of tour operators;• Insufficient advertising of available tourism resources; <p>Lack of funds to promote the destination.</p>	<p>accommodation and catering;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthening of unfavorable trends in demographic indicators;• Lack of encouragement, state support and funding for improvement and development of rural areas and infrastructure; Global environmental threats;• Risk of deterioration of environmental parameters.• Strong competition from other municipalities;• Recessions, economic and financial crisis leading to stagnation and recession in major emitting markets, resulting in strong price sensitivity;• Increasing the price of the offered tourist services, leading to the loss of one of the strongest competitive advantages - the low price;• Lagging behind in the development of tourism compared to other Bulgarian municipalities;• Insufficient advertising campaigns due to insufficient funding;
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Nisovo Village, Ivanovo Municipality



Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographical proximity to main target markets - Ruse, tourists on the Danube, Romania • Beautiful and preserved nature in this part of the Ruse Polomie, in the heart of Rusenski Lom Natural Park, <p>Existence of tourist attractions - the rock monastery "Golyam Nisovski Monastery", Batakliata wildlife reserve, fishponds, preserved traditions and customs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mild climate and moderate temperatures; • Facilitated travel regime for EU citizens and Romania; • Low prices of tourist services; • Existence of eco-trails and tourist sites accessible to tourists; • Potential for attracting Bulgarian and Romanian tourists; • A hospitable attitude towards foreigners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of specialized tourism types, both individually and in combination; • Possibilities for diversification of the offered tourist products; • Existence of tourist potential for diversification of the opportunities for tourism - eco and rural tourism; • Unutilized opportunities for internal tourism and tourism from neighboring countries for short trips; • Opportunities to attract foreign investments in tourism; • To attract more tourists by building appropriate infrastructure for them; • Active work with tour operators; • It is necessary to look for



	ways to maximize the effect with minimal costs.
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of rational solutions for cultural and historical managing heritage sites, leading to lack of care; • Insufficient number of accommodation and meals; • Insufficient experienced and trained staff; • Untapped potential of tourism resources; • Poor tourist infrastructure; • Lack of attractions, initiatives, events, etc., related to the presentation of the cultural and historical heritage and the traditions of the region; • Lack of tour operators; • Insufficient advertising of available tourism resources; • Lack of funds to promote the destination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the unfavorable trends of demographic indicators; • Global environmental threats; • Strong competition from other municipalities; Recessions, economic and financial crisis leading to stagnation and recession in major emitting markets, resulting in strong price sensitivity; • Lagging behind in the development of tourism compared to other Bulgarian municipalities; • Insufficient advertising campaigns due to insufficient funding;



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Cherven Village, Ivanovo Municipality



Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rich and internationally recognized cultural and historical heritage and preserved traditions;• Good geographic position close to Cherni Lom, Polomie, and NP Rusenski Lom, as well as the Danube• Geographic proximity to major target markets; Romania and Rousse• mild climate and moderate temperatures;• Easy travel for EU citizens and Romania;• Low prices for tourist services;• Existence of monuments related to Russian history;	<p>Development of specialized tourism types, both individually and in combination;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Possibilities for diversification of the offered tourist products;• Existence of tourist potential for diversification of the opportunities for tourism - eco and rural tourism;• Continued interest in cultural, eco, and rural tourism;• Building a positive image of the region as a tourist destination;• Diversification of the cultural calendar with events, with active participation of the Community Center and NGOs in the



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existence of tourist sites, accessible to tourists;• Potential for attracting Bulgarian tourists;• A hospitable attitude towards foreigners.	<p>region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilizing European funds for the development of infrastructure and tourism;• Opportunities to increase the additional tourist services offered;• Unutilized opportunities for internal tourism and tourism from neighboring countries for short trips;• Improving the qualifications and skills of the staff in tourism;• Establishing an effective link between early planning and demand and supply of the tourism product through the development of effective communication channels;• Opportunities to attract foreign investments in tourism;• To attract more tourists by building appropriate infrastructure for them;• Active work with tour operators;• It is necessary to look for ways to maximize the effect with minimal costs.
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of rational solutions for cultural and historical managing heritage sites, leading to lack of care;• Insufficient number of accommodation and meals;• Insufficient experienced and trained staff;	<p>Campaigns of competitive destinations in Romania, Serbia, Turkey, Greece</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating a bad image of the village or municipality as a tourist destination resulting from unqualified staff in accommodation and catering;



