Building Regional Actions for New Developments in Tourism

REGION OF CRETE

REGIONAL SURVEY

REGION OF CRETE
2017
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   1. INTRODUCTION

Crete island, fifth in size in the Mediterranean and the second largest in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea is located between the Ionian, the Aegean and the Libyan sea. It

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covers a surface of 8.332 km² and 1040 km of coastline. The island has a rich and varied landscape, history and culture. The ever present sea offers a pleasant environment and the climate of Crete provides an annual average of 300 days of sunshine. The natural beauty of the island is on the top-ranking islands of Europe and worldwide. Scenic panoramas, sandy beaches, crystal waters, a magical underwater world and traditional villages offering the rich Cretan nutrition cover the whole island. There are rough mountains and impressive gorges. The Gorge of Samaria is internationally known and visited by 300,000 people every year. It has been proclaimed Biosphere Reserve by MAB Programme of UNESCO. Also Psiloritis Nature Park and Sitia Nature Park are World Geoparks by UNESCO due to their natural biodiversity. Crete is considered as a “must see” destination for thousands reasons, grouped in four core themes: history and culture, outstanding natural beauty, heartfelt hospitality, lively and cosmopolitan island.
Moreover, there are three small islands in the southern side of Crete which are connected by ferry boats:

- **Gavdos**, which is the southernmost inhabited border of Greece, is connected by ferry boat from Sfakia-Chania.
- **Koufonisi**, which is non-inhabited and is connected in summer season by daily cruises boats from Makri Gialos-Lassithi
- **Chryssi**, which is non-inhabited and is connected by small ferry boats from Ierapetra-Lassithi.

Population related to last census (2011) was 621,340 people. Approximately 42% of the population lives in Crete's main cities and towns while 45% lives in rural areas. The Region of Crete is composed of four Regional Units and accordingly four main cities which are: Chania, Rethymno, Heraklion and Agios Nikolaos.

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**Region of Crete – Administrative Structure**

[Diagram showing the four main cities of Crete: Chania, Rethymnon, Heraklion, and Lassithi]

*One of the 13 top-level administrative units of Greece*

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1.2 CONNECTION
Crete has three international airports: “Nikos Kazantzakis” in Heraklion, “I.Daskalogiannis” in Chania and in Sitia, Lassithi. Most of the air traffic is concentrated in Heraklion airport which is the second biggest airport in Greece in passengers and cargo. There are six main ports, two of them, Heraklion and Chania have regular sea lines operating travel itineraries to/from Athens and other Greek islands.

**1.3 HISTORY AND CULTURE DESTINATION**

The island of Crete is a cultural crossroads where generations of Minoan, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Venetian, Turkish, Jewish, and Egyptian people lived. A large number of elements of other cultures still form a part of the everydayness of the Cretan people. The history of Crete is age-long and should be traced back in the first myths and legends. According to the Greek mythology, Cretan-Born Zeus was born and raised in the mountains of Crete. Minos is referred to in mythology as the son of Zeus and Europe. Minoan Crete, with its ninety cities and their brave young men are also mentioned by Homer in Ilias.

There is evidence that the island was inhabited ever since the Neolithic times. During the Copper Age the Minoan civilization developed, especially from 1900 BC until its sudden disappearance around 1500 BC. Knossos was the centre of it. The Minoans controlled the trade in the eastern Mediterranean Sea and accumulated great wealth. Apart from Knossos, many cities were also important and the excavation findings indicate a great civilization.
Crete owns remarkable museums, archaeological sites, the ancient palaces of Knossos, Phestos, Malia and Zakros, Byzantine churches and monasteries, historical buildings and fortresses of the Venetian and Neoclassical architecture, even minarets and mosques. The ancient civilization from the prehistoric Minoan times since now revolves around the Cretan culture but most of all, the famous Cretan hospitality is very much in evidence and has made its mark on the island and throughout the world.

1.4 GASTRONOMIC AND VINEYARD DESTINATION

The value of the Cretan nutrition and the importance of the local foods of the Cretan dietary scheme (such as olive oil, plant fibers, fresh seasonal foods and vegetables, pulses) in the adherence to a healthy diet model, shielding the Cretans from the serious diseases of Western Civilisation. Promoting the superiority of “the Cretan dietary pattern” is a strong competitive advantage for Crete.

Today, the Cretan Diet and the local products claim the position and the recognition they deserve. Since 2012, the Region of Crete along with the Agro-nutritional Cooperation, have been pioneers in implementing the labeling of standardized local products with the label “crete”.

