

## MEMBER STATES' ANNUAL TOURISM REPORTING TEMPLATE

*Article 3 of Council Decision 86/664/EEC<sup>1</sup> of 22 December 1986 establishing a consultation and cooperation procedure in the field of tourism stipulates that:*

*"...each Member State shall send the Commission, once a year, a report on the most significant measures it has taken and, as far as possible, on measures it is considering taking in the provision of services for tourists which could have consequences for travellers from the other Member States. The Commission shall inform the other Member States thereof".*

*The following reporting form aims at facilitating compliance with this Council Decision.*

### SECTION 1 TOURISM ORGANISATION AND GOVERNANCE

**This section is aimed at reporting on the following:**

- **Administrative organisation**
- **Territorial organisation**
- **Organisation and links between the national tourism authority and the provinces / regions**
- **Organisation and links between the national tourism authority and industry associations, stakeholders and customers**

**1.1. Please provide a short description of the administrative and territorial organisation of public bodies responsible for tourism**, indicating the relationship and cooperation between national, regional and local bodies of the core responsibilities and competences of each department (Max. 3000 characters)

#### **At National level:**

The national policy in the field of tourism is formulated by the Council of Ministers. The Ministry of Tourism has the responsibility to implement the state policy in the field of tourism and to co-ordinate the activities of the ministries and other institutions towards its implementation. The Ministry's main activities cover: development and control of the implementation of the National strategy for sustainable development and the strategies for the development of different tourism segments, as well as their short-term implementation programmes and plans; regulation of the tourism sector; tourism product development; providing assistance to regional management organisations; national marketing and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/Notice.do?val=123070%3Acs&lang=en&list=123070%3Acs%2C&pos=1&page=1&nbl=1&pgs=10&hwords=>

advertising, market research and tourism market analysis; maintenance of the National Tourism Register and the Single Tourism Information System, international relations; participation in programmes and projects in the field of tourism funded by the European Union and by international organizations. The National Tourist Council (NTC) is a governmental consultative body under the authority of the Minister of Tourism. It aims to assist in the implementation of the national tourism policy. The members of the National Tourist Council are representatives of the tourism-related ministries and institutions, national, regional, local and branch tourist associations, associations of air, land and water carriers, nationally represented associations of the consumers in the Republic of Bulgaria. The consultative tasks and activities of the NTC are as follows:

- To approve the national funding support for tourism marketing including the annual program for national tourist advertisement;
- Coordinating the implementation of the national tourist advertisement;
- Analysis of the implemented promotional activities and appraisal of the efficacy of tourist seasons;
- Making recommendations on designed concepts and programmes for tourism development, as well as proposing measures for improving the control in tourism sector with respect to raising the overall quality of the whole range of tourist services in Bulgaria;
- Giving opinion on draft regulations with regard to provision of tourist activities;
- Discussing the issues related to tourist infrastructure, foreign investments in tourism, fulfilment of charter programmes, consumer protection.

**At Regional level:** Regional authorities (the regional governor and the regional administration) are in charge of implementing the state policy in tourism on the territory of the region by:

- Devising the regional strategy and taking part in the creation of programmes for tourism development on the territory of the region and coordinating their implementation; the strategy and the programmes are integrated in the regional development strategy and are created on the basis of the national priorities for tourism development, the tourism region's marketing strategy and in accordance with the local and regional tourism resources and needs;
- assisting the Ministry of Tourism in the implementation of its activities;
- Cooperating with and supporting the initiatives of the national authorities, the tourism region management organizations and the tourism development associations in the region in the implementation of the national tourism policy;

According to the Law on Regional Development the Regional Council for Regional Development assists the Regional Governor in carrying out his duties.

