



Infopack

Road to integration through cultural tourism

Lessons learnt from the Rivne region in Ukraine

This road is for:

GOVERNMENT BODIES, CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS, ENTREPRENEURS AND SMES OF THE REGIONS PLACED ALONG LONG INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL ROUTES INTERESTED IN EXPANDING TOURISM AND STRENGTHENING COHESION BETWEEN DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS.

Abstract

TEXTOUR is a project **co-creating sustainable cultural tourism development strategies**. Rivne region is one of the project's pilots placed along the European Cultural Route of Via Regia connecting 8 countries. Being a part of this international tour offers many opportunities, but it has its challenges too.

The **VIA REGIA** is the oldest and longest road link between the east and the west of Europe. It has been awarded as "**Cultural Route of the Council of Europe**". Such Cultural Routes are an invitation to travel and discover Europe's rich and diverse heritage. They bring people and places together in networks of shared history and heritage.

As such, the VIA REGIA and the Cultural Route network are powerful tools for developing combined travel offers to international travellers. Via Regia is considered a symbol of European unification. This symbolism was taken as a ground for developing cultural tourism in the Rivne region by looking for shared values and creating unique tourist products, which brings multiple stakeholders together.

In particular, due to the war that broke out in Ukraine in 2022, Via Regia in Rivne became a place for refugees and internal migrants to find shelter and cultural tourism became a way to foster inclusion between internal refugees and local communities.

Rivne **cultural tourism actions** have shown the **true value of unity** in a broad sense: not just as a way to do business but also as **a way to solve pressing social problems**.



What to pack:

KNOWLEDGE, TOOLS, AND SKILLS REQUIRED BEFORE IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION

- Knowing what social groups exist in the region and identifying potential stakeholders;
- In-depth understanding of needs and interests of each social group and stakeholders (not only cultural but in a broad sense – their life expectations and challenges);
- Methodology for finding out these needs and interests;
- Expert support to transform personal aspirations into shared values and goals, finding effective solutions and implementing them decently;
- Open-mindedness to see new and timely solutions.



Exploring Rivne Region and its innovative actions

THE CREATIVE CLUSTER IN DERMAN-OSTROH NATIONAL NATURE PARK TO STRENGTHEN INCLUSION OF INTERNAL REFUGEES IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Rivne region is one of the multiple tourist destinations along the Via Regia route. Compared to huge and popular European tourist centres it is less known and has fewer points to attract tourists and be equally incorporated into European tourist packages. So, the very first idea for the Pilot was to **open the Rivne region as a part of the cultural route "VIA REGIA" for Ukrainian and foreign tourists**. The primary focus was building links between stakeholders, improving infrastructure, gaining and sharing knowledge of travellers' needs and promotion.

Using a participative approach, a project team with other stakeholders set up the Creative Cluster in Derman-Ostroh National Nature Park to strengthen the inclusion of internal refugees in local communities.

Creative clusters are a favoured concept for identifying groups of nearby stakeholders to target for intervention and through which to implement strategies for achieving growth.

The Creative Cluster serves as a communication platform between various stakeholders, and like a venue for artistic practices, psychological workshops, and cultural events.

It is the core of a partnership network that has started developing within the project and an inclusive space. The offer is a fresh, non-standard way of popularising natural heritage to **enhance the integration of internally displaced persons into local communities**. It is a space for joint activities with educational, art, ecological and psychological components.