The main goal is for the products labeled “crete” to become all the more recognizable and competitive, as well as to have a strong commercial identity in the national and international markets.

The label “crete” was created in order to enable agricultural products, which are distinguished by their quality standards as far as production, standardization and distribution, to be properly presented and promoted to buyers. They are products manufactured and produced in Crete, showcasing the culinary traditions of the island to the world. The Cretan products with the label “crete” are available in various eating establishments, restaurants, Greek taverns, restaurants in hotels or agro-tourism complexes with the label “cretan cuisine” and retail shops in Greece with the label “cretan grocery store”.

There are numerous agro-tourism and rural accommodation areas and varying agro-tourism activities such as the harvest of olives, the process of the olive oil production, distillation of raki, vintage, honey production, vegetable cultivation, collection of milk and dairy products processing, raising of domestic animals, sheep – shearing, etc. There is an available online Agro-tourism guide that the visitors are able to download and live the experience of the traditional Cretan lifestyle.

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There are more than 30 wineries in the Region of Crete. Cretan winemaking industry has entered a new growth path following a mindset of cooperation and synergies, since 2006. Functioning as core production of bottled wines, Prefecture of Heraklion, provided the initial impulse for what would then develop into Wines of Crete. The creation of the Heraklion Winemakers’ Network urged the creation of the Chania - Rethymnon Winemakers’ Network two years later. Subsequently, Prefecture of Lasithi joined the network of Heraklion’s, resulting in the achievement of the first goal, which was none other than the consistent promotion of Cretan wine not only within the island but to other places as well.

1.5 TOURISM EXPERIENCE

Development of alternative tourism forms and e-services for travel activities focused on the experience is conducted in the context of the tourism promotion of Crete. The rich natural environment of Crete is suitable for a variety of activities. Cretan nature gives the opportunity to explore a wide range of landscapes of great diversity, wildlife, traditional rural life through Agro-tourism activities given the natural and cultural wealth of Crete, as well as the quality and genuineness of the local life.

The following table shows the alternative tourism forms in Crete:
2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

The Region of Crete participates in the Gross Domestic Product of the country at a percentage more than 5%. The GDP of Crete showed a considerable increase (75.35%) during the years 2000-2008, in line with the 73.85% increase in the national GDP for the same period. The per capita Gross Domestic Product of Crete is equal to that of the country. In the year 2008 it amounted to 21.157 euro, matching the corresponding figure of the total of the Regions of the country (21.084 euro).

The per capita GDP of Crete showed a constant upward course during the years 2000-2008, with a total percentage increase of 70.98%. The Gross Added Value in the total of the productive branches in Crete amounts to 11.375 million euro (data of the year 2008). The Primary sector has a domineering position in terms of products and employment, but it is characterized by small and dispersed lots, dependence on traditional models and cultivations, structural backwardness with imperfect infrastructures, largely outdated production systems and low postproduction added value. Among the different productive branches the branch "Industry and Energy" shows the highest increase, as part of the secondary sector, with a 165% percentage but with a relatively low total added value (851 million euro). The branch "Trade and Tourism" has the most important contribution to the added value of the products of Crete and the highest participation percentage in the added value, being the pivot of the development of Crete. Because of the insular nature of the economy and its exporting orientation, very powerful transportation and shipping companies have been founded.

2.1 EMPLOYMENT

Employment in the Region of Crete has remained at the same levels during the past decade. The number of working people increased from 267.320 in 2000 to 274.872 in 2008, that is, it presented a small increase of 2.82%. Significant increases and decreases in employment appear, however, in the different branches of the regional economy. In the primary sector the work force appears reduced from 76.659 in 2000 to 48.734 in 2008, which corresponds to a decrease of 36.43%.

In the strongest branch of the Cretan economy, "Trade and Tourist Services", the Regional Units of Heraklion and Chania appear to be stronger than the rest of the regional units, having some of the important tourist sites of the island and the two largest cities.

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2.2 PRODUCTION AND EXPORT TRADE

The Exporters’ Association of Crete was founded in December 1994, by the initiative of the businessmen and exporters of Crete with the collaboration and support of the Region of Crete, the Hellenic Foreign Trade Board (HEPO), the Exporters’ Association of Northern Greece (S.E.V.E.) and the Chambers of Crete. Today, more than 160 Cretan exporting businesses are its members, which are active in the sectors of Foods and Beverage, Industrial products, Agricultural products - Alteration and Popular Art. The Exporters’ Association of Crete tries to establish its own mark through informative actions for its members, actions that deal with exhibitions, daily events, conferences, request bills for products by foreign countries, and also through the support of its members who wish to participate in international events sponsored by the Association. In Crete is estimated a total amount of 500 million euro in exports (2017).

