



## TOURISM PRODUCT

In execution of Project “Creativity on the Rise”, Ref №: 2007CB16IPO006 – 2011 – 2 – 85, financed under Second Call in the framework of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) Bulgaria-Serbia

Tourism product, pursuant to the Tourism Act of Republic of Bulgaria is the set of tourism services offered or provided in one or several tourism entities. Outside of the legislative framework tourism product is traditionally defined as the set of goods and services which are a result on the one hand from the activity of touristic and other undertakings and organizations and on the other hand by natural, historical and cultural assets created by the human labor or the nature. In order a tourism product to start functioning, it is necessary to generate an idea for it, to be established and implemented on the market and a market saturation to be achieved.

The making of the tourism product requires both substantial prior preparation (marketing research, qualified employees, technological base) and fast implementation in the market environment, preserving and further development of the acquired positions. The tourism product which is realized between two countries, and specifically in the Project “Creativity on the Rise” between their districts and regions, requires a substantial prior preparation and subsequent implementation on the market as well as effective partnership relations between the states and the regions, including between the organizations-beneficiaries and business (NGO sector) and the local authorities they interact with. This is a complex set of planning, realization, partnerships which would generate a sustainable product for development of tourism even after completion of the project activities.

The Project “Creativity on the Rise” financed by the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance Bulgaria-Serbia 2007-2013 would provide an opportunity for development and implementation of sustainable practical application, with the possibility of extending and upgrading of the tourism product. The product would create a model based on international good practices and working methods, for appreciation of the rich cultural heritage and contemporary local creative potential and therefore contribute to limiting brain-drain among young generations in the cross-border region (in general in both countries Bulgaria and Serbia) and for growth and capacity of the target groups (local authorities and cultural organizations in addition to young people) connected to the tourism attractiveness.

The four specific aims of the Project “Creativity on the Rise” (1. Strengthening institutional and cultural structures in order to enhance the region attractiveness by developing a joint collaboration model focused on creativity and artistic expressions as drivers of growth and regional prosperity; 2. Economic growth of the cross-border zones of the region supporting human capital, in particular youth and students to develop their creativity and young artists in their career; 3. Promoting traditional and contemporary cultural and creative industry as an asset to the cross-border region and in terms of tourism attractiveness and sustainable economy; 4. Sensitivity of the institutions regarding the connection between artistic expression and economic development of the region, especially with regard to the employment and entrepreneurship in the creative sector and the related sectors such as



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tourism) fully contribute to the successful development and implementation of the tourism product.

At the same time the Project “Creativity on the Rise” complies with the vision and strategy of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance Bulgaria-Serbia 2007-2013 for strengthening the territorial cohesion, competitiveness and sustainable development by working out a joint cross-border cooperation model, for taking advantage of the cultural and creative resources of the region, in accordance with priority axis 2 “Improving capacity of local planning, problem solving and development of a key region”, paragraph 2.2 “Sustainable development through efficient use of the regional resources”. The implementation of the project activities and the preparation and introducing of a tourism product would guarantee sustainability which would allow forming a unique model which would be used by other organizations. It would also provide the opportunities for upgrading the project and the tourism product developed in its implementation within the framework of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria-Serbia 2014-2020. The upgrading of the tourism product, after its final market deployment and successful implementation, is usually necessary as the market and the product itself are not constant values and they should be constantly improved and updated. The tourism product of the current project will be called “Creativity on the Rise” (after the project title). Thus it would both promote the project in a sustainable and lasting manner even after its completion, and would develop a unique model of tourism product, as promoting creativity as a main focus for enhancing tourism appeal is a rare approach. The primary objectives of the tourism product “Creativity on the Rise” will constitute of defining the product in the region Sofia-Montana-Niš (Mediana)-Leskovac, offering a strategy for its development and marketing. The target groups of the product are set out in the project but after the realization of activities for promoting and enforcing the product other communities would be covered: youth, local authorities, educational and cultural institutions, tourist agencies and tour operators, local representatives of the tourism business, branch organizations in the tourism field, state institutions.

