

Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives

# **Tourism as a driving force for regional cooperation across the EU**

Cross-border aspects of tourism development

Edited by CESCO's team  
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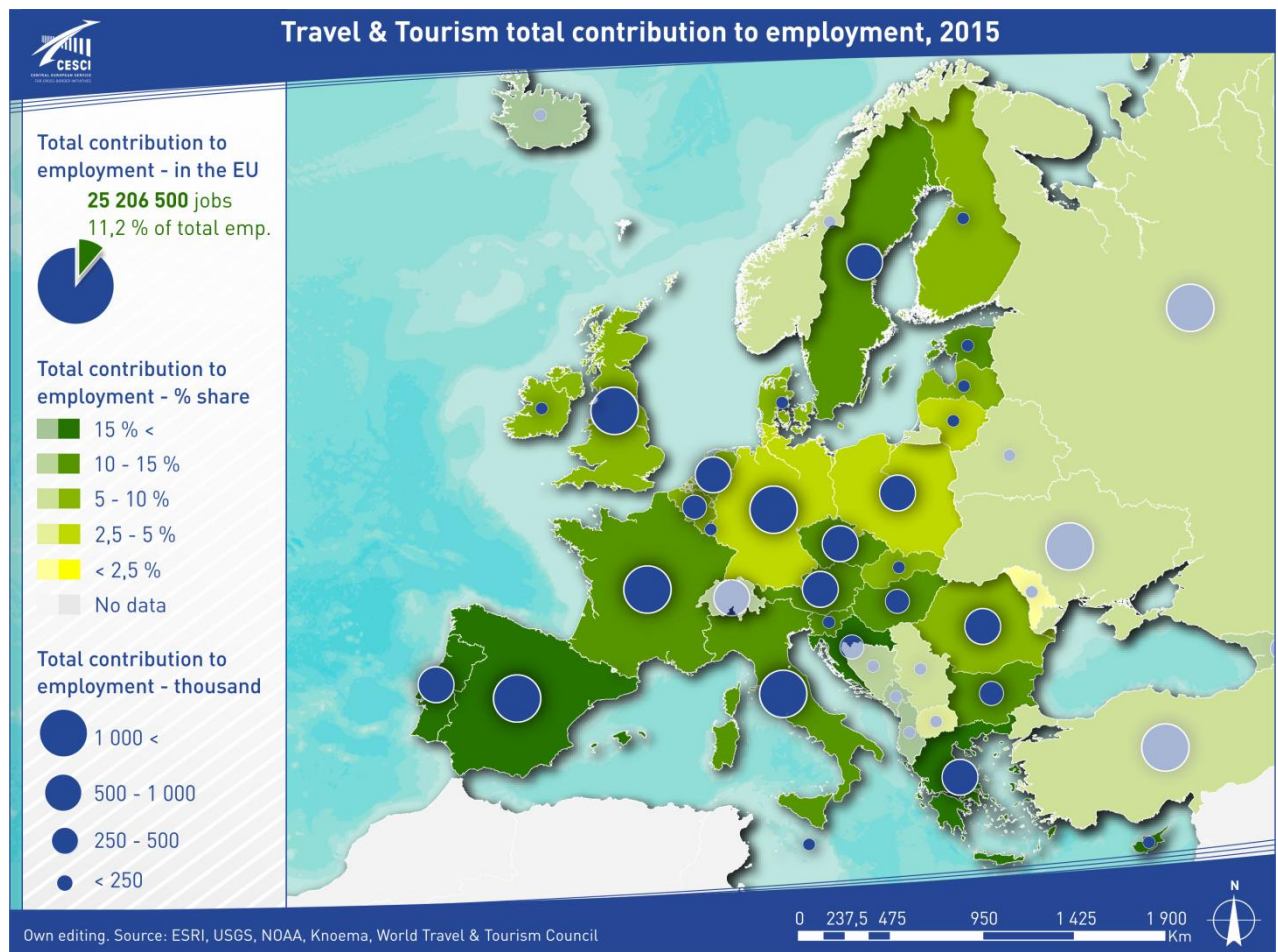
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## 1. Importance of tourism