3. TOURISM INDUSTRY

Tourism is the most dynamically developing sector and the demand gave incentives for important investments in hotel units, resulting in the qualitative and quantitative upgrading of hotel infrastructures. At the same time it is facing structural problems, consisting mainly in its seasonal nature and the limited expansion of the tourist movement to the inland settlements, as tourist infrastructures are mainly gathered in the northern coast and small centers in the south, while its course is largely influenced by outward, uncontrollable conditions, contributing to fluctuations in its performance. An important competitive advantage of the tourist branch is the high percentage of high standard hotel infrastructures. As seen in Table 1, Crete has 30,31% of the total of 5 star beds in Greece and 24,57% of 4 star beds respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>5*****</th>
<th>4****</th>
<th>3***</th>
<th>2**</th>
<th>1**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Units</td>
<td>15,84%</td>
<td>24,55%</td>
<td>18,80%</td>
<td>14,50%</td>
<td>15,77%</td>
<td>13,71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooms</td>
<td>21,64%</td>
<td>30,51%</td>
<td>24,59%</td>
<td>16,36%</td>
<td>19,92%</td>
<td>19,22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beds</td>
<td>21,31%</td>
<td>30,31%</td>
<td>24,57%</td>
<td>16,08%</td>
<td>19,06%</td>
<td>18,48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Hotel capacity (percentage to Greece) by category in Crete, 2011 (Source: SETE 2012)
3.1 INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC ARRIVALS

There is an increase of 12,28% in international flight arrivals related to previous year and an increase of 0,62% in international arrivals by the sea. Passengers traffic in Heraklion international airport “N Kazantzakis” rose significantly in 2016, where foreign arrivals reached 2,900,000 passengers. In particular, the international airport of Heraklion “N Kazantzakis” is the 2nd in Greece in terms of arrivals (2016). Moreover, the international airport of Chania comes 1st in terms of capacity (86%) in 2016.

It is an island with incomprehensible diversity and contrasts that attracts many tourists every year. Welcomes approximately:

- 15% of all international tourism to Greece
- 40 years of successful tourism development
- International arrivals: 40% increase in the past 4 years

Below is the table with tourism magnitudes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passengers arrivals by air (2016)</th>
<th>3,938,580</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passengers arrivals by the sea (2016)</td>
<td>963,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels (2015)</td>
<td>1,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrotourism and rural Accommodation (2015)</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Enterprises (2015)</td>
<td>1,557</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourism Activities</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Accommodation</td>
<td>15,1%</td>
<td>15,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Food and beverage section</td>
<td>19,8%</td>
<td>19,4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Employment in tourism sector:

Source: ELSTAT (Hellenic Statistical Service)

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A total amount of 3,938,580 flight arrivals (2016) are foreign:

- 761,529 arrivals from Germany
- 575,005 arrivals from England
- 614,154 arrivals from Scandinavian countries
- 177,309 arrivals from Holland
- 316,235 arrivals from France
- 79,485 arrivals from Austria
- 135,349 arrivals from Belgium/Luxemburg
- 124,950 arrivals from Switzerland
- 153,814 arrivals from Italy
- 225,309 arrivals from other countries and
- 775,441 arrivals from East Europe countries

SOURCE: MINISTRY OF TOURISM - REGIONAL TOURISM OFFICE DIRECTORATE OF CRETE
The total amount of 963.614 arrivals by the sea (2016) are 728.298 passengers from internal shipping lines, 235.041 passengers from foreign Cruises and 275 passengers from yachts.

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3.2 VISITOR PROFILE

The visitors of Crete are from all ages, look for adventure, activities, relax and spa therapies. The last years the tourists prefer, except from sea and sun, alternative tourism such as natural and botanical routes, climbing, trekking, new undiscovered places such as small traditional villages.

3.3 TOURIST BENEFITS

The tourist benefits means the way which is promoted the island and how they can add value in visitors’ experience.

