



Balkans & Black Sea Cooperation Forum

Friday May 26th

Press Release

“Cultural Tourism, a key to Sustainable Development”

- **Master Plan Cultural Tourism to connect destinations in the Balkans and Black Sea region**

The First Balkans & Black Sea Cooperation Forum, was successfully held in the city of Serres, Greece, from 25 to 26 May 2017.

The inaugurated Forum kick-started with the headline “**Cultural Tourism | a key to Sustainable Development**” aligned with United Nations resolution (A/C.2/ 70/L.5/Rev.1 of 4/12/2015) that has adopted 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

The participants expressed their willingness to actively promote cultural tourism, as a key to sustainable development for the benefit of all peoples in the Balkans and Black Sea region, a region rich in diverse cultural heritage, possessing vibrant creative forces and the capacity to build on a wide and positive experience in stimulating growth through the protection of its distinctive natural and human-made landmarks.

In this framework, the participants expressed their readiness to contribute to the formulation of a **Master Plan** for the promotion of **Cultural Tourism**, with the aim to create a practical platform for **connecting destinations** in the Balkans and Black Sea region and provide to the cultural and creative industries an environment allowing them to continue expanding, creating growth and increasing employment.

In particular the Forum’s strategic partners –the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions and the European Banking Federation- welcomed the Master Plan as a tangible conference proceeding.

Partners expressed their willingness and readiness to contribute to the Master Plan with their **expertise**, including how public and private sector **funding** can support the development of partnerships. In particular, public-private partnerships on Joint Technologies Initiatives and co-funded initiatives can be addressed. Furthermore, the Master Plan can consider the potential of rural development funding for innovation as a way to turn Cultural Tourism into an engine for **sustainable, social and economic development**.

The adoption of such a Master Plan and its implementation process will further facilitate the enhancement of **interaction** between Government officials, regions, entrepreneurs, academia, NGO’s and, last but not least, young people, providing fresh incentives for exchanges, common projects and initiatives.

<p>Official Partner Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation</p>		<p>Strategic Partners</p>			
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The Master Plan in question will be finalized at the forthcoming Thessaloniki International Trade Fair*, in September 2017, during a Balkans & Black Sea Cooperation Forum event, in cooperation with representatives from the 2018 hosting country and city.

For queries, please contact:

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**T.I.F. is an annual commercial exhibition event of great importance in Greece and Southeastern Europe, taking place at 180,000m². It is customary for a Greek prime minister to set out his government's policies for each coming year in a speech, and for this reason the event has political significance in addition to its commercial importance. This year's honorary country is China; this signals a more institutional approach by China to Greece and S.E. Europe.*

<p>Official Partner Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation</p>		<p>Strategic Partners</p>	<p>Black Sea Trade & Development Bank</p> 		<p>CPMR CRPM</p>  <p>European Business Federation</p>
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