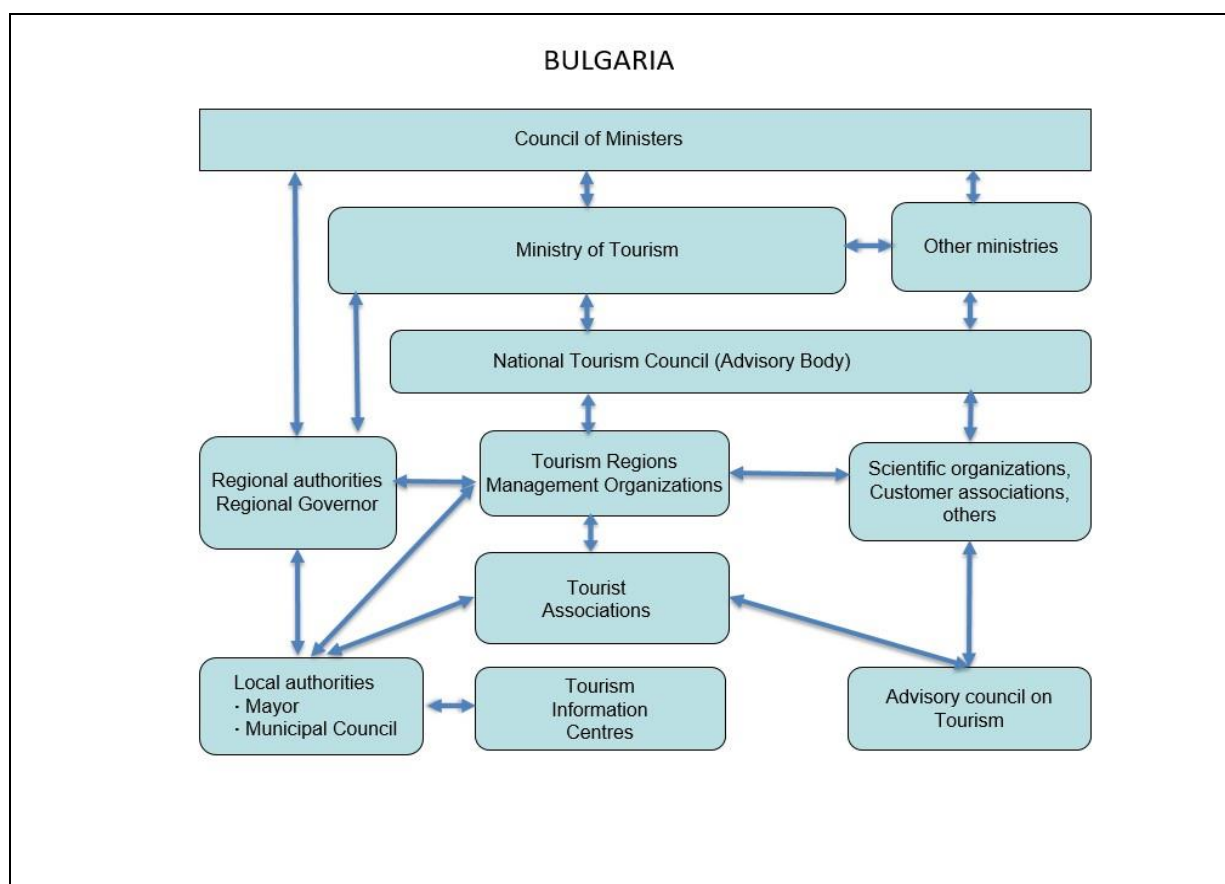
According to our legislative framework at a sub-regional level nine new intermediary organisations will be introduced, namely Tourist Regions Management Organisations. They are responsible for regional tourism product development and the marketing of the established nine Tourist Regions in Bulgaria. Currently nine Tourist Region Management Organisations are established, and another two has started the procedure for establishment.

**At Local level:** The Municipal administrations are the institutions responsible for tourism development at local level. Local authorities are the mayor and the municipal council. The Municipal Council adopts a tourism development programme on the territory of the municipality in accordance with the priorities of the regional strategy, the tourism region's

marketing strategy and in accordance with the local tourism resources and needs.

The Mayor has almost the same duties as the Minister of Tourism at local level. He is in charge of: elaborating the tourism development programme on the territory of the municipality; establishing and managing the Advisory Council on Tourism and the Municipal Expert Commission for Categorization of Tourism Facilities; participating in programs and projects in the field of tourism funded by the European Union and by international organizations; supporting initiatives of the national authorities, the organization managing the tourism region and the tourism associations on the territory of the municipality, thus implementing the national tourism policy; creating an annual report on the spending of the tourism tax collected by the municipality.

**1.2.** Please provide an **organisation chart** reflecting the above described administrative and territorial organisation.



**1.3.** Please list and describe briefly the **relationship and main areas of cooperation between national/regional public tourism bodies and the most significant / active private organisations / stakeholders / industry associations /unions / consumer organisations.** (Max. 1500 characters)

At national, regional and local level **Tourist associations**, listed in the National Tourist Register participate in relevant tourism organizations and are represented in the National Tourism Council, thus taking active role in tourism planning and management.