These are the below:

- Back to basics, return to tradition
- Live an adventure
- Escape
- Get together, enjoy each other
- Rest and relax
- Travel in time
- Learn
- Cretan hospitality
- Discover new experiences
- Re-energize, rejuvenate.
3.4 TOURIST SATISFACTION

The main elements that attract and satisfy tourists are mostly:

- Weather and Climate
- Famous gastronomy (the well-known Cretan Nutrition)
- Tradition and Cretan way of life
- Cultural heritage and history
- Natural environment
- Beaches and Coasts

Moreover, there are specific groups of tourists who are satisfied with activities such as following:

- Religious and pilgrimage sites
- Botanical and natural routes
- Alternative tourism of well-being and relaxation
- Off-road activities
- Organizations of congresses

3.5 TRENDS AND COMPETITORS

The trend and the main interest in development of tourism product in Greece and especially in Crete is the sustainability of tourism in current social, economic and political conditions. Taking into consideration that the tourists prefer different kind of activities, for example alternative forms of tourism, quick way of reservation via internet. Sustainable as far as the economy, environment and society is concerned. Sustainable in terms of economy: the aim is to achieve sustainable development based on the Region’s characteristics, that is, the enduring value of culture- Cretan nutrition where there is a solid base for boosting extroversion and increased competitiveness. Sustainable in terms of environment: protection and enhancement of natural and cultural resources. Sustainable in terms of society: inclusive development combined with ways of combating poverty and support of weaker social groups.

So the main targets are:

- Enhancement of tourist services
- Differentiation of tourist product to sectors where Crete could develop comparative advantages.
- Reinforcement of entry points
- Promotion of Crete’s rich cultural heritage and interconnection with the society and the local economy.

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Due to its geographic situation, the competitors are: Spain, Italy, France, Malta and Turkey.

4. **TOURISM PROMOTION**

Every year the program of tourism promotion is planned by the Departments of Tourism of Region of Crete and is approved by the Regional Council of Crete and the Greek National Tourism Organization. This program includes the proposals and actions of all stakeholders and the economic ability of Region of Crete for the improvement and development of tourism product and the increase of tourists’ choice as travel destination.

The targets of the program are:

- Maintaining the traditional markets
- Opening in new markets and in internal tourism
- Elongation of the tourism period with alternative forms of tourism

The program includes seven actions for better promotion of Region of Crete:

1. Tourism Exhibitions
2. Hospitalities
3. Events
4. Promoting material
5. Advertisement
6. Web management, social media and development of the official website: www.incrediblecrete.gr
7. Studies

4.1 **TOURISM PROMOTION ACTIVITIES**

- The European project, entitled “Development of Content and Communication Applications in the framework of the Tourism Promotion of the Region of Crete”, according to the Action Plan "Tourism Marketing of Crete 2012-2015", which was prepared in the framework of the project “Provision of Consulting Services for the specialization and technical support of the implementation of Tourism Promotion Actions of the Region of Crete, funded by the O.P of Crete and Aegean Islands Operations 2007 -2013 (" Priority Axis 7 of the Program entitled “Sustainable Development and Quality of Life in the Region of Crete”, CS 57 "Assistance to Improvement of Tourism Services") and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and national resources.

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The "Tourism Marketing Marketing 2012-2015" Action Plan which includes a set of actions divided into three (3) categories:

A. Developing Content and Communication Applications
B. Coordinated Marketing Activities
C. Coordination Monitoring Actions

Accordingly, the action concerning "Development of Communication Content and Applications" includes the following actions:

**Action 1**: Creation of Visual Identity (brand identity), and Application System of destination “Crete”

**Action 2**: Creation of experiential products for the destination “Crete”

**Action 3**: Create & Concentrate Basic Visual Content of Communication

**Action 4**: Production of Visual Content of Communication

**Action 5**: Design of Advertising Materials and Identity Applications

**Action 6**: Production of Advertising Materials and Identity Applications

**Action 7**: Development of a digital library system, education

Category B. "Coordinated Market Activities" and are as follows:

**Action 8**: Seeding trial campaigns

**Action 9**: Generic launch campaign

**Action 10**: Six (6) marketing combining campaigns for the twelve (12) thematic axes

**Action 11**: Developing and managing the Social Web

**Action 12**: Upgrading and Managing the Content of the Destination Portal of the Region of Crete, “Incredible Crete”

**Action 14**: Cooperation program with tour operators of specialized and general tourism

**Action 15**: Design and construction of a stand, participation in exhibitions, organization of parallel events

**Action 20**: Lobbying with Travel Guide Publishers

Also, an action concerns the above Category C "Coordination Monitoring Actions" is:

**Action 24**: Brand Equity Measurement Survey

These communication actions are the second and most essential phase of the Tourism Promotion Strategy of Crete, utilizing the communication tools and applications that will be produced under the first category of actions.
TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS MEETINGS IN THE REGION OF CRETE:

The first tourism stakeholders meeting of Western Crete, in order to present the new Interreg Europe Project for new developments in tourism entitled “BRANDTour”, was held on August 7th, 2017 at the headquarter of the Regional Unity of Rethymno.