THE CLUSTER'S KEY ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

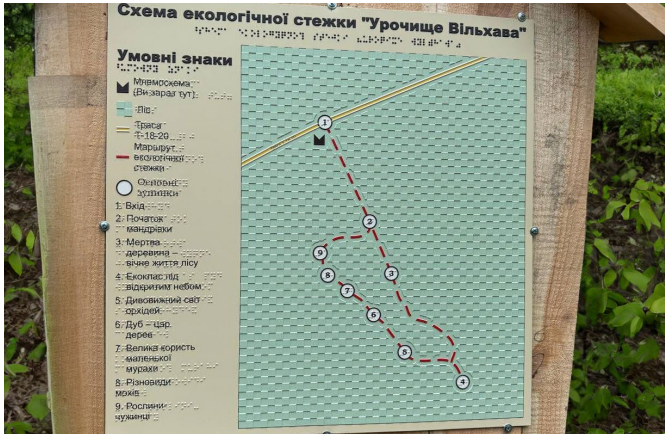
- Ecological route.
- Partnership with local businesses (food, accommodation, excursion services, souvenir products, tourist equipment rental, mental health services).
- Educational activities in the territory of the Derman-Ostroh National Nature Park, such as tours, excursions, use of local cultural heritage.
- Providing tourist services for IDPs and people with disabilities (Internally Displaced Persons).
- Promoting the idea of combining forest art and psychological rehabilitation for internal refugees who have fled conflict.
- Organizing events and festivals such as Gastro-Festival in Ilyashivka, Novomalyn Fishing Festival, Buderaz Festival, master classes etc. for different groups of stakeholders.
- Promoting nearby cultural heritage.
- Promoting environmental friendliness to a wide audience using place recommendations, digital local guide, and setting up a social media page.

Pic 1: tour for people with disabilities.



Photo credits: Culture and Tourism Department of Rivne Regional State Administration

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Pic 2: tactile map of the eco-route.
Photo credits: Culture and Tourism Department of Rivne Regional State Administration

THE KEY ACTIVITIES TO CREATE THE CLUSTER ARE:

Infrastructure:

- Installing information boards in the territory of the Nature Park Derman-Ostroh;
- Marking ecological routes
- Adapting the ecological route to the needs of disabled people

Knowledge:

- Organizing a set of masterclasses (on art and how to launch a business based on local culture)
- Trainings for local businesses on providing tourist services for IDP

Promotion:

- Tours for various stakeholders, including IDPs and persons with disabilities
- 360° images of natural heritage
- Organizing cultural events

When engaging internally displaced people, it is crucial to understand that they may not be as active or ready to participate as you might expect. Considering the significant stress that refugees often experience, it's important to approach them with sensitivity and without pressure.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR INVOLVEMENT:

1. **Identify a trusted contact:** refugees often form tight-knit communities with one or a few individuals who are particularly active and open to interaction with locals. to effectively promote your activities, start by communicating with these community leaders.
2. **Offer roles gradually:** initially, invite refugees to observe rather than participate actively. Avoid overwhelming them with questions or multiple offers. As internally displaced people may view their new environment as a temporary refuge, they require time to adjust and feel ready to engage more deeply.

By adopting these approaches, you can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for displaced individuals.



Roadmap:

THE MAIN STEPS TO EMBARK ON

- 1 **MONTH 1-2**
Data Collection - Gather information on potential stakeholders and the cultural environment.
- 2 **MONTH 3**
Develop a stakeholder engagement plan.
- 3 **MONTH 4-5**
Collaborate with stakeholders - identify their needs and interests and align them into shared goals.
- 4 **MONTH 5**
Create a cluster that involves all the relevant stakeholders.
- 5 **MONTH 6**
Allocate financial and human resources effectively.
- 6 **MONTH 8-12**
Implementation - Execute the plan and facilitate collaboration among stakeholders.



Testimonials

“Cultural tourism is a one of the most effective ways to build links between territory and peoples; that is why it is the best ground for “natural” and light integration”

YAROSLAVA HAVRYLOVA, DEPUTY CHIEF, CULTURE AND TOURISM DEPARTMENT OF RIVNE REGIONAL STATE ADMINISTRATION



New fellow travellers

WHO JOINED AND FORMED THE NETWORK

- Local authorities
- Local NGOs working with IDP's
- Local NGOs working with disabled people
- Family enterprise, Dairy Farm “Iunikasol”
- Private entrepreneur, Lavender field
- Private baker “Kraftova Lavka”



Souvenirs

BEST ACHIEVEMENTS RELATIVE TO THE PROJECT'S IMPACTS



SOCIAL IMPACT

- Gaining a new social role in the local community by IDPs.
- IDPs and locals can see clearly how they can use culture and nature to develop their personal psychological and economic well-being, build social cohesion, establish links, and communicate effectively with people having diverse identities.



ECONOMIC IMPACT

- IDPs and locals have new opportunities for self-employment, a way to monetize their skills and inspirations.



POLICY IMPACT

- Local communities now have a new vision of developing cultural tourism based on visitors' needs and current challenges



Contact us if you want to use sustainable cultural tourism to solve pressing social problems

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