### 1.1 Tourism in the EU

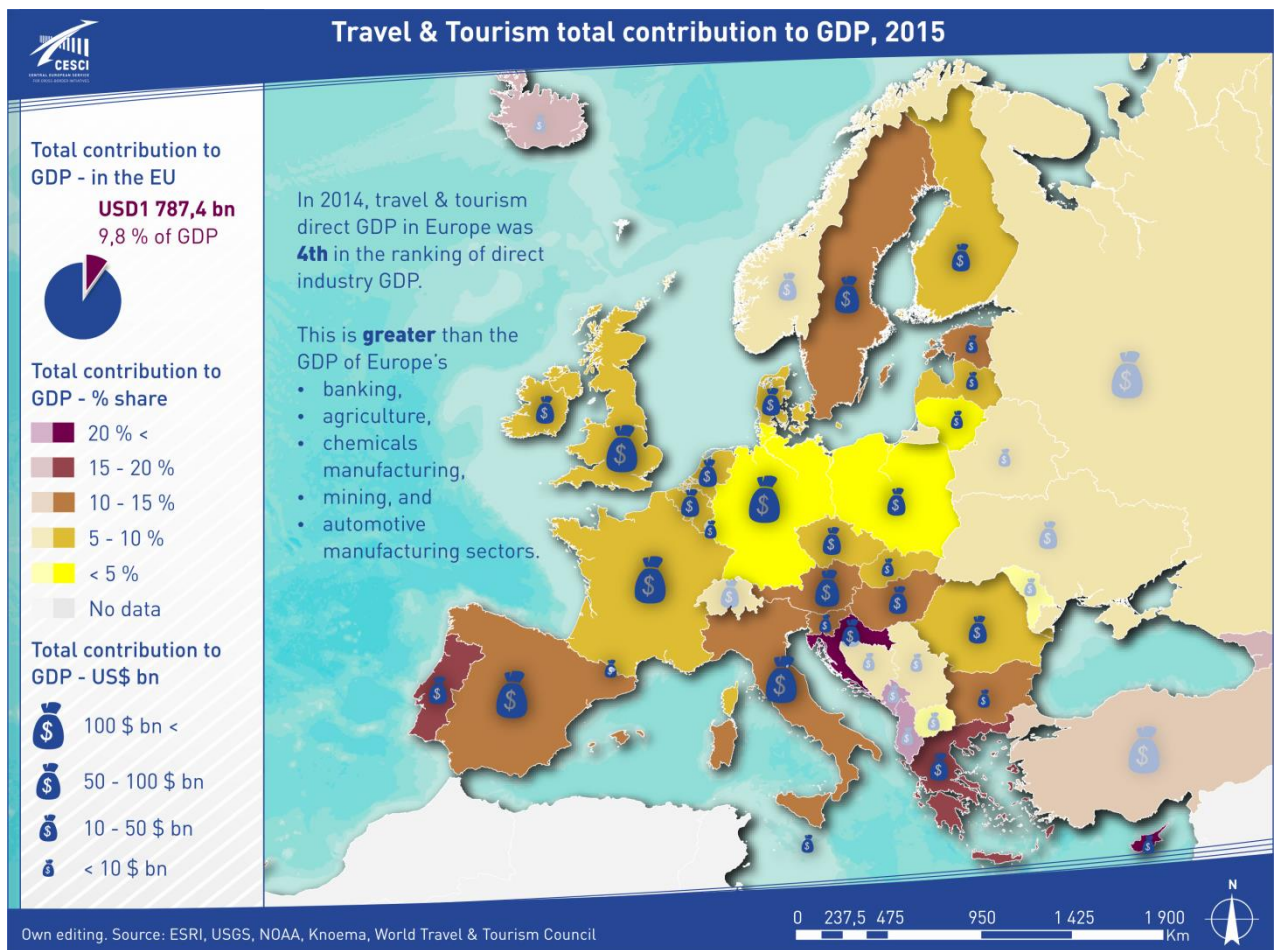
Among other characteristics, one of major features of tourism is its increasingly important role in boosting local and regional economies. Tourism is a decisive economic activity in the European Union with wide-ranging impact on economic growth and employment in particular. It can be a powerful tool in fighting economic decline and unemployment as well. Based on Eurostat findings, high tourist activity couples with lower regional unemployment rates. Considering tourism's impact on employment, enterprises in industries with tourism related activities account for 9% of the persons employed in the whole non-financial business economy and 22% of persons employed in the services sector. In 2012, **2.2 million enterprises** related to tourism industries employed just over **12 Million persons**.



Map 1.: Travel & Tourism total contribution to employment, 2015

According to Eurostat, tourism industries make up 16.4% of the total service turnover and contribute with 13.6% to the value added to tertiary factor costs. Tourism industry directly

generates over 5% of EU GDP, and when taking into account other industries that produce tourism characteristic products, tourism's contribution to the economy is even higher: **over 10% of EU GDP**. According to the European Commission, it is the third largest socio-economic activity in the EU (after the trade and distribution, and construction sectors).<sup>1</sup> Even in case of big and/or diversified economies such as the British, the German, the French, the Italian or the Spanish, tourism is one of the most important sectors in economy and can be comparable to other major industries. In case of these countries travel and tourism's direct contribution to GDP impact is generally larger than that of the chemicals manufacturing, banking, agriculture, and mining and some cases automotive industries as well. In the Spanish national economy tourism GDP is larger than that of every other sector except for retail.<sup>2</sup>



Map 2.: Travel & Tourism total contribution to GDP, 2015

1 Tourism and the European Union. Recent trends and policy developments. In-depth analysis. 25 p. (download: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/568343/EPRS\\_IDA\(2015\)568343\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/568343/EPRS_IDA(2015)568343_EN.pdf))

2 For more information, please study the benchmark reports, the country profiles of the given states: <http://www.wttc.org/research/economic-research/benchmark-reports/country-results/>

Furthermore, it also has to be emphasized that in spite of the economic turmoil leading to a significant decline in total employment and economic output, the services sector, including the core tourism industries such as accommodation, maintained or even extended economic activities. Therefore **tourism industry has potential as a growth sector, even in times of economic crisis** that significantly affects other sectors of the economy too.<sup>3</sup> According to the figure below, the direct contribution of tourism and travel to the GDP has become significantly higher particularly in the case of the new Member States joining European Union in 2004, 2007 and 2013. Consequently, the Eastern and South-Eastern part of the EU can be characterized by an even higher growth rate when it comes to tourism.

