



The project is funded by EU

DISCOVERING HIDDEN ATTRACTIONS

The regions of Pelagonija in North Macedonia and Diber in Albania have some of the greatest potential for the development of a dynamic and sustainable tourism offer in the CB area.

The possibility to capitalize these cross-border assets is provided within the frame of the **Cross – border cooperation Programme between Republic of North Macedonia and Republic of Albania, co-funded by the European Union – IPA 2 instrument and Ministry of Local Self – Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.**

Both Demir Hisar (MK) and Klos (AL) municipalities, are rich in tangible and intangible cultural heritage, diverse natural landscapes that are favorable for a variety of outdoor experiences for visitors, especially since they are located within an hour's drive from the main destination hubs of Bitola and Tirana (by the newly built Rruga Arberit highway).



The problem addressed by Discovering hidden attractions project is the under-utilized manmade and natural potential of the CB region as a means to increase the number of traveler arrivals onto the territory of the municipalities, and their length of stay and spending on various activities, thus engaging the local population in business activities, resulting in an increase in their incomes and reducing youth unemployment.

Discovering hidden attractions focuses on developing a consolidated travel packages across the border. Developing similar destination attractiveness factors in both municipalities, as well developing products of active tourism—hiking, cycling and local experiences delivered by locals—culminates in a **joint cross-border travel package** motivating visitors to go beyond borders and explore untouched places offering a **unique single thematic destination to a two-country travel experience.**

Project objectives are:

1. **To increase the touristic attractiveness of the CB target destination.** The project will introduce a point of interest through the adaptation of the existing Cooperative Centre in v. Sloestica (MK) into a Multifunctional **Cultural Center** encompassing: a new attraction as a motivation to visit the location by establishing a **Memorial Room for the renowned writer P.M. Andreevski**, featuring original personal furniture and inventory in partnership with the co-applicant ART Point Gumno, (www.artpoint-gumno.org.mk) an NGO dealing with the preservation and promotion of culture in the area of Demir Hisar for the past ten years, organizing annual cultural events attracting active travelers from all over the world; it will introduce a **souvenir and traditional products shop**;

increase the attractiveness of the wider region by **upgrading the natural area of Valavicite (natural river whirlpools) into a touristic site** offering a unique visitor experience. Added value will be an **increased number of beds in the destination** (set on the upper floor of the Centre), thus contributing towards the upgrading of the accommodation possibilities both in quality and quantity. **Hiking and cycling (mount biking) trails** introducing natural and cultural heritage will be developed in the rural surroundings of DH and Klos.

A main **cultural motivator will be established in Klos (AL) through the construction of a new Historical and Ethnographic Museum** for the area. In conjunction with this infrastructural development, **capacity development of the staff** will be provided by the partner FLAG (www.flag-al.org), a NGO from Tirana with extensive experience in developing local communities. In the area of Klos, the project envisages **renovation of the hiking trails to the glacial lakes at Balgjat, and the canyon of Gryke e Xhabes and to Gurra Kaculit, as well as the installation of signage for all 21 cultural monuments in Klos Municipality, particularly for the new Museum, the ancient bridge of Ura Vashes, and the above-mentioned hiking trails to Balgjat, Gryke e Xhabes and Gurra Kaculit.**

2. **To develop joint CB cultural and tourism products.** The project will develop at least two **CB tourism products**, namely one-day and multi-day trips to the CB area that will introduce visitor packages of an activity and cultural content, linking the area of Klos and Demir Hisar by the similar activities offered. **Online targeted campaigns for promotion of the joint tourism products** will present the attractiveness and innovative adventure offered by the area.
3. **To diversify the CB target area touristic offer by SME innovations.** Businesses will be heavily involved in the process of **CB destination plan development (supply and demand assessment)** and knowledge sharing, contributing thus to the **development of new marketable products** and participation in the **testing of new touristic services and products (FAM tours).**
4. **To uplift the skills of persons engaged in rural and active tourism.** Building capacities for **the local people in the CB target area for marketing their own traditional products as well for the services and activity providers** regarding the expectations of travelers will be introduced by the project.

The project specifically works into developing rural and eco-tourism business in the same time preserving traditional way of life, quality of natural surroundings and quality of life as those are preconditions to a scaled up tourist offer in the rural areas.

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Project overall budget: 455 633€

Co-financing from EU: 387 288 €

Project duration: 20 months

Project partners:

1. **Lead partner is Municipality of Demir Hisar**
2. **Municipality of Klos**
3. **NGO ART POINT-GUMNO, v. Sloeshtica**
4. **NGO FLAG, Tirana**