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Untapped potential of tourism resources;• Poor tourist infrastructure;• Lack of attractions, initiatives, events, etc., related to the presentation of the cultural and historical heritage and the traditions of the region;• Lack of tour operators;• Insufficient advertising of available tourism resources; <p>Lack of funds to promote the destination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthening of unfavorable trends in demographic indicators;• Lack of encouragement, state support and funding for improvement and development of rural areas and infrastructure; Global environmental threats;• Risk of deterioration of environmental parameters.• Strong competition from other municipalities;• Recessions, economic and financial crisis leading to stagnation and recession in major emitting markets, resulting in strong price sensitivity;• Increasing the price of the offered tourist services, leading to the loss of one of the strongest competitive advantages - the low price;• Lagging behind in the development of tourism compared to other Bulgarian municipalities;• Insufficient advertising campaigns due to insufficient funding;
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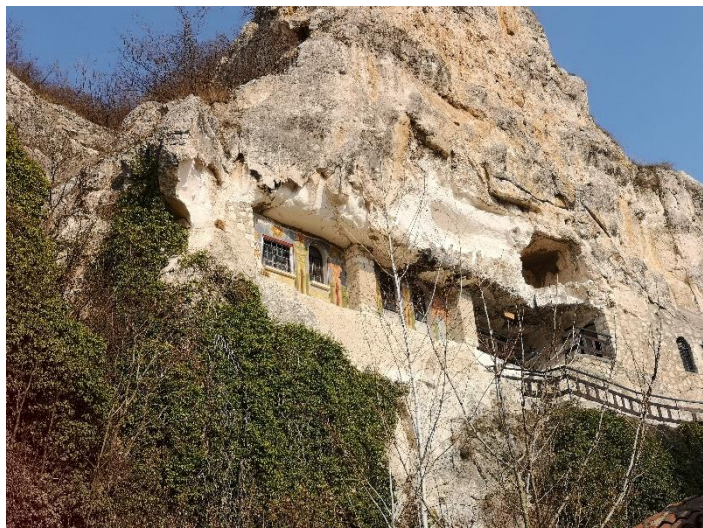
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Village of Basarbovo, Ruse Municipality



Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good geographic location - geographical proximity to Ruse and the Danube;• Relatively good transport access to the region;• Conserved nature; existence of protected areas and interesting natural sites• UNESCO site nearby• mild climate and moderate temperatures;• Marked routes around major tourist locations• Facilitated travel regime for EU citizens and Romania;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of specialized types of tourism with the surrounding settlements in Bulgaria and Romania, both for individuals and in combination: cultural-historical, religious tourism, etc.• Opportunities to diversify the offered tourist products for cycling, hiking, cruise tourism• Existence of tourist potential for diversification of the supply - eco and rural tourism;• Building a positive image of the region as a tourist



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A competitive price destination.• Presence of preserved cultural and historical heritage in the area around Basarbovo-rock monasteries• Potential to attract Bulgarian and Romanian tourists, tourists from cruise ships, Euro 6 tourists and ones from other international routes around the Danube• A hospitable attitude towards foreigners• good base of eating facilities	<p>destination;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diversification of the cultural calendar with events, with active participation of the Community Center and NGOs in the region.• Absorption of European funds for the development of infrastructure and tourism; EU Danube Strategy• Opportunities to increase the additional tourist services offered;• Unused opportunities for domestic tourism and tourism from neighboring countries for short trips;• Improving the qualifications and skills of the staff in tourism;• Establishing an effective link between early planning, demand and supply of the tourism product through the development of effective communication channels;• Opportunities to attract foreign investment in tourism;• To attract more tourists by building appropriate infrastructure for them;• Active work with tour operators;• It is necessary to look for ways to maximize the effect with
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	minimal costs.
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient numbers of experienced and trained staff;• Untapped potential of tourism resources;• Lack of a single memorable image for the region.• Poor tourist infrastructure;• Lack of attractions, animations, events, etc., related to the presentation of the cultural and historical heritage and the traditions of the region;• Lack of tour operators actively advertising the region;• Insufficient advertising of available tourism resources;• Lack of funds to promote the destination.• Low level of public services to for the tourist destination - public transport, guides and information boards, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mass Campaigns of competitive destinations in Romania, Serbia, Turkey,• Creating a bad image of the village or municipality as a tourist destination, resulting from unskilled service staff in accommodation and meals;• Global ecological threats• Strong competition from other villages• Recessions; economic and financial crisis leading to stagnation and recession in major emitting markets, resulting in strong price sensitivity;• Worsening of the price-quality ratio• Lagging behind in the development of tourism compared to other Bulgarian municipalities;• Insufficient advertisement due to insufficient funding;



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Nikolovo Village, Ruse Municipality



Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good geographic location - proximity to Ruse, Ivanovo Municipality and the Danube River; • mild climate and moderate temperatures; • Facilitated travel regime for EU citizens and Romania; • Low prices for tourist services; • Existence of the Lipnik forest park (Teketo) in Nikolovo • Potential for attracting Bulgarian and Romanian tourists; • A hospitable attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of specialized types of tourism with the surrounding settlements in Bulgaria and Romania, both individually and in combination; • Possibilities for diversification of the offered tourist products; • Existence of tourist potential for diversification of the supply - eco and rural tourism; • Building a positive image of the region as a tourist destination; • Diversification of the cultural calendar with events, with active participation of the