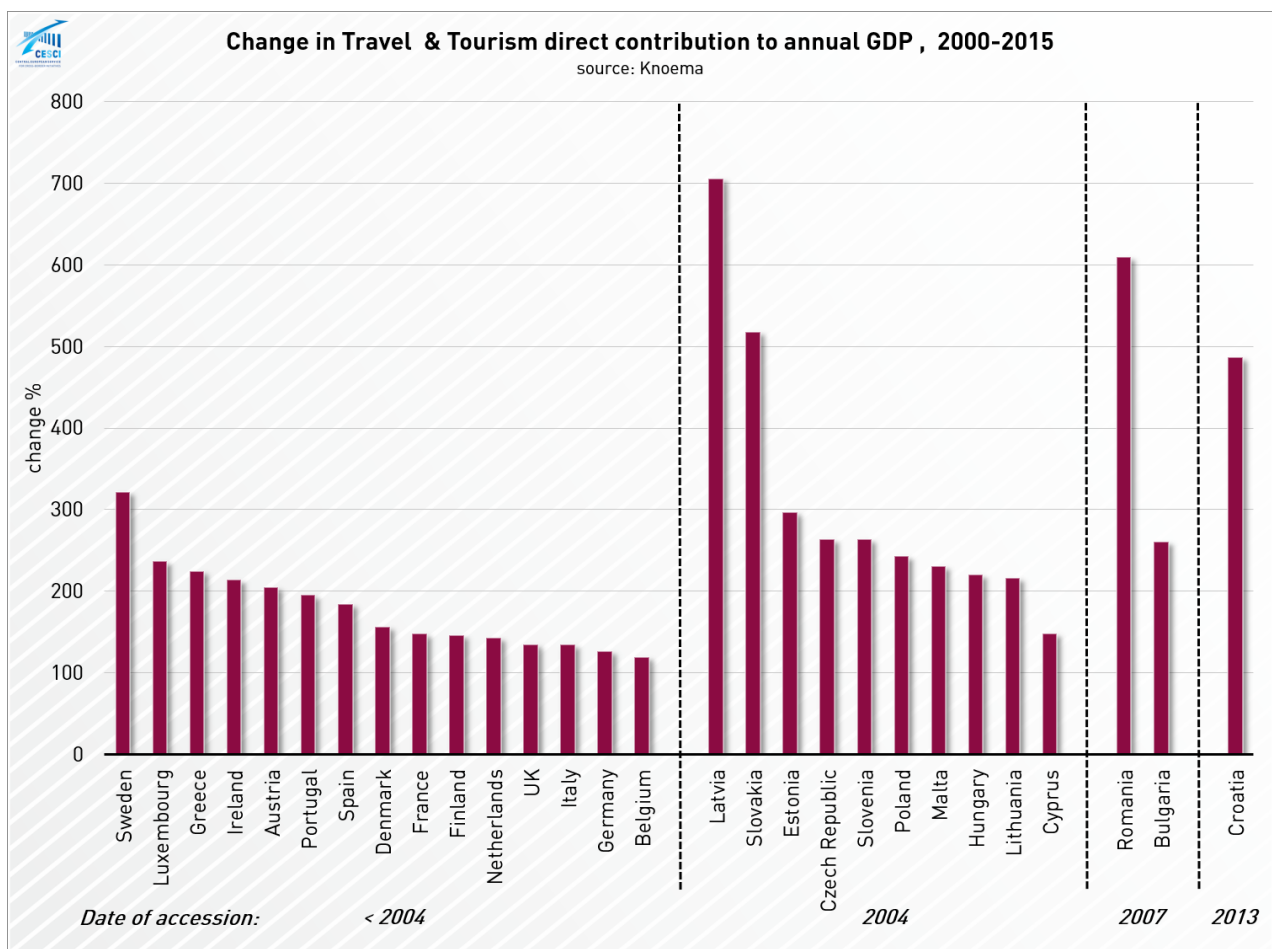


Figure 1.: Change in Travel & Tourism direct contribution to annual GDP, 2000 - 2015

<sup>3</sup> Eurostat findings: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism\\_industries\\_-\\_employment](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism_industries_-_employment)

## 2. Integration of borderlands – The role of tourism

### 2.1 Significance of tourism development in the Cross-border Cooperation Programmes along the Hungarian borders– 2007-2013

First of all, in this chapter we would like to underline that as a Central European think-tank of cross-border issues, mostly territorial programmes targeting Central Europe will be discussed from the point of view of financial allocation to tourism goals and projects. Based on information found from the official web pages, our association has compiled a database of cross-border cooperation programmes from between 2007-2013 with Hungarian participation.<sup>4</sup> Hungary has seven border sections with different status: EU Member States within and outside the Schengen zone, and associated countries at the very-very beginning or in the middle of the process, thus the region can be seen as quite diverse, integrating many distinct countries with different cohesion assets and challenges. However, in all cases, **projects targeting tourism development had remarkable shares within the total Union's contribution of the given programmes.** This fact unites the whole macro-region, in a way.