The second tourism stakeholders meeting of Eastern Crete, with a view to their participation in the implementation of BRANDTour Project, took place on August 8th, 2017 at the Old Town Hall of Malia, city of the Municipality of Hersonissos.

A detailed presentation of BRANDTour Project and ways of implementation and utilization of the project followed. The main topics discussed at these meetings were:

1. The overall objective of BRANDTour Project coupled with the objectives for tourism development of the Region of Crete.

2. Opinions and experiences exchange from the participants, who were stakeholders of the public and private tourism sector.

3. Results and further actions for tourism in the framework of BRANDTour Project.

Furthermore, references were made in the context of innovation and diversification of the tourism product.

Specifically,
1. New personalized tourist products and the new emerging markets satisfaction
2. Developing thematic and experiential forms of tourism - Experience tourism
3. Grouping of tourism SMEs and cooperation between public and private tourism sector
4. Addressing seasonality and ways of extending the tourist season
5. Marketing-branding-communication and promotion of lesser-known destinations of Crete

In conclusion, the opportunities for tourism development and the importance of cooperation for the promotion of the island through BRANDTour Project were highlighted from all the partners.

4.2 TOURISM DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Due to its geographic position, Crete has an important role in the tourism industry. The island can offer ideal climate, rich historical and cultural heritage, heartfelt hospitality, unique natural environment and many years of experience in tourism sector.

The Region of Crete seeks to develop technologies that support and promote tourism and culture and to revitalise and expand the value chain in order to consolidate the
competitive edge of the complex in the global market. The core priorities are the attraction of a better tourism mix that will increase expenditure per visitor, the increase in tourist flows, the expansion of the touristic period and the forwarding of tourists to new destinations within the Region.

The breakdown of the value chain reveals the necessity of focusing on the interconnection between activities at various levels of production and provision of services in order to enhance cooperation between businesses at a national and international level.

The intervention in the cultural - tourism complex will include five levels:

- Upgrading of entry points with the construction of the new airport at Kastelli through PPP and upgrading of cruise infrastructures at the ports of Heraklion and Souda (passenger terminals - information and navigation systems).

- Upgrading of tourist accommodation facilities and of hotel services in general through the development and implementation of technological solutions provided by ICTs, mobile phone applications and the Internet. Creating solutions of smart rooms and services. Crete could benefit from a more strict accreditation system, given that it already has a high percentage of 4* and 5* facilities.

- Expansion of the value chain through the integration of new activities and services, especially for better exploitation of the synergies with the agro-alimentary complex.

- Diversification and enrichment of the tourism product. Crete can offer a highly competitive and multifaceted tourism product that includes Sea and sun, sailing and yachting, cruises, golf courses, culture, diving, medical and conference tourism. At the same time, Crete could diversify into other products such as agrotourism, ecotourism and religious tourism by making good use of existing resources and thus, reinforce its attractiveness. Crete should also explore the possibilities for the hosting of one or two world class events with gastronomy and healthy nutrition being its first priorities.

- Improvement of signs and marketing practices, development of online sales and networking systems, upgrading of the tourism experience. The main priority is the development of an all-inclusive virtual platform for the preparation of a tourist visit with the incorporation of existing units. Also, the virtual guidance of cruise tourists within the urban fabric of the two cities would improve the

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provision of services and would encourage their organised dissemination.

