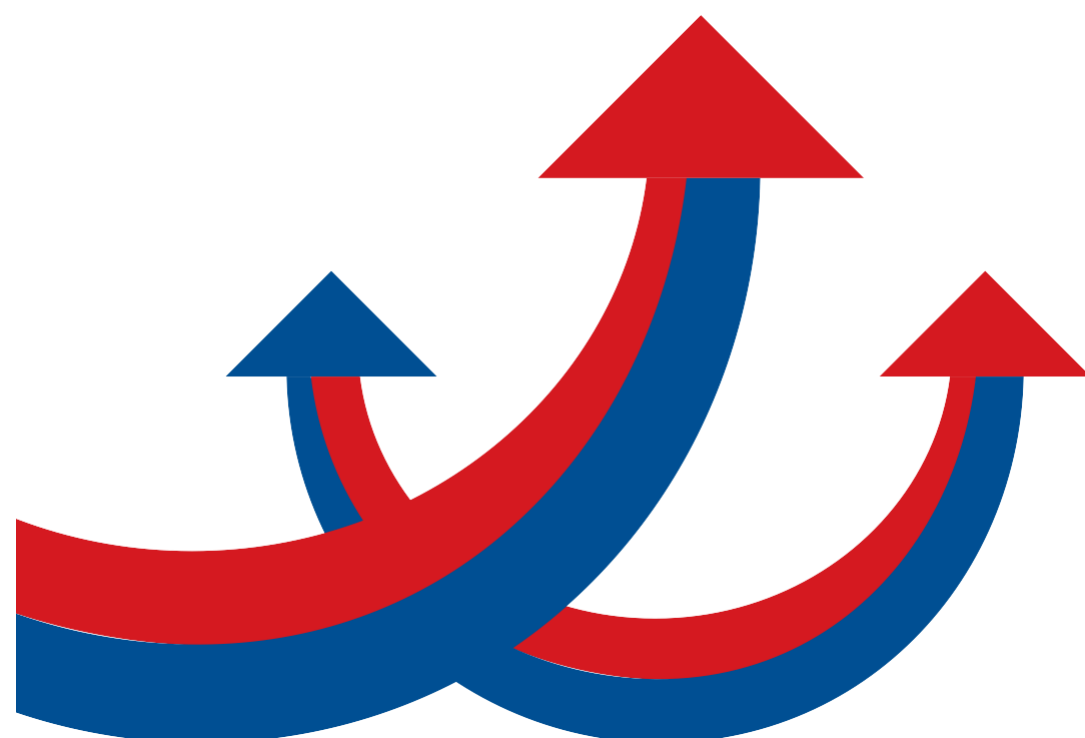


D2.3.5: Marketing strategy, exploitation and sustainability plan

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1. Introduction

The present Deliverable entitled “Marketing strategy, exploitation and sustainability plan” aims at: a) The development of a marketing strategy for the promotion of the CULTURAL DIPOLE and the establishment of Serres-Petrich as a new tourist destination, b) The sustainability and exploitation of project results throughout the whole project lifetime and after the project’s completion.

According to UNWTO at the projected pace of growth, international tourist arrivals worldwide are expected to reach close to 1.4 billion by 2020, and 1.8 billion by 2030 (UNWTO, 2011).

The general idea of the CULTURAL DIPOLE project is to promote the development of cultural tourism in the border region between Greece and Bulgaria. According to Hofstede (1997) culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. The World Tourism Organization has defined cultural tourism as “movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals and other cultural events, visits to sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore or art, and pilgrimages.” (WTO, 1985 p. 131). Cultural tourism is usually related to trips that include visits to such places as museums, art galleries, historical and archaeological sites, festivals, architecture, artistic performances, and heritage sites (Hughes, 1996; Stebbins, 1996). It is important to consider that culture has arguably become a major driving force of the urban tourism system. (Andries van der Arka & Richards, 2005). The cultural tourism has gained a significant share in the global tourism market, during the last decades. Data provided by OECD indicate that worldwide, almost 360 million international tourism trips were generated by cultural tourism in 2007, accounting to around 40% of all global tourism (OECD, 2009). The dynamic interaction among culture and tourism has been identified by Richards (2009, p.1) who states that “Culture and tourism were two of the major growth industries of the 20th century, and towards the end of the century the combination of these two sectors into

'cultural tourism' had become one of the most desirable development options for countries and regions around the world."

European cultural heritage is of exceptional economic importance for the tourism industry, generating estimated annual revenues of € 335 billion, and many of the 9 million jobs in the tourism sector are linked to it directly or indirectly. The market for conservation of this heritage is estimated at some € 5 billion per year. (Mergos & Patsavos, 2017).

According to comprehensive studies and statistical data, the impact of the investment of 1 m. Euros in cultural infrastructures yields within a five-year period 3.44 m. euros of overall economic growth in the area. The original investment is more than tripled. (Mergos & Patsavos, 2017).

In this context, the CULTURAL DIPOLE project aspires to preserve and promote the heritage of the two countries, Greece and Bulgaria by creating a powerful Cultural Dipole of European significance, in the cross border region.

The establishment of the dipole Serres-Petrich as a unique cultural destination that will attract visitors mainly interested in art and history requires the development and application of an integrated marketing plan. The present deliverable outlines the key elements of this marketing plan and provides guidelines and recommendations on how to effectively apply this plan towards ensuring the exploitation of project results, the sustainability of Cultural Dipole and the promotion of this new destination Serres-Petrich.

2. Tourist identity of the dipole Serres-Petrich

According to official statistical data both cities, Serres and Petrich constitute popular tourist destinations which attract a significant number of visitors, especially from the neighboring countries. There exist many archaeological sites and Museums, churches and religious sites, Monuments and other attraction poles of historical and cultural interest. In addition, both cities offer a great range of alternative forms of tourism, and recreational activities, including spa tourism, wine tourism, rural tourism, cycling and racing activities.

According to statistics, the number of the annual tourist overnight stays at accommodation is 12.000 for the city of Petrich (for 2015) and 158.655 for the prefecture of Serres (for 2014). The tables below provide indicative statistical data concerning tourism in Serres and Petrich.

Table 1 presents data for the time period 2010-2017 concerning the arrivals, overnights and occupancy in hotel establishments in the regional unit of Serres. It is obvious that from 2013 until 2017 there has been a significant increase in the number of foreign arrivals and foreign overnights.

Table 1. Arrivals, overnights and occupancy in hotel establishments in the regional unit of Serres for the years 2010-2017

CENTRAL MACEDONIA REGION – Regional unit of Serres: Arrivals, overnights and occupancy in hotel establishments, 2010-2017								
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Foreign arrivals	7.767	8.039	8.353	13.284	14.244	14.020	17.513	20.691
Domestic arrivals	72.398	72.916	65.049	65.778	63.466	62.305	68.343	65.526
Foreign overnights	13.877	13.315	14.992	22.535	25.947	24.036	35.921	80.660
Domestic overnights	141.283	147.598	131.459	127.660	132.708	115.328	141.190	152.333
Occupancy	24,7%	21,4%	19,1%	19,3%	20,4%	18,6%	23,8%	30,9%

Source: ELSTAT - Processing INSETE Intelligence

Concerning the admissions to Museums and archaeological sites there has been also an increase since 2010 until 2017 (Table 2).

Table 2. Admissions to Museums/ Archaeological sites in the regional unit of Serres for the years 2010-2017

CENTRAL MACEDONIA REGION – Regional unit of Serres: Admissions to Museums/ Archaeological sites 2010-2017								
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Archaeological sites	47.804	54.473	51.011	64.991	70.749	57.439	71.211	72.897
Museums	3.632	2.755	3.837	4.399	18.183	25.614	14.929	14.104

Source: ELSTAT - Processing INSETE Intelligence

In a Report of the Region of Central Macedonia concerning the tourist sector in the year 2020 the impacts of COVID-19 are reflected (Table 3). It can be seen clearly that in all Regional Units of the Region of Central Macedonia between 2015-2019, there is a significant increase in the number of overnights of foreign tourists. Serres is the champion of the aforementioned increase by 511% in foreign tourists whereas the number of domestic ones seems to be stable.

Between 2019-2020 there is a general decrease in the number of overnights in all Regional Unit, whereas the highest decrease is observed in Serres, by 90% 44% (still a high amount) of domestic ones. It is concluded that the COVID-19 had a serious impact in the number of overnights in the Regional Unit of Serres.

Table 3. Overnights in hotel establishments by Regional Unit 2015-2020

Regional Unit		2015	2019	2020	%Δ 2015- 2019	%Δ 2019-2020
Chalkidiki	Foreign	3.920.566	5.048.484	851.031	+ 29%	-83%
	Domestic	473.306	598.522	327.231	+ 26%	-45%
Thessaloniki	Foreign	1.146.885	1.488.668	341.821	+ 30%	-77%
	Domestic	1.322.745	1.375.986	571.093	+ 4%	-58%
Pieria	Foreign	777.152	1.376.558	262.662	+77%	-81%
	Domestic	187.929	325.858	233.804	+73%	-28%
Serres	Foreign	24.036	146.932	14.091	+ 511%	-90%
	Domestic	115.328	115.109	64.271	+ 0%	-44%
Pella	Foreign	9.181	12.654	3.470	+ 38%	-73%
	Domestic	80.110	149.699	55.585	+ 87%	-63%
Imathia	Foreign	16.415	27.805	4.871	+ 69%	-82%
	Domestic	85.753	73.658	20.409	-14%	-72%
Kilkis	Foreign	14.818	47.928	8.157	+ 223%	-82%
	Domestic	20.171	21.482	14.220	+ 6%	-34%
Total	Foreign	5.909.053	8.149.029	1.486.463	+ 38%	-82%
	Domestic	2.285.342	2.660.314	1.286.613	+ 16%	-52%
Region's Total		8.194.395	10.809.343	2.773.076	+ 32%	-74%

Table 4. Payment receipts in Museums of the Region of Central Macedonia by Regional uniti 2015- 2020

Regional Unit	2015	2019	2020	%Δ 2015- 2019	%Δ 2019-2020
Thessaloniki	662.713	1.167.857	256.886	76%	-78%
Pella	62.300	82.804	14.900	33%	-82%
Pella	43.557	72.164	14.132	66%	-80%
Serres	23.355	38.124	10.890	63%	-71%
Chalkidiki	1.883	10.203	5.181	442%	-49%
Imathia	5.780	9.322	2.842	61%	-70%
Kilkis	275	332	20	21%	-94%
Central Macedonia	799.863	1.380.806	304.851	73%	-78%

Table 3 presents the hotel capacity in the regional unit of Serres, for the years 2010-2018. In total, more than 30 hotel units exist in the area, and the total number of beds amount to 2.000 approximately during the last years

Table 3. Hotel capacity in the regional unit of Serres for the years 2010-2018

CENTRAL MACEDONIA REGION – Regional unit of Serres: Hotel Capacity 2010-2018							
Year		5*	4*	3*	2*	2*	Total
2010	Units	0	4	19	8	3	34
	Rooms	0	202	504	218	64	988
	Guest beds	0	405	966	423	130	1.924
2011	Units	0	4	20	7	3	34
	Rooms	0	202	492	167	107	968
	Guest beds	0	405	956	320	217	1.898
2012	Units	0	5	20	7	3	35
	Rooms	0	284	492	167	107	1.050
	Guest beds	0	610	956	320	217	2.103
2013	Units	0	5	20	7	2	34
	Rooms	0	283	492	167	95	1.037
	Guest beds	0	610	956	320	193	2.079
2014	Units	0	5	20	7	2	34
	Rooms	0	283	492	167	95	1.037
	Guest beds	0	610	956	320	193	2.079
2015	Units	0	5	21	7	2	35
	Rooms	0	283	504	167	95	1.049

	Guest beds	0	610	975	320	193	2.098
2016	Units	0	5	20	6	2	33
	Rooms	0	283	497	155	95	1.030
	Guest beds	0	610	960	293	193	2.056
2017	Units	0	6	19	6	2	33
	Rooms	0	299	481	155	95	1.030
	Guest beds	0	642	928	293	193	2.056
2018	Units	0	6	19	6	2	33
	Rooms	0	299	481	155	95	1.030
	Guest beds	0	642	928	293	193	2.056

Source: ELSTAT - Processing INSETE Intelligence

Next tables (table 4,5,6) present statistical data concerning tourism in Petrich. In particular, table 4 presents information concerning accommodation facilities in Petrich and table 5 provides information about the hotels in Petrich, for the years 2012-2016. It is obvious from the data of the tables that in 2016 there has been a significant increase in the revenues from nights spent, in comparison with the previous years. Table 6 shows the annual number of visits at the museum of Petrich from 2012 until 2016.

Table 4. Accommodation establishments in Petrich for the years 2012-2016

Year	Accommodation establishments - number	Bed-places - number	Bed-nights - number	Room capacity - number	Nights spent - number	Visitors for a night and over - number	Revenues from nights spent - Levs
2012	6	246	85132	120	11688	6635	413486
2013	7	266	85885	125	10757	7136	421185
2014	12	452	118247	208	12953	9283	472555
2015	13	470	162161	217	16566	11219	628794
2016	14	524	174245	242	25523	16305	1121834

Table 5. Hotels in Petrich for the years 2012-2016

Year	Hotels - number	Bed capacity - number	Bed nights - number	Rooms - number	Nights spent - number	Visitors for a night and over - number	Revenues from nights spent - Levs
2012	5	230	82576	114	11637	6589	412761
2013	5	230	77145	109	10123	6654	403188

2014	6	317	99630	154	11537	8335	428129
2015	7	339	120387	165	13702	9329	549547
2016	8	393	139088	190	22756	14191	1047708

Table 6. Visits at the museum of Petrich for the years 2012-2016

Year	Visits at the museum of Petrich Thousands
2012	14620
2013	17097
2014	37580
2015	27730
2016	37525

3. Main poles of attraction and tourist activities in Serres

Serres is a vibrant city in Northern Greece, close to the border with Bulgaria. It is the seat of the Municipality of Serres and it is also the capital of the homonymous Prefecture and Regional Unit. According to the most recent data (2011 census) the population of Serres is 58.287 residents (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2011).

Human settlements in the place of the modern city date back to the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC and the land was uninterruptedly populated ever since. The roman era city, Sirra or Sirraion polis knew some prosperity, while during Byzantine times it was an important fortress to guard against invaders from the North. The city met with its first period of occupation, by the Bulgarians, after the 4th Crusade and fell to the Ottomans in 1383. It became the focus of anti-Ottoman unrest in the Uprising of 1903, was captured by the Bulgarians during the first Balkan War, while the Greek Army first entered the city in 1913, during the second Balkan War and the land remains Greek territory ever since.