<p>towards foreigners and tourists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• good base of dining and accommodation• Existence of a rowing channel and base	<p>community center and NGOs in the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absorption of European funds for the development of infrastructure and tourism;• Opportunities to increase the additional tourist services offered;• Unused opportunities for domestic tourism and tourism from neighboring countries for short trips;• Improving the qualifications and skills of the staff in tourism;• Establishing an effective link between early planning, demand and supply of the tourism product through the development of effective communication channels;• Opportunities to attract foreign investment in tourism;• To attract more tourists by building appropriate infrastructure for them;• Active work with tour operators;• It is necessary to look for ways to maximize the effect with minimal costs.• Development of canoe kayak products and more. water
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	sports
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient numbers of experienced and trained staff;• Untapped potential of tourism resources;• Poor tourist infrastructure;• Lack of attractions, animations, events, etc., related to the presentation of the cultural and historical heritage and the traditions of the region;• Lack of tour operators active in the region;• Insufficient advertising of available tourism resources;• Lack of funds to promote the destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Campaigns of competitive destinations in Romania, Serbia, Turkey, Creating a bad image of the village or municipality as a tourist destination, resulting from unskilled service staff in accommodation and meals;• Global environmental threats;• Strong competition from other villages;• Recessions; economic and financial crisis leading to stagnation and recession in major emitting markets, resulting in strong price sensitivity;• Increasing the price of the offered tourist services, leading to the loss of one of the strongest competitive advantages - the lowest price;• Waste in the development of tourism compared to other Bulgarian municipalities;• Insufficient profiling of advertising activities due to insufficient funding;



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Ryahovo Village, Slivo Pole Municipality



Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good geographic location, the village of Ryahovo is situated on the Danube• Geographic proximity to major target markets; proximity to Ruse and Romania• Existence of a beach, fish market and a restaurant with fish dishes• Cultural historical and ethnographic heritage• Rich biodiversity and natural coastal wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of specialized tourism types, both individually and in combination;• Opportunities for reconstruction and exploitation of the potential around the coast - in the area of the fishing port in the village of Ryahovo, around the beach• Existence of tourist potential for diversification of the supply - eco and rural tourism;• Traditional and uninterrupted interest in cultural, eco and rural tourism;



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A region with traditions in fisheries, preserved traditional crafts and human resource with many years of experience in catching fish on the Danube• mild climate and moderate temperatures;• Facilitated travel regime for EU citizens and Romania;• Low prices for tourist services;<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existence of tourist sites near the village of Ryahovo; accessible to tourists;• Potential for attracting Bulgarian tourists;• A hospitable attitude towards foreigners.• Established structures and strategies for support to local communities and businesses MIRC "Glavinitsa-Tutrakan-Slivo Pole" and MIG "Tutrakan-Slivo Pole"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building a positive image of the region as a tourist destination;• Diversification of the cultural calendar with events, with active participation of the community center and NGOs in the region.• Strategy of MIG Tutrakan - Slivo Pole and MIRC Glavinitsa, Tutrakan, Slivo Pole, which offer opportunities for the development of tourism infrastructure and services;• Opportunities to increase the additional tourist services offered;• Unused opportunities for inbound tourism and tourism from neighboring countries for short trips;• Improving the qualifications and skills of the staff in tourism;• Establishing an effective link between early planning, demand and supply of the tourism product through the development of effective communication channels;• Opportunities to attract foreign investment in tourism;• To attract more tourists by building appropriate infrastructure for them;
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active work with tour operators; • It is necessary to look for ways to maximize the effect with minimal costs.
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of rational solutions for managing the sites of the cultural and historical heritage, leading to lack of care; • Lack of adequate infrastructure and extremely unnatural appearance of the coastal area around a non-working port - state property, which is a restrictive condition for investments by the municipality; • Undeclared tourist infrastructure: Limited number of low-class accommodation places; • There are no cultural and historical sites meaningful and relevant for visits from so-called organized tourism, except for the Ethnographic Museum Collection in Borisovo village; • Insufficient tourist information about the area • Underdeveloped information system for facilitated access to natural landmarks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaigns of competitive destinations in Romania, Serbia, Turkey, Greece • Creating a bad image of the village or municipality as a tourist destination resulting from unqualified care staff in accommodation and catering; • Strengthening the unfavorable trends of demographic indicators; • Global environmental threats; • Risk of deterioration of environmental parameters. • Strong competition from other municipalities; • Recessions; economic and financial crisis leading to stagnation in major emitting markets, resulting in strong price sensitivity; • Stagnation in the development not only of specific tourism products and services but also generally lagging behind the development of tourism compared to other villages in the region; • Insufficient profiling of advertising activities due to insufficient funding;



<p>and the traditions of this region;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficult access to protected areas and the islands on the Danube River, which are a natural reserve for biodiversity;• Insufficient numbers of experienced and trained staff;• Untapped potential of tourism resources;• Lack of attractions, animations, events, etc. related to the presentation of the region's history, cultural heritage and traditions;• Lack of tour operators servicing the region;• Insufficient advertising of available tourism resources;• Unsufficient funds to promote the destination.	
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Features of the analyses conducted in both counties

The natural and anthropogenic heritage specific to each of the selected Romanian and Bulgarian villages, their accessibility as destinations, the existent facilities and the openness of the community to embrace tourism activities for each of the 20 target villages were searched and analysed by the two research teams in the project, following the recommended methodology and own research approach.

