



Проект за зајакнување на иновативен туризам  
Projekt për avancimin e turizmit bashkëkohor  
Smart Tourism Enhancement Project



## Short summary of the project

Smart Tourism Enhancement Project (STEP) is grant contract of IPA 2, Cross border cooperation: Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – Republic of Albania, allocations 2014-2015. Project partners are Metamorphosis, Foundation for Internet and Society, Center for regional development (CRD) Polog and Center for regional development (CRD) Elbasan.

### The overall objective of the action is:

(O1) Promoting a vibrant touristic sector that effectively adapt to the needs of both domestic and international markets and contributes to accelerate growth and stimulate job creation in the cross-border tourism zone between Macedonia and Albania.

This main objective is to strengthen the foundations and the necessary elements needed for reaching and benefiting from new international markets in the tourism industry and improved communication and cooperation for the purpose of achieving a coordinated development of joint cross-border activities.

### The objectives of the project are:

S1) Broadening and enhancing strategic and coordinated access to specific new and strategic tourism export markets for tourism businesses (SMEs and start-ups in particular);

(S2) Increasing capacities of tourism businesses to meet the demand and requirements of tourists in the region and to build strategic partnerships and collaboration domestically, regionally and globally.

### The key elements which will bring about this change include:

(a) strengthened capacities of tourism SMEs and increased access to markets

(b) raised awareness and understanding of the need for new marketing approach in tourism;

(c) improved environment for exchange of information, cooperation, research, as well as joint marketing product development towards an expansion of markets beyond the local cross-border area;

(d) local expertise among private and public entities to develop enabling policies and conformity standards that meets international standard on tourism development;

(e) the capacity of SMEs to effectively use technology to enhance their value chain

(f) knowledge and awareness necessary to sustain partnerships and good practices in tourism marketing as well as strong network committed to advance the development of cross-border tourism initiatives.

The project therefore aims to empower private and public entities (SMEs, government agencies, start-ups and individual entrepreneurs) in the tourism sector to contribute in the economic growth and stimulation of job creation in the cross-border region. STEP takes into consideration that there are already SMEs and public institutions and organizations who have been engaged in various initiatives and have expertise in the tourism sector. The project fosters the creation of new initiatives and opportunities for tourism initiatives, but will also further invest in the existing capacities to address ongoing needs as well as enrich the pool of available expertise. In addition, the project will increase SME capacities to internationalize their market reach and provide them with tools and skills that will allow them to increase tourism offer and demand in the region; and also connect and build new partnerships beyond the completion of the project.

Overall, the project will benefit the final beneficiaries in the following way:



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- SMEs and start-ups will be able to raise their capacities and to engage strategically in creating new business opportunities, expand their markets thus contributing to their increased business turnover; They will also be provided the opportunity to network and build new partnerships leading to creation of new business initiatives.
- Individual entrepreneurs will learn how to earn additional income by using their underutilized assets and will be provided opportunities to start micro-businesses in the tourism sector.
- Government agencies will have clear guidance on how to facilitate the creation of an enabling environment for tourism development. STEP will provide them opportunities for building a relationship of mutual trust and realistic expectations with the private sector.

Ultimately the project will increase the share of export value of the tourism sector and will contribute towards a more sustainable, inclusive and balanced economic development of the region.

**STEP centers around 4 key areas of activity:** 1) strategy-building via wide consultation and coordination, 2) capacity building for SMEs, start-ups, and individual entrepreneurs, 3) networking and internationalization of the value chains, 4) supporting concrete champion projects to be used as best case examples to motivate and foster cross-border tourism.

**Impact/Output/Result are:**

(R1) Increased capacity of tourism business to strategically use ICT for increased market reach via coaching and mentoring support platform;

(R2) Increased tourism demand in the region through increased online content and activity;

(R3) Increased interconnection between tourism and culture in the cross border region through the creation of a STEP network of informed and empowered tourism public and private entities, CSOs, Tourism clusters and/or chambers of commerce;

(R4) Increased capacity of tourism businesses and individual entrepreneurs to internationalize, connect and partner with international relevant parties;

(R6) Created credible STEP brand providing added value to the tourism SMEs in the cross-border region by bringing identity benefit, creating trust and respect and raising expectations of quality and integrity;

(R5) Created Inter-Regional Tourism Online Platform (iTOP)

**Final Beneficiaries are** SMEs, government agencies at local and national level (relevant ministries, regional development centers, departments of tourism), tourism development and promotion agencies, tourism clusters, chambers of commerce, start-ups and citizens as potential individual entrepreneurs in the tourism sector as well as CSOs and the media.

**The action locations** will be area of Pollog, Macedonia and area of Elbasan, Albania.

**The key facts & figures relevant to the project:**

- Project duration: 27 months
- Start date of the project: 01.01.2017 ; End date of the project :01.04.2019



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