3.1. Cultural and historical sites

In Serres there are many cultural and historical sites. First of all, a large number of Museums exists in the city:

3.2. Main Museums and collections, in the City of Serres and its area

1. Bezesteni Archaeological Museum

Since 1970, the Serres Archaeological Museum has been housed in the Bezesten, a closed market dating from the second half of the 15th Century.

This building came to be used in this way as a solution to the pressing problem of firstly gathering together, and secondly, displaying archaeological artefacts that had come to light in the city and the rest of the prefecture. The museum's collection, initially consisted of two small collections. The first, which had until then, been housed in the basement of Serres' First, Highschool for Boys, mostly consisted of sculptures and inscriptions, while the second was donated by Georgios Kaftantzis. In the years that followed, interest in Macedonia and the ensuing development in archaeological research enriched the museum's collection with finds from every period and every part of the prefecture.



Figure 1. View of the Archaeological Museum of Serres, housed in Bezesteni (Ottoman covered Market).

Source: Regional Unit of Serres

2. Natural History Museum

It operates since 2007 as the continuation of the Center for the Protection of the Natural Environment, which was founded by the Municipality of Serres in 1996.

It constitutes a useful guide for the knowledge, study and protection of the area's natural environment. The exhibits of the museum include animals, birds, plants, insects and rocks. Its aim is the collection and preservation of every kind of fauna, flora and mineral water.



Figure 2. Exhibits of Natural History Museum

Source: Municipality of Serres, 2016

3. “Georgakis Olympios” Folk Museum of the Vlachs.

This belongs to the Vlach association of the Prefecture of Serres. The museum opened its doors in 2008 at the facilities of the association, the culmination of the efforts that begun in 1995. It has three levels. The semi-basement includes a teaching room of folklore dances and traditional music instruments. On the first floor there is a representation of a reception hall in a Vlach house with low sofas, textiles, pillows and low round tables. On the second floor there is an exhibition space. Moreover, there is a library with remarkable historical books and also a wardrobe with traditional Vlach clothes.



Figure 3.The “Georgakis Olympos” Folk Museum of the Vlachs.

Source: Regional Unit of Serres

4. Sarakatsani Folk Museum.

The culmination of a twenty-five-year effort, this museum opened its doors to the public in 1997. It is considered as one of the best Museums of its kind in Europe having received the Museum of the Year Award in 1987, thanks to the exhibits making it unique.



Figure 4. Sarakatsani Folklore Museum

Source: Regional Unit of Serres

5. Lyceum Club of Greek Women Folk Museum collection

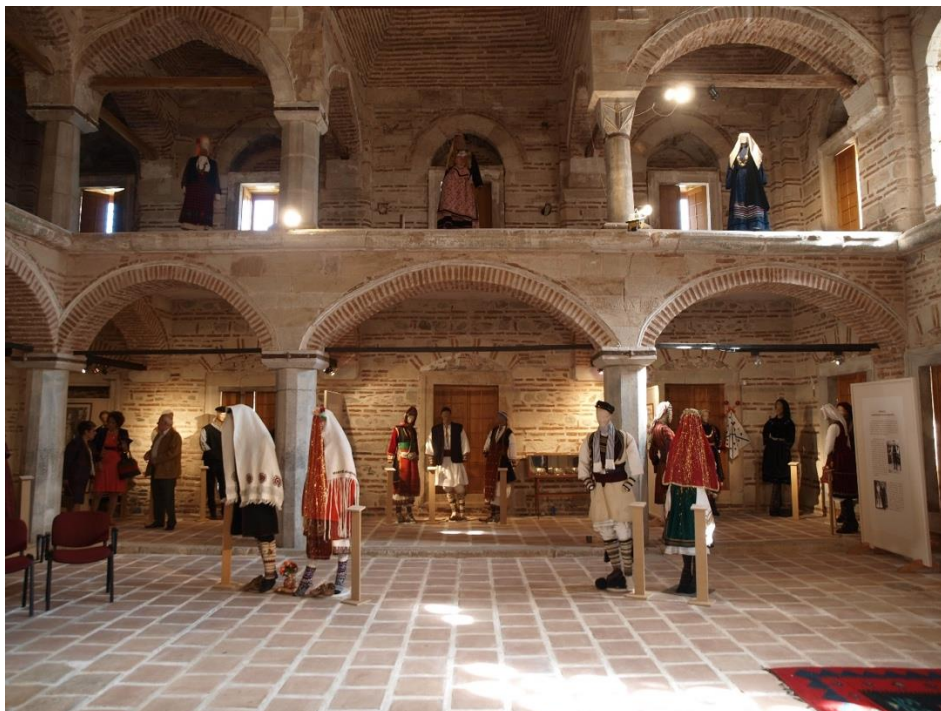


Figure 5. Exhibition of folk dresses, from the Lyceum Club, of Greek Women, in Tzintzirli Tzami

Source: A.Naniopoulos

The main objective of the Museum is to preserve Greek customs and traditions, dances and songs, dresses, musical instruments and, in general, of every element associated with Greek culture and tradition. The collection of genuine folk dresses, as well as contemporary ones, is perhaps the greatest of its kind in Greece, after the one of the National Lyric Theater in Athens.

6. Collection of weapons

The collection is housed on the 2nd floor of the Administration Building for the Regional Unit of Serres, at “K. Karamanlis” hall.

7. Ecclesiastic Museum of Serres



Figure 6. Exhibits of the Ecclesiastic Museum of Serres

Source: A.Naniopoulos

The Ecclesiastical Museum of the Holy Diocese of Serres and Nigrita is a labour of love for the artistic expression of the past and the religious life of local people. It is one of the most significant museum collections in Serres, and is laid out in a modern, comfortable style. The museum is housed in a new building. The exhibits are set out in three small sections within the spacious and comfortable rooms of the museum, so that they merge into a single, unified entity.

The organic, contemporary functional unity of the Ecclesiastical Museum and the chapel of Saint Nikitas, who was martyred in Serres, put paid to any objections that the only place for holy exhibits is in churches, and the exhibition area blends in perfectly with the sacred nature of the exhibits, managing to be simultaneously a modern, museum space and a place of worship.

The majority of exhibits have all been donated by individuals and parishes making up the Diocese of Serres, also a great number of exhibits has been donated by the former deceased Metropolitan Kyros Maximos, the founder of the Museum, of the Diocese of Serres and Nigrita. The exhibits have been divided into four categories: icons, wood carvings and screen sections, metal objects, gold embroidery, filigree work. The most numerous exhibits are the icons, 130 in number, followed, in numerical order, by the metal objects, wood carvings, and gold embroidery.

8. Museum of the Holy Monastery of St. John Prodormos

Old tools, which were used by the monks for the production of various products e.g. for the olive processing and wine making, are displayed in a renovated wing of the Monastery, that functions as an exhibition area.



Figure 7. Museum of the Holy Monastery of St. John Prodormos

Source: A.Naniopoulos

9. Olive Museum

The Olive Museum first opened its gates to the public in 1990 at the old oil mill of Elaionas, after its restoration and enhancement, co-funded by the Community initiative LEADER plus, on the occasion of the action “The Routes of the Olive Tree”. Inside the Olive Museum there is all the equipment needed for the operation of the oil mill (milestones, tanks, press or “vice”), while the waterwheel of the watermill is preserved outside of it.



Figure 8. Olive Museum

Source: Municipality of Serres, 2016

10. The War Museum of the fort Roupel

According to professor Theodosios Tasios the 21 Forts of the “Metaxas Line”, along the borders between Greece and Bulgaria consist the greatest Public Infrastructure work of Greece in the 20th Century. During the “Forts battle” of the Second World War, the Greek Army defended for three days. The Fort Roupel has not been conquered but surrendered following the capitulation signature. Following the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union and NATO there is no reason for the Line to be operational and the Fort Roupel is a visitable Museum under the responsibility of the Hellenic Ministry of Defence.

11. Other smaller Museums in the Regional Unit of Serres.

In the Regional Unit of Serres there are some smaller museums and collections such as the “Hayati Ladia” in the village of Proti, the Tobacco Museum in the village of Pentapolis, the Folk Museum in the village of Neos Skopos, the folk collection in the village of Skotousa etc.

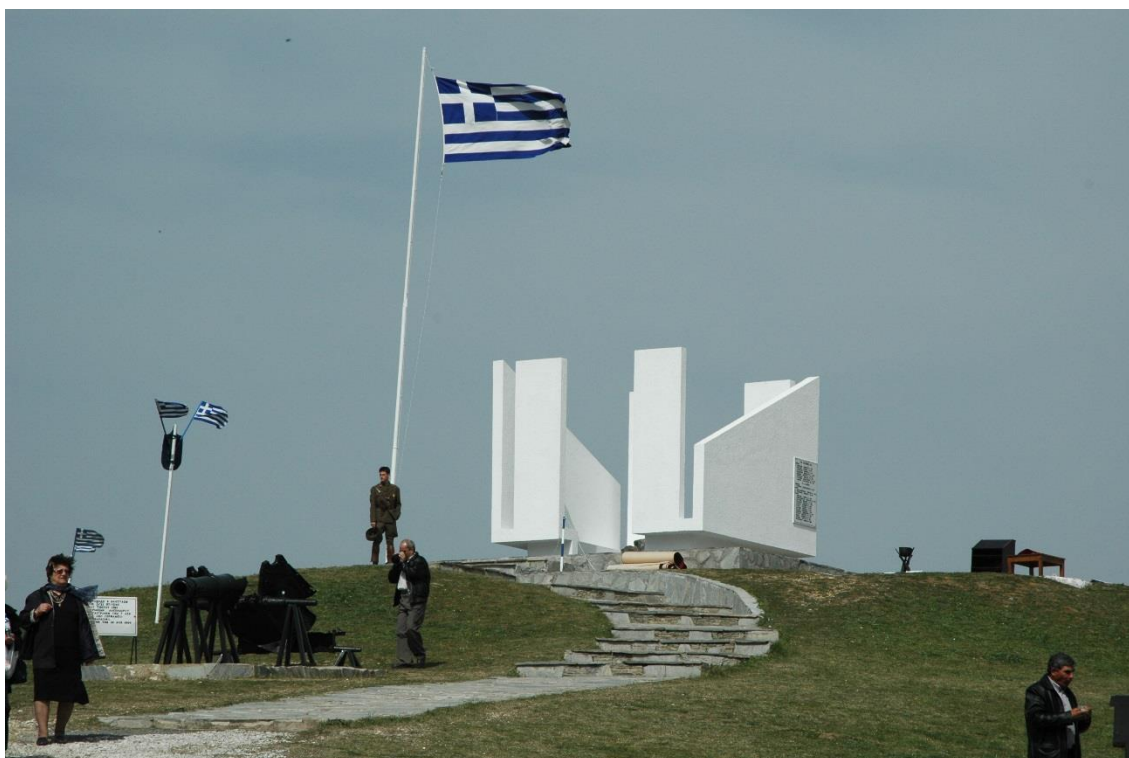


Figure 9. The Monument and Museum of the Fort Roupel.

Source: Regional Unit of Serres

3.3. Sites and Buildings of historical importance in Serres

The main sites of historical importance in Serres, are the following:

1. The Acropolis of Serres and the Orestes' Tower

One of the most remarkable monuments of Serbian rule in Macedonia can be found high up on the south-western section of Serres' acropolis. It is the only building worthy of note that remains of the much fought-over fortress that once crowned the acropolis. Serres Castle was the stronghold of Byzantine emperors during their campaigns against neighbouring peoples. In 1018, its walls and other fortifications were strengthened and improved on by Basil II, the Emperor of

Byzantium. In 1205, the city walls and the acropolis were razed to the ground by Ioannitsis the Bulgarian. The acropolis was rebuilt in 1208, and between then and the city's occupation by the Turks in 1383, various improvements were made to the city's fortifications by the commanders and lords of the city.

The one remaining tower of the castle is known as Orestes' Tower, and was built in 1350 by - as its inscription says - "Orestes for Stephanos his King" - in all probability a reference to Stephanos Dousan, the King of Serbia. The acropolis - known to the Turks as "Bas Kule", which means "The tower on high" or the "Kulas", by which name we find it referred to in the Codex of the Monastery of the Timios Prodromos - was inhabited between 1332 and 1617. In 1668 we find it in ruins according to both the Turk, Evligia Tselebi, and the French traveller, Robert de Dreux. Visitors to the acropolis of Serres can enjoy a panoramic view of the city and the fertile plain surrounding it from the walls that were once so fiercely fought over.

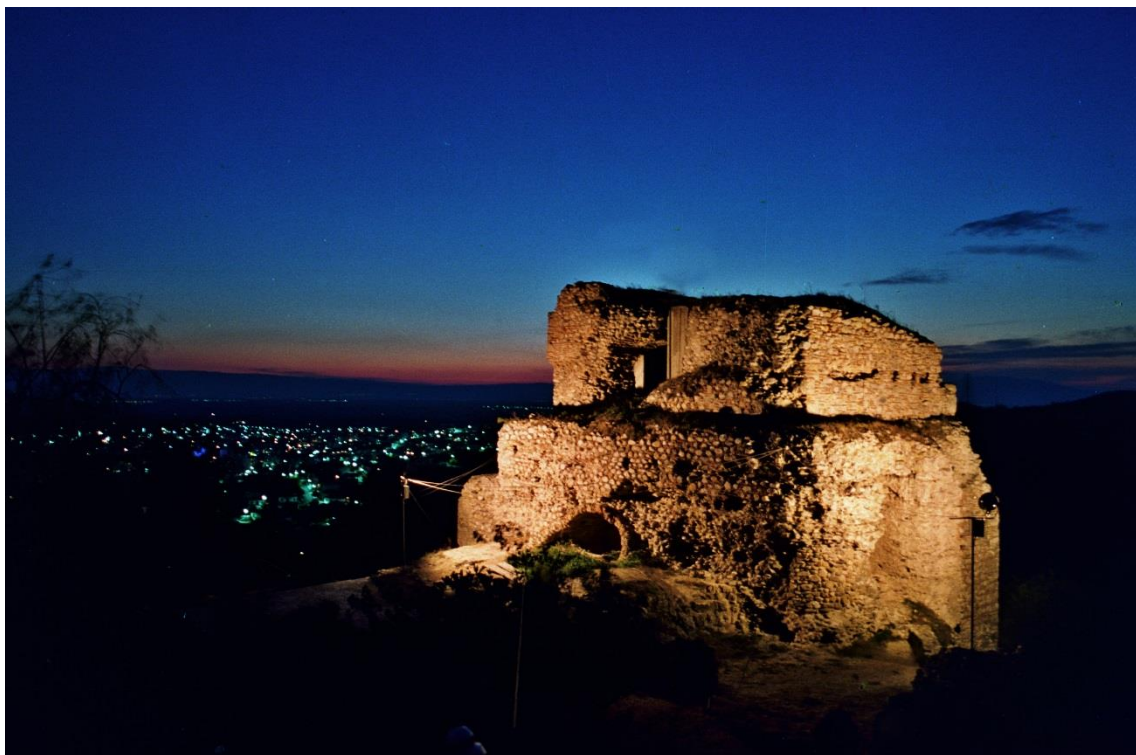


Figure 10. Serres, the Orestis tower

Source: Regional Unit of Serres

2. Bezesteni, the ottoman covered market.

Bezesteni, the old Ottoman covered Market is located at the heart of the City of Serres, housing the Archaeological Museum.