The conducted surveys were based on questionnaires addressed to the local population, local organizations and authorities, businesses, local cultural and tourist organizations, tour operators, travel agents, tourists visiting sites in the areas, experts and students.

The surveys revealed the attitude of the inhabitants and their readiness for tourism development, their expectations, as well. The analyses also revealed the demand among tour operators and their assessment of the potential for development of different types of tourism in the villages, the status and needs that owners and people in the HORECA field face during their current activity.

The results of the surveys are meant to contribute to the development of an integrated approach along coming years to promote the cultural and intangible heritage of rural communities within Giurgiu and Ruse counties in order to support local economic development and the development of rural tourism.

The algorithm used in surveys, the SWOT analyses, the way questions were combined in the techniques used by the Romanian and Bulgarian teams helped to discover and evaluate the perspectives of attractiveness these rural destinations show and the chances to get more tourists accommodated in the region.

It has been noticed that the most interested in tourism development in the region, like local residents and local authorities, find it hard to agree to fill out surveys out of concern



for their businesses, such as accommodation or catering owners. Same situation for the employees in local institutions, who were worried to share basic problems and difficulties, mostly related to disruption of the infrastructure - as sewerage, lack or poor state of the tourist infrastructure, lack of mechanisms for letting and managing objects, public owned businesses etc.

Tourists who were interviewed during the tours of the areas were most receptive and willing to share their mostly positive impressions of the region and of the visited sites. The low category of accommodation was, in many cases, offset by the responsiveness and good attitude of the owners who personally serve their clients and, usually, leave the guests satisfied.

Interviews with accommodation and catering owners have been a good form of sharing problems and expectations. In general, the income from tourist services in the accommodation facilities and catering areas in the region is extremely insufficient. Therefore, private owners refrain from large investments and their expectations towards local authorities are related to the lack of insufficiently built or poorly maintained tourist infrastructure in the whole cross-border region.

As the most significant tourist attraction / event / package / route - cultural, historical, natural, traditional etc - in the villages of Giurgiu and, respectively, Ruse counties, there were pointed out:

-----For **Giurgiu** area:

> Comana Natural Park (designated as Ramsar site²)

² The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands is delighted to report that Romania, which was generously preparing to play host to the next meeting of the Ramsar Conference of the Contracting Parties in July 2012, has increased its number of Ramsar Sites to 8, covering a surface area of 824,897 hectares. As summarized by Ramsar's Kati Wenzel, from the data sheets accompanying the new designations, Comana Natural Park (Parcul Natural Comana) (24,963 hectares, 44°09'N 026°09'E), a Natural Park and Natura 2000 (SPA, SCI) in Giurgiu County, is a complex in the flat plain of southern Romania characterized by a high diversity of flora and fauna and consisting mainly of forests, agro-ecosystems, meadows, rivers, lakes, canals, oxbow lakes and a micro-delta. Some 157 bird species have been observed in the park, which regularly supports more than 20,000 waterbirds, many of them migratory. The park also supports numerous fish species, including the endemic *Petroleuciscus boristhenicus* and the internationally threatened *Umbra krameri*. Neajlov River and its



- > *Comana Adventure Park and Comana Monastery*
- > *The Church painted by Priest Arsenie Boca in Draganescu village*
- > *“Cover of the Mother of God” Hermitage in Izvoarele village*
- > *Izvoarele Natural Reserve with Fishing bays and Manafu Forest*
- > *The Nunnery Monastery painted by great painter Gheorghe Tattarescu, holding the Miracle Icon of Sf. Mary in Letca Noua village*
- > *“Udriste Nasturel” Mension and Peony Festival in Herasti village*
- > *Famous Clejani Folk Music Ban of Clejani village*
- > *“Caprita” pie gastronomy product to be included within Romanian famous brands*
- > *County Festival “Handicraft Get Together” (“Sezatoarea”) – Romanian Traditions and Customs in Gostinu and Oinacu villages.*

-----For **Ruse** area:

- < *Basarbovo Monastery "St. Dimitar Basarbovski" in the village of Basarbovo*
- < *Ivanovo rock Monastery and churches located along the Rusenski Lom river*
- < *Rusenski Lom Nature Park protected area*
- < *Medieval town-fortress Cherven, located about 30 km south of Ruse*
- < *Orlova Chuka cave, located on the territory of Dve Mogili Municipality*
- < *Forest Park "Lipnik", which is located in the village of Nikolovo*
- < *Rock Church near the village of Cherven*
- < *Carranborovo Monastery "St. Marina"*
- < *Stalpishte School at the village of Mechka*
- < *Danube Bridge and Belene Bridge, in the northeastern part of the town Byala, Ruse Municipality.*

The respondents in both areas were aware that, despite the presence of the Danube river, there is no serious supply of additional tourist services related to the river - water sports,

microdelta are optimal habitats for the Otter (*Lutra lutra*), and the Tree-marten (*Martes martes*), Fitchew (*Putorius putorius*), Jackal (*Canis aureus*), and Badger (*Meles meles*). Of the 1,300 plant species, 72 are threatened nationally and species like *Marsilea quadrifolia* L. are also protected in Europe.