According to the 6<sup>th</sup> Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion, the main outcomes up to the end of 2012 considering Cohesion Policy programmes of the planning period of 2007-2013 include over 8 600 projects co-financed through the ERDF fund carried out across the European Union to support tourism, which directly created a reported 11 928 jobs in total. Based on the same findings most of the tourism projects (around 75%) were elaborated in Convergence regions, in the 'newly joined countries' of the EU (EU-12).<sup>5</sup> It underlines the importance of such directly tourism related developments in general, especially regarding mostly the Eastern part of the EU that constitutes no less than 44.4% of total Member States (notwithstanding tourism-oriented Croatia at that time).

Focusing on the goal of European Territorial Cooperation, macro-regional development plans e.g. the Central Europe Transnational Programme, South-East Europe Transnational Programme, the so-called Danube region or the Baltic Sea cooperation reveals that heritage and related tourism are strongly represented on agendas.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Programmes between 2007 and 2013 were not yet concluded at the time data was collected excluding HUCRO. In the case of several tenders, contracts were being still being negotiated, therefore the final supporting funds were not available yet.

Nevertheless, we are still able to draw some conclusions from the financial point of view of tourism developments.

5 Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Cyprus and Malta

6 [http://www.interreg-central.eu/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Documents/Publications/Thematic\\_study\\_cultural\\_heritage.pdf](http://www.interreg-central.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Documents/Publications/Thematic_study_cultural_heritage.pdf)

Taking a closer look at the Central Europe Programme, a questionnaire was sent to all partners in culture-related funded projects. The submitted answers showed that after more vision and awareness raised for the project's goals and results, as well as transnational cooperation, networking and sharing, the third most important main result and expected impact were considered to be the different incentives and improvements for cultural tourism.

The document entitled *Contribution of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme to the future transnational cooperation 2014+* states that the highest number of approved projects of the recently ended 2007-2013 programme in Calls 1, 2 and 3 can be found in Priority 3 “Using our environment responsibly” targeting also tourism projects. The share of projects compared to other Priorities’ projects is outstanding, underlining their popularity and the need for tourism-oriented developments: Priority 3 had 34 projects at that time, which make up 33.7% of the approved projects, while in the frame of all other Priorities there were 67 projects, in all. In budgetary terms, the highest share, 57% was allocated to projects under Priority 3. Implementation rate was by far the highest during the implementation of the programme meaning that tourism actions were not only popular but had high feasibility.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that the on-going Central Europe Programme 2014-2020 contains a third Priority Axis, entitled *Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth*, and it will allocate € 88 769 200 of the ERDF which is as much as 29.7% of the total funding.

Considering the *Annual Implementation Report 2014 of the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme*<sup>8</sup>, SEE projects became excellent platforms for integrating IPA and ENPI partners in wider European networks. For instance, TRANSDANUBE project promoted sustainable mobility in the Danube region with special focus on tourism. Areas of Intervention with tourism focused topics proved to be of high interest for programme applicants. Taking into account the budget of approved projects on Call 1, 2, 3 and 4, tourism-related ones make up € 37,326,423; 21.8% of the total ERDF contribution spent on.

Turning and referring to cross-border cooperation programmes with Hungarian participation, the lowest share of ERDF funding can be identified in the case of the Hungary-Romania CBC Programme 2007-2013 where the rate reaches far above some previous expectations with its 15.24%.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.interreg-central.eu/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Documents/Programme\\_documents/Ex-ante\\_evaluation\\_report.pdf](http://www.interreg-central.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Documents/Programme_documents/Ex-ante_evaluation_report.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Annual Implementation Report 2014 of the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme (download: <http://www.minzp.sk/files/sekcia-enviromentalnych-projektov-programov/programove-obdobie-2007-2013-sf-kf/operacny-program-juhovýchodna-europa/see-annual-implementation-report-2014-mc-approved-11.06.2015.pdf>)

The Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENPI Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013 hit 18.2%. In the case of most CBC programmes, **tourism-related projects exceeded 20% or even nearly reached 30%**. In ascending order: tourism projects amounted to 20.35% in the Hungary-Serbia IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme, 25.96% considering the Austria-Hungary CBC Programme, 29.23% regarding the Hungary-Slovakia CBC Programme and no less than 35.5% in the case of Hungary-Croatia IPA CBC Programme. Taking into account HUCRO Priority 1 that included both sustainable environment and tourism actions, it was designated as the biggest priority by far in term of financial allocation, meaning that 60% of the programme was planned to be spent on such goals. Significance of tourism developments seems to be taken into account in the on-going European financial period of 2014-2020, too. Funding for Cohesion Policy in the aforementioned period amounts to € 351.8 Billion while the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) budget for 2014-2020 is € 196 580 820 589. As it was confirmed by the European Commission, tourism will continue to play a prominent role in planned ERDF investments, as well as related investments into the conservation, protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage, with approximately € 8 Billion of planned ERDF allocation. This sum makes up 2.3% of the total funds related to Cohesion Policy and 4.1% of ERDF.



## 2.2 Thematic concentration vs. tourism

The thematic concentration principle launched by the EU during the current budgetary period hinders tourism development needed in many cases. **Tourism is explicitly not included in the list of the 11 thematic objectives (TOs) nor the list of investment priorities (IPs).** The lack of a direct tourist related TO effects negatively also CBC areas with high but mostly untapped touristic potential. Keeping in mind the heterogeneity of EU regions in terms of cohesion, instead of strict restrictions of thematic concentration obligatory for all regions, **territorial concentration** would be well advised within territorial programmes. Territorial concentration of resources can enable stakeholders of borderlands to utilize EU support for realizing their common objectives in an integrated way.

