**WHY? • OBJECTIVES**
The Year provides many opportunities to explore the relationship between cultural heritage and cultural tourism. During the Year, discussions around the concept of the sustainability of cultural heritage along with the economic benefits of tourism are taking place. The combination of these two can be a powerful economic driver; but only if managed in a way that benefits communities.

**FOR WHOM? • TARGET GROUPS**
Policymakers, cultural heritage professionals, research communities, local communities, and tourism organisations.

**WHAT? • CONTENT OF THE INITIATIVE**
This initiative has four main components:

**COMPONENT I — TOWARDS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL TOURISM**
An EU Member States expert group is examining sustainable cultural tourism across Europe and identifying good practices. At the end of 2018, the group will present policy recommendations and guidelines for regional and local authorities, and stakeholders.

**KEY DATES:**
- **March 2017 — October 2018**  
  Meetings of EU Member States expert group on Sustainable Cultural Tourism
- **19 April 2018**  
  Network of European Regions for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism (NECSTouR) Workshop in Barcelona (Spain)

**COMPONENT II — NATURAL HERITAGE AND NATURA 2000**
Sustainable conservation areas under the European network Natura 2000. Special EYCH-related activities include:

- Evaluation of overlaps between Natura 2000 and cultural heritage areas and sharing of good practices and case studies on integrated management by the end of EYCH, as outlined in the 2017 European Commission Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy.
- Links with the Natura 2000 Awards, which recognise excellence in the management and conservation of Natura 2000 sites.
- Other relevant activities in connection with the EYCH such as the Green Week 2018’s sustainable cities theme and the European Green Capitals 2018.
COMPONENT III — PROMOTING EUROPE’S CULTURAL ROUTES

Sustainable cultural routes are receiving a boost in 2018 through the following initiatives:

- Cultural routes with the Council of Europe: 33 certified Cultural Routes that invite the public to explore various themes of European history, landscape and heritage.
- UNESCO World Heritage Journeys in the EU: this project aims at developing four trans-European Cultural Routes around World Heritage sites, highlighting a clear European dimension.
- The Balkans itineraries: the European External Action Service is implementing the ‘Balkans Heritage Route’, which consists of several events connected to heritage in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia.

COMPONENT IV — AWARDING EXCELLENCE – EUROPEAN DESTINATION OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

The 2017 edition of the Commission’s European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) awarded 19 destinations for their excellence in tourism offers based on cultural heritage assets. The EDEN awards promote sustainable tourism and draws attention to non-traditional, little-known European destinations that are off the beaten track. A total of 158 destinations from 27 participating countries have been awarded the EDEN prize since 2007.

COMPONENT V — EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF SMART TOURISM

An award ceremony, taking place in November, will grant two cities the title of European Capital of Smart Tourism in 2019. An additional four cities will receive the European Smart Tourism Awards for their outstanding achievements in the individual categories (i.e. accessibility, digitalisation, sustainability and cultural heritage and creativity).

PARTNERS

- Within the European Commission, services dealing with tourism, environment and culture
- The European External Action Service and EU Delegations in the Western Balkans
- UNESCO
- Council of Europe Cultural Routes Institute
- European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN)
- Network of European Regions for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism (NECSTouR)
- European Travel Commission (ETC)
- EDEN Network Association
- Member State authorities/agencies in charge of Natura 2000 management

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