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walks, cruises, even opportunities for fishing are not available as a solid tourist product. The main reason is the lack of a spatial plan for the coastal areas, piers and ports in the small settlements, to design the separate areas for beach and sports. Greater and more targeted dissemination of information and promotion of the region's natural resources is needed the whole year and during guests' stay.

The respondents appreciate **the cultural tourism as a priority for the region** and as the most contributing factor for the development of the local economy, including folklore events, festivals and various musical events. Revenue expectations are for cultural institutions, museums, hoteliers, restaurateurs and all representatives of the tourism business as well as for the population. The expectations of the respondents overlap with the recommendations of the experts and it must be ensured that the formation and implementation of the national and regional policy for the development of cultural tourism prioritizes the preservation of national culture in each of Romanian and Bulgarian parts, encourages investments in cultural tourism and promotion of the whole region. Identity preservation as a legacy for future generations stimulates the locals to involve in tourist activities and support responsible tourism.

The analyses indicate that **tourism infrastructure in both counties needs to be developed** – including leisure attractions, places of accommodation - especially of a higher category, transport and sewerage infrastructure, ecological, cultural and sports tourism products. Such products need to be promoted both in Romania and Bulgaria and in Europe and other continents, designed for – either individual or organized groups of tourists, including cruise ships. This will increase the tourist competitiveness and attractiveness of many villages in discussion.

The recreational and tourist resources available allow the development of various types of tourism in Ruse rural region and their combination, as well as their use throughout the



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year or at least during two seasons despite the situation in Giurgiu rural region, where the resources are limited at the moments, with better prospects for future.

The surveys show that it is necessary **to build tourist attractions to provide entertainment and diversity** for the tourists although the preservation of traditions and natural landscapes within eco-systems remains a successful direction of tourism development. Tourist infrastructure and superstructure are key implementation factors in pushing ahead the dynamics of both areas. Without their construction, renovation and development, it is difficult to improve the attractiveness of the rural territories.

The analyses show that **both Giurgiu and Ruse regions need to expand the bed base in the villages**. The construction of the material base of tourism requires solid investment. Their return is guaranteed by the attractiveness of the tourist destinations, but for the moment there are not many investment intentions in the cross-border region.

Respondents from both areas mention **ecotourism and hobby and sports tourism as suitable for development** in the targeted villages. There is a need for a comprehensive network of hiking and cycling routes by linking existing ones in the Bulgarian side and marking new ones to include the Romanian part, as well. There is also a need for designing thematic routes (arts, educational, ecclesiastical topic-oriented). In areas with natural attractions, accommodation is sufficient for short-term rest, but it's not good enough for longer stays in such rural destinations.

A large number of respondents in both counties have linked the vision of tourism development in villages with eco and folk tourism, putting an accent on old customs in the villages as well as on the natural landmarks along the Danube. There are suggestions related to climatic tourism hunting and fishing or bird watching.



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An important factor for tourism development is the improvement of the image of the cross-border region, by using public relations and advertising activities and the creation of cross-border products between Bulgaria and Romania. There is no general marketing programme of the region yet, including a comprehensive PR strategy with common messages, positioning the region as a single destination, with joint advertising efforts. Organized promotion of demonstration opportunities and the participation in crafts, customs, traditions-related events would contribute to the boost and improvement of the rural responsible tourism outlook.

Key proposals for cultural tourism products in the two counties

From both parts of the cross-border region, Bulgarian and Romanian, there is the potential for creating and promoting a "Danubian destination for cultural tourism and nature attractions" based on events in rural communities, full of exquisite experiences targeting historical heritage, gastronomy, eco-friendly and attractive activities in nature.

Most of the municipalities in the **Ruse county** have access to the Danube River and have natural and artificial ponds, as The Lomove Basin is. This generates the traditions of *fishing, fish farming, fish and fishery products*. We can speak already about designing a **Bulgarian brand**. The exotics of the environment and the lifestyle in the so-called "**Fishing villages**", combined with the opportunities for developing water sports, represent a significant resource for enriching the tourist product package. The preserved traditions of local crafts could be offered as a tourist attraction, especially in the villages of the area, meaning: *barrel making, carpentry, extraction and processing of traditional stone, weaving, hand knitting and embroidery* with traditional motifs. The best conditions for rural tourism are in municipalities and settlements near other attractions, such as Ivanovo monasteries, fishing villages and water basins. These conditions are most suitable in the municipalities of Ivanovo, Dve Mogili, Slivo pole and Borovo. Several economic activities



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have the potential to enrich the proposed tourist product with additional attractions and leisure opportunities, as:

- *Fisheries and fishing - opportunities for organizing sport fishing;*
- *Vine-growing, wine-making and fruit-growing - opportunities for tasting local wines, participation in grape harvest and other attractive forms of agricultural work.*

The area has rich traditions – like *local folklore, lifestyle, crafts, rituals, cuisine*, etc.

