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Youth Entrepreneurship in Cultural Tourism in the Black Sea: policies, challenges and opportunities



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Contents

Introduction	5
Background Information	5
CulTourE4Youth project: Objectives and Methodology	8
Emerging challenges in the existing policy framework.....	9
i) Regional and National Policies.....	9
ii) Challenges and Trends	10
Identification of priorities for future action.....	13
Good practices and existing tools from other sea-basins.....	16
Conclusions	17

Introduction

Building on the notion that cultural tourism, particularly with a maritime dimension, constitutes a job generator and a driver for sustainable development, the project **CulTourE4Youth - Supporting youth entrepreneurship in cultural tourism for coastal communities** was launched to address two crucial challenges for the Black Sea region, i.e. brain drain and youth unemployment.

The project built on the potential of the Black Sea countries as attractive tourist destinations that creates job opportunities and necessity for skilled human capital in the sector, and assessed the level of support to the latter by national policies and regional cooperation frameworks.

The present paper constitutes the final report of the project and includes the key results and recommendations for future actions. It is addressed mainly to policy stakeholders, funding agencies, the business community and the academia, as the primary actors of policy-making and policy-delivery.

Background Information

The **Black Sea Region** consists of thirteen countries¹ that comprise an area of nearly 20 million km² and a population of more than 350 million. The region holds a significant geostrategic position, connecting Europe with Asia and the Middle East.

With a combined GDP of USD 2.95 trillion (as of 2020), the Black Sea countries represent 4% of the global economy and generate 14% of Europe's GDP. Economic sectors such as tourism, energy, transportation and ICT are attractive for national and international investments.

Despite the noticeable increase in global performance indexes however, **youth unemployment and brain drain** constitute a crucial socioeconomic challenge for the Black Sea countries. As younger people have difficulty finding work, many of them choose to migrate to urban areas or abroad.

Mobility stimulates development through diaspora engagement, remittances and transnational networks however, in the long-term, it reflects negatively to the origin country's development. It affects its demographics, particularly in the rural areas and local communities; it disrupts their economic development which eventually projects to national deterioration.

According to the Human flight and brain drain index for the period 2007- 2021², **Albania** scores the highest index points (8.3) among the 13 BSEC Member States and is at the 7th place.

With an EU average index at 3.22 and World average at 5.25, the **Republic of Moldova** is in the 19th place with 7.50 index points, out of total 173 countries, **Georgia** scores 5.50 (89th), **Türkiye** 4.10 (126th) and **Ukraine** 5.80 (80th).

¹ Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine.

² https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/human_flight_brain_drain_index/. The higher the index, the greater the human displacement.

It is worth noting that despite the relatively low scoring of **Azerbaijan** at 4.30 index points (117th place); the country is dealing with a high number in youth NEETs at 19.45% (2020) when the Eastern Europe average is 13%³.

Concerning the youth NEETs particularly, according to ILOSTAT data for the year 2020 (Table 1), rates indicate an important challenge for the target countries; when compared also to the general unemployment rate.

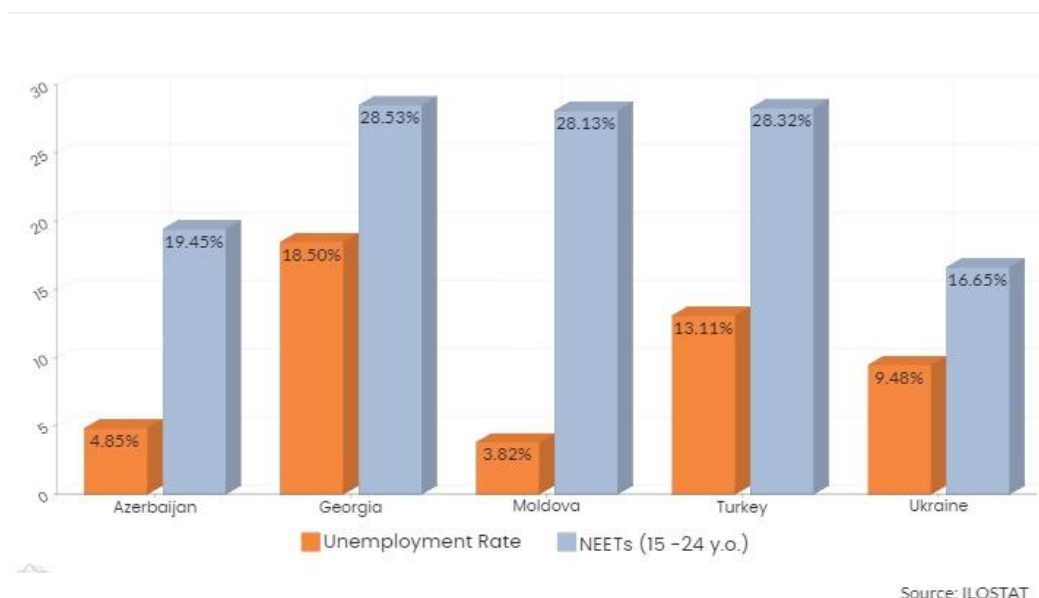


Table 1.