At the moment, the first four of the thematic objectives constitute key priorities for the ERDF, and a significant part of the investment is planned to focus on these areas, while *Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency*, considered to be the most tourist-targeted objective, is only the 6<sup>th</sup> in the row. Without a clear thematic objective dedicated to tourism, it is difficult to choose from the various TOs (namely TO1, TO2, TO3, TO4, TO6, TO8 and TO9) from which different tourism related investments can be supported. Less developed regions shall concentrate 60% of the allocation to each cross-border programme on up to 4 of the investment priorities (TOs) defined in the ESF Regulation while this share is even higher in case of transition regions (70%) and developed regions (80%). Therefore, in many cases only one TO can be targeted for tourism in a given programme while all the other TOs can be excluded losing the possibility to finance projects that would even strengthen the outputs and impacts of the chosen TO's investments. In order to develop a cross-border tourist area with a territorially integrated approach using the method of functional geography, synergies between various thematic areas of tourism sector are going to be hard to reach in an efficient way. Focusing on several TOs will have the threat of excluding developments based on the territorial capital of the given region, for example one-sided developments can take place without supporting infrastructure, services, management and other aspects of the sector. Taking into account activities supported by EU funds, one of the most favourable advantages of the current budgetary period is that cross-border product and service developments are preferred in the case of tourism promotion. In addition to that, tourist infrastructure is a basis for further developments especially, in regions lagging behind; it is not advised to forget about that.

## 2.3 Why cross-border tourism development matters?

By the introduction of territorial cohesion in the Lisbon Treaty as an explicit objective of Cohesion Policy, a stronger emphasis has been given to functional geography.<sup>9</sup> There is a growing consensus that economic policies and development strategies should be more related to functional regions. Using functional geography can enhance the efficiency of policies, tourism included; it often calls for more coordination across administrative or political boundaries. From geographical point of view **border areas are often constituted of landscapes not aligned to state borders** therefore it is crucial to analyse, develop and monitoring cross-border landscapes with many attractions and destination to be developed jointly. It also means a territorially integrated approach in tourism policies and programmes.

Taking into account the impacts of such developments, **tourism activities mean often an important first step in improving the sense of social cohesion** along the borders. Sense of belonging can be risen along with creating new job opportunities in order to strengthen the population retention force in regions characterised by serious outmigration or even depopulation. Many other types of projects can be realized after bringing people closer together by breaking down mental boundaries with the help of tourism-related initiatives. Having a “soft” feature, many further examples of co-operation can be based on previous tourism-related initiatives even in case of border regions of countries having conflictual relations.

In regions such as Central and South-East Europe, there is no long history of cross-border tourism cooperation, its culture is still relatively weak with both its quantitative and qualitative aspects. In order to develop further and give a stimulus to the recently emerging cross-border tourism initiatives, programmes and funds related to tourism development have higher and higher importance.

Finally, the importance of joint tourism destination management cannot be overstated at both cross-border and macro-regional or transnational level of coordination. In order to step forward from individual sites and developments, an evolution of cross-border tourism towards integrated actions and connected attractions, services and stakeholders are needed in the name of **making more formal, institutionalized and cost-efficient co-operation models**. These types of organizations will be able to elaborate and implement projects furthermore they will also be able to maintain the results, the personnel and the joint institutions, infrastructures.

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<sup>9</sup> 6th Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion (download:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion6/light\\_6cr\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion6/light_6cr_en.pdf))

## 2.4 Best practices and tools concerning the joint development of a cross-border tourism area

In the next section, two initiatives regarded as best practices<sup>10</sup> will be presented in order to show the importance of joint management and formal, institutionalised organisations. Finally, the innovative tool of cross-border governance of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) will be discussed.

### 2.4.1 Lake Constance Tourism Ltd.

The initiatives focusing on the joint development and management of a common cross-border tourism area around Lake Constance can be seen as best practice, especially when it founded the Internationale Bodensee Tourismus GmbH organisation (abbreviation: IBT). IBT, founded in 1997, has been working as a cross-border tourism organisation for many years now. Its shareholders are destination management organisations, administrative districts and associations of four countries, Germany, Switzerland, France and Liechtenstein, in the Lake Constance area (for an overview, please consult the figure below).