**Tourist Associations**, in compliance with their statutes also:

- participate in the development of strategies and programmes at national, regional and municipal level and ensure their implementation;
- carry out consulting and marketing activities;
- participate in the Expert Commission for Registration of Tour Operators and Tourist Agents and an Expert Commission for Categorization and Certification of Tourism Facilities;
- support the process of improving professional skills in the sector;
- support the improvement of the quality of tourism products and service and work for the protection of consumer interests;
- participate in the management organisations of tourism regions

**1.4. What is the existing national/regional specific legislation on tourism?** (Max. 500 characters)

Legal document	Adopted
1. Tourism Act	In force since 2013 amend. SG. 17/26 Feb 2019  Currently under amendment
2. Ordinance on requirements for accommodation and catering establishments and the order for categorization, refusal, downgrading, suspension and termination of the category	Adopted by Decree Council of Ministers No. 217 of 17.08.2015  Promulgated in State Gazette, issue 65 of 25.08.2015 Currently under amendment
3. Ordinance on the Organization of the Unified Tourist Information System (ETSI)	Adopted by Decree of the Council of Ministers No 23 of 09.02.2015. Promulgated in State Gazette, issue 13 of 17.02. 2015 Currently under amendment
4. Regulation on the safety and information provision of the ski runs in the Republic of Bulgaria and laying down the rules for safety on the territory of the ski slopes and ski areas and for organizing the work of the ski patrols	Adopted by Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 13 of 26.01.2015. Promulgated in State Gazette, issue 9 of 3.02.2015
5. Regulation on the fees collected under the Tourism Act	Adopted by Decree of the Council of Ministers No 355 of 15.12.2016  Promulgated in State Gazette, issue 102 of 23.12.2016
6. Ordinance on Education, Practical Training and Vocational Qualification, Required for Acquiring the Competence for Exercising the Occupation "Guides"	Promulgated in State Gazette, issue 5 of 19.01. 2016  In force since 20.07.2016, amend. and suppl. SG.46/11 june 2019
7. Ordinance on the Common Standards	Promulgated in State Gazette, issue 85 of

and the Organization of the Activities of Tourist Information Centers (TICs) and the National Tourist Information Centers	3.11.2016 In force since 04.05.2016
8. Ordinance on requirements for tourist chalets, tourist training centers, tourist sleeping rooms and adjoining catering establishments and the order for categorization, refusal, termination and reduction of their assigned category	Promulgated in State Gazette, issue 37 of 22.05 2015
9. Ordinance on the conditions and procedure for certification of the "SPA center", "SPA center", "Wellness center" and "Thalassotherapy center"	Promulgated in State Gazette, issue 11 of 9.02. 2016 Currently under amendment
10. Ordinance on Education, Practical Training and Vocational Qualification, Required for Acquiring the Qualification for the Purpose of "Mountain Guide"	Promulgated in State Gazette, issue 21 of 18.03.2016  In force since 19.09. amend. and suppl. SG.46/11 june 2019
11. Ordinance on the requirements for the location, suitability and equipment of the tour operator/ or tourist agency and for the education, language, training and staff traineeship.	Promulgated in State Gazette, issue 97 of 8.11.2013
12. Ordinance on children's and students' organized trips with a total price initiated by institutions in the system of pre-school and school education	Adopted by Decree of the Council of Ministers No 365 of 21.12.2016 Promulgated in State Gazette, issue 103 of 27. 12.2016
<p><b>In 2017 the Ministry of Tourism has drafted amendments in the legislation with regard to the Directive (EU) 2015/2302 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 on package travel and linked travel arrangements.</b></p> <p><b>The development and protection of the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast is a subject of a special law - the Law on the Structure of the Black Sea Coast. Other laws, such as those relating to taxation, and concessions affect tourism but come under the control of other Ministries.</b></p>	

## SECTION 2 - MEMBER STATE ECONOMIC DATA AND TOURISM BUDGETS

*This section is intended to provide an overview of the key statistical information about the general tourism economic environment of the Member States.*

The statistical data provided in the tables below shall cover the year 2017 and, **if available**, 2018.

The data collected through these sections could also feed into the Virtual Tourism Observatory.