Nevertheless, “countries of the Black Sea are home to a relatively healthy and well-educated work force compared to global peers. During the last decade, a majority of countries from the wider Black Sea region have improved or sustained their relatively high performance in the World Bank’s Human Capital Index (HCI)”⁴; it is, therefore, vital to mitigate these challenges, i.e. youth unemployment and brain drain. In this context, when wage-earning jobs cannot absorb the available workforce, **supporting entrepreneurship** enters the policy agenda as a way to expand employment opportunities, especially for the youth⁵.

According to the EU Commission’s Communication on “A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism”⁶ adopted in 2014, “half of European coastal tourism’s jobs and value added are located in the Mediterranean, but the Atlantic, Baltic and Black Sea regions have significant shares too. Attracting more than one third of all tourism business in Europe, coastal areas are important for growth and jobs, in particular for young people, since 45% of tourism workers are between 16 and 35 years old”.

³ <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/youth/>

⁴ <https://www.mei.edu/publications/challenges-economic-integration-black-sea>

⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/media/72406/file/Youth-entrepreneurship-concepts-and-evidence-issue-brief-2019.pdf>

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/maritime-coastal_en

Indicatively, according to the latest available data (2018), **Türkiye** has the value 477.83 jobs (thousands), making it part of the Top 20% for the indicator “Travel and Tourism direct contribution to employment”; whereas **Moldova** has the lowest indicator value at 10.09 jobs (thousands), indicating the potential for further support to the sector (Table 2)⁷.

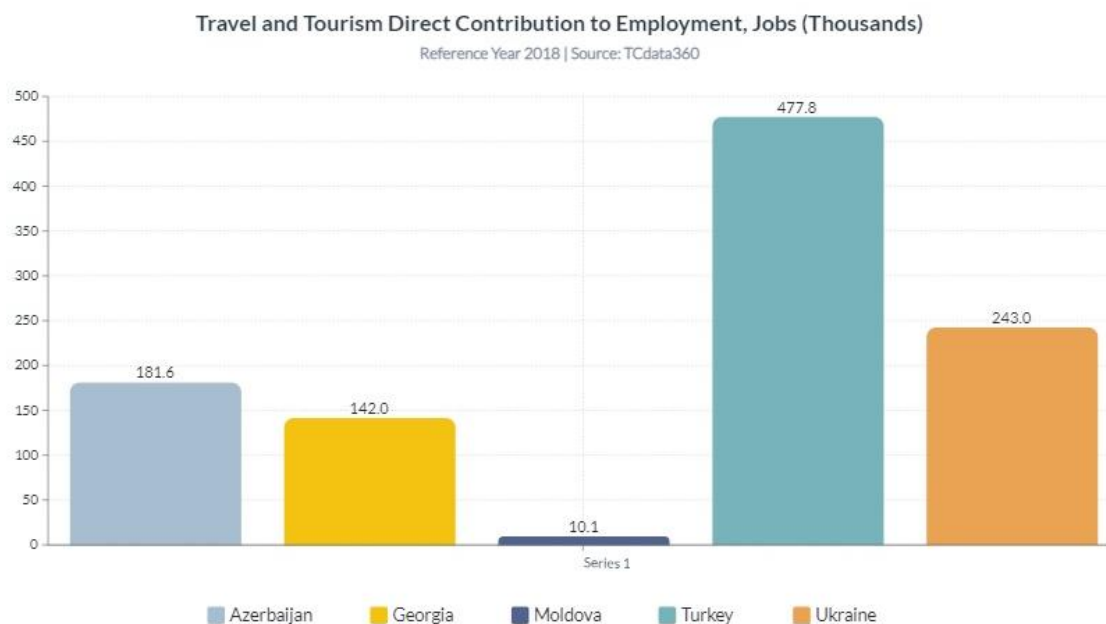


Table 2.

Tourism plays a vital role in the economic development of the Black Sea countries as a major source of foreign revenues. In 2018, the BSEC region welcomed 143 million international tourist arrivals and earned EUR 62 billion in international tourism receipts (13% of Europe’s tourism receipts). Overall, the region represents 10% of the world’s arrivals⁸.

Additionally, **cultural tourism** is one of the largest and fastest growing tourism segments worldwide⁹. More specifically, cultural tourism with maritime dimension plays a significant role for the development of a sustainable blue economy for the countries surrounding the Black Sea.

The tourism industry however, was one of the hardest hit by the pandemic. In 2020 alone, international tourism fell by 73%. Within two years, workers in tourism suffered severe pay-cuts while estimations show up to 62 million job losses¹⁰.

Two years later, and as the numbers seem to reach the 2019 levels, the industry is presented with an excellent opportunity to rebuild better; to become more resilient, inclusive and sustainable¹¹.