The realization of the tourism product “Creativity on the Rise” would bring an increased interest in touristic resources in the region Sofia-Montana-Niš (Mediana)-Leskovac by Bulgarian, Serbian and foreign tourists stressing on the intangible culture, enhancing the region appeal, it would have a favorable impact on the local economy, it would contribute to decreasing unemployment mainly among younger people and brain-drain abroad (a negative trend both in Bulgaria and Serbia), a more even distribution of the tourism benefits would be achieved, the revenue from tourism in the local economy would be increased, Bulgaria and Serbia would be more actively promoted as interesting, attractive and rich in tangible and intangible cultural resources.

The available resources of the four municipalities in the region Sofia-Montana-Niš (Mediana)-Leskovac are the basis for successful implementation of the tourism product “Creativity on the Rise”. The four municipalities have a rich historical and cultural heritage, the intangible assets are developed, there is youth activity but it needs to be extended by stressing on youth creativity as an essential focus of the touristic supply. The existing differences in each municipality (for instance, Sofia is a capital much bigger, with more activities) are rather an advantage than disadvantage, as it would allow choosing the activities which could be combined with the activities in other municipalities, whilst a unity in diversity and incorporation of good practices would be achieved, in order to obtain comprehensive and



complete tourism product “Creativity on the Rise”. The available resources in the four municipalities in the region Sofia-Montana-Niš (Mediana)-Leskovac are as follows:

**Sofia** – the capital of Republic of Bulgaria and the biggest city in population (1 249 665 people according to data from 31.12.2013) and territory in the country. It is an administrative, political, economic and cultural center. Sofia was declared capital of Bulgaria on 3 April 1879 by the Constituent Assembly on a proposal from prof. Marin Drinov. It is called after the late antique Cathedral St. Sofia. As the holy martyr was the mother of Faith, Hope and Love, the feast of the four saints – 17 September was declared as the official holiday of Sofia. Sofia is the city with the most temples in Bulgaria (including the biggest one on the Balkans – St. Aleksander Nevski Cathedral), museums, libraries, galleries, history is literally at every step in the capital due to its rich past. Since the Neolithic period, throughout the Thracian and Roman Serdika, the medieval Bulgarian Sredets, the ottoman and post-liberation Sofia, in the present Bulgarian capital new archaeological, historical and cultural artifacts and monuments are discovered constantly. Whilst in Sofia there is an extremely rich cultural life, and activities of young people (school and university students) encouraged by institutions and organizations, including the Metropolitan Library (Project partner) which works with a wide range of young people – children, pupils, university students. Tourism in Sofia is highly developed. Implementation of the tourism product “Creativity on the Rise” and the project activities as a whole would be an essential support to the candidature of Sofia for European Cultural Capital in 2019.

**Montana** – a town located in Northwestern Bulgaria, center of the municipality and district with the same name. With population of 42 426 people (according to NSI data from 31.12.2013), Montana is one of the small Bulgarian district towns. Rich in historical and cultural heritage, dating back to the establishment of the town by the Romans (Montanesium) the Slavic period of Kutlovitsa, the post-liberation Ferdinand and the socialist town of Mihaylovgrad, nowadays Montana has a Roman villa, Roman ruins and medieval Bulgarian fortress, a historical museum with Lapidarium. The cultural life in the town is complemented by a drama theater, art gallery, a community center. The official holiday of the town is the great Christian holiday of the Holy Spirit. Work with young people is well developed as both the local authority and the NGO sector, including the beneficiary of the Project “Creativity on the Rise” - Youth Impulse in the Future Association are working in this direction.

**Niš** - a town in Southeastern Serbia, administrative center of Niš County, situated on the river Nišava. With a population of 257 867 people, including the attached suburban municipalities in 2004 and the largest of them Mediana, Niš is one of the largest Serbian cities. It has a crossroad location as road and railway junction on the Balkan Peninsula. With a view of its historical roots - back in time and that it was part of the Medieval Bulgarian State and the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Serbia and Yugoslavia, Niš has a rich cultural heritage. Birthplace of the Emperor Constantine the Great and a center of imperial residence, nowadays Niš boasts of the remains of the Roman fortress Mediana, with its walls, villas, mosaics, plumbing, baths, granary, sacred sites and necropolis. The remains of the early medieval fortress Celle Tower built by the Ottomans from the heads of the rebels, the Renaissance architecture of XIX century, Holy Trinity Church - main temple of Niš Diocese, the Royal Court, Banovina etc. have been witnesses of time. Niš is rich in cultural events supported by many institutions and organizations such as the National Library, the National



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Theatre, the gallery, historical archives, etc. The official holiday of the town is 11 January - the day of the liberation of Niš from the Ottoman rule.