The Rocky niches of the Polomie, populated by a sophisticated bird choir, were used in the past as a holy abode by the monks who settled in the area. In the thirteenth century, in the rocky limestone rocks they began to dig dozens of chapels, monasteries and cells of different heights. For centuries, the area was one of the largest spiritual and cultural centers in our lands. Later the caves were abandoned by their inhabitants and left to the mercy of natural elements. However, in some of them magnificent frescoes and inscriptions have been preserved. Nowadays, this invaluable **historical heritage is under the protection of UNESCO** and is one of our most famous tourist attractions. However, most of the former rock monasteries are inaccessible due to poor infrastructure. Most of the tourists in **the Rusenski Lom Nature Park** appreciate the biodiversity and the virgin nature of the nature park. They combine the eco-routes with the so-called archaeological routes. During this time, tourists are acquainted with the flora and fauna of the Polomie. If worked properly, the two element destinations might be considered for a **brand area**, as well.

As for the Romanian **county of Giurgiu**, we recommend the valuable complex of Comana to be taken into consideration as a highlight of the rural communities. The **Comana site** is protected (starting with October 25, 2011) by the Ramsar Convention, as a wetland of international importance. The park overlaps both the Comana avifauna special protection area (SPA site) and the Comana community site (SCI site) and includes the natural reserves: Ologa Forest – Grădinari and Padina Tătarului Forest. For the Giurgiu area, the natural elements of Comana Park constitute a resource with invaluable territorial capital value, given



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by the characteristics of the place with symbolic uniqueness for ecotourism. Moreover, this resource is immutable, unrepeatable and non-replicable - it cannot be extracted and moved to another territory, the experience and the impact on the history of tourists cannot be repeated, the replication in another place or time being unable to take on its exemplary uniqueness value. As a result, once entered into the consciousness of potential tourists as a unique place and of unparalleled beauty, the Park can not be eroded, but only enriched if protected according to the rules of European ecotourism.

The brand is a set of valuable features that customers / consumers, rationally and emotionally, can automatically identify and associate with a company or the product / service offered by it. Destination marketing aims at the strategic approach of local development, with tourism as its domain of action. Thus, the economic and cultural interests of the local community, local organizations and tourists, as well as the stakeholders involved are the subject of the study. Therefore, we suggest **Comana Natural Park** to become **the brand for Comana locality**. The commune's brand will be composed of the actual brand name, logo and slogan, which will symbolize the characteristics of the commune.

Due to the existence of a very wide palette of suitable flora and fauna elements, but also through the sustainable relationships created, the Comana Natural Park itself forms a viable and independent ecosystem.

The commune of Comana is known for this natural park and the variety of its biosphere (wetland of international importance and site of community importance). Therefore, we suggest the brand name of the commune to be "**Comana ecosystem**".

The logo of the brand can be a stylized clover that reflects both the protected clover species existing in the Natural Park and the symbol of the clover, the lucky one. Commune Comana is a commune that had the chance to have in its territory this unique park in the world through its diversity and composition.

The slogan of the brand could contain the name of the Comana commune, which, separated and associated with the divine word, symbolizes the divine luck of this



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settlement that has this ecosystem park. The special variety of park elements leads to the idea of encompassing the entire universe of nature. Therefore, the proposal of the slogan of the Comana brand is: **"Divine co-hand is the universe of nature"**. ("Co-ma(â)nă divină e universul naturii".)

Therefore we suggest:

NAME OF THE BRAND:	COMANA ECOSISTEM
LOGO OF THE BRAND:	OXALIS COMANA
Stylized DRAWING:	A CLOVER SPECIFIC TO COMANA NATURAL PARK
SLOGAN OF THE BRAND:	"CO-MANA DIVINĂ E UNIVERSUL NATURII"

Regarding the Danube river strategy for village communities:

The biggest development potential at regional level could register the following tourism activities:

- == cruises on the Danube River,
- ==gastronomy and crafts tourism,
- ==sports tourism (water sports and fishing)
- ==leisure and bird watching tourism, weekend tourism
- == cultural tourism
- ==business tourism.

All forms of tourism could get good chances to evolve if responsible actions will be carried away by all actors involved within communities.