Figure 11. The Bezesteni, old Ottoman covered Market, now housing the Archaeological Museum of Serres

Source: Regional Unit of Serres

3. Zincirli Mosque

It is a remarkable building of Byzantine architecture which gives the impression of a Christian church with its three aisles and a pulpit similar to the one of the Old Cathedral of Serres. After its restoration, Zincirli Mosque is used for various cultural events.



Figure 12. The restored Zincirli Mosque, used as exhibition hall

Source :A. Naniopoulos

4. The Mosque of Mustafa Bey

In the west suburb of the city, referred to as Kamenica in the Ottoman archives - very close to the modern version of the name, Kamenikia- Mustafa bey added to a pre-existent quadrangular domed hall two lateral compartments of the same length and founded his own mosque. This ensemble was united by means of a large portico. The niche of the mihrab was easily opened in the east wall while it was only the dedicatory inscription that destroyed the front of the arched lintel of an opening. The domed roof of the portico with five domes and also the heavy decoration shown on the quality of the marble and built architectural features retract the careless masonry which after all was covered by a painted imitation of a perfect one. Thus, we come across a picturesque mosque neighborly characterized.



Figure 13. The Mosque of Mustafa bey

Source: Municipality of Serres, 2001

5. Ahmet Pasha Mosque or Hagia Sophia

This mosque was famous in the years of Ottoman rule. It constitutes a great architecture artwork, but needs immediate preservation.



Figures 14. The Ahmet Pasha Mosque (Hagia Sophia)

Source: A.Naniopoulos



Figures 15. The Ahmet Pasha Mosque (Hagia Sophia)

Source: Municipality of Serres, 2016

There are also many traditional buildings preserved in Serres:

6. Government house of Serres



Figure 16. The government house of the Regional Unit of Serres

Source: Regional Unit of Serres

It constitutes a work of the famous architect Xenophontas Peonidis, constructed in the period 1898-1905. The Government House served the needs of the Ottoman government.

7. Old Orpheus

The Old Orpheus constitutes an architectural jewel of historical significance built by the homonymous Group in 1905 and hosted in its hall the modern historical and cultural life of the city of Serres.



Figure 17. The old ORPHEUS Building.

Source: Regional Unit of Serres

8. 3rd High school of Serres

Another traditional building is the former Hospitaal of Serres, built in 1885. In 1913, during the holocaust of the city, it was burned down and later, when repaired, it was used as a military Hospital.

9. 1st High school of Serres

The 1st High school of Serres in the foothills of Koulas constitutes one of the first buildings in the burnt in fore zone, founded with solemnity in 1926 by the Principal A. Misirlis from Serres and inaugurated in 1929.

12. The Building of the National Bank of Greece



Figure 18. The National bank building, by night

Source: A.Naniopoulos

The imposing building of the National Bank of Greece with its morphological characteristic of Classicism was built in 1928 under the supervision of the architect X. Aegidis.

13. Residence of Athanasios Argyros

Another preserved building is the two-storey house of Athanasios Argyros, a local intellectual and politician. It was renovated the last decade and for year housed the offices of the local union of municipalities and communities. Nowadays, it belongs (with concession) to the Municipality of Serres and is used for official events by the Mayor of Serres.

14. Rehabilitation Centre for Persons with Disabilities of Serres

The building constitutes one of the most important surviving edifices of the late 19th century. From 1932 until 1981 it operated as an orphanage for boys.



Figure 19. The Rehabilitation Centre for Persons with Disabilities of Serres

Source: Regional Unit of Serres

15. Red school

In the city centre there is the former 1st primary school of Serres also known as Tsalopouleio or Red school. It took the name Tsalopouleio in honour of Tsalopoulos, who was its Principal during the last years of Ottoman rule until 1930. Nowadays, it houses the 23rd primary school.

16. Residence of Maroulis

In the late 19th century the improvement of economic conditions resulting from the commercial prosperity enabled the dwellers of Serres to build many private residences. Central European influences are obvious in the house of the tobacco merchant Maroulis.

17. Residence of Schoinas

The residence of Schoinas, a supervisor and cashier of the city's schools and tobacco merchant was built in 1927. The building's NeoByzantine style

resembles similar modern buildings of Thessaloniki and other cities in Northern Greece.

18. Residence of Medicine Doctor Papavasileiou

It was built in 1929 by the architect X. Aegidis, reflecting the classicism of neighbouring National Bank of Greece. The apartment house of Dr. Papavasileiou is preserved with all its furniture and equipment, housing events and small exhibitions.



Figure 20. The “house of Dr. Papavasileiou”, exhibition place.

Source: A.Naniopoulos

19. Residence of Mallios

It was built in 1927 with its characteristic angular semicircular ending and the uncovered balcony highlighting the diagonal direction of its volume.

20. Residence of Spontis

The mansion of the tobacco merchant Spontis constitutes an impressive interwar building. It housed the offices of the “Austro-Hellenic” Tobacco Company during the heyday of the tobacco trade in the city of Serres. A characteristic polygonal edge houses the staircase.

21. Building of the Hellenic Public Power Corporation

The old tobacco warehouse of Mediterranean company is preserved and turned into office building, maintaining some of its original morphological elements.



Figure 21. Traditional buildings in Serres

Source: Municipality of Serres, 2016

Other cultural infrastructures in the city include the Municipal Library, founded in 1952, the Municipal Regional Theater of Serres, amongst the first municipal theaters established by the Ministry of Culture, the Musical-Gymnastic Club “Orpheus”, established in 1905, the Maximian Spiritual and Cultural Center established by the Holy Metropolis of Serres and Nigrita and operating since 1998.

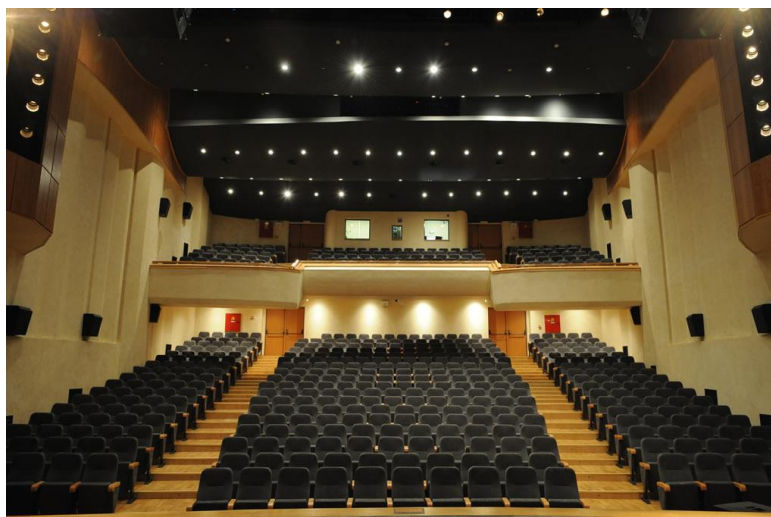


Figure 22. The “ASTERIA” Municipal Theater

Source: Regional Unit of Serres

22. The “ ASTERIA” Municipal Theater

In the place of a former cinema, a modern Theater has been built by the Municipality of Serres, and is now the seat of the Municipal Peripheral Theater of Serres. It includes two theater stages, a central one of 540 seats and an auxiliary one of 107 seats.

23. The KRONION Cinema



Figure 23. The KRONION Cinema, a listed building together with its open yard, which belongs to the Nursing Home of Serres.

Source: A. Naniopoulos

The Cinema opened in 1931 and is now a listed building, together with its open yard which, nowadays, houses a Café-Bar. The Cinema building has 400 seats in the main hall and 150 in the balcony.

3.4. Religious sites

1. Hagios Nikolaos

The Church of Hagios Nikolaos on the Acropolis is a two-floored building of the 13th century. The basement was used as a cemetery for the burial of the guard's soldiers and the ground floor for their church services. This church has been mentioned by many writers over the centuries. It was restored by a group of Christians in 1937, using the destroyed units of the 17th century structure. They did not seek the opinion of the Archaeological Service and change the architectural design.



Figure 24. Hagios Nikolaos

Source: Municipality of Serres, 2016



Figure 25. The old Metropolis, St Theodori

Source: A.Naniopoulos

2. Hagioi Theodoroi

The church of the gloriously martyred soldier saints, the Theodoron is located in the centre of the old city of Serres. Its large square basilica (internal dimensions 15.6 by 24 metres) is divided into two parts, the portico and the main body of the church, which is itself separated by two lines of columns into three naves. The large amount of early Christian masonry that was reused in the building of the church would indicate that it was built as early as the 6th Century. The exquisite church has been renovated on a number of occasions. No information is available on the history of the monument until the Fifteenth Century. However, the manner in which the church was built, and its final form in particular, are the result of a number of bold, easily distinguished, major alterations made at different periods down the ages. The materials and methods used by the craftsman for each of these alterations have helped most of the reputable scholars who have researched the church's history to draw roughly the same fundamental conclusions as to its architecture and decoration.

3. The small monastery of Hagios Georgios Kryoneritis

The small monastery of Agios Georgios Kryoneritis, located east of Serres, consists of two churches in honour of Agios Georgios and Agios Dimitrios.



Figure 26. Monastery of Hagios Georgios Kryoneritis

Source: Regional Unit of Serres

4. Holy Monastery of Timios Prodromos

The Royal and Stavropegic Monastery of the Timios Prodromos of Menoikion mountain is situated 12 kilometres north-east of the city of Serres. The founder of the monastery was the Athonite monk, Ioannikios, who was born in Serres in around 1225 and later became bishop of Ezevon. The Monastery of the Timios Prodromos is perhaps the most remarkable Byzantine monument of Northern

Greece outside of the St. Mount Athos. It is intentionally known for the fact that Gennadius Scholarius, the first Ecumenical Patriarch, after the Fall of Constantinople lived and died there. During the centuries the Monastery has realized glorious moments, but also great catastrophes. In 1917 the library was looted by the Bulgarians who had sent in Bulgaria a great number of manuscripts, books and precious relics, where many of them are in the Ivan Duicev center in Sofia.





Figures 27. Monastery of the Timios Prodromos

Source: A. Naniopoulos

5. Hagioi Anargyroi

To the north of the city and "below Liokalis is the quarter known by the Christians as Katakonoz, and the exquisite church of the Hagioi Anargyroi.". The area is named after the famous Byzantine lord who was later to become the Emperor Kantakouzinus, and the church is built on the site of what was, before 1310, "the monastic dependency in Serres of the Holy and miracle-working Anargyroi of the Holy Monastery of the Ibiroi". The current church was built in 1817 and renovated in 1867. The church's frescoes are worthy of note, and their inscriptions - along with the dedications on the icons on the rood screen - are of great historical value, bearing witness, as they do, to the apogee of the city's guilds.



Figure 28. Agioi Anargyroi

Source: Municipality of Serres, 2001

6. The Panagia "LIOKALI"

This small church in the north-eastern suburbs of the city of Serres has lent its name to the surrounding area. It was built in 1951 on top of the ruins of the once thriving Stavropegic Monastery of the Virgin of the Iliokallou. The church of the Virgin of the Iliokallou is first mentioned in 1323. In 1326 it is mentioned in a monasterial document as a dependency of the Philotheou Monastery. From 1477 on, it belonged to the Holy Monastery of the Eikosifoinissis. The history of the monastery is connected with the martyrdom of Neomartyras Nikitas, who arrived here from Mount Athos in March 1808 and stayed in the Church of the Virgin of the Iliokallou where he was martyred for his faith on Easter Saturday, April 4, 1808. The dependency of the Virgin of the Liokalis - as the people of Serres call it - also played its part in the 1821 revolution. In that year, Konstantinos Kasomoulis fortified the monastery of the Iliokallou with a view to using it as the headquarters for the freedom fighters of 1821. The church was burnt to the ground by the Bulgarians in 1913 after they had stolen its exceptional relics.

3.5. Other poles of attraction and tourist activities

1. Lailias

The forest of Lailias lies in the mountain range of Vrontou, 25 km away from the city of Serres. It constitutes a high forest composed of beech and forest pine-tree with its highest peak at 1850 meters. The name of Lailias is a corruption of the Turkish word Yailas that meant recreation ground and summer settlement. Many

walkers and athlete visit daily the forest of Lailias during the summers, especially on August 15. The Ski Center of Lailias is one of the most remarkable ski centers in Greece lying at 1600 meters.



Figures 29.The forest and the Ski Center of Lailias

Source: Municipality of Serres, 2016

2. Valley of Saints Anargyroi

Lying on the road leading to Acropolis, this is the most beautiful park in Serres which also serves as a recreation sports and entertainment area.



Figure 30. Valley of Saints Anargyroi

Source: Municipality of Serres, 2016

3. Municipal Race Track

The Municipal Race Track has been open to the south west of the city since 1998. Built in accordance to the specifications laid down by the International Federation (FIA), its 3,186 metres of track host Formula 3 and motorcycle races. It is

considered to be the biggest circuit of Balkans. The track boasts the following auxiliary facilities: (a) fully-equipped pits, which cater for the needs of competitors and their back-up teams, as well as buildings to house spectators, the track management, a competitions secretariat, and a press office; (b) a 4,900 square metre parking lot for competitors; and (c) the auxiliary road network, nine areas where spectators can park, and the stand with a maximum capacity of 10,000 spectators.



Figure 31. Municipal Race Track

Source: Municipality of Serres, 2001

4. Hagios Ioannis

The suburb of Agios Ioannis lies some 2.5 kilometres to the east of Serres, and was incorporated into the municipality of Serres in 1946. The area is blessed with ancient plane trees and abundant flowing water and - now as then - during the

summer months, the area is a favourite recreational spot for the people of Serres. The chronicler, Papasynadinos, had this to say about the area: "June 24, 1631.the weavers invited the high priest, the clerics, and the Patriarch's exarchs to Agios Ioannis, which pleased everyone a great deal".



Figure 32. The suburb of Hagios Ioannis

Source: Municipality of Serres, 2016

5. The Alistrati Cave

The cave of Alistrati with wonderful stalactites, stalagmites, at a distance of 6 km from Serres, and a length of 3 km, of which 1 km is visitable.

6. The Kerkini lake

The ecosystem of the artificial lake of Kerkini and the river Strymonas that crosses the plain of Serres and flows in the Strymonikos gulf. Lake Kerkini offers many attractions and ecological activities to visitors, such as, bird watching, boating, hiking.