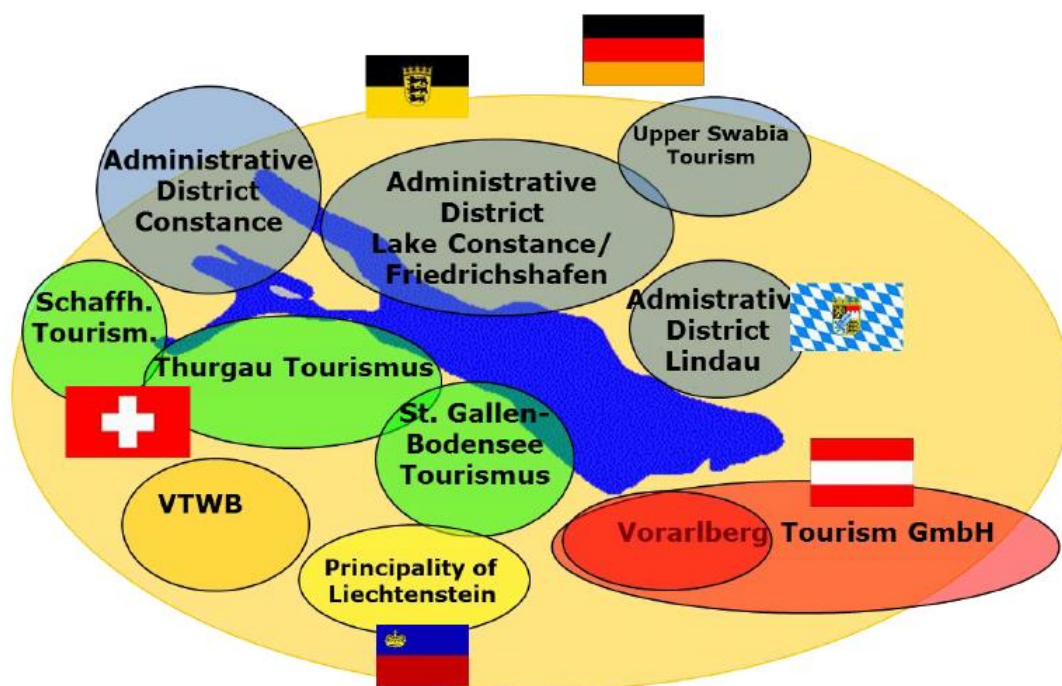


Figure 2.: The shareholders of Internationale Bodensee Tourismus GmbH  
(Source: Internationale Bodensee Tourismus GmbH)

<sup>10</sup> Many other best practices can be found in addition to the introduced ones, e. g. EGTC Tatry, Dunkirk-West Vlaanderen-Côte d'Opale EGTC, cross-border geoparks of UNESCO, SaarMoselle Eurodistrict, Euregio Meuse-Rhein, AlteValli Cooperazione Transfronatljera etc.

It is to be underlined that while many cross-border regions cooperate only for one special project or only for a certain period of time, the IBT and its co-operation has a long term orientation and higher level of institutionalisation.

Internationale Bodensee Tourismus GmbH is similar to a tourism destination management organisation (DMO). IBT does not operate in all fields of a DMO, and as many of the shareholders are DMOs themselves, IBT covers the fields and functions needed for successful cross-border integration. The organisation therefore focuses on fields that can complement the shareholders' activities giving them additional benefits.

IBT serves in a way as an umbrella organisation which pools information concerning the entire region around Lake Constance and its attractions. IBT GmbH is the platform via which tourist organisations of the destinations/regions and the companies in the tourism sector around Lake Constance cooperate and share information. With the help of IBT, regional actors work on projects and issues together. IBT helps in presenting, representing and communicating Lake Constance as a unified area, a joint single touristic region for guests or business partners like media, tour operators and so on. For example by maintaining the official tourism website, creating common cross-border products like the Bodensee Erlebniskarte (Lake Constance Adventure Card), carrying out common press work for the region or organising and coordinating tours and press trips throughout the Lake Constance region and its four countries.

Having cross-border structures and a unified system, organizing tourism activities in the region has been simplified. For tourism business partners and tourists, it is, as a first step, enough to have contact only with IBT regarding Lake Constance instead of 10 different organisations or regions making the situation much less complicated and much clearer. As a second step, for more detailed needs, questions or for bookings, IBT can bring partners, tourists and regional tourism stakeholders together with the suitable partners, suppliers or destination management organisations in the region.

As the GmbH stated, it is quite crucial to have one particular organisation responsible for the joint image and the communication of the cross-border region of Lake Constance. The organisation is in charge of elaborating a common vision, tourism strategy and positioning the lake region on tourism market as well. Instead of fragmented, local or nationwide activities, IBT carries out its tasks on a cross-border level of the whole Lake Constance region. With the help of IBT we can talk about a joint Lake Constance region that unites attractions, services and stakeholders (e.g. by easily

accessible contacts or bookings), have the competences of responsible organisation in order to elaborate and implement joint strategies, concrete projects and tourism products.

To name but a few examples of the projects/products that IBT has taken part in or implemented directly:

- **Bodensee Erlebniskarte:** it is designed to be the Holiday Pass of Lake Constance, an all-inclusive card that offers free access to more than 160 attractions in four countries in the Lake Constance area for guests. This cross-border product has been available by the help of IBT for more than 15 years.<sup>11</sup>
- **EU project of developing a common positioning and tourism strategy for the international Lake Constance region:** the project „*Positionierung der Tourismusregion Internationaler Bodensee zur Optimierung des Destinationsmanagements*“ (2009-2012) can be considered as the basis for the work and designated function of today’s organisation<sup>12</sup>
- **EU project of Lake Constance Gardens:** it is a relatively new product, a cross-border network of historical gardens or castles, monasteries with gardens around Lake Constance<sup>13</sup>
- **EU project of Wine Region Lake Constance:** it is a new cross-border network of wine regions, wineries, tourism partners around the lake to establish Lake Constance region as a cross-border wine region
- **Joint trade fair presentations of Lake Constance:** the organisation supports the representation of Lake Constance as one region/destination. For example joint trade-fair presentation takes place at the Camping Motor Touristik, Europe’s largest tourist fair, in Stuttgart.<sup>14</sup>
- **Common Sales Guide Lake Constance:** IBT has just developed a guide for 2016-2017 including tour suggestions to explore the highlights of the four countries around the lake and the joint “four-country-region” in itself<sup>15</sup>
- **Official website:** the website presents the Lake Constance region as a unified tourism region under the motto “Bodensee - four countries, one lake”<sup>16</sup>