**Mediana** – is one of the town municipalities of the Serbian town of Niš. It is the largest town municipality in population 88 010 people (data from the 2011 census) and the smallest in territory. While Mediana is the municipality with the leading cultural and historical sites in Niš – the Roman fortress Mediana, Celle Tower, the Cathedral church of Niš, the National Theatre, the National Museum, etc. The municipality is actively working with young people. Its participation as a partner in the Project “Creativity on the Rise” is an upgrade of its policy.

**Leskovac** - is a town in Southeastern Serbia, administrative center of Jablanica County and the municipality of the same name. The municipality comprises 144 settlements (3 towns and 141 villages), as the population of the town of Leskovac is 68 449 people (data from 2002). Leskovac has a rich history, as the place where the town is located now had been inhabited by the tribe Dardanians; it had been within the Medieval Bulgarian State, as it was first mentioned as a settlement (village) during the reign of the Serbian King Milutin and King Dusan (14<sup>th</sup> c.). During the Ottoman rule the town was the center of Nahia (region) Dubochitsa. Under the Berlin Treaty of 1878 Leskovac became part of the Kingdom of Serbia. Because of its 13 textile mills of that period the town was called Serbian Manchester. In addition to the Museum of the Textile Industry, Leskovac is famous for its archaeological site Hissar, Tsarichina City, Renaissance houses, interesting temples and monasteries, folk museum, monuments, etc. The town boasts its diverse cultural life, according to the local population - the richest in the whole of Serbia - with many events. The annual feast Roshtiliada - a celebration of Leskovac's grill, is quite famous and popular as it is visited by about 300000 people every August as the festival is accompanied with a rich cultural program. One of the distinguishing symbols of the municipality of Leskovac is Holy Trinity Cathedral. The activities with the young people, including the promotion of their creative and cultural cravings, are actively supported by the project partner - Educational Center, Leskovac.

With the available resources of the four municipalities in the region Sofia-Montana- Niš (Medians) -Leskovac, the project partners: Youth Impulse in the Future Association (Montana, Bulgaria), Metropolitan Library (Sofia, Bulgaria), Mediana Municipality (Niš, Serbia) and Educational Center, Leskovac (Leskovac, Serbia) should direct their efforts to the promotion and enforcement of the main cultural events, bringing together in a logical link for finding a permanent place for the youth creative endeavors. Meanwhile the tourism product “Creativity on the Rise” would highlight the rich cultural and historical heritage in the four municipalities thus it would combine the tangible and intangible culture and would achieve better tourist offering and therefore greater economic benefits. The product “Creativity on the Rise” would be the first cross-border product between Bulgaria and Serbia, which will be based on those principles, and therefore its complementarity and upgrading over time would further enrich and expand it.

The tourism product “Creativity on the Rise” would be unique also because it would not be based on a specific fixed tourist route, it would not be limited in time but it would be open to new happenings and events, a year-round route, with an emphasis on the cultural-creative performances, which in turn would serve as a bridge to the cultural-historical and natural



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tourism. The combination of the performances in the separate municipalities, regions and countries would be the principle of this product.

The choice of the four municipalities (respectively the four project partners) to establish based on the product a common tourist area is justified by the exceptional opportunity for those municipalities mutually to complement their resources and thus to develop and offer unique, innovative and diverse proposals for tourists. Analyzing the Bulgarian and Serbian tourist markets that are quite similar, it was concluded that the most effective marketing measures for reaching both the direct users of travel services, tour operators and travel agencies are modern technologies: social networks, specialized tourism portals, content portals created by users (blogs and wikis). Thus, without incurring separate costs, the product would reach the widest possible range of interested people. This approach would greatly attract young people too, who would actually get more involved in the artistic events, because namely young people are the biggest users of contemporary technologies.

That would launch a virtual marketing management of the newly established tourist area and the product with the wide participation of all interested parties, including the direct consumers of tourist services. It would ensure the completeness of the tourism product and creativity of young people would be in constant progress and positive gradation.