Figure 33. The Alistrati cave
Source: Regional Unit of Serres





Figure 34. Views of the Kerkini Lake

Source: Regional Unit of Serres



Figure 28. The custom of “Anastenaria” fire dances takes place in five places in Greece, two of which are in Serres Peripheral Unit i.e. the villages of Hagia Eleni and Kerkini.

Source: Regional Unit of Serres



Figure 35. Folk festivities in the village of Flambouro.

Source: Regional Unit of Serres

7. The ancient city of Amphipolis

The archaeological site and the ancient City of Amphipolis are located in an area approximately 50 km from the city of Serres near the Strymonikos gulf. Rich findings from several historical periods depict the unique value of the place which promises a lot more to be discovered.



Figure 36. A recent great discovery in the Kastis tomb/hill of Amphipolis

Source: Hellenic Ministry of Culture

8. Gastronomy of the area

Serres has a rich gastronomy tradition with special local food. The heart of Serres is the “Freedom Square” and the surrounding squares with sidewalks, bars, taverns and coffee shops. Tourists in Serres have a variety of different food choices and can try many unique tastes, such as souvlaki, kavourmas and filled pastries known as “bougatsa”. They can also taste the traditional drink called “ouzo” and the traditional sweet called “akanes”.



Figure 37. Local dishes

Source: A.Naniopoulos



Figure 38. Hand making of the filled pastry called “bougatsa”

Source: A.Naniopoulos



Figure 39. Akanes: traditional sweet of Serres

Source: A.Naniopoulos

3.6. Planned cultural spaces in the city of Serres

Following the decision of the Economic Committee (n. 705/2021) the submission of the project “RESTORATION – REUSE OF BUILDINGS OF CULTURAL INTEREST OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF SERRES” has been approved, having two subprojects:

- **Subproject 1: Restoration – “Reuse of the Industrial building “NASIOUTZIK”** a cultural multi-space, with a budget of 3.100.00 euro. The project has been included in the programme “Interventions of upgrading and modernization of the Building’s stock of architectural value and cultural interest, which is in a significant position in relation to the grid of routes of historical environmental or cultural character.



Figure 40. Cultural multi-space NASIOUTZIK

- **Subproject 2: History Center of Konstantinos Karamanlis.**
This project concerns the “Restoration – Reuse of the Building K13, in the Former Military Camp PAPALOUKAS, as a History Center of Konstantinos Karamanlis with a budget of 4.250.00 of the aforementioned programme in subproject 1.
 - **Municipal Gallery, Museum of Newer History of Serres**
- Following the call No AT09 of the “ANTONIS TRISTSIS” programme entitled: “Maturation of projects and actions of the Municipality of Serres”, the Economic Committee of the Municipality of Serres has approved the submission of the proposal for the study of two listed buildings in the former military camp of PAPALOUKAS, i.e.
 - Building K2: Municipal Gallery
 - Building K3: Museum of Newer History of Serres.

3.7. List of main events in Serres and its greater area during the year

1. ECO FESTIVAL

May

The ECO-FESTIVAL is organised by the Municipality of Serres together with the Directorates for Primary and Secondary Education, NGOs and local associations. It is a one-day event on all issues relating to Ecology. It is an established annual event attended by schools, students and their families as well as anyone interested in ecology.

9. WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL AND ART

June

It includes performances and workshops by traditional musicians from the region and beyond. It takes place on an annual basis aiming to attract visitors and support the development of the city’s cultural profile.

10. SIRRIS 22.7 SEMI-MARATHON

October

The Sirris Semi-Marathon is an established event. It is a Road race 22,7 km within the boundaries of the Municipality of Serres starting and stopping at Eleftherias Square. The race is open to all people from 20 to 65 years with the participation of many athletes.

11. World book day and International Children's book day

23 April and 2 April

World Book Day is an annual event organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to promote reading, publishing, and copyright. World Book Day was first celebrated on 23 April 1995, and continues to be recognized on that day.

Young people are invited to discover the enjoyment of reading, realizing thus its importance for the social and cultural development of the humankind.

International Children's Book Day is an annual event that takes place on or around April 2. It coincides with the birthday of Hans Christian Andersen.

12. Drawing weekend

April

The aim of this event is to bring young pupils and adults closer to the art of drawing through exhibitions, presentations, public demonstrations and experimental actions.

13. World poetry day

21 March

A decision to proclaim 21 March as World Poetry Day was adopted during UNESCO's 30th session held in Paris in 1999. At this day of the year poems are read and people have the chance to become familiar with the majesty of poetry.

14. Christmas carols

December

During this event choirs of clubs and other societies gather in “Eleftherias” square and sing Christmas carols. Next the choirs follow different routes in the city singing the carols in order to create a festive atmosphere.

15. International dance day

29 April

International Dance Day is a global celebration of dance, created by the Dance Committee of the International Theatre Institute (ITI), the main partner for the performing arts of UNESCO. The event takes place every year on 29 April, which is the anniversary of the birth of Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810), the creator of modern ballet. The day strives to encourage participation and education in dance through events and festivals held on the date all over the world. UNESCO formally recognize ITI to be the creators and organizers of the event.

16. “ELEFThERIA”, city of Serres

“Eleftheria” is the central celebration of the Municipality of Serres, taking place on the 29th of June, with the occasion of the liberation of the city on this date.

Various events will take place such as: Visual Arts, Cinema, Music, Folk traditions, Sports, in various places of the city.

17. AMPHIPOLIS FESTIVAL

Visitors have an opportunity, during July and August, to attend important Theatrical and Dance shows, Concerts and other cultural events.

18. ANASTENARIA, fire dances with icons

The custom of Anastenaria has been brought to northern Greece by Greek Refugees from Easterns Romelia (South Bulgaria) and more specifically from the villages of Kosti and Brodivo, province of Sozopolis, Agathoupolis.

Main celebration: fire dances with icons, in front of the public, take place in the Regional Unit of Serres, in the villages, Haghia Eleni, (20-22 May) and Kerkini (20-24 May).

19. GYNEKOKRATIA, Women’s Domination custom.

Every year, on the 8th of January, take place The Women’s Domination custom “GYNEKOKRATIA” or “Babo” or “Vrexoudia” in the villages of Monoklisia, Nea Petra, Ano Kamila, Kerkini, Melenikitsi, Charopo and other ones, in the Regional Unit of Serres.

A custom stemming from ancient times, which has been brought, by the refugees from Eastern Romylia who settled in villages of Serres Regional Unit and the rest of Macedonia – Greece. With the events of this custom the woman, who gives birth to children is celebrated.

On the 8th of January, women take local power into their hands whereas men are occupied with household works.

20. GERAKINIA cultural events in the town of Nigrita.

Gerakinia include various cultural events, which take place in the town of Nigrita, including the representation of the “fall of Gerakina in the well”.

21. Traditional wrestling

Traditional wrestling take place at various village festivals e.g. Skotousa 18th of September, in Mavrothalassa 16-17th of July etc.

22. DRAKOKTONIA, the killing of the Dragon

Every year on St. George’s celebration, 23rd of April, second day of the Easter, in the village of Neo Souli takes place the custom of DRAKOKTONIA i.e. the killing the Dragon.

23. KALOGEROS, the Monk

A custom that Greek Refugees brought from Eastern Romylia which concerns the fertility of the earth. It takes place in the Haghia Eleni village on Tyrini’s Monday. In the custom participate only men.

24. KETSEKIA folk, carnival

A folk custom of the Apokria (Carnival) which is celebrated in Pontismeno village every “Clean Monday”.

25. DERVENES”, big fires in every neighbourhood of the village Proti.

During the last Sunday of the Apokria in the village of Proti the custom “Dervena” takes place. Every neighbourhood collects oaks, for about two months, from the forest creting huge piles.

Accompanied by traditional music the villagers and the visitors, light fires one after the other. The custom symbolises the burning of hate, evil, hostility of people.

26. KOURBANI, meal offered for free to the participants

In various villages such as: Langadi village every September, Angista, on the 7th of January , Neos Skopos village on the 20th of July celebration of Prophet Helias, Ivira village on the 6th of May, take place the Kourbani custom.

People are offering animals and raw materials to the local Church. Next volunteers are preparing, in large cauldrons, the meal, which is next offered for free to the participants of the celebration.

27. CHELIDONISMATA, swallow bird songs.

On the first of March, children are singing the arrival of the swallows, holding a wooden dummy of the bird. Chelidonismata take place in various villages of the Visaltia province, having as capital the town of Nigrita.

4. Main poles of attraction and tourist activities in Petrich

Petrich is a city in the Blagoevgrad Province in southwestern Bulgaria, near to the Greek borders. It is the seat of Petrich Municipality and according to official statistical data, the city has 27.587 inhabitants (National Statistical institute - Republic of Bulgaria, 2013). The city was part of the First Bulgarian Empire during the rule of khan Presian (837 AD).

In the broader region various forms of tourism have been developed, providing thus to visitors a great range of options, many interesting assets and alternative activities.

4.1 Cultural and historical sites

Due to favourable climate and landscape, as well as water abundance, the region of Petrich and Stroumitsa had been populated for thousands of years. Its history is closely connected to the river Strouma, which in ancient times had been the main communication thoroughfare between the Aegean region and Europe. It was through the Strouma river that in the 7th millenium BC agriculture and stock-breeding penetrated Europe forming the base of the European economics till present days. In this region metallurgy originated for the first time. Remarkable culture blossomed in the Antiquity and during the Middle Ages the region was an arena of impressive and tragic events.

Significant archaeological sites are the ancient city of Heraclea Sintica and the Samuil's Fortress, marking the dramatic struggles for preserving the Bulgarian independence in the beginning of the XI century.

1. Heraclea Sintica

Heraclea Sintica is an ancient city, the ruins of which are located on the land of the village of Rupite, Petrich municipality, on the southern slope of the volcanic hill Kozhuh. In ancient times the city was the center of the region Sintica which was inhabited by Thracian tribe Sintians.

Heraclea Sintica is an ancient city, the ruins of which are located on the land of the village of Rupite, Petrich municipality, on the southern slope of the volcanic hill Kozhuh. In ancient times the city was the center of the region Sintica which was inhabited by Thracian tribe Sintians.

Archaeologists found that the city had an intense life and today impresses its researchers and visitors. The public buildings of the ancient city were built with much elegance and the preserved part of the civic basilica and the city water fountain stands out among them. The water fountain discovered in 2016 is

decorated with beautiful lion head sculptures, made with master craftsmanship. It was located in front of the official gates of the civic basilica and the parade staircase. The ancient city is mentioned in the works of ancient authors Livy, Diodorus, Strabo, Pliny the Elder and Claudius Ptolemy.



Figure 41. Heraclea Sintica

Source: Municipality of Petrich

2. The Samuil's fortress

The National park-museum "Samuil's fortress" is situated 5-6 km north of the village of Klyuch, Municipality of Petrich, where the flanks of the Belasitsa and Ograzhden mountains are drawing near and forming the Gorge of Klyuch. The place has been settled as early as IV-III century BC but the stormiest period in its history is related to the reign of king Samuil (997-1014). With a view of strengthening the defense against Byzantium king Samuil built up an entire system of defensive works, which were beginning high from the flanks of Belasitza mountain, south of the village of Klyuch, and touching Ograzhden Mountain. From the hill on which the Park-museum "Samuil's fortress" is now located it was possible to control the entire Klyuch gorge. There was built a fortification, consisted of three ramparts and two moats, in the middle of which there was a high wooden watch tower.

The history of the fortress is related to some tragic events for the Bulgarians which dated the beginning of the end of the First Bulgarian Kingdom which was finally conquered by the Byzantines in 1018. At the beginning of the summer of 1014 the emperor of Byzantium, Vasili II, invaded the Gorge of Klyuch with a large army. After some abortive attempts to break through the Bulgarian defense, he withdrew and looked for another way through the Belasitza Mountain.

On July 29th his army crossed the Mutnitsa River and gained the Bulgarian army's rear, which in spite of the fierce resistance suffered a complete defeat. 14000 Bulgarian soldiers were taken prisoners by the Byzantines.

After he laid siege on the Stroumitza fortress (Tzarevi kuli), Vasili II took west, accepting the decisive battle with Samouil near the Mokrievo fortress. In the pass between Belasitza and Blagush mountains the Bulgarian army, leaded by Samuil's son, Gavril-Radomir, defeated the Byzantine army. The best and closest commander of Vasili II, Theophilact Votaniat, perished in that pass.

Upon receiving the news, the Byzantine emperor ordered the 14000 captured soldiers to be blinded by leaving a one-eyed leader to every 100th man. Because of the outrageous cruelty Vasili II was given the nickname Bulgaroctone. Samouil couldn't stand the sight of the returning blinded army and died of a heart attack at the beginning of October. That was the beginning of the end of the First Bulgarian Empire which was finally conquered by the Byzantines in 1018. In 1982, in memory of these events, on that very place was built the memorial complex "Samuil's fortress", part of the National park-museum of the same name.



Figure 42. Samuil's fortress

Source: Municipality of Petrich

3. The City Museum of History

The main elements of the cultural infrastructure of the Municipality of Petrich are the City Museum of History, along with the traditional cultural centers specific to the Bulgarian cultural life. The churches have been always the keepers of the spirit and the faith of the local inhabitants for centuries and an immutable and significant part of the spiritual life.

The City Museum of History enters the modern history of Petrich in 1966. Created as a museum collection in the beginning of 1998, based on a decision of the City Council, Petrich, it was transformed into a Museum of History. Nowadays it is housed by the community centre “Bratja Miladinovi” and owns over 10.000 museum exhibits, made-up in four sections: Archeology, Ethnography, Bulgarian Lands in the 15th-19th Century, New and Newest History and the National Park Museum “Samuilova Krepost” section.

Over the past 10 years, the archaeological findings at the spot of Heraclea Sintica expands the exhibition of the immovable cultural heritage to this archaeological site.

The Archeology section has at its disposal 3.400 exhibits of which particular attention deserve the honorary edict of the Emperor Galerius in the year 308 BC, a unique collection of terracotta figures of the 2nd century, tombstones of the 3rd century BC – 2nd -3rd century, product of a local school of arts; consecrated plates; objects of everyday life; Roman ceramics; idols of clay /6th millennium BC/; collective find of terracotta figures /Dionysus and Ariadne, ritual figures of a bull/ dated from the 3rd century; coins of Phillip II and Alexander III, a collective find of coins from 12th century, sgraffito ceramics from 12th-13th century /notably well preserved bowl with a picture of a gryphon/ etc.



Figure 43. Exhibits of the City Museum of History in Petrich

Source: Municipality of Petrich

The Natural Science Museum “Samuilova Krepost” section is a museum in the open including a memorial and an exposition representing the heroic events of the year 1014.