As regards already existing routes and projects, we need to mention and support:

" The Danube Terraces" – as part of „The Wine Route". The vineyard area delimited for the production of grapes raw material, vinification, conditioning and bottling of wines with geographical indication The Danube Terraces follow as a band the course of the great river, from Zimnicea (Teleorman county) to Fetești (Ialomița county) and Insuraței (Brăila



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county). The wine region related to the geographical indication "Danube Terraces" includes two vineyards, **Ostrov and Greaca**, to which are added four independent wine centers: Giurgiu, Zimnicea, Fetești and Insuraței. The Ostrov vineyard includes the Ostrov, Baneasa, Oltina and Aliman wine centers. **Giurgiu county** includes vineyards from: **Daia commune with villages of Daia, Dăița, Plopșoru, Greaca commune with the villages of Greaca and Puțu Grecii; Hotarele commune with the villages of Hotarele and Izvoarele; Prundu commune with villages of Prundu and Puieni; Băneasa commune with the village of Pietrele.**

Viticulture has grown steadily. The vineyards held a chain, throughout the contact area of the plain, with the Danube meadow, starting from Chirnogi and up to Prundu. The multisecular wine tradition exists in the area, the natural environment particularly favorable for table grapes, together with the great prospects offered to viticulture by the transformations that occurred after the Second World War, determined the establishment of Greaca Operational Station, the only research and production station for wine producing specialized in the production of grapes. from our country.

In the **Greaca resort**, two known wine varieties - *Carmina* and *Xenia* – are successfully produced.

The integration of the Wine Route in the Iter Vitis Cultural Itinerary show fine perspective for Romanian villages in discussion.

The European Route of the Roman Emperors includes visits to historical resonance objects, located along former roads of the Roman Empire, in several countries, but it is important that the historical monuments from Giurgiu county dated from the Roman era (see Table 1) are to be included within the circuit. At the moment, the itinerary includes Roman roads, aqueducts and amphitheaters in Serbia, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria.



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Main directions to be followed for Sustaining Rural Tourism in the Giurgiu-Ruse Region

1/ COOPERATION AND TEAM WORK

- a/ Contact all actors involved as – local regional authorities, tur operators, NGOs, stakeholders, opinion leaders to engage partneships for sustaining responsible tourism
- b/ Diversify partnerships in the fields of transportation, accommodation, restaurants, promotion and events to backup the professional tourism services

2/ FUNDING

- c/ Get funding for rural sustainable development projects to conserve the protected natural areas and their biodiversity

3/USE OF SUSTAINABLE METHODS

- d/ Keep all actions under sustainability umbrella by promoting ecological tourism over Danube river, handle and remove flowting garbage, use any time possible green energy tools, push on investment for restauration and monitoring habitats

4/ SUPPORT TOURISM BY CONEXE ACTIONS

- e/ Identify products and services provided through local experience and resources
- f/ Promote private entrepreneurs in agrotourism
- g/ Support set-up of SMEs of different types in the rural communities
- h/ Find ways to integrate locals within commercial networks of producers
- i/ Expand cross-border relationships with Bulgarian professionals and not only to boost cultural projects



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j/ Use partnerships among cultural tour operators, stakeholders and local public administration

5/ INFRASTRUCTURE

k/ Prepare visiting eco-friendly infrastructure for cultural, historic objects and protected areas

l/ Install or upgrade the marking signs, route and roads, thematic circuits, traffic lights etc

m/ Restore or update the tourist information centres where needed, organize leisure facilities for the travelers' comfort

6/ ACCOMMODATION, HORECA AND SURROUNDINGS

n/ Rehabilitate, adjust, identify or build accommodation structures as guest houses in the rural areas

o/ Prepare camps, green areas, parking lots, recreation facilities where needed

p/ Restore, renovate facades and walls for cultural-historical monuments and accommodation facilities

q/ Take care of signals for feeding, recreational, fish and hunting structures

r/ Harmonize feeding possibilities with accommodation ones for tourists in rural areas

7/ ACCESSIBILITY AT DESTINATION

s/ Improve roads and equipment network towards cultural heritage and natural sites

t/ Repair connection roads among target sightseeing places

8/ LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

u/ Support the proper training for people working within HORECA in rural areas

v/ Extend local tourism offers and support traditional local services based on responsible tourism principles

z/ Provide consultancy for start-up businesses in different tourism activities



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Conclusions

Cross-border cooperation is one of the main objectives in Europe and the cohesion policy of the member states enhances its importance. The integration of regions separated by national borders, facing common problems requiring unified solutions, is the ultimate goal of this cooperation. The membership of Bulgaria and Romania in the European Union has important strategic implications. It reduces the traditional function of the border as an obstacle to social, cultural and economic cooperation and removes administrative obstacles to the free movement of goods and people. Cross-border cooperation between Romania and Bulgaria encompasses all spheres of the economy. This implies the development of common programs, strategies and actions, the active participation of different societal groups and management levels, especially in the field of tourism.