The tourism product “Creativity on the Rise” would be implemented with the participation of youth artistic contributions (acting, music, dance, art, film, etc.) in the cultural events of the annual, permanent, however not constant but continuously expanding tourist route in the region Sofia -Montana-Niš (Mediana) -Leskovac:

December 31, the New Year, Sofia – at Kniaz Alexander I Central Square in the last decade it had become a tradition to celebrate the New Year with a grand concert. The creative efforts of young people could be embodied in part in the event (music, dance), as well as outdoor exhibitions. In the days before the New Year students could help decorate the stage and the square. Participation of young people from Serbia in the events would stimulate the interest and might enrich the event with Serbian elements, where the civil New Year is celebrated in a spectacular manner.

January 8, Niš, Christmas concert - organized by the local Orthodox diocese of Niš. The concert is a great opportunity to promote religious tourism, based on common Orthodox faith of the Bulgarian and the Serbian people and the possibility of religious young people from both sides of the border to show their creative vision of their faith - through music, speech and art.

January 13, Niš, Mediana Park; Leskovac - celebration of the Serbian New Year (Orthodox New Year in the old calendar style) - a great opportunity for young people - individually or as groups to participate in the organized events, accompanied by spectacular fireworks.

February 14, Montana - Procession concert on the occasion of the traditional holiday Trifon Zarezan. Opportunity for youth groups from Serbia to take part in it as this holiday demonstrates the rich folklore in the region.



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February 14, Leskovac - a celebration of St. Trifon's Day, as tourists have the opportunity to choose where to be on that holiday - in Serbia or in Bulgaria and to compare them, one year visiting Montana, the next year – being in Leskovac. That comparison will be especially fascinating for the western tourists, for whom February, 14 is St. Valentine's and Love Day.

February/March, Sofia - National Poetry Contest “At the Foot of Vitosha” - young poets from Serbia and neighboring countries can visit the contest and possibly be involved in it because one of the special prizes is for young artists.

March 3, Sofia - Formal events for the anniversary of the Liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman rule, a national holiday of Republic of Bulgaria. It is an opportunity for participation of young people in the different events on the occasion of the national holiday.

March /April/May, Montana – “Dyed Eggs, Painted” - traditional Easter exhibition.

March – June, Sofia - European Music Festival (for connoisseurs of classical music) and Sofia Jazz Peak – of world renown international festival.

March, Leskovac - Traditional guitar festival with the participation of students from primary and secondary schools in Serbia and abroad, as well as famous guitar players. It provides a great opportunity for the expression of young people and a real “creativity on the rise” for them because they learn from and touch to the art of virtuosos.

March/November, Sofia - Galleries in the Open - a great opportunity for young Bulgarian and Serbian artists to show their art to the public, as well as to the numerous tourists in Sofia.

March, Sofia - Sofia Film Fest International Film Festival - one of the most prestigious film festivals in the world (according to Variety Magazine) - a real chance for lovers of cinema and culture, opportunity for young people to enjoy the great movies.

March, Sofia - Young Virtuosos International Competition - lovers of classical music from around the world could enjoy the performances of the young talents - participants in the competition.

April, Niš - International Fair of Tourism and Recreation - a great opportunity for exchange of experiences, best practices and promoting the creativity of young people.

April, Sofia – Antistatic - Festival of Contemporary Dance and Performance

May, Sofia/Montana - Night at the Museum, all museums in Bulgaria are open at night, admission is free and it is traditionally accompanied with cultural program.

May 24, Sofia/Montana - Day of Bulgarian Education and Culture and Slavonic Literature – the only opportunity for foreign tourists to see holiday parades and the events during the Bulgarian spiritual celebration



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May, Montana - International children's drawing contest “Drum Beats, Horo is Danced”

May, Niš - International Art Photography Colony “Sićevo”.

May, Montana - Festival of Brass Bands “Diko Iliev” - one of the emblems of the cultural program of Montana - an opportunity for foreign tourists to enjoy the rich Bulgarian folk traditions.

June, Leskovac – “Dum Drum Fest” - the only Balkan Festival of drums and percussion instruments. The festival aims to encourage young people both through meetings and demonstration of skills.

June, Sofia - National competition for children fairy tale “I'll tell you a Tale of Sofia” - with the possibility of including foreign participants, the competition would be promoted abroad and thus children's creativity would facilitate tourism development.

June, Leskovac - Balkan Festival of Young Cartoonists - a traditional event, held for many years, enabling young artists from the Balkan countries to express themselves and make the event, part of the route of the tourist product “Creativity on the Rise”.