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11 For more information please check: <http://www.bodensee.eu/en/was-erleben/bodensee-highlights/bodenseeerlebniskarte>

12 All the documents and information about this project can be found on the project’s website:  
<http://www.dasbodenseeprojekt.eu/>

13 <http://en.bodenseegaerten.eu/A-journey-through-time/history>

14 <http://www.bodensee.eu/de/b2b/partners/cmt-2016>

15 <http://www.bodensee.eu/trade/sales-guide>

16 [www.bodensee.eu](http://www.bodensee.eu)

### 2.4.2 Espace Mont-Blanc

The Espace Mont-Blanc is a cross-border cooperation bringing together 35 communes straddling Upper Savoy (France), the Aosta Valley (Italy) and Valais (Switzerland). These actors commit themselves to the protection and enhancement of an emblematic territory, where the exceptional natural and environmental heritage lives alongside economic and tourist activities international in scope.

The establishment and the subsequent steps of the cooperation itself have a long history. The celebration of the bicentennial of the first ascension of Mont Blanc in August 1986 marked the beginning of the evolution of French-Italian-Swiss cross-border cooperation around Mont Blanc.<sup>17</sup> In order to protect and support the exceptional environmental and cultural heritage of the mountainous area, ministers of the environment of the three countries signed the Declaration of Locarno in order to designate a “Mont Blanc International Park”. After a fruitful discussion the ministers of the three countries, furthermore the national authorities and their regional and local counterparts agreed on the creation of the Espace Mont-Blanc in 1991. So Espace Mont-Blanc was initiated by a decision-making body, namely the Mont-Blanc Cross-border Conference, bringing national, regional and local representatives of France, Italy and Switzerland together. Since then there is a tradition of series of so-called Mont Blanc Cross-border Conferences, every time in another city situated in the cross-border region. In 1992 a mandate was given to put in place the necessary structures to conduct a cross-border feasibility study, to launch the pilot projects, as well as to define the area of the cooperation of Espace Mont-Blanc. Cross-border tourism became a distinct and major initiative in 1993 when the annual Mont Blanc Cross-border Conference was charged by the Ministries of the three countries to launch pilot projects in the frames of “extensive yet gentle tourism”. After ten years of study to lay down a framework, the projects entered into their realisation phase and materialised with the drafting of the *Sustainable Development Scheme in 2006*. In the process of becoming an even more formal organization, a tourism task force was set up in 2013 with the help of the Alpine Convention.

Owing to the long and successful initiatives carried out since the 1980s, the three Vice-Presidents of the Espace Mont-Blanc signed a document about the creation of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation in January 2014. It marked a new level and period in the cooperation history of Espace Mont-Blanc.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.espace-mont-blanc.com/en/timeline>

In the last 20 years, Espace Mont-Blanc strives at meeting the needs of sustainable development through actions related to the following priority axes: Mountains, Territory, Energy and Transport, as well as Education, reaching positive effects on tourism offered in the respective cross-border territories. Among the actions carried out, the organisation would like to emphasize the following ones as important steps or even best practices:

- In 2001 a **guide with 50 theme trails** in the Espace Mont-Blanc was introduced.
- In 2007 an **Ultra Trail du Mont-Blanc**, an eco-responsible race was established.
- **Inauguration of the Casermetta Espace Mont-Blanc**: it took place in 2007 with the help of funds of ALCOIRA, EU funds. The structure has become a privileged centre of research and advocacy for sustainable development, tourism included.
- **Creation of the Association of hut wardens** in all three countries (at the moment it is still independent: it has its own President, General Assembly etc.)
- **Establishment of the official website of the Mont Blanc area<sup>18</sup>** as well as the **booking website<sup>19</sup>** (managed directly by the Association), with a turnover of 1 300 000 EUR per year.
- Within the framework of the aforementioned Integrated Cross-border Plan, a project on sustainable tourism entitled “**Around the Mont Blanc**” was launched and important results have been reached in establishing a joint cross-border touristic region under a single logo.

The objectives of the cooperation are the following: conserve the cultivated area: support agriculture and pastoral activity; protect nature and landscape; encourage integrated tourism compatible with the protection of resources and the environment; limit the impact of transport and their infrastructure in favour of local inhabitants and the environment.

Recently, in the course of the action programmes realised between 2007 and 2013 within the framework of the joint *Integrated Cross-border Plan*, Espace Mont-Blanc has been involved in a multitude of European cooperation initiatives (mainly Interreg ALCOIRA, but also the France-Switzerland and Italy-Switzerland CBC Programmes). The goal is to create good practices with 6 main projects: *Camp de base* (Base camp), *Mont-Blanc villages durables* (Sustainable Mont-Blanc villages), *Autour du Mont-Blanc* (Around the Mont-Blanc), *Éducation à l’environnement* (Environmental education), *Mobilité durable* (Sustainably mobility) and *Saveurs d’hauteur* (Highland flavours).