The key challenge for the Region of Crete is to find the best possible way for the Smart Specialisation Strategy to support the transformation of tourism into a high added value and knowledge-intensive activity, aiming at developing innovative entrepreneurial activity, improved financial results and employment. To this end, the introduction of technological innovations enhances tourism experience, destinations’ attractiveness and business competitiveness. The involvement of business schemes with educational and research institutions is a prerequisite for the development of new products and services and their commercialisation in the tourist market.
### CULTURAL - TOURISM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Diversification of the tourism product, brand name consolidation</th>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Source of Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Configuration of networks of excellence to promote research support innovation in environments of pervasive intelligence for the provision of customised services in tourism - culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ HORIZON 2020 Action 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support for innovative methods and promotion of collaborative planning for new forms of tourism and content (living labs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ ROP Crete 2014 - 2020 (ERDF): IP 2c, 2b and IP 3a, 3b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• R &amp; D through access of businesses to research infrastructure related to tourism</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME ENTREPRENEURSHIP, COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION 2014-2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstration projects to promote new, innovative business initiatives that promote alternative forms of tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Research and innovation to adapt and implement sustainable transport in tourist areas and infrastructures</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Development, promotion and dissemination of innovations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Development and use of innovative tools, products and for the creation of special forms of tourism (cruise, religious, and marine, rural)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promotion of as a competitive element of the tourism product</th>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Source of Funding</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Development of innovative applications for the Minoan, Byzantine and Venetian civilisations with the tourism experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ ROP Crete 2014 - 2020 (ERDF): IP 2c, 2b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promotion of the tourism experience through the use of documentation</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME ENTREPRENEURSHIP, COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION 2014-2020 (ERDF): IP 1b, 2b, 2c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Highlighting of innovation in activities related to tourism - such as cultural heritage conservation and the development of creative industries</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pilot implementation of integrated management and overall enhancement methods in an archaeological site</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Utilization of e-ticketing services, e-guide systems, support networks with a view to optimal promotion and use of the most valuable cultural resources.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Development of innovative applications in the promotion of culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strengthening technological innovation in museum display, storytelling techniques for the innovative presentation of events in cultural sites</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Enhancing digital services and cultural heritage projection applications, navigation systems, route management in tourist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mobile apps-portal innovations</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvement of the tourism value chain’s cohesion and establishment of interconnections with other chains and complexes</th>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Source of Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Creation of a tourism - culture cluster</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ ROP Crete 2014 - 2020 (ERDF): IP 1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reinforcement of networks per form of tourism (medical, religious, rural, cultural)</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME ENTREPRENEURSHIP, COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION 2014-2020 (ERDF): IP 1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reinforcement of the interconnections of tourism with other RIS3 complexes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reinforcement of the interconnections of the tourism chain with Universities and Research Institutions</td>
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4.3 CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM INTEGRATION

1. The cultural tourism as a factor for the elongation of the tourist season

- Other factors which must be activated in order to achieve tourist season’s extension (tourist shops, hotels, restaurants etc)

- Bodies, local authorities which would be useful and demanded for their activation

- Promotion of cultural activities of the Regions, focusing on the off season periods

- Actions to be demonstrated by each Region

- Finding the best way of common procedures (for promotion)

- Top importance consideration, is that cultural tourism should be an important factor in the lengthening of the tourist season of each region. Therefore the activation and action of society’s institutions-factors is considered to be very significant for that particular project.

REGION OF CRETE
2017
2. **Culture, tourism and new technologies**

   ▪ New Technologies as a mean of integration and elimination of existing information.
   ▪ Creation of one single IT platform for the integration of cultural tourism websites and links among Regions.
   ▪ Development of a virtual reality technology for archaeological or other sites of tourist interest.
   ▪ Application of new technologies is an important synthesis and continuity tool for information by contributing to: create a single electronic platform for the integration of websites concerning the cultural tourism and b: to present the exhibits of archaeological sites with tourist interest through virtual reality. In a such way, cultural tourism becomes a valuable assessment which makes it not only attractive but also more user-friendly to the visitor.

3. **Interactive applications on museum Tours**

   ▪ Application in addition for other forms of activity that are characterized by new technologies.
   ▪ Creating application to showcase the daily agenda of events taking place in each area.
   ▪ Determining eligibility of events.
   ▪ In which way the institutions will be selected in order to perform the events?
   ▪ Which institution will conclude and evaluate them?
   ▪ It is commonly accepted that all kinds of interactive applications attract guests and make the cultural tourism friendlier to the visitor. Therefore the wide use of actions through new technologies could only be a positive factor that will increase the traffic. In this way, the creation of an electronic application regarding the emergence of a daily agenda of events taking place in each region is indispensable. However, specification of the eligibility of events, how the institutions will be evaluated and which institution will select them, consists a major issue and options as well.

4. **Raising the awareness of the local communities to host tourism, especially fot the off season period**

   ▪ Training of local communities to communicate with tourists

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**REGION OF CRETE**

**2017**
Engagement of tourists in local, cultural events and ethics, in collaboration with local actors.

The promotion of cultural tourism is led by the engagement of local communities and actors. In such a way, the exchange of information and the training of all the involved parties has become necessary and crucial. Specific actions will result to the promotion of local events, combined by the active contribution of tourists.