June, Montana - International Folklore Festival - Montana

June/July, Leskovac - Leskovac Summer - traditional multimedia outdoor festival consisting of three components - sport events, children's events and art shows.

July, Sofia - Theatre Festival of Monodramas “Sofia Mono”.

July, Leskovac - International Carnival, a combination of traditions and innovations in the carnival art. Children fancy-dress ball takes place together with the carnival. That's a real attraction for young and old, delight to the senses of tourists.

July, Sofia - Outdoor Festival “Opera in the Park”, organized by the Sofia Opera and Ballet.

July, Niš - International Folklore Festival.

July - August, Mediana Municipality, Niš – “Mediana Fest” - concerts of all styles - from opera, pop and rock to folk music, and a lot of fun for the children.

August, Leskovac - Festival of Meat, Barbeque and Grill “Rotshiliada”. It is held in the last week of August and is visited by nearly 300000 people, mostly young people. It is one of the biggest tourist events in Serbia and the largest festival of this type in this part of Europe. It is accompanied with a rich cultural program - concerts, fashion shows, carnivals and competitions. That's a real opportunity for tourists to enjoy delicious food and various cultural events.



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August, Sofia - Festival “Sofia Breathes” – an event dedicated to environmental protection, with the participation of many young people.

August, Niš – “Nišville Jazz Festival” - held in Niš Fortress.

September, Sofia - International Biennial Festival for Street and Puppet Theatre “Puppet Fair” - non-competitive event, a great opportunity for young artists, especially since 2010 it has been relied on puppet art demonstrated in open spaces (gardens, parks, squares).

September 17, Sofia - Sofia Day. The Day of the Bulgarian capital. The flag of Sofia Municipality is traditionally raised, there is religious ceremony and awards for outstanding achievements in the field of culture are conferred. Traditionally on this day the Metropolitan Library – partner to Project “Creativity on the Rise” organizes exhibitions and other cultural events.

October, Mediana Municipality, Niš – “Mediana Balkan Rock Festival” - the event is a music festival - competition for young and not so famous rock bands. The grand prize for the winner is a studio recording of an album.

October, Montana – Radichkov’s Days dedicated to the works of the greatest connoisseur of Bulgarian northwest Radichkov

October/November, Niš – “NIMUS” - classical music festival with an international reputation that had been organized more than three decades

November 1, Montana - Torchlight procession and concert on the Day of the Leaders of the Bulgarian National Revival. Opportunity for foreign tourists to see one of the few Bulgarian Holidays with a torchlight procession.

November, Sofia - International Music Festival “Young Musical Talents”. Since 1994, many young artists in the field of classical music from around the world have become famous due to their participation in the festival.

November, Montana - Festival of Old Town Songs.

November, Sofia - International Film Panorama “Kinomania” - hit worldwide movies, plus a special section for children’s movies.

November/December, Niš - Niš Book and Graphics Fair.

December, Sofia - Sofia International Literature Festival - a place where artists from around the world could meet.

December, Montana - Christmas events – men’s choir concert, the workshop of Santa Clause, happenings in the library.

December, Sofia - Traditional concert dedicated to the Nativity.





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With the implementation and practical application of the concept of tourism product “Creativity on the Rise” the following results would be achieved:

- Reducing the seasonality of tourism offers and establishment of a comprehensive route in time - from New Year to Christmas and New Year;
- Establishment and strengthening of strong brand position of the region in existing markets and expanding it to new markets;
- Increased awareness of end users and travel agencies for the resources, potential and tourism opportunities in the region Sofia-Montana-Niš (Mediana)-Leskovac;
- Turning the region into “newly discovered” destination especially for young people and artists;
- Increased growth of tourism in the region Sofia-Montana-Niš (Mediana)-Leskovac according to the indicators such as number of stays for the night, employment, length of stay. Specific feature in the tourism product “Creativity on the Rise” is increasing the number of tourists outside the high season;
- Increased income from tourism not only of the specialized tourism organizations but also youth organizations, cultural institutions and local authorities;
- Increasing the image of the region Sofia-Montana-Niš (Mediana)-Leskovac and generally of Bulgaria and Serbia as destinations offering innovative tourism product “Creativity on the Rise”;
- Sustainability of the tourism product “Creativity on the Rise” after completion of the project activities financed by Bulgaria - Serbia IPA Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013