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18 <http://www.autourdumontblanc.com>

19 <http://www.montourdumontblanc.com/fr/index.aspx#>

The latest development plan for the region is called *Strategy for the Future of Mont Blanc (2014-2020)*. The Future Strategy forms the main strategic tool to align public policies around the Mont-Blanc and is structured around two main axes: Preservation and development of the mountain range; and Creation of a sustainable and innovative economy respecting natural resources. As tourism-related developments will form important steps in the realization of a joint cross-border region during the Strategy for the Future of Mont Blanc, tourism is still one out of the three main profiles of the region (along with environmental and economic issues). Among others, the main actions to be dealt with within the framework of future European projects or concerning mountains within the framework of Structural Funds 2014-2020 are in the field of enhancing the attractiveness of the cross-border territory (e.g. by re-qualifying and reorganising tourist sites of great environmental value and socially confronted with tourism pressure, developing research and scientific hiking tracks, creating an environment research centre network, promoting the agricultural and agro-pastoral sectors of the territory by developing its tourism potential etc.).

The examples cited before demonstrate the necessity of a territorial-based approach in tourism development not only inside but also between member states. Territorial integration of resources and assets in tourism, emphasis on integrated territorial approach can provide a new impetus to the economic growth of border areas.



## 2.5 An innovative tool for joint cross-border tourism development: European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

During the last 60 years cross-border cooperation, including tourism, has undergone a unique process in Europe. In the very early years, cross-border cooperation meant an informal, potential partnership without a stable institutional background. This period was mainly characterized by personal relations, ad hoc actions, and sporadic cooperation. Some 40 years ago some stakeholders started to use the geographic proximity for utilizing territorially complementary functions for the development of the given regions. At the same time, functional level of cooperation required the **emerging of the normative level of cross-border cooperation, the level of regulated institutional cooperation, since the fulfilment of functions across the border necessitates a stable legal background**. Thanks to the EGTC Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006<sup>20</sup>, an innovative solution of the European Union, **European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation** became legally available in order to ensure permanent cross-border cooperation in the field of tourism as well. It can be considered as the first European cooperation structure with a legal personality, an actor of the highest actual level of cross-border (territorial) cooperation. It is welcomed that an EGTC is a tool to be used for the management of EU Structural Funds, but different functions can be envisaged for an EGTC too: in charge of the implementation of a Territorial Cooperation programme (upon delegation by the Member State to the EGTC); lead partner or partner in an ETC project; other cooperation actions with EU-funding; their cooperation actions without EU-funding.<sup>21</sup> Since an EGTC has a legal entity status on both sides of the border, it is able to manage projects and programmes, as well as establish and operate institutions and enterprises maintaining the results of implemented projects and programmes. It is not accidental that both the Tatry and the Mont-Blanc cooperation have chosen this instrument to intensify their common work.

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20 REGULATION (EC) No 1082/2006 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 5 July 2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) (download: <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/networks/Documents/EN.pdf>)

21 [http://www.interact-eu.net/the\\_egtc\\_regulation/the\\_egtc\\_regulation/68/42](http://www.interact-eu.net/the_egtc_regulation/the_egtc_regulation/68/42)

### 3. Conclusions

- Tourism industries play an important role in EU economy with their 2.2 Million enterprises, 12 Million employees and a share of over 10% in GDP.
- Due to the cross-border characteristics of landscapes with many attractions and destinations, an approach of joint development and management is needed.
- Tourism activities are often an important first step in improving the sense of social cohesion along the borders resulting in additional positive effects on cross-border cooperation culture. Many other type of projects can be realized after bringing people closer together by breaking down mental boundaries with the help of tourism-related initiatives.
- In order to develop further and give a stimulus to the recently emerging cross-border tourism initiatives in the case of less developed regions, programmes and funds related to tourism development have an increasingly high importance.
- Around 75% of tourism projects in the frame of Cohesion Policy were elaborated in Convergence regions in the period of 2007-2013, in the newly joined countries of the EU, therefore tourism developments in less developed regions have higher importance in reaching cohesion goals and economic growth as well.
- There is a need in macro-regional, transnational and cross-border cooperation programmes for more directly articulated financial allocation to tourism actions, at least 15-20% out of the total EU contribution.
- Elaborating and implementing direct tourism interventions have become much more difficult in the on-going planning period because tourism is explicitly not included in the list of the 11 thematic objectives (TOs). In the event the system of TOs remains in force beyond 2020, particular TO dedicated to tourism is advised to include in the list.
- At the same time, keeping in mind the heterogeneity of EU regions in terms of cohesion, instead of strict restrictions of thematic concentration obligatory for all regions, **territorial concentration** would be well advised within CBC programmes. This way, border regions such like Mont-Blanc or Bodensee areas can develop and implement their own integrated territorial strategies based on the detected potentials and needs, and more integrated cross-border tourist developments can be realized.
- In order to elaborate and implement actions and maintain its results, infrastructure, (personnel included), a shift toward a more institutionalized formal cooperation (e.g.

EGTCs) would be well advised in the form of joint cross-border tourism destination management.

- EGTCs representing possibly the highest level of cross-border cooperation are welcomed in the case of tourism initiatives, and it would be well advised to rely more on this innovative tool of regional development and territorial governance.