5. Evaluation of local cultural bodies and certification procedures

- Methodological assessment of culture bodies.
- Determination of possible certification and review procedures
- Institutions promotions
- Methodological evaluation of the events.
- The promotion of relevant bodies, handling the local actions/events are of great importance for the development of culture tourism in the Regions. Assessment and evaluation of bodies as well as of the events and cultural activities could be a further critical step to the certification and reliability of that particular sector.

6. Setting the outline by determining the currying capacity

Establish an integrated, methodological approach to:

- Increase the number of visitors
- Keep the quality of interactive services and communication in order to avoid congestion.
- Enhance the promotion of cultural heritage
- Qualify and exchange best practices among Regions

Cultural heritage is considered to be a significant contributor to the sustainable growth of cultural tourism. Major issues are being raised in relation to those activities, having to do with determining currying capacity, upper limits regarding the number of visitors and also by exploring and exchanging best practices among Regions.

7. Monitoring, feedback and evaluation in cultural activities

- Setting the Indicators.

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Evaluation methods.

Feedback methods.

Observatory of the methodological procedures.

Dissemination of the results and of the best practices.

Monitoring, feedback and evaluation are discussed, as necessary steps to achieve positive results for the sector cultural tourism, during preparation and implementation phases. Indicators, evaluation and feedback methodology and as through an observatory tool, are being effectively combined with dissemination of the results and of the best practices followed so far.

8. The role of immigrants in a tourism-culture interactions’ perspective

- Immigrants-scientists and researchers
- Immigrants - workers in various sectors (e.g. primary)
- Information and knowledge offered to the immigrants regarding local and regional culture and ethics, to be further transferred to their countries (the ambassador role)
- Promotion of common values, to act as cultural bridges among Regions and countries of their origin

Immigrants could and should development a notable role through targeted information events on culture -the importance of which they experience- and for future spreading that to their countries of origin, resulting to the increase of the number of future visitors and by intriguing the interest in different countries.

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5. SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Excellent climate
- Powerful geographic position—insular character
- Adequacy natural and human resources and high level cultural product
- Broad variety and projected local quality products
- Adequate and various tourist infrastructures of accommodation
- High reputation
- Satisfying level of repeated tourism
- Tourism culture
- Well-known destination
- Main destination of flights charter
- Presence of an internationally acclaimed educational and research potential which could develop and disseminate innovations in many sectors
- Very good level of broadband networks and digital data centres
- Well established primary sector with considerable exports. Presence of products of high nutritional value which support and shape the Cretan Diet Model, a diet which has been internationally recognized as promoting good health and longevity.
- Crete is an international tourist destination (brand name) It is the Region with the highest concentration of 4 star and 5 star hotels in Greece.
- Important concentration of cultural and natural resources that can boost the creation of new sustainable developmental activities.
- Excellent climate and sunshine throughout the year.
WEAKNESSES

- Low in relative terms quality of public infrastructures
- Deficiency of supportive tourist infrastructures
- Seasonality
- Low quality and specialization of education in tourism sector
- Absence of tourism marketing
- Difficulty of penetration in large foreign markets
- Reduced competitiveness against new tourism destinations
- Intense dependence from decisions, choices and policies of large tourist foreign agencies
- Spatial concentration of environmental and tourist infrastructures and difficulty of penetration in inland
- Absence of tourism activity in winter period
- Steep swelling of private investment activity
- Lack of an institutional framework for regulating land use
- Lack of innovation culture
- Limited cooperation between businesses and research institutions and thus, low networking level between the entrepreneurial world and knowledge institutions.
- Low technological demand from the well established sectors of the economy (primary and tourism).
- Research work of low orientation towards the needs of regional economy.
- Low competitiveness of the regional economy at a European level in technology readiness and labour market indicators.
- Lack of trained human capital on technology intensive and knowledge intensive sectors
- Low number of startups.
- Low tourist spending per visitor

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OPPORTUNITIES

- Exploitation of comparative advantages with regard to the Cultural heritage, the natural resources, the historical significance, the geographic position and the vicinity to the sea
- Possibilities of developing thematic tourism and attraction of new groups of tourists
- Promotion of diet and gastronomy as “new tourist product”
- Financial opportunities for tourism
- Exploitation of special tourist infrastructures
- Exploitation of new markets
- Positive image of Cretan tourist product
- Allocation of resources through financial instruments (e.g. HORIZON) which aim at promoting innovation at a regional level.
- The potential of emerging productive sectors
- Growth of ecological and biological products market and increase of environmental awareness
- Constant increase in the demand for special forms of tourism
- Creation of a national institutional framework for the promotion of innovation
- The expressed political will at a regional level for the promotion of innovation
**THREATS**