**Please use the Excel templates provided below** in order to facilitate coherence and comparability of the data.

**Please note that you are only requested to fill in data that is available in your country. Please insert "N/A" for those that you are not able to provide.**



Data Sheet MS  
Annual Reports tem

### SECTION 3 NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY AND STRATEGIES

*This section aims at collecting information on the Member States general strategic vision as well as the specific objectives of their tourism policies.*

**3.1. Please provide information in bullet points on the key mission, main medium and long-term objectives and the main targets of your national tourism policy.** (Max. 1500 characters)

**The main priority of the Ministry of Tourism** is to create the necessary conditions for stable tourism growth in the Republic of Bulgaria and to carry out the country's tourism policy in a lawful and advisable way. The foundations of the country's tourism development are sustainable production, increased productivity and competitiveness, that is based on advanced technologies, innovation and modern industrial policies. The Ministry of Tourism develops both traditional sectors and sectors with potential for future global growth in order to create sustainable industrial clusters. Its aim is to create a less bureaucratic, investment-friendly environment, with simple and transparent procedures for business and effective management in the benefit of entrepreneurs.

**The mission of the Ministry of Tourism** is to pursue a clear and transparent tourism policy protecting the state and the public interest on the basis of the European Union principles. Ministry of Tourism works for positioning Bulgaria as a well-known and preferred year-round tourist destination with clearly identifiable national identity, authentic culture and nature, occupying a leading place among the tourist destinations in Central and Eastern Europe. Ministry of Tourism efforts are focused on the development of specialised types of tourism, improving the quality of the national tourism product and its competitiveness, and attracting more tourists.

**The strategic goal** is to strengthen the competitiveness and efficiency of the tourism sector in Bulgaria through the optimal use of available natural and anthropogenic resources, in line with market requirements and consumer expectations for sustainable tourism development:

- Diversification of the national tourism product by developing integrated and distinctive tourism products for different categories of tourists resulting from the natural priorities of Bulgaria;
- Promoting quality services and protecting the rights and safety of consumers;
- Ensuring effective coordination between the institutions and integrating tourism into related sectoral policies; Interacting with the tourist business;
- Making Bulgaria a recognised leader in the tourist development of the EU and the region and building a positive attitude towards our country among the target groups;

- Raising the level of awareness for Bulgaria as a country of rich opportunities for summer and winter holidays, of ancient culture, rich in historical and architectural monuments, mineral resources and beautiful and preserved nature, as a destination that offers security and tranquillity to its guests;
- Making effective national marketing aimed at positioning and promoting Bulgaria as a year-round tourist destination, agreed with sectoral organisations and major tour operators working at target markets for Bulgaria through targeted messages to different markets aimed at the target groups

**3.2. Do you have a multi-annual national tourism strategy specific / relevant for tourism in place?** If yes, please describe in bullet points the main medium and long-term objectives of the strategy as well as **who is responsible for its implementation. How is the implementation monitored and how often?** (Max. 2000 characters)

In 2017 after a broad consultation with public authorities, stakeholders, academia, NGOs an updated **Strategy for sustainable development of tourism in the Republic of Bulgaria with Horizon 2030** was adopted.

**This long term strategy** addresses strategic aims such as improving the infrastructure at national, regional and municipality level, implementation of international standards, best European practices, innovations concerning products, high technologies and human resources in tourism industry, preservation, protection and quality improvement of current tourism resources.

Another multi-annual Programme associated with the tourism development is the adopted **Government Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria 2017-2021**. Some of the goals included in the Programme are:

- Stimulating sustainable tourism development and reducing tourism regional imbalances in the development of the sector by promoting cultural and historical heritage and tourist attractions and developing specialised types of tourism;
- Improving the quality of the national tourist product and of the tourist service, and increased consumer protection;
- Improving Business Environment in the Tourism Sector;
- Positioning Bulgaria as a High Class Tourist Destination on the world tourist market in terms of the quality of tourism product and its added value;
- Increasing the share of the domestic tourism market by offering specialised types of tourism, and popularization of less known tourist sites and themed routes.