The section of Ethnography has 1.600 exhibits of which clothes are the most important reflecting life of women in the town at the end of the 19th –the beginning of 20th century /the so called grand fustan of Petrich/ as well as clothes belonging to the refugees from Thessaloniki, Demirhisar and Vardar. The way of living and traditions of the local people are represented by clothes and objects from all the surrounding villages /e.g. a complete female national costume from the village of Karnalovo etc.

The Bulgarian Lands in 15th -19th Century section has over 500 exhibits including tools of production, folk-style ceramics, objects of the local crafts industry and articles of import, a seal of the Municipality of Petrich dated 1872, a seal of the school-board of trustees to the municipality dated 1892, firman/royal decree of Sultan Abdul Azis II permitting the construction of a church in the village of Kapatovo etc.

The New and Newest History section has 4000 exhibits allotted to the inventory books New and Newest History, The History of the Bulgarian Communist Party. Of particular importance among them are the original photos and documents from Petrich in the period 1900 – 1912, documents, photos and written materials of citizens of Petrich, participants in the MOOP? in 1912 – 1913, documents and materials of the activity of the state institutions in the period 1912 – 1934, documents and materials concerning the social and economic and the cultural life in the period 1912 – 1939 as well as documents covering the time after 1945; memoirs and notes of distinguished members of the Bulgarian Communist Party in the region of Petrich and also material evidence on the activity of the Party in the region.

The scientific and secondary fund and the scientific archive have 500 exhibits. Of these funds the greatest interest lies in the documents referring to the Petrich incident in October 1925.

4. Topolnitsa

The Promahon-Topolnitsa settlement of the late neolith is situated on both sides of the Bulgarian-Greek border, it is 2 km to the south of the village of Topolnitsa (Bulgaria) and 3,5 km to the north-west of the village of Promahon (Greece). The site is located on the first non-flooded terrace of the river Strouma at the foot of the east slope of Belassitsa mountain. The results from the investigation of the site show several building stages unified in four phases.

First, (around 5320-5300 BC) a big basement temple was built, dug over 8 m deep into the ground. It had two floors, the first one was above ground and its walls were decorated with skulls of bulls painted in red. We are speaking of a unique phenomenon, i.e. the one and only of its kind basement Neolithic temple in Europe. Surrounding the temple gradually the infrastructure of the settlement was organized consisting of dug-outs.

The second stage of life of the settlement (5300-5070 BC) lasted for quite a long time. From the architectural point of view the settlement consisted of a centre, in which the big dug-in temple was set-up, around it were dug-in two-floored residential buildings that were constructed to adjoin each other. Around 5070 BC the settlement was completely burned.

Following the fire the terrain was raked and construction of ground dwellings started to be constructed of the standard pile construction (phase III). The cult centre had already been moved to the east. On the west wall of the temple examined was a big relief composition comprising solid semi-embossed idols. In this stage the settlement grew fast and occupied the larger part of the plateau. Then a solid protection palisade was built. The ground buildings in this stage had a rectangular form orientated southeast-northwest. Phase III is dated in 5070-4750 BC. This phase also perished in a fire. The last, fourth phase of the settlement's history (4750-4650 BC), is referred to the beginning of the early Neolith.

The most characteristic of phase I is the ceramics decorated with bitumen. The analysis shows that bitumen itself was not used as a decorating material but only to glue decorating elements of birch bark. During later phases decoration of vessels was made in dark brown pictures of the Acropotamos type. Some of the

vessels have an anthropomorphous shape. The ceramics found in the settlement is of exclusively high quality, thin-walled, perfectly baked, of polished surface and completely differs from the thick-walled ceramics of the late Neolith from the north parts of the Balkan Peninsula. The contacts of the settlement with Thessalia are unambiguous.

Graphite decoration of the vessels, laid in wide (0,5-2.00 cm) bands, appears for the first time in phase III. In phase IV a sudden change in the total material culture of the settlement was observed due to the relay of population. Around 4650 BC the settlement was finally deserted as a result of the unexpected warming up of climate, all settlements in the southern part of the peninsula perished.

5. Late Antique and Medieval Stronghold (until the 14th century)

It is located on a height on the north slope of Belasitsa mountain about 1,5 km south of the city of Petrich. The total area covers 800-900 sq m. A pentagonal turret and a large part of the stronghold's west wall, 1,80 m thick, was uncovered. It is constructed of roughly processed stones and is preserved to a height of 2 m.

6. Antique Stronghold Named Gradishteto

It is located on a height on the south slope of Ograzhden mountain, about 2,5 km northeast of the village of Parvomai. The area of the site is about 100 decare. Parts of 1-1,20 m thick wall of a stronghold were uncovered the wall being constructed of big broken stones and preserved to a height of 1,30 m. Finds: fragments of ceramic vessels from Thracian epoch and from the late Antique, consecrated plates of Artemis etc.

7. Antique Sanctuary

Located in the Tsarkvata neighbourhood at the southwest end of the Mitinovo village. It is supposed to be a sanctuary of Bendida-Artemis. Seven processed marble blocks were uncovered, one of them with an inscription. On the same spot were found ruins of a church and necropolis dating the Ottoman period.

8. Medieval Church (10th-12th century)

It is found in the school yard of the village of Kulata. A unique model of architectural type in Bulgaria. The church is three-aisled, built in a rectangular corpus, ending in the east direction, with a big three-aisled apse, to the west with a narrow one-part narthex.

9. Turkish Bath on the Foundations of an Antique Building

Situated in the region of the Marikostinovskite mineral springs at about 3 km northwest of the village of Marikostinovo. A building, small in size, of architecture typical for Turkish baths.

3.5 Religious sites

There are many interesting religious sites in the region of Petrich:

1. The Church The Assumption (in the churchyard)

Found in the village of Gegga at the slopes of Ograzhden mountain. It was built in 1870. It is made of stone, with a nave and two aisles, a pseudobasilica with an outer gallery in the west and east. It has a solid belfry with open arcades, separated from the church. Of artistic value in the decoration of the church are the painted iconostasis with fretwork carving on the king's holy gates and the nuptials, the iconostasis icons, made by gifted icon-painters, and the furniture – the bishop's stall, pulpit and proscinitarius, that are more simply decorated. The patron saint's day is The Assumption (August 15th).

2. Churilovsky Monastery St. George

One of the most interesting historical and spiritual sights is St. George Monastery, called Chourilovski, the Abbot's Monastery or Monastery with the Devils, which is located 15 km from the town of Petrich on the southern slopes of the surrounding

mountains, about 2 km north of the Gega village and about 2,5 km southeast of the neighbouring village of Churilovo.

The monastery was built, according to a legend kept, in 1848 on the remains of an older church. By a sultan's firman from 1857 a permission was granted for the monastery to be enlarged and the church of the monastery St. George to be built. In 1870 the belfry of the church was constructed. The interior of the church is decorated with breathtaking frescoes. Of particular interest are scenes stories of "The Doomsday" and "The Wandering of the soul", decorated the open Narthex. In painted scenes can be traced all kinds of sins: a shepherd – liar, an innkeeper turned into a devil, the Prophet Isaiah – reprover of the power, a unique scene with a girl decked out looks at herself in the mirror held by the devil and more. There was a small school close to the monastery (the building is still preserved) for the children from the neighbourhoods of the former Ygumenets village. It is situated in a very picturesque spot; spring water gushes near the monastery. The patron saint's day is St. George's Day (May the 6th).



Figure 44. St. George Monastery

Source: Municipality of Petrich

3. The Church St. Dimitri

Found in the northeast part of Dolna Ribnitsa village. It was built in 1871 according to a legend by master Trencho of Dolene village. It is a pseudobasilica with a nave and two aisles and with an open narthex in the west and south. The plank painted ceilings, the mural-paintings on the east wall of the church and panel, the three-lined iconostasis, with carving on the king's holy gates and the nuptials, are of

artistic value. A greater part of the icons and plant pattern decoration on the plinth line, the bishop's stall, the pulpit, the proscinitarius and lectern are made by an icon-painter of fine sense of art; 2 of the icons on the king's line are made by the icon-painter Andon of the Melnik art centre. The patron saint's day is Dimitri's Day.

4. The Church The Assumption (in the churchyard)

It is located in the Dolene village. The church was built in 1873. It is a pseudobasilica with a nave and two aisles and with an open narthex in the south and west. Of artistic value are the wooden ceilings, made of profile and polychrome decoration; the ornamental mural-painting on the columns, the railing of the balcony and the intradoses of the arches; the figured compositions on the walls; the iconostasis with painted and carved king's holy gates, frames and nuptials. On the plinth panel of the iconostasis there are painted luxuriant bouquets of wild flowers; the icons of the king's and apostle's line are painted in 1874. The decoration and the carving on the bishop's stall, the to-be-kissed iconostasis, the pulpit and the lectern are also of artistic value. The patron saint's day is the Assumption Day.

5. The Church St. prophet Elija

It is found in Belassitsa village. A pseudo-basilica built in 1897 with a nave and two aisles with an outer gallery in the west and south. The interior of the church has artistic value and was made in 1910 by the icon-painters Teophil Minov and Mina Markov from the village of Karakioj in the region of Seres and was completely preserved. The ceilings are casseted, painted in ornamental patterns. The mural-paintings on part of the walls, the apse and side niches of the east wall are performed in the tradition of the late Bulgarian national revival of the ecclesiastical art of painting. The iconostasis is painted and with some carving on the king's holy gates, the nuptials and the frames. The patron saint's day is St. Elija's Day (July 20th).

6. The Church Most Holy Virgin Mary, Zoodochos Pigi

It is located in the village of Kapatovo, at the southwest slopes of the Pirin mountain. The church was built in 1887. A nave and two aisles pseudo-basilica the artistic value of which can be found in the interior of the church, namely the mural-paintings comprising 66 scenes, made by the brothers Marco and Teophil Minov; the big painted and partially decorated with wood-carving iconostasis; the ornamented ceilings, the bishop's stall, to-be-kissed iconostasis? and the pulpit. The patron saint's day is Virgin Mary Day (August 15th).

7. The Church St. George

Located in the village of Kromydovo. It was built in 1860. A nave and two aisles pseudo-basilica. Of artistic value in the interior of the church are: the ornamented ceilings, mural-paintings, the iconostasis, with partially wood-carved sub-icon panels, the painted decoration on the bishop's stall, the to-be-kissed iconostasis? and the pulpit. The patron saint's day is St. George's Day (May 6th).

8. The Church St. Anastasis of Alexandria

The church is located in the village of Karnalovo; built in 1870. A nave and two aisles pseudo-basilica with an open shelter? in the south and north. Of artistic value in the interior are the ornamented wooden ceilings; the painted iconostasis, partially decorated with wood-carving on the king's holy gates and the nuptials; the bishop's stall, the pulpit and proscinitarius? decorated in the same manner. The plinth panels of the iconostasis are made by an primitivist icon-painter; the king's icons are dated 1878 and are made by a good unknown icon-painter; the apostles' icons are made in iconography, typical for the time, by another unknown master. The patron saint's day is St. Atanasius' Day.

9. The Church St. Petka

It is situated in the neighbourhood of Rouppite, 10 km northeast of the city of Petrich. The church was built in 1994 next to the house of the renowned prophet granny Vanga. The mural-paintings and the icons are made by Svetlin Roussev, the

wood-carving is made by Grygor Paunov. The church is of great interest mainly because of its location, its connection with the prophet and the untraditional architectural aspect and artistic decoration.

The emblem of the municipality of Petrich is the Bulgarian prophet Vanga. Its house in Petrich has preserved the memory of thousands of people who came to seek help and consolation, and today it has become a place of worship, gathered the energy and power of Vanga. The mystical power of the prophetess is particularly felt in the place of Rupite, a sacred place where the temple of Vanga – St. Petka Church is built and concentrates cosmic energy.



Figure 45. Vanga – St. Petka Church

Source: Municipality of Petrich



Figure 46. Statue of Baba Vanga

Source: Municipality of Petrich

4.3 Other poles of attraction and tourist activities

1. Festival tourism

Cultural life is a legacy of traditions and history - the cultural aspect of Petrich reflects the local historical development.

The Rusalii dancers are particularly colorful features of the local cultural life with their dances with swords, as well as the mummers, called "Stanchinari" whose fairs and games are held on the 1st of January. Nowhere else you can find live those ancient games that have passed through the vicissitudes of history and preserved in the local folklore presented at the Festival South Necklace.



Figure 47. Rusalii dancers

Source: Municipality of Petrich

The successor of the national festival of the old town song "Golden Chestnut" is the International Festival of Pop and Rock Music "Golden Chestnut", whose stage meets young Bulgarian talents with the stars of the Bulgarian and world stage. Since 2009 Bella Rock Fest gathers rock bands from Bulgaria and Balkan countries.



Figure 48. "Golden Chestnut" Festival

Source: Municipality of Petrich

2. Spa-tourism - Marikostinovo- Rupite- Kromidovo villages

The territory of the municipality of Petrich falls within the range of transient Mediterranean climate influence. It is characterized by a short and mild winter, dry and hot summer. Typical of the region is the early spring warming, and in the second half of February the air temperature lasts for over 5 degrees. The average annual maximum air temperature is 19.7 degrees and the average annual minimum is 3.1 degrees.

The most important water artery for the municipality is the Struma River, starting from the Vitosha mountain and flowing into the Aegean Sea. The next most important is the river Strumeshnitsa, part of the river basin of the Struma river.



Figure 49. Hot mineral springs in the region of Petrich

Source: Municipality of Petrich

The water resources of the municipality are complemented by the hot mineral springs in the villages of Rupite and Marikostinovo. Also known are cold mineral springs in the Belasitsa area.

The thermal waters in the region are characterized by a hydrocarbon-sulphate, sulphate-hydrocarbonate and sodium predominant ionic composition. The available resources on the territory of the municipality are expressed in the presence of 5 deposits: Rupite, Pravo Bardo, Kromidovo, Marikostinovo and Chuchuligovo.

In the village of Marikostinovo there is a mud deposit and hot mineral springs, which is a base for the development of the spa treatment.

“SBR MARIKOSTINOVO” EOOD is a medical centre specialized in the treatment of locomotive diseases, illnesses of the peripheral nervous system and gynecological ailments. It is located 15 km away from the town of Petrich, 16 km away from the town of Sandanski and 2 km away from the village of Marikostinovo and the E79 international motorway.

The major factors for treatment, rehabilitation and preventive measures at this healthcare facility are the diverse local hydro-thermal resources, which, parallel with the curative mud fields and the climate constitute irreplaceable therapeutic, tempering and recreational factors.

The mineral springs and the unique open air mud field make up a peculiar and valuable natural resource, similar to the therapeutic factors in Heviz, Hungary and Piestany, Slovakia.