- Strong international competition
- Lagging behind in promoting issues compared to competitive countries
- Reduced tourist culture
- Dependence from the future of air transport
- Alteration of residential identity
- Downgrading of natural environment
- Low level of cooperation between public and private sector
- The Greek economic crisis is more intense and has lasted longer than the rest of Europe.
- The prolongation of funding restrictions for entrepreneurs by the financial institution.
- Delay in bringing forward reforms to streamline and support innovation.
- International competition, lack of incentives and the brain drain.
- Strong international competition for traditional Cretan products.
- Emergence of new tourist destinations.

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<th>Policy theme</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Development Priorities</th>
<th>Policy Rate</th>
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| 1. The promotion of tourism products to enhance the visibility, image and market uptake of destinations | - Crete is an international tourist destination operating direct flights to/from other European cities and flights charter  
- Heraklion airport is the second biggest airport in Greece in passengers and cargo  
- Promotion of Crete and its products to European and other emerging markets through various cooperation-communication activities, study visits, fam trips, participation in international exhibitions, workshops and conferences | - Focus on “Tourism & Culture” product to promote the historical heritage of Cretan civilizations & Cretan culture and enhance the visibility and image of less known destinations of Crete with cultural heritage  
- Promotion and marketing of the internationally known Cretan Diet Model by hosting 2 World class Gastronomy and Health Nutrition events and engaging tourists in agrotourism tours and rural areas  
- Upgrading the entry points of the island and the cruise infrastructure  
- Development of innovative accommodation facilities such as smart rooms and services  
- Utilization of ICTs, mobile apps, virtual technology for the marketing of destinations | 5 |
| 2. The valorization of attractions through marketing, territorial branding and quality schemes | - It is the Region with the highest concentration of 4* and 5* hotels in Greece
- The rich natural environment of Crete offers a variety of activities and there are highly developed thematic forms of tourism throughout the island
- The guests can experience the diversity of landscapes, beaches and mountains, traditional villages, cultural and historical heritage, heartfelt hospitality | - Promotion and marketing of less-known destinations through the introduction of alternative tourism forms in their territory
- Reinforcement of agrotourism and cultural activities and events in rural areas
- Enhancing digital services and cultural heritage projection apps, e-guide systems, e-ticketing services, mobile applications-portal innovations and route management to increase the touristic flows in regional touristic destinations | 5 |
| 3. The innovation of the tourism offer through the clustering of SMEs and tourism products | - Numerous Associations and other cooperative actions for the promotion of Crete, trade and promotion of the local products such as the Winemakers Networks, “The Agronutritional Cooperation of Region of Crete”
- The brand name “CRETE” in a variety of local and exporting products | - Improvement of value chain’s cohesion and establishment of interconnections of touristic SMEs with other chains
- Creation of Tourism-Culture cluster
- Reinforcement of networks per form of tourism (rural, cultural, medical etc.) | 5 |
| 4. The innovation of the tourism offer through synergies between private and public stakeholders | - The Region of Crete conducts frequent local meetings in each regional unit for the exchange of opinions, concerns and support of stakeholders in business initiatives
- Active participation of the Chamber of Commerce and various R&D institutions for training seminars, workshops | - Development of innovative entrepreneurial activities through the support of the public authorities
- Involvement of business schemes with educational and research institutions for the deployment of new products and services
- Engagement of stakeholders and other target groups in the exchange of experiences process of European projects to learn new tools and methods | 4 |
| 5. The diversification of tourism products and services to provide more customized packages | - Massive tourism flows experience the alternative types of tourism
- Visitors enjoy luxury tourism through prominent beachfront resorts, golf, spa | - Development of all-inclusive virtual platform for customized visits and guidance
- Configuration of networks
- Collaborative planning for new forms of tourism and content (living labs)
- R&D through access of businesses for new infrastructure and sustainable transport in touristic destinations | 4 |
| 6. The development of experiential tourism in relation to local value chains and excellence | - Crete’s Tourism Promotion Strategy is based on developing high added value tourism products focused on the experience | - Expand the value chain through the integration of activities and services, especially in synergies with the agro-alimentary complex and the cooperation of the primary sector with the tourism industry | 5 |

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