**Other national and regional strategic planning documents are:**

- National Development Programme Bulgaria 2020;
- Regional Development Plans for level 2 regions 2014-2020 – Bulgaria;
- Municipal Programmes for Tourism Development;

#### **4. TOURISM CHALLENGES, MEASURES AND INITIATIVES**

*This section aims at collecting information on the challenges the Member states and the tourism industry has to deal with as well as the measures put in place to tackle them.*

**4.1. Please identify the key challenges for the tourism sector in your country and indicate their importance /priority in the table below.**

CHALLENGES	IMPORTANCE / PRIORITY		
	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Diversification of the tourism offer	x		
Protection of the cultural heritage	x		
Protection of the natural heritage	x		
ICT and innovation, digitalisation	x		
Collaborative economy in the tourism sector			
Connectivity and transport	x		
Employment in tourism – improving the perception of the sector as a career opportunity	x		
Improving education and skills in tourism	x		
Combatting seasonality	x		
Demographic changes	x		
Improving accessibility of tourism	x		
Improving socio-economic data in tourism		x	
Economic crisis and recovery		x	
Improving investment in the sector	x		
Improving the sustainability of tourism offer			
Combatting climate change		x	
Improving the quality of tourism offer	x		
Developing responsible tourism practices	x		
Competition against other destinations	x		
Administrative / regulatory burden, bureaucracy, improvement of the business environment	x		
Other, please specify			



**4.2. Please describe briefly the main measures in your country aimed at tackling the key high-priority challenges indicated above. (Max. 2000 characters)**

The Ministry of tourism is fostering the all-year-round tourism in Bulgaria in order to create a social-economic stability and to avoid the depopulation of the poorest areas in our country. Development of tourism industry in Bulgaria supports the process of creating jobs even at the poorest and isolated areas in the country which is a way to increase the quality of life of local communities.

**The development of cultural and historical tourism** in Bulgaria is important in increasing the competitiveness of the entire sector and the effectiveness of regional tourism products through sustainable and balanced utilisation of cultural and natural resources. The new focus on the development of cultural and historical tourism in Bulgaria brings benefits to local communities and contribute to development of local goods and services, crafts, local foods, music dance, storytelling and guiding services which are sought by tourists. An initiative in that regard done by the Ministry is the newly created online Register for tourist attractions, which highlights more than 3300 cultural and historical sites throughout the country. Additional parts of the Register are also festivals and cultural activities, which are promoted as a tourism product for enhancing regional economic development. The festivals offer sustainable development options because the sector draws on the creativity of local artists and entrepreneurs, generating higher levels of local added value.

**The Ministry of Tourism assists SMEs** by providing institutional support and opportunities for funding for establishment of Tourism regions management organizations outlined in the Tourism Act, including activities aimed at: capacity building of the enterprises for easier access and presence on the national and international markets; for establishment of a unified system for tourist information at national level as a platform for networking tourism business, tourism organizations and institutions; support for the introduction of ICT; conducting market studies, analyses and forecasts; developing product, marketing and investment concepts, strategies, plans, etc.; organizing business forums in the country and abroad, supporting participation in events and exhibitions, (regional, national and international). Financial support is also provided through the Operational programmes 2014-2020.

The Ministry of Tourism is trying to keep track of the most recent trends and to respond to them. **We developed a regulatory framework for an Integrated Tourist Information System (ESTI).** It regulates the circumstances subject to registration, maintenance, preservation and access to information in the National Tourism Register (NTR) as well as the collection, processing, storage and delivery of tourism statistics in accordance with the recommendations of Eurostat and the World Tourism Organization. Developing a centralized information system, our aim is also to provide a wide range of users with public available information. This integrated platform is multiplying touch points that could be accessed through a variety of end-user devices which supports the creation and facilitation of realtime tourism experiences and improve the effectiveness of tourism resources management throughout the destination at both the micro and macro level. The ultimate aim is to utilize the system to enhance tourism experience and improve the effectiveness of resource management towards maximising both destination competitiveness and consumer satisfaction while also demonstrating sustainability over an extended timeframe. Currently trainings with local authorities and business are taking place and **ESTI** is in a test period.