These natural resources coupled with the favourable climate, which exerts a pronounced Mediterranean influence, have been used since ancient times, which is proved by historical evidence: a Turkish bath built on Roman foundations (restored in 2000), remains from the village of Petra from Thracian and Roman times in the Rupite area, situated 1 km away from the hospital.

In addition, there is an open air pool of mineral water at the village of Kromidovo, which for the time being attracts mostly local holiday makers.

The mineral springs near the village of Rupite are also a prerequisite for the development of the resort.

In the immediate vicinity of Petrich on the right bank of the Struma River is Rupite area, which is a cultivated area with specific flora and fauna, some of which are included in the Red Book of Bulgaria. The migrant flight of birds in the region of Rupite is part of Via Aristotelis (Main route of bird migration from Europe to Africa passing through Western Bulgaria and the second largest migration of birds after Via Pontica).

Another landmark here is the elevated Kozhuh hill, which is part of an extinct volcano, in the crater of which today the temple of Vanga is situated.

3. Mountain tourism activities

The landscape of Petrich municipality is varied - from hilly to medium-mountainous. It includes the Ograzhden and Belasitsa Mountains, with the highest peak Radomir - 2029 m.

4. Belasitsa

The mountain Belasitsa is part of the Ossogovo-Belasitsa mountain massif. It is bordered in the north by the Valley of Strumeshnitsa River and by the Roupel gorge in the south, its south slopes lie in the territory of the Republic of Greece, its west slopes lie in the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. The relief of the mountain is low and middle mountainous, heavily broken, the average height above sea level is 1040 m. According to the Habitats Directive 92/43 / EEC, Belasitsa mountain is specified into a separate protected area of the National Ecological Network NATURA 2000.

The main mountain ridge is narrow and bare; the state border with Greece passes along it. The peaks Kongura (1951 m), Debelo Bardo (1950 m), Radomir (2029 m; the highest), Lozen (1894 m) and Toumba (1880 m) stand out. Steep short hills

drop from the ridge in the north to the valley of Stroumeshnitsa river. A number of small rivers lead their way from the high parts of Belasitsa mountain the valleys of which, in their upper part, are strongly cut and in the lower part they form alluvial cones.

Belasitsa Nature Park is the newest natural park in Bulgaria. The territory includes the strictly controlled nature reserve "Kongura" and the protected areas "Toplište" and "Babi" - former buffer border zone of "Kongura".

Natural Reserve Kongura was announced a protected area in 1988. Its lower boundary is 2 km away from the city of Petrich. Its area covers 1312 hectare; the height above sea level is 600-1950 m; the former reserve Skoshnik (1954) is also included in it.

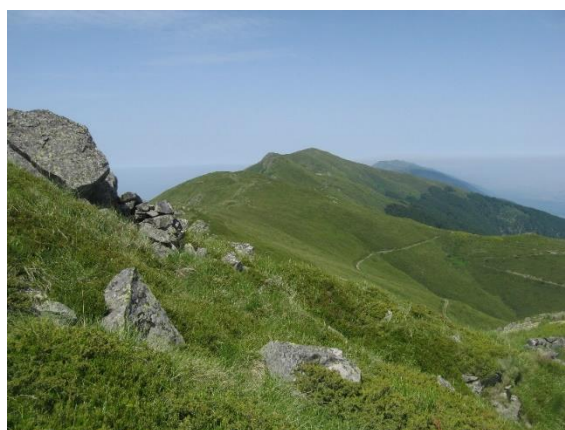


Figure 50. Belasitsa Nature Park

Source: Municipality of Petrich

It was made to protect the unique natural forests of *Castanea Sativa*/edible chestnut/. The relief is highly varied, the climate is transitory-? Mediterranean of mountain variations due to height – warm summers and autumns and mild winters. The vegetation differentiates in three height belts: the belt of the mesophile oak and hornbeam forests and communities of sub-Mediterranean vegetation; the belt of the beech forests; the belt of the sub-Alpine vegetation. Endemic and relict vegetation types can be found in the reserve. The fauna is characteristic of the broad-leaf forests; endemic insects are observed. Because of its *Castanea Sativa* forests the reserve is of international importance (since 1993).

There are eight thematic trails in the Belasitsa Nature Park: " Butterflies and Flowers of Belasitsa," "Life of the sweet chestnut", "The path of the ant", the trail "Friends", "Journey into History", "Secrets of the water", "Woodpecker - guardians of the forests", "Flower Fairy Tale".

5. Ograzhden

The mountain Ograzhden is also part of the Ossogovo-Belassitsa mountain massif. It is differentiated as a horst among the faults of the rivers Lebnitsa in the north, Stroumeshnitsa in the south and Strouma in the east. Its relief is low and middle mountainous, heavily broken, the average height above sea level is about 850 m.

The main mountain ridge is wide and flat and stretches in the east-west direction. The following peaks stand out: Golak (1639 m; the highest), Markovi Kladentsi (1522 m), Ygumenets (1398 m) etc. The south slopes of the mountain are steep, denuded of forests, strongly eroded. The valleys of few small rivers, which flow in the rivers Stroumeshnitsa and Strouma, are deeply wedged. Ograzhden consists of pre-Cambrian metamorphic rocks – mica schists, gneiss and amphibolites.

The palette of Ograzhden mountain and villages perched on sunny places with old houses and unpaved streets bring the spirit of harmony and peace and the feeling that here all small life adversities lose their importance.

6. The Natural Wealth Site Kozhuh

The extinct volcano Kozhuh is found 10 km in the northeast of the city of Petrich along both banks of the river Strouma. The right-bank part is 281,4 m high. The other, left – bank part, is 239 m high and known under the name of Pchelina. The slopes to the river bed are very steep and un-wooded. It is formed of volcanic rocks; gas caverns and niches are noticeable; it is rich of the aragonite mineral. Kozhuh is a natural wealth site and its statute is of protected area since 1962. The protected area covers 94,2 hectare. Many interesting plants and wild animals can be seen some of which are found on this spot only in the Pirin mountain region; the Mediterranean species prevail.

7. The Protected neighbourhood Roupite

Roupite is located in the crater of the extinct volcano Kozhuh. It is part of the vast neighbourhood named Roupite; the protected area covers 20 hectare. There is poplar vegetation which migratory birds use in their migration (the so called Aristotle migration route). The site is of particular interest for the experts-ornithologists as well as for fans of birds and their songs.

8. Roupite Mineral Springs

The springs are in the crater of the extinct volcano Kozhuh. Their area covers around 3000 sq.m. The total capacity of the springs is 40 l/sec, the temperature reaches 73-77 degrees C. The most valuable quality is the combination of free carbon dioxide and the temperature of the water which is not to be found anywhere else in the country. The water is clear, of no colour and odour, and slightly sour in taste. It is quite drinkable. The contents of biologically active microelements are pretty high: fluorine and meta-silicon acid, a certain quantity of calcium, copper and sulphate. It can heal rheumatic joints disorders, peripheral nerves system disorders, skin diseases as well as cardiac and vascular diseases.

9. Wine tourism activities

In the valley of the Struma River, in the lands of the villages of Kromidovo, Kapatovo, Dolno Spanchovo, Kolarovo are grown the local variety of vine - Shiroka Melnishka, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. The resulting wines are characterized by warm southern tones in the aroma, full of taste and richness of general impressions. Of particular interest are the wines of the variety Shiroka Melnishka vine, which are rich and sufficiently voluminous and when aging they acquire exotic and very pleasant nuances in taste.

Do not miss the wine degustation with specially selected one-bite appetizers and wines from the best Bulgarian and foreign varieties / Wide Melnik, Melnik 55, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Muscat Ottonel, Ancellotta, Grenache Noir, Petit Verdot / preserved and developed the local wine traditions. Indulge in wine

delights and the hospitable householders will help you discover a whole new world of flavors, colors and tastes.

10. Extreme cycling activities

The fastest and the most difficult downhill track in Bulgaria for extreme cycling, cycling along the ridge of the mountain Belasitsa is built in 2015 on the slopes of Belasitsa, and offers one of the most amazing experiences.

11. Rural tourism activities

The villages of the so-called Podgoria area - Belasitsa, Kolarovo, Samuilovo, Kamena, Yavornica, Klyuch, Skrat, Gabrene are situated on the slopes of Belasitsa, following the foothills of the mountain. In each of them there are guest houses offering delicious dishes of savory recipes, homemade wine and brandy. Guests can enjoy folk songs and dances, rituals and customs presented by local amateur groups.

4.4 List of main events in Petrich and its greater area, during the year

1. Stanchinarski Games

1 January

Stanchinarski Games is a custom preserving the lively Bulgarian spirit of the population of Petrich and the surrounding area. Stanchinari are elaborately costumed Bulgarian men who perform traditional rituals intended to scare away evil spirits. The costumes cover most of the body and include decorated wooden masks of animals and large bells attached to the belt. The Stanchinarski Games, also, feature characters that can be found only in the Petrich region such as Rusalii and their dances with swords. People from all neighbourhoods in the town participate which makes 1st January the most lively day of the year.

2. Day of the Vine-Grower (St. Trifon's Day)

14 February

St. Trifon's Day (or the Day of the Vine-Grower) is the traditional Bulgarian wine celebration that marks the time of year when vine-growers prune their vines. The holiday marks the dividing line between the outgoing winter and the onset of spring – the transition between the dead winter season and the invigorating powers of the following seasons. On this day, the vine is ritually pruned and wine is spilled to ensure vitality and fruitfulness.

3. Anniversary of the Death of National Hero Vasil Levski

19 February

On 19th February, Bulgaria marks the anniversary of the hanging (1873) of Vasil Levski, known as the Apostle of Freedom, after he was betrayed and sentenced to death by the Ottoman authorities. Vasil Levski was a leading figure in the fight of the Bulgarian people against Ottoman rule. He was called the Apostle of Freedom by the Bulgarian people for his self-sacrifice in developing a strategy to liberate Bulgaria from Ottoman rule. Thousands of people pay tribute to the national hero and lay wreaths and flowers to the monuments dedicated to him all across the country.

4. Anniversary of the Liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Domination and a National Holiday of the Republic of Bulgaria

3 March

The date of 3 March marks the date of the signing the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878. The peace treaty ended the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire and proclaimed Bulgaria as an independent state, after almost 500 years of Ottoman rule. Liberation Day is a public holiday in Bulgaria and is always celebrated on 3 March.

On the eve of the holiday, various events are held annually in front of the monument "Perished for the Homeland" in honor of all Bulgarians who died for the liberation of Bulgaria. This year, a historic recreation of the signing of the San Stefano Peace Treaty took place with the participation of local school students.

5. Festival of Humor and Satire

1 April

The Festival of Humour and Satire is organized by the cultural center “Anton Popov,” the village of Skrat. It’s celebrated on April 1st – April Fool’s Day. It’s a lively and cheerful holiday that gathers participants from all over the municipality. During the festival people’s folk wit and artistic charge can be felt.

6. Flower’s Day

April

Palm Sunday or “Flower’s Day” is one of Bulgaria’s most celebrated holidays. The holiday takes place on the Sunday before Easter Sunday to commemorate Jesus Christ’s entry into Jerusalem through a crowd waving palm branches. In Bulgaria, people also celebrate this holiday to welcome spring and close the cycle of adolescent girls’ vernal rites.

The holiday in Petrich brings together hundreds of citizens and guests of the southern town. Traditionally, the event takes place in front of the Belasitsa Rest House where various cultural events and sports games are organized. But the highlight of the event is the “Miss Bozhura” (Miss Peony) beauty contest.

7. 19th International Contest for Children “Southern Suns”

May

The national contest “Southern Suns” aims to encourage the artistic energy of the Bulgarian children for creating works in the field of fine arts, studying and preserving Bulgarian folklore and traditions.

8. Saint George’s Day. The Day of Petrich

6 May

On one of the most Bulgarian holidays – Saint George’s Day – Petrich marks its Patron Saint’s Day. A number of different events are organized such as sports events, including a football tournament, tennis, billiards, festivals and concerts in the town and villages.

9. Day of Bulgarian Education and Culture and Slavonic Alphabet

24 May

May 24 is the Bulgarian Education and Culture and Slavonic Alphabet Day. It is also known as the day of St. Cyril and Methodius, in honor of the brothers who created the Cyrillic alphabet. It is a public holiday celebrated with an abundance of cultural events.

10. Children's Day

1 June

For Children's Day, a celebration of various games and entertainment for all children is held at the central town square in Petrich, giving them many awards and surprises on the occasion of their holiday.

11. Day of Hristo Botev

2 June

On June 2 Bulgaria pays tribute to the deed of revolutionary poet Hristo Botev and all heroes who died for the freedom and independence of Bulgaria. Hristo Botev is Bulgaria's poetry genius and one of the nation's best-loved revolutionary heroes. Every year, Petrichans honour the death of Hristo Botev with poetic recitals, Renaissance performances, laying flowers in front of the monument "Perished for the Homeland".

12. Folk Festival "Oro se vie, tsarvuli se kinat" combined with "Southern Necklace"

01-03 June

In the village of Parvomay, Petrich, the folk festival "Oro se vie, tsarvuli se kinat" is held every year. Over a thousand singers and dancers participate in the folk competition.

The folk municipal fair for amateur groups "Southern Necklace" is a real overview of the folk singing and dancing art in the municipality of Petrich. Participants

perform songs that have been passed down for generations in the Ograzhden surroundings and plain area villages around Struma. It aims to popularize and preserve the folk wealth of the Petrich region for future generations.

13. International Festival “Rising Stars”

June

The national festival of the adolescent entertaining song “Rising Stars” is a prestigious platform for young talents to express themselves and perform. It provides an opportunity for a cultural, artistic and educational experience exchange between children and artistic directors from different countries.

14. “Bella Rock Fest” Festival

June

“Bella Rock Fest” Festival is emblematic of Petrich. With traditions and fans already beyond the borders of the host town, Bella Rock Fest brings joy to a large audience for two days at the central town square.

15. “XXX” International Art Festival

June

The International Music and Art Festival aims to support the development of electronic music, modern art as well as traditional crafts and arts. The festival will be a combination of musical events and a cultural-artistic exhibition including arts, competitions, crafts and a bazaar.

16. Anniversary of the Battle of Kleidion

29 July

The anniversary of the Battle of Kleidion is celebrated at the National Park-Museum “Samuel’s Fortress.” The fortress is connected with tragic for Bulgaria events – the blinding of the 14, 000 captured Bulgarian warriors of Tsar Samuel of Bulgaria. Each year the date is celebrated with solemn ceremonies paying tribute to the blinded troops.

17. Anniversary of the Unification of the province of Eastern Rumelia with the Principality of Bulgaria

September

Unification Day on 6 September is a national holiday of Bulgaria. It commemorates the unification of the province of Eastern Rumelia with the Principality of Bulgaria in 1885. In Petrich numerous events are organized honouring the Unification.