The cross-border region of Giurgiu-Ruse is filled with a variety of natural and anthropogenic tourist resources, which are largely unknown to visitors. Unique cultural and natural resources are among the strengths of the Romanian-Bulgarian region. Archaeological and architectural heritage, traditional folklore, natural landscapes are the subject of many programs and their further encouragement and development leads to diversification of tourism activities. This creates the conditions for the management of cross-border tourism programs and projects and for joint management of funds from different sources. However, a large number of tourist sites are difficult to access, with underdeveloped infrastructure and insufficient tourist interpretation to meet the contemporary requirements of international tourism. Poor economic development, depopulation of the region and aging populations have had a negative impact on the human factor and the shortage of skilled workers. The lack of a clear vision and awareness of the benefits of developing the region as a tourist destination leads to fragmentation of



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existing projects, worsened communication between stakeholders and difficulties in forming a common identity.

The cross-border region Giurgiu-Ruse should be increasingly oriented towards the business sector and the market in planning and implementing its economic priorities, but with an eye to local communities and their development. Approaching responsible tourism as a way to promote a destination while taking care of local treasures, by training locals for hospitality services, involving them in own community decision-taking process for the future of the village they live in – is the best recommended direction to be followed to boost the domestic economy and attract tourists. The more so, these villages are still untouched by the heavy burden of mass tourism, they still offer genuine customs, fresh natural sites, an experience that a lot of travelers coming from different corners of the world long for – while in their developed countries everything became industrialized and technologized.

The fundamental question remains how the overall cross-border region of Giurgiu-Ruse could evolve and adapt to growing competition, how to offer sustainable development to meet the challenges of the international market. The region must meet market conditions and adapt to user requirements and searches, of course.

The sustainable development of the cross-border region of Ruse-Giurgiu is a reflection of the continuous struggle for market positioning, through innovation and preservation of historical values and traditions. The basic idea of community development and the formation of an environment is related to the people who live and work in a community at this time; regional planning aims to establish the economic base of the community and to protect the "public interest". Economic development offers not only more productivity, but also the productive usage of resources, more innovation and focus on enhancing competitiveness. But the risk of damaging the life harmony of eco-systems and historic



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legacy in the target areas it is always there. It depends on the management carried on the rural destinations and at the whole counties to keep the balance between tourist expectations and inhabitants' needs and possibilities to be good hosts. At the heart of these approaches is the idea that in order to succeed, one should use its business potential and develop and operate the planning methodology.

Despite the poor economic development and its unrecognizability as a tourist destination for both foreign and domestic tourists, the diverse natural and anthropogenic resources in the cross-border region of Giurgiu-Ruse, the rich historic heritage, the traditions preserved within communities are a prerequisite for popularization of the region and development of year-round tourism.

There is a need for a new understanding of the way to position the cross-border region of Giurgiu-Ruse as a tourist destination - positioning based on strategic promotion tailored to specific target group of users.

Therefore, a CROSS-BORDER STRATEGY FOR THE CROSS-BORDER GOIRGIU-RUSE REGION coordinated and implemented with all stakeholders involved (state institutions, civil, cultural and educational organizations, society, private organizations, etc.).

The construction of **an effective tourist brand in the cross-border region of Ruse-Giurgiu** is related to asking the question: what is the brand image that the cross-border region can present to the world in the 21st century? A brand that is recognizable, bearing the emotion to be evoked and accepted by the consumer of the tourist destination "Cross-border region Giurgiu-Ruse". The rural communities could provide such brands especially if these are supported to **develop responsible tourism**. Locals to be involved in their own village prosperity become key players in the construction of tourism brands.

An effective factor for success in attracting investment and funding is effective



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cooperation between official institutions, various tourism organizations, other stakeholders and local inhabitants. The development of this factor in the Bulgarian-Romanian cross-border region is greatly favored by the fact that the creation of public-private partnerships is a major task in both countries. A wide range of measures at national level has been developed to achieve this task. At local level, however, it is also necessary to build even more cross-border partnerships with different organizations and institutions.

For the Romanian-Bulgarian cross-border region, the **partnership** should be viewed as an agreement to include public or private organizations so that to create and develop components of a **tourism investment and promotion program**. This partnership can be identified and developed by all institutions and organizations that play a role in the development of tourism and can be based on formal or informal relationships. It aims to accomplish tasks that can be better achieved through collaborative work than on their own. Partners need to be included in such a way that they can add value to a range of upcoming tourism activities and contribute to existing resources.

The region's brand should be created and enforced as an opportunity to integrate the competitive advantages of the region with its representative communities as major economic development goals.

The cross-border Region Giurgiu-Ruse must take into account the main rural resources and on their basis plan and select the most appropriate marketing tools (advertising, organizational, functional and many others), tailored to the specifics of the different consumer groups, their expectations and requirements. In order to build strategic and successful marketing, the region needs several key elements - effective planning, marketing factors that include infrastructure, attractions, image, quality of life and people, and as a last but very important factor - well-defined target market segments.

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Hear our stories, see our heritage, experience our way of life

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