**Other important challenges for the Bulgarian tourism sector**, also addressed in the new long term strategy for sustainable development are:

- Overcoming the seasonal and territorial concentration of the Bulgarian tourism sector;
- Undertaking measures for adaptation of the national tourist product to the climate change;

- Protecting the environment – support to implementation of energy efficiency measures, waste management and protection of the biodiversity and the landscape;
- Carrying capacity – development of carrying capacity indicators for vulnerable nature areas and places of tourist interest;
- Overcoming the excessive construction in the seaside and mountain resorts by means of legal regulations

**4.3. Please identify if any of the above mentioned challenges relate to any legislative measures at EU level, and how. (Max. 1000 characters)**

The above-mentioned challenges are not related to any legislative measures at EU level

**4.4. Please identify and describe any measures implemented in your country to increase tourism flows from other EU Member States and from third countries. (Max. 1000 characters)**

Each year Ministry of Tourism develops and implements the Annual Program for National Tourism Promotion that aims to establish Bulgaria as a year-round tourist destination with well-known high quality tourist products. The program focuses on the optimal use of existing traditional marketing tools (ATL, BTL, online advertising, PR, exhibitions, events, forums etc.) as well as application of non-standard mixes, technological innovations and new advertising opportunities. The Ministry of Tourism conducts marketing campaigns to increase interest in Bulgaria as a tourist destination and attract tourists from targeted and perspective markets, as well as to contribute to the building of a full positive image of the country:

- In Pan – European and specialized TV and digital channels in more than 50 countries in EMEA region.
- Integrated communication campaigns on 16 European markets in TV, digital, print, radio, outdoor, events and PR channels.
- Cooperation with leading tour operators
- Organizing more than 24 international exhibitions in Europe and third countries

Joint activities with European countries, members of European Travel commission

**4.5. Please describe how promotional measures implemented in your country make use of / capitalise on the promotional campaigns carried out by the Commission (i.e. Ready for Europe, Europe. Wonder is all around, European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN), low-season tourism campaigns, etc.). (Max. 1000 characters)**

Ministry of tourism is implementing two COSME project for selection of new and promotion of existing EDEN destinations:

- Project BG EDEN Campaign III, which implementation started in September 2018. The aim of the project is to promote the existing 17 Bulgarian EDEN destinations through participation at national and international tourism fairs, production of promotional videos, production of promotional materials, showcasing Bulgarian EDEN destinations in the web-based and mobile device channels of relevant media operators; Organisation of familiarization trips for travel enablers from Bulgaria, Romania and Germany.

Project BULGARIA Sanus per Aquam, submitted and approved in 2018 and under implementation since April 2019. The objective of the project is to select five non-traditional destinations /one winner and 4 runners-up/ in health and well-being tourism in Bulgaria. After the National Award Ceremony the new selected destination will be promoted and they will be integrated in National and European EDEN Network.

**4.6. Please identify and describe any measures /actions in your country which contribute to maximising the potential of national policies for developing tourism (e.g. ensuring that tourism interests are taken into account in the development of other policies which may have impact on tourism). (Max.1000 characters)**

In 2018 Bulgaria held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (first half of 2018) and the Presidency of the EU strategy of the Danube region (EUSDR).

On 18-19 October 2018 Bulgaria organized in Sofia 7th EUSDR Annual forum. The main focus of the forum was economic growth and territorial cohesion through investments in tourism, including financial instruments. As a part of the forum. Ministry of tourism organized on 18 October Meeting of Ministers in charge of Tourism from the Danube Region, who adopted a Joint statement.

<https://www.mrrb.bg/static/media/ups/articles/attachments/Joint%20statement%20EUSDR%20Ministerial%20meeting%20FINAL5b426541d485e4d322662fbbb55aa5f0.pdf>

During the Bulgarian Presidency of the EUSDR and the Annual forum in Sofia, tourism was one of the main topics and also its interaction with other policies.

**4.7. Please identify and describe any measures/actions in your country which contribute to maximising the potential of EU Funds, including Financial**

**Instruments for developing tourism** (e.g. information on main objectives, financing opportunities, training courses, etc.). (Max. 1000 characters)

Operational Programme “Regions in Growth” 2014-2020, Priority Axis 6 "Regional Tourism" (total budget - EUR 100.7 million). Support is aimed at developing integrated tourism products where restoration activities on sites of cultural heritage of national and global importance will be accompanied by infrastructure and marketing activities as well as by revenue-generating small scale investments within the cultural attraction or directly related to her. Projects are implemented through combination of grant and financial instrument. The Fund of Funds in Bulgaria manages financial instruments.

Eligible Beneficiaries are the Ministry of Culture; municipalities; Religious institutions and their local branches. Grant budget of this procedure is about 50 mln. Euro and in addition to the grant is added the financial instrument. The call for proposals was opened in April 2018 until the end of 2021. Project proposal should include combination of infrastructure and reconstruction activities and soft measures such as promotional activities, information campaigns, training of staff in the touristic attractions.