18. Festival “Golden Chestnut”

September

The international festival for pop and rock music “Golden Chestnut” in Petrich, traditionally is held in September on an open-air stage at the central town square where young musical talents of Bulgaria meet the stars of Bulgarian and world pop music. The competition is for music, text, arrangement, and performance.

19. Independence Day of Bulgaria

22 September

Independence Day in Bulgaria takes place every 22 September to celebrate the nation’s official declaration of independence from Ottoman rule on this date in 1908. The declaration formalized autonomy that had already basically existed for three decades since 1878, giving Bulgaria equal status amongst nations on the world stage. This day in Petrich is celebrated with a festive program, as well as laying wreaths and flowers in front of the monument “Perished for the Homeland.”

20. “Chestnut Festival”

October

This is a festival in honor of the Belasitsa chestnut tree forests – the largest forests of edible chestnut not only in Bulgaria, but also across the entire Balkan Peninsula. During the festival the best of the unique nature of the mountain and the most interesting of the local people’s lifestyle and culture can be enjoyed. The event is accompanied by an artistic music program with songs, dances, customs, humor

and fun from the surrounding villages as well as various contests for children and adults.

21. Anniversary of the Liberation of Petrich

28 October

Petrich was liberated from Ottoman rule in 1912 during the First Balkan War. This day is commemorated with various events each year accompanied by laying flowers and wreaths in memory of the heroes who died for the Liberation.

22. National Awakeners Day. Day of Bulgarian Science. Day of Bulgarian Journalism.

1 November

November 1 is the Day of National Awakeners in Bulgaria celebrating intellectual figures and freedom fighters – the founders and foremost defenders of the spiritual values and national confidence of Bulgarians. The holiday is marked with a rich program and a recital. Flowers and wreaths are laid in front of the monument of the National Awakeners in Petrich.

23. Christmas. Christmas Holidays/Raffle

24-26 December

The Christmas and New Year holidays in Petrich start with a Christmas tree lighting ceremony, welcoming Santa Claus and a concert.

On Christmas Eve a raffle “Christmas Luck” is organized for the citizens and guests of the town.

5. Outlining a Marketing Strategy for CULTURAL DIPOLE

The development of an integrated marketing strategy is essential for promoting the concept of “CULTURAL DIPOLE” and enhancing the identity of the two cities, Serres and Petrich. Towards achieving this target, an extensive literature research has been carried out to define the basic steps that need to be followed for designing and applying a successful strategic plan.

The main objectives of the tourism marketing plan for Serres-Petrich are:

- The development of a powerful brand for the dipole Serres-Petrich
- The establishment of Serres-Petrich as a sustainable tourist destination of excellence in the region
- The increase of tourist arrivals at the two cities
- The extension of the average length of stay of visitors
- The improvement of existing tourist services and the development of new ones
- The promotion of tourism entrepreneurship in Serres-Petrich
- The increase of total tourism revenues for the two cities
- The social and financial development of Serres and Petrich

It is evident that many different frameworks, tools, techniques and policies have been developed so far concerning destination marketing. *Destination marketing facilitates the achievement of tourism policy, which should be coordinated with the regional development strategic plan. Marketing of destinations should also guide the tourism impacts optimization and the maximization of benefits for the region* (Buhalis, 2000).

At this point it is worth providing the following definition: *Tourism destination is defined as a geographical region, political jurisdiction, or major attraction, which seeks to provide visitors with a range of satisfying to memorable visitation experiences* (Bornhorst et. al. 2010:572).

The development of the tourist destinations should be carried out such that it creates a memorable tourist experience and a favorable brand image which in turn will result in positive word of mouth and repeat business for a particular tourist destination and at the same time improves the sustainability of tourist destination (Manhas et. al., 2016).

As tourist destinations seek to become distinctive, a “Destination Personality” emerges. Destination personality is viewed as a viable metaphor for understanding tourists’ perceptions and experiences of destinations and for building a unique destination identity.

Four key strategic management and marketing objectives for destinations have been identified: 1) enhance the long term prosperity of local people, b) delight visitors by maximizing their satisfaction, c) maximise profitability of local enterprises and maximise multiplier effects and d) optimize tourism impacts by ensuring a sustainable balance between economic benefits and socio-cultural and environmental costs.

5.1 Development of a tourism marketing plan for the dipole Serres-Petrich by means of a SWOT analysis

The main features of the tourism marketing plan for the dipole Serres-Petrich are presented in the next chapter. **This plan should be constantly updated, in order to keep up with the new tourist trends and meet the requirements and expectations of the tourists visiting the two cities.**

This plan aims at the use of appropriate tools and the implementation of specific measures towards enhancing the tourist identity of Serres and Petrich. All project partners and especially the two Municipalities will be responsible for the application of this plan and will monitor the design and implementation of the marketing activities specified in the plan.

A SWOT analysis of the Dipole Serres-Petrich consists a snapshot of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats concerning the two cities and their areas, contributing to a better understanding of them. Table ... presents a first attempt to synthesize such SWOT analysis for the Dipole.

1. A SWOT analysis of the Dipole Serres – Petrich and relevant proposals.

S

- Safe destination
- Important cultural stock of Monuments Museums and Movable Values
- Important Religious Monuments
- Special local products and gastronomy
- Important poles of cultural and environmental interest in the greater area of both cities e.g.
- Kerkini ecopark, Alistrati cave, Monastery of Timios Prodromos in Greece, mountains Tsar Samouil’s fortress in Petrich
- The Serres racing circuit unique in Greece and the Balkans
- The Baba Vanga Museum of the world famous prophetess in Petrich
- The established cooperation of the twinned cities Serres -Petrich
- The acquaintance and intimacy development among the Municipal executives
- Strong local cultures, customs, village festivities and festivals

W

- Great seasonality
- Lack of the “sun sea” product
- Inadequacy of tourist infrastructure particularly in Petrich
- Lack of educated trained personnel in the greater tourist sector
- Limited tourist activity, during the winter period

O

- Close distance, efficient border controls
- The challenge of a tourist visiting another country, based in Serres or in Petrich
- The interest creating the two CULTURAL DIPOLE Museums
- The tourist interest about the “iron curtain” and inter-boarder stories
- Possibilities to continue cooperation in programs.
- Interconnection of agriculture and tourism.
- Use of e-marketing and new technologies
- Cooperation with tour operators, travel bloggers, influencers
- Promotion of unique local cultures, customs, village festivities and festivals
- Exploitation of thermal springs in Petrich
- Attract for a short stay tourists from Serbia and Romania on their route to the beaches and islands of Northern Greece.

T

- The dangers of revival of nationalisms
- The different readings of history in the two countries -areas and the need of developing honest dialogues
- Open issues among the two countries which concern particularly the two areas e.g.
- The return of the relics and manuscripts of the Timios Prodromos Monastery by Bulgaria. Greece give to Bulgaria the bones of Tsar Samouil found during archaeological excavations in St. Achileios in Prespa Lake.
- Competition of nearby cities which are also near other entrance gates e.g. Drama.
- Quality of services offered
- Inadequate financing and lack of a stable and safe economic frame for tourist investments
- Lack of economic crisis COVID-19 and conflicts with Russia
- Degradation of natural environment
- Lag behind competitions concerning the promotion of tourism

Taking into consideration the SWOT analysis, strategy should be based in:

- Keeping and reinforcing strengths
- Remediating weaknesses
- Identifying and exploiting Opportunities

- Facing, or avoiding, threats

In relation to the SWOT analysis the following proposals are made:

A. Keeping and reinforcing strengths of the Dipole Serres – Petrich

1. Promote the appropriate Restoration of Monuments and landmarks.
2. Identify special local products proceed with patents, where appropriate, of protected designation of Origin, e.g. Akanes and Bougatsa, for Serres.
3. Promote on national and European level the important cultural and environmental interest poles of the Dipole e.g. Kerkini, ecopark Baba Vanga Museum and church, Alistrati cave, Tsar Samuils fortress.
4. Promote the Serres racing circuit, organise events involving Petrich if possible
5. Continue utilising opportunities which appear in the frame of E.U. programmes.
6. Produce a mapping and a relevant publication concerning local cultures, customs, village festivities and festivals.
7. Promote actions aiming to maintain the authenticity of local cultures.

B. Remedying weaknesses, where possible

1. Promote the establish of high standards tourist infrastructure.
2. Establish appropriate programmes for training personel in the tourist sector.
3. Promote the opportunities for reinforcing tourist during the winter period e.g. Lailias skiing certain, Belasiza mountains.
4. Remedying weaknesses, where possible.

C. Utilising opportunities

1. Produce appropriate promotion material for informing tourists of one City to visit the other, in another country.
2. Opportunities concerning the participation in tourism programmes related to the ‘Iron curtain’ .
3. Utilise the promotion of local products to tourism related activities.
4. Utilise e-marketing tools for promoting the Dipole.
5. Cooperate with tour operators, travel bloggers, influencers in both countries for promoting the Dipole.
6. Appropriate promotion of local cultures, customs village festivities and festivals.
7. Promote the appropriate high level exploitation of thermal springs in Petrich.
8. Promote the opportunities provided in Petrich and Serres to attract tourists from Serbia and Romania for a short stay, or visit on their summer routes to the beaches and islands of northern Greece.

D. Facing or avoiding threats

1. Avoid practices that might cause revival of nationalism.
2. Promote a common understanding of the different readings of history by organising relevant events.

2. Developing a brand for CULTURAL DIPOLE

One of the main targets of the marketing strategy of CULTURAL DIPOLE is the development and establishment of a distinguished brand for the destination Serres-Petrich. In modern tourist development the destination is treated as tourist product that will successfully compete on the market due to its attractive and high quality issues. The destination brand demonstrates its location, its attractions and the activities inside its borders.

To attain better position on the market the destination should present its identity by the brand that will differentiate it from the competition (the tourist destination brand).

It is necessary to have the long time vision of the destination brand based on the knowledge and cooperation of all that are included in the creation of destination tourist product (the tourist destination brand).

In competing for cultural tourists, it is important for destinations to understand the cultural motivations of visitors and non-visitors (or potential visitors) (Andries van der Arka, L. & Richards, G., 2006)

The development of the tourist destinations should be carried out such that it creates a memorable tourist experience and a favorable brand image which in turn will result in positive word of mouth and repeat business for a particular tourist destination and at the same time improves the sustainability of tourist destination.

According to P. Kotler (1996) the basic elements of the brand are the following:

- The name or the part that can be pronounced
- The symbol or the part of the product that can be recognized but not pronounced (symbol, design or the use of various colors or letters)
- The trade mark of the part of the brand of the product that is in exclusive usage, something that protects the exclusive rights of the seller for use of particular name or symbol

- The subsequent right is the exclusively legal right of reproduction. Performance and sale of form and contents of literary, musical and artistic works

An integrated and recognizable brand that will represent the identity of the Cultural Dipole, its assets, values and attraction poles is considered very important in order to ensure its successful placement on the European and global tourism market as a unique destination.

The creation of a destination brand is a long lasting process with various interrelated phases. The challenge is to develop the general identity that will represent all the participants included in the tourist product creation, forming thus an “umbrella brand”. During the brand development it is also crucial to take into consideration how tourists are going to perceive and understand the brand and eventually whether they are going to accept or reject it.

After the design and creation of the Cultural Dipole brand the implementation of appropriate marketing activities is necessary to promote the developed brand to the market. At this stage, the identification and use of various communication channels is very important in presenting the brand to the general public and to specific target groups, with special emphasis on cultural tourists. In addition, a critical aspect is the development of cooperation and synergies with local stakeholders, existing and potential entrepreneurs and investors who are involved in the creation and promotion of the destination product.

3. Creating synergies with Museums and relevant Institutions

The Contemporary Art Museum “Constantin Xenakis” in Serres and the new Historical Museum in Pertrich, after their creation, will seek to develop cooperation and synergetic activities with other Museums and relevant Institutions of the wider cross border region but also at European level.

4. Developing a fundraising strategy

The implementation of the two Museums is funded by INTERREG V-A GREECE BULGARIA 2014-2020 Cooperation Programme. In order to ensure the sustainable

operation of the Museums and achieve the implementation of the whole concept through the creation and establishment of the Cultural parks in Serres and Petrich, new funds should be raised. During the last years there is an increasing interest about the concept of fundraising.

Traditionally, there were two models for financing of investment in culture and heritage: a) public funding, either national or local, as public investment or as operational expenditure of public organizations and b) private funding from private individuals or from charities in the form of donations.

Public funding sources within each country are considered as a leading source of finance, but national and local funding capabilities are often correlated with the economic conditions at national or local level. It is important to conduct a research on the available reports and databases which have mapped and structured information about the donor landscape in a particular area. Many authors have suggested that seeking grants and donations is a lot like telling stories. It is the story which attracts people to projects, ideas, objects and places.

In recent years, due to the shortage of both public and charity funds, alternative funding opportunities have been explored and innovative financing tools have been developed. Such opportunities are:

- Participation in EU projects

Funding through the participation in research projects related to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage is very important.

- Public Private Partnerships

Both Municipalities should seek for private funds and development of Public Private Partnerships should be also explored. PPPs can bridge the funding gap of public entities, provide interesting investment opportunities for the private sector, but they require the development of legal, institutional, policy and administrative conditions in order to develop capacities, transfer of knowledge and excellence, and foster entrepreneurship in local communities (Mergos & Patsavos, 2017).

- Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding constitutes an innovative financial tool to fund projects by the private sector using the social web in raising small amounts of contributions from a general public.

5. Involvement of stakeholders

There are different categories of stakeholders that affect tourist offer and demand differently, but act in common on a regulatory, economic and social level. The stakeholder concept is based on the connection and coordination of stakeholders' different interests within a destination, in order to form a quality product and recognizable image of a destination, achieve the excellence and long-term competitiveness on the market, as well as the destination sustainable development.

It should be taken into consideration that there are many stakeholders involved in the production and development of tourism products, with different and sometimes conflicting interests. The most important of them are:

In the case of Cultural Dipole, the main stakeholders involved are:

- Municipality of Serres
- Municipality of Petrich
- Regional authorities of the respective Regions of Greece and Bulgaria
- Other local authorities, such as Tourist information offices, transport authorities
- Tourism enterprises, such as hotel managers, owners of restaurants, tourist agents
- Cultural Clubs and Societies involved in cultural activities

6. Development and use of destination marketing and management tools

In order to monitor the progress of the tourist development in Serres and Petrich the use of the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) is recommended. ETIS is a system of indicators, launched by the European Commission in 2013, in order to

help tourist destinations, monitor and measure their sustainable tourism performance, by using a common comparable approach. Its monitoring results are based on self-assessment, observations, data collection and analysis by the destinations themselves. The indicators provided by ETIS are subdivided into four categories: a) destination management, b) social and cultural impact, c) economic value, d) environmental impact.