**4.8 Please describe shortly which EU programmes are used the most frequently and for what purposes of tourism development in your country.** (Max. 1000 characters)

Tourism development in Bulgaria is funded most commonly through the following EU programmes:

**1. National Operational programmes:**

- Operational programme “Regions in growth”, priority axis 6, procedure for development of touristic attractions. Projects are implemented through a combination of grant and financial instrument. Project proposal should include combination of infrastructure and reconstruction activities and soft measures such as promotional activities, information campaigns, training of staff in the touristic attractions.
- Operational programme Innovation and Competitiveness through procedure “Provision of institutional support to the Ministry of Tourism for activities related to the increase of the capacity of SMEs in the field of tourism”. Ministry of tourism provides support for the establishment, functioning and promotion of Bulgarian touristic regions.

**2. EU programmes for territorial cooperation**

- Cross-border cooperation programmes with Romania, Serbia, North Macedonia, Greece, Turkey and Joint OP for Black sea basin for the implementation of joint projects in tourism sector
- Transnational programme “Danube” for the implementation of partnership projects to foster sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources

**3. COSME programme** – for selection of new European destinations of excellence and promotions of existing EDEN destinations.



*Sustainable and responsible tourism, whether talking about economic, social or environmental sustainability, is a broad concept and may be interpreted in various ways depending on the attributes of a Member State or region.*

*The following questions focus on sustainability and responsibility in tourism as described in the 2007 Commission Communication<sup>2</sup> on an agenda for sustainable and competitive European tourism.*

**4.9. Sustainable destination: What support is given to strengthen destination management at the national /regional/local level (e.g. supportive policy environment, knowledge networks, training programmes, technological support tools, financial support, promotional activities, etc.)? (Max. 1000 characters)**

**The efforts of the Ministry of Tourism are focused on improving business environment in the tourism area** which includes stimulating the investment in improving quality of human resources in the industry and modernization of the facilities, according to principles of sustainable development.

**Attracting investments in tourism** is one of the highest priorities of the Ministry. Therefore, in 2017 we have developed a Map of investment Projects in Tourism in Bulgaria. The map is a project that supports the sustainable development of the sector and more than 30 investment projects are outlined on its pages. In 2018 the Map of investment Projects in Tourism in Bulgaria is still involving .

**The Ministry of Tourism uses all available resources to support the tourism sector** by drafting new normative provisions for tourist activities, by facilitating the administrative procedures, by assisting the activities of the regional, local and branch tourist organisations and by promoting Bulgaria as attractive all year round destination.

**Following its priorities, the Ministry works closely with the private sector, and different stakeholders.** At national, regional and local level the tourist associations, listed in the National Tourism Register participate in relevant tourism organizations and are represented in the National Tourism Council, thus taking active role in tourism planning and management. They take part in the development of strategies and programmes at national, regional and municipal level; support the process of improving professional skills in the sector; carry out consulting and marketing activities, support the improvement of the quality of tourism products and service and work for the protection of consumer interests.

**Collaboration with neighboring countries to develop sustainable transnational tourism product on the Balkans.**

- Consistent annual marketing campaigns to boost the domestic and international tourism: Integrated international communication campaigns on target markets in Europe and Russia
- Joint marketing activities with Europe`s biggest tour operators
- TV and digital campaigns to boost domestic travels
- Joint campaigns with TV channels in the EMEA region

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/documents/communications/commission-communication-2007/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/documents/communications/commission-communication-2007/index_en.htm)

**4.10. Sustainable businesses: What support is given to strengthen the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism businesses** (e.g. supportive policy environment, knowledge networks, orientation of business support services to sustainability, training, financial incentives, promotional activities, etc.)? (Max. 1000 characters)

**Capitalizing on cultural identity of the local communities** - Following global trends and the growing interest in creative tourism, including festivals and events, Bulgaria also is promoting our rich diversity of over 600 music, folk and cultural events are held throughout the year. Not only does the concept of festivals and events helps sustain and improve local economies; it often leads to the emergence of new forms of social and cultural interaction, it often leads to new forms of tourism.

The Ministry of Tourism is **enabling the domestic stakeholders to participate at tourism fairs** abroad, published in The Annual Tourism Promotion Program.