Another critical aspect is the development and use of innovative technologies and advanced tools for providing information to the tourists visiting Serres and Petrich concerning the local facilities, attractions, services and products.

7. Application of sustainable tourism principles

Besides the positive economic effects, tourism is also linked with negative impacts on destinations, related to the degradation of their environment and the sociocultural elements of communities in these areas. Thus, an important condition for tourism development is the sustainable management of tourism destinations (Miočić et.al., 2016). According to Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry (UNWTO, 1992) sustainable development in tourism should be based on sustainable preservation of ecological, socio-cultural and economic components, with the presence of human activities and processes as a key factor (Vukonić & Čavlek, 2001: 190; Đukić, 2001: 32; Swarbrokke, 2000: 83; Črnjar & Črnjar, 2009).

Taking into consideration the above, the development of tourism in Serres-Petrich will be consistent with the principles of sustainability. These principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability. Thus, sustainable tourism should: (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005).

- 1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- 2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

8. Design and implementation of marketing campaigns

An integrated marketing strategy will be launched aiming at the promotion and establishment of the destination Serres – Petrich. This strategy will include the following promotion campaigns:

i. Production and constant update of brochures

High quality brochures for the destination Serres-Petrich will be produced in different languages, mainly English, Greek and Bulgarian, presenting the main attractions and tourist poles of the two cities. The brochures will include appropriate photos, maps and information updated on a regular basis. They will be mainly available in electronic form to minimize the environmental cost of their production, but also printed copies will be distributed to key locations of the region.

ii. Creation of a guide for the destination Serres-Petrich

The guide will provide general information about the two cities but also detailed information about the sites, the accommodation, the food and the activities offered. It will be also available in digital form.

iii. Creation of a video for the destination

A 360-degree virtual reality professional video will be produced for promoting Serres and Petrich. Nowadays the use of 360o virtual reality videos in tourism marketing has become very popular. Video is considered a particularly powerful tool for delivering emotional messages since the potential customers can feel themselves actually present in the destination through a virtual environment and can make a better, well-informed decision. As recently as 2015, Google reported that YouTube views of travel-related videos were up 118% year-over-year and destination-specific searches accounted for more than 70% of the activity (Crowel et. al., 2014).

iv. Creation of a website for the destination

The website will provide information about the tourist services and products of Serres- Petrich, the accommodation facilities, restaurants, shops etc. It will be fully accessible to people with disabilities and will be constantly updated.

v. Use of social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

Communication through social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram is also crucial towards promoting the idea of Cultural Dipole. Tourists need to know by means of reliable sources how their experience is going to be like in order to reduce uncertainty and create some expectations of what they are going to find at a destination (Zeithaml et. al., 2006).

Social media has become nowadays an important tool for tourism since modern tourists have more trust in other travellers' opinions using social media rather than official marketing advices (Živković et al., 2014).

vi. Publications in press, electronic media, tourism magazines, travel guides and websites

CULTURAL DIPOLE will be promoted through publications in press and electronic media, but also in specialized magazines, selected guides and websites relevant to travel and tourism.

vii. Participation in tourism fairs and shows

CULTURAL DIPOLE will actively participate in tourism exhibitions and shows at national, regional or international level in order to promote the Serres - Petrich destination.

viii. Implementation of creative tourism activities

The Creative Tourism is considered a new generation of tourism (www.creativetourismnetwork.org/about/) by involving the tourists themselves and the locals in the creation of the tourist products (co-creation).

Indicatively, creative tourism activities in Serres and Petrich will include:

- Wine tasting and gastronomy
- Cooking classes
- Workshops

- Itineraries
- Traditional crafts

ix. Establishment of cultural routes

New cultural itineraries will be established aiming to connect important sites, monuments and cultural poles along the road axis Serres – Petrich. Cultural routes can “fill old wineskins with new wine” (Sundbo & Darmer, 2008) giving new meaning and interpretations to places, sites and monuments, producing new job opportunities and promoting entrepreneurship.

x. Participation in cultural and other events

CULTURAL DIPOLE will be promoted through the participation in cultural and other events. An indicative list of such events implemented in Serres and Petich, on a regular basis has been prepared. Any other events organised and established in the future will be added in the list.

xi. Creation of “tourist packages” for three days or longer

Creation of such “tourist packages” as to what one can do in Serres – Petrich Dipole area during the whole year, as well as in selected attractive/unique events. Propose these ‘packages’ to the tourist market for transforming them to tourist products. Also supporting them with appropriate dissemination material e.g. leaflets, videos e.t.c.

xii. Creation of a year calendar with important events in the greater area of Petrich

Interesting events -activities taking place during the whole year in the two greater areas will be identified and described appropriately. The result of the survey will be presented in printed as well as in electronic format.

5.2 Exploitation and sustainability plan

5.2.1 Introduction

The exploitation and sustainability plan aims at the development of

project's sustainability and exploitation strategy, which will ensure that the project results will have a long term effect in the project's target groups. In the present deliverable it is described how each project partner and target group will make use of research results, take advantage of the project activities and how the Museums developed will be sustained after the completion of the project. The ultimate goal of the exploitation and sustainability plan is to keep alive the vision of Cultural Dipole.

It should be noted that the project's sustainability and exploitation strategy consists of both actions taken during the project duration and continuous actions taking place after the project's finalization.

5.2.2 Expected Impact of CULTURAL DIPOLE for the two cities and the cross border area

The successful implementation of the CULTURAL DIPOLE project is a challenge with multiple benefits, not only for the partners of the project, but also for all the local stakeholders, entrepreneurs and residents primarily of the two cities and, consequently, of the whole cross border area. The expected outputs of the project can be summarized as follows:

The CULTURAL DIPOLE will enhance the attractiveness and tourist identity of Serres and Petrich. The annual number of tourists visiting the two cities and the cross border area is expected to increase. The creation of the two Museums in the frame of the project, with the prospect of developing the Cultural Parks in the future, will have a positive effect on the tourist character of the wider region. As a result of tourism development, direct benefits will arise for the whole area, for example creation of new jobs and employment opportunities, but also indirect, related to the inspiration of locals and others, in terms of using designs and motives in local products and initiatives. The CULTURAL DIPOLE will act as flagship enforcing the tourist identity and branding of the two areas. The numbers of tourist arrivals and stays in Serres and Petrich are expected to increase after the completion of the project activities and the creation of the two Museums.

The CULTURAL DIPOLE will develop cooperation and synergies with Museums and relevant Institutions of the greater area and will seek to be included in relevant

guides and programmes. The Contemporary Art Museum “Constantin Xenakis”, the new Historical Museum of Petrich and the whole concept of the CULTURAL DIPOLE will be promoted, through the participation in various cultural events and joint activities implemented in the wider region. Thus, new opportunities will be provided to the whole cross border area, for further development and cooperation.

In addition, the CULTURAL DIPOLE will promote the principles of sustainable development and energy efficiency. The Contemporary Art Museum “Constantin Xenakis” in Serres will be a Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB). Special provisions concerning energy consumption will be also applied in the case of Petrich. The renovation of the existing buildings will be fully consistent with the EU/regional/national strategies, instruments and policies related to reducing greenhouse emissions and minimizing the environmental cost of construction sector, through the implementation of energy efficient buildings and infrastructures.

The CULTURAL DIPOLE could be a transferable practice and concept, since other border cities and areas, via the “mimetic process”, will adopt the idea of creating a Cultural Dipole, towards promoting their cultural heritage. This way the creation and establishment of new cultural bridges among different cities and countries will be encouraged.

The CULTURAL DIPOLE will also promote different readings of history in the two Cultural Parks, since the tourists will have the opportunity to get acquainted with the historic events and facts from different points of view, sometimes conflicting, but neutralized in the current reality of two countries working together peacefully and effectively within the European family. In this sense, art and culture are called upon to play a significant role as unifying factors.

Exemplary provisions concerning physical and sensory accessibility will be applied to both Museums, providing equal opportunities to all tourists visiting the area. Thus, the CULTURAL DIPOLE aims at the establishment of accessible tourism in the cross border area and the elimination of discrimination attitudes against visitors with disability.

Serres and Petrich cities, cooperating as a Cultural Dipole, will attempt to attract, among others, tourists from Serbia and Romania on their route, via Bulgaria, to the summer resorts of northern Greece, such as Kavala, Thasos, Chalkidiki.

Including references in the Annual Programmes of tourist development, of Serres and Petrich respectively.

The two Municipalities may decide to include references in the Cultural Dipole Serres- Petrich in their respective Annual Programmes of tourist development.

- **The Annual programme of tourist Development of the Municipality of Serres in 2022.**

The aforementioned programme has been approved by the decision No 384/2021 ADS.

Reference for the Museum, following its opening may be included in the following actions of the Annual Programme:

1. Creation of new leaflets of thematic destinations according to new Marketing plan, Budget: 20.500€

More specifically the following tourist editions are foreseen:

- **Design and printing of a Tourist album** of 150 pages, size: 32x24 cm cover promoting the “modern city” with its infrastructure and quality of life offered by the Municipality for the significant visitor and the investor.
- **Design and printing of a tourist brochure** for the promotion of the Municipality having 24 pages, size 33x24 cm, hardcover, focusing on companies and tourist organizations.

2. Social media : 4.500,00€

- **Creation, function, promotion of pages DiscoverSerres** in Facebook – Instagram – Twitter -Youtube channel.
- **Support and enrichment of the Municipality’s site** (<https://tourism.serres.gr>) which is connected with smart Labels of landmarks via QR Code.

3. Participation of the Municipality in Exhibitions which promote the tourist product of Serres in Greece and Abroad.

The Municipality of Serres has an elaborated plan for the participation in various tourist exhibitions, as follows:

EXHIBITIONS ABROAD :

Budget: 24.000,00€

MONTH	TITLE – PLACE *	SITE
February	HOLIDAYS & SPA EXPO – Sofia , Bulgaria	https://holidayfair-sofia.com
	BELGRADE TOURISM FAIR – Belgrade, Serbia	https://beogradskisajamturizma.rs
	IMTM, Tel Aviv, Israel	https://www.imtm-telaviv.com
March	BIT, Milano, Italy	https://bit.fieramilano.it
	ITB – Berlin, Germany	https://www.itb-berlin.com
	MITT – Moscow, Russia	https://mitt.ru
May	Travel The World Expo – Nicosia, Cyprus	https://www.traveltheworldexpo.eu
	ITB CHINA – Shanghai, China	http://www.itb-china.com
October	TTR – Bucharest, Romania	https://www.targuldeturism.ro
November	WTM – London, U.K.	https://www.wtm.com
	INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL SHOW TT – Warsaw, Poland	https://ttwarsaw.pl/en/

DOMESTIC EXHIBITIONS:

Budget: 25.000,00€

MONTH	TITLE – PLACE	INDICATIVE COST	SITE
April	GREEK TRAVEL SHOW – Athens	2000	https://greektravelshow.helexpo.gr
September	ΔΕΘ - Thessaloniki	7.000*	https://www.thessalonikifair.gr
	SEREXPO - Serres	7.000*	http://www.ser-expo.org/
November	PHILOXENIA – Thessaloniki	1000	https://philoxenia.helexpo.gr/el
	ATHENS INTERNATIONALTOURISM & CULTURE Expo – Athens	8000*	https://aite.gr/en/

4. **Hosting actions** in the frame of a Hospitality Plan concerning agents and tourist journalists as well as personalities of the target countries aiming to bring them in touch with local tourism professionals.

5. **Synergies with actions in relation to the Education.**

Numerous educational institutions exist in the Municipality in various levels

- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary

As well as special structures and schools.

Excursions and tours can be organized in the Contemporary Art Museum “Constantin Xenakis” as well as later in Petrich.

The International University of Greece, Serres branch has seven departments where students from all over Greece study, also accepts visitors from many

countries abroad in the frame of Educational and Research activities. All the above will be encouraged to visit the Constantin Xenakis Museum and also the Historical Museum of Petrich

The basic impact of the CULTURAL DIPOLE project, as derived from all the above, is that the implementation of the two Museums and the creation of the Cultural Dipole will benefit the local population of Serres and Petrich in economic and social terms. The development of cultural tourism in the two cities will actively promote employment and entrepreneurship. The reputation of the two cities will be enhanced through their active involvement in various cultural and social events. Different empirical studies have shown that tourism is a tool that enables the improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the population (Fayissa et al., 2008; Rosentraub & Joo, 2009; Sanchez-Rivero, et al., 2012). It is worth mentioning that UNESCO is focusing in particular on the connection between cultural heritage and development through the Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies (UNESCO, 1982) and the Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development “Our Creative Diversity” (UNESCO, 1996). Today, cultural heritage, in particular, is perceived as an important vehicle for development, since “cultural tourism contributes to economic development” and “cultural heritage builds social cohesion” (UNESCO, 2010; Van der Auwera & Schramme, 2014). The facilities and services that will be developed for the visitors (health and transport infrastructure, restaurants, sport and leisure facilities, public spaces) will result in the improvement of the life quality for the local communities.



Figure 51. The CULTURAL DIPOLE



Figure 52. A model of Petrich CULTURAL PARK



Figure 53. A plan of the Serres CULTURAL PARK proposed by SERREON POLITEIA

5.2.3 Exploitation of the project results and application of the developed tourism plan

During the CULTURAL DIPOLE project a great number of dissemination activities has taken place to promote the general concept, such as:

- Participation in conferences, workshops and other events.
- Publications in press and electronic media
- Implementation of four publicity events:
 - 1st publicity event: Serres, 1 June 2018
 - 2nd Publicity event: Petrich, 19 October 2018
 - 3rd Publicity event: Serres, 14 MAY 2022
 - 4th Publicity event: Petrich, 26 May 2022

It should be noted that the idea of the project was presented in the contest **“Destination of Sustainable Cultural Tourism 2018 Awards”** and CULTURAL DIPOLE project won the 2nd prize in the category **"Transnational Thematic Tourism"**.

Further dissemination activities should be implemented after the end of the project to promote the project results utilizing the set of proposals presented in this deliverable.

The CULTURAL DIPOLE project's partners, supporters and involved stakeholders are committed to undertake specific actions in order to ensure the exploitation and sustainability of project results.

Despite the difficulties imposed by COVID 19 and now the Ukrainian crisis, the CULTURAL DIPOLE has been concluded successfully, having created two Museums, real jewels for the interborder area.

The great opportunities for utilizing project results, have been well documented previously resulting in a rich set of proposals.

The proposals made concern not only the two cities but also the greater interborder area.

The Dipole Serres-Petrich may act as the catalyst for deepening the cooperation of the whole interborder area, where the respective Regional authorities have a crucial role to play.

Deepening the cooperation and unfolding the application of the Marketing Plan, requires the political will of the respective political authorities.

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