**4.11. Responsible tourism: What support is given to tourists and the tourism industry to promote their responsible practices and choices** (e.g. awareness raising, sustainability in education, national marketing and media campaigns, promotion of certification schemes, etc.)? (Max. 1000 characters)

One of the main priorities for the sustainable development of tourism in Bulgaria is the improvement of the tourism environment in resorts and populated areas in an effort to ensure sustainable tourism development. The most important actions include the implementation of energy-saving technologies and energy efficiency measures in the tourism industry, and greater use of solar energy technology. This includes developing programmes and measures for sustainable development related to energy saving and eco-friendly technologies in buildings and in the management of tourist sites, applying eco-friendly technologies and systems and the European quality standards (EMAS, EU Eco-Label) for accommodation services; using protected natural areas as a resource for the sustainable development of tourism, controlling air and water quality and achieving sustainable waste management.

**4.12. Please describe maximum three of the most significant planned / future tourism measures (legislative or non-legislative) which envisage to impact travellers visiting your country from other Member States or from outside Europe.** (Max. 1000 characters)

The establishment and maintenance of an **effective network between Bulgaria and the neighbouring** countries are of a great importance for the future development of joint tourist products and their promotion on long-haul markets. The Ministry is taking the opportunities within all regional and international organisation to work in cooperation for reaching these targets.

The Ministry has put its efforts on **promoting Bulgaria as year round destination**, with favourable conditions for practising various types of tourism based on the abundance of our tourism assets. A further step in this direction was made with the establishment of tourist centres for promotion in targeted markets, the first of which is situated in Tokyo and opened its doors for visitors in 2016. In September 2017 the first Bulgarian Tourist information center in Shanghai was opened. Other measures include the implementation of European, trans border and transnational programmes and projects, and the conducting of a massive and consistent with the current trends marketing campaign of Bulgaria as a competitive tourist destination in international tourism fairs and exhibitions

## 5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### 5.1. Please describe maximum 3 best practices of tourism measures implemented at national, regional or local level (any type of activity). (Max. 2000 characters)

**Cultural tourism is in the focus of the policy pursued** by the Ministry of Tourism. For the purposes of culture promotion, cultural-historical routes have been designed in Bulgaria, providing opportunities for acquaintance with a great part of our country's cultural heritage. The Ministry has developed **8 cultural-historical destinations**, which cover the territory of the whole country, summarizing over 150 cultural sites in more than 70 locations in Bulgaria.

1. For the purposes of promotion of our thermal resorts by linking them to Bulgarian rich history another **7 Thematic SPA Destinations** have been designed, providing opportunities for acquaintance with a great part of our country's cultural heritage.

**12 (twelve) wine-culinary destinations** have been developed under the project **"Share Bulgaria"**, which is jointly implemented by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests.

These destinations are the result from the work of experts of the ministry, proven specialists in the field of culture and tourism, local authorities and other stakeholders. Our aim was not only to promote the cultural and historical resources, but also to spread more evenly tourist flows within the country. These destinations are aimed both at domestic and international tourist markets.

An innovative approach used to promote these destinations is the interactive maps showing each of the sites with useful information. The maps are accessible on the website of the Ministry of Tourism.

### 5.2. Please describe, in a concise manner, in your view, what policy developments / actions / activities would you expect from the Commission's tourism team that would serve better (than the current ones) the EU Member States and the industry. (Max. 2000 characters)

Tourism is undoubtedly a driver for peace and understanding between peoples by allowing the exchange of ideas and cultures, as well as one of the main drivers of the European economies. It is a major source of income and employment and a factor for sustainable development. And it's only through cooperation and unity that Europe can continue to stand strong as the world first tourism destination and rip its benefits. For this reason, the Ministry of Tourism has taken the initiative to organize several events, giving a forum to European officials and stakeholders to further the agenda of the EU in the field of tourism. The events focused on several trends likely to have a significant impact on the tourism industry, such as sustainability, digital technologies, connectivity and evolution of the visitor demand. Being cognizant of their profound and lasting influence on the sector, it is essential to explore their implication to better inform policy and shape the future of European tourism. Moreover, policy developments, projects and initiatives having a regional scope, e.g. Southeastern Europe, and treating the aforementioned trends should be put forward and carried out. For instance, the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria is currently working on the creation of a Common European Map of Cultural Tourism Sites and the establishment of a Joint Balkan Tourism Route. Such initiatives represent a significant measure for further enhancing the regional cooperation in the field of tourism, a sector, which is an integral part



of all the economies of the Balkan Countries.

**THANK YOU**