⁷ https://tcdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/tot.direct.emp?country=AZE&indicator=24643&countries=GEO,MDA,TUR,UKR&viz=bar_chart&years=2018&indicators=944

⁸ https://icbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Food-for-thought-paper_Regional-Cooperation-on-Tourism_ICBSS_Nov-2021.pdf

⁹ <http://europeanheritagealliance.eu/author/alliance/>

¹⁰ <https://oecdcoigito.blog/2022/07/12/labour-shortages-hamper-sustainable-tourism-recovery-after-summer-holidays/>

CulTourE4Youth project: Objectives and Methodology

Building on the notion that cultural tourism with maritime dimension is an up-and-coming blue growth generator, the **project CulTourE4Youth - Supporting youth entrepreneurship in cultural tourism for coastal communities**¹² aimed to provide background information and analysis on how youth entrepreneurship is promoted by existing policies and initiatives, and how it can be better supported to address local and regional challenges, such as youth unemployment and brain drain.

The CulTourE4Youth project aimed to develop a regional paradigm as **capacity building initiator** in order to:

- Increase the knowledge and entrepreneurial culture of young people, to be able to meet market demands and identify business opportunities;
- Promote sustainable coastal tourism practices to develop new products, services and processes for sustainable cultural tourism;
- Motivate employers, educational institutions, policy makers and civil society, and facilitate synergies among them, to support youth entrepreneurship with concrete actions.

Although the thematic priorities targeted the wider Black Sea region, emphasis was placed on five Black Sea countries, i.e. **Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Republic of Türkiye and Ukraine**.

Furthermore, the project used the **Mersin Region (TR)** as a case study. Mersin is a coastal city of Türkiye with a 321 km shoreline. The city is an important hub of Türkiye's economy; the country's largest seaport is located in Mersin. In addition, the wider region hosts many historical sites and cultural routes, from the ancient port cities on the coast to the historical villages in the mountainous settlements¹³. As of the last 2020 estimation, the Metropolitan Province population was 1,868,757 inhabitants whom 38% are young individuals. Considering this ratio, the young entrepreneurship potential is high.

The project focused mainly on **young people aged 18-30**. Other relevant stakeholders were engaged along the process, i.e. government and funding agencies, local and regional authorities, business operators and training institutions. In total, the project engaged directly with approximately 300 stakeholders.

The project's **activities** included desk-based research and a series of consultations with the target groups. More specifically:

- i) **Elaboration of a preliminary assessment** of the existing policy framework for youth entrepreneurship in culture and tourism in the five target countries; [[here](#)]
- ii) **Launch of an online questionnaire** to identify challenges, priorities and best practices from the wider Black Sea region; [[here](#)]

¹¹ https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_tourism_august_2020.pdf

¹² <https://icbss.org/cultoure4youth-project/>

¹³ <https://mersin.ktb.gov.tr/TR-73152/tarihce.html>

- iii) **Organisation of two local workshops** in Mersin, Türkiye. The first workshop (November 2021) engaged with local and regional stakeholders involved in the culture and tourism industry. The second workshop (October 2022) engaged with students in the tourism sector, aiming to validate and complement the findings of the project.
- iv) **Organisation of two international workshops** with the participation of regional and international policy stakeholders and practitioners in Batumi, Georgia (February 2022), and in Agios Nikolaos, Crete, Greece (October 2022).

The project was coordinated by the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), in cooperation with the Balkan and Black Sea Commission (BBSC) of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR) and the Middle East Technical University Institute of Marine Sciences (METU-IMS) for a period of 24 months (Jan 2021 – Dec 2022). It was co-funded by the European Commission under Grant Contract ENI/2020/421-957, coordinated by the BSEC PERMIS.

Emerging challenges in the existing policy framework

i) Regional and National Policies

A preliminary assessment of the regional and national policies and programmes supporting youth entrepreneurship, culture and tourism was conducted early in the project to establish a general baseline¹⁴. As a main output, we observe that all five countries foster entrepreneurship and promote culture and tourism as key pillars of their economies; nonetheless, in a more fragmented way than a targeted one.

At **regional level**, four of the target countries (Georgia, Moldova, Türkiye and Ukraine) are members of the two regional frameworks the **Black Sea Common Maritime Agenda (CMA)**¹⁵ and its scientific pillar, the **Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA)**¹⁶.

With their endorsement in 2019, the Black Sea countries acknowledged the importance of supporting a **sustainable blue economy**, as an environmentally friendly growth generator, particularly amidst regional challenges or the unexpected pandemic outbreak.

Both frameworks envisage concrete and project-oriented actions to promote economic stability in key sectors of blue economy, such as tourism, transport, shipping, aquaculture and fisheries, environmental protection. To this end, the documents include provisions for skills development, support to innovation and entrepreneurship in the targeted fields, with a view to creating jobs or support the training of existing workforce.

A key objective for both regional frameworks is to help identify national priorities in order to contribute to the development of national agendas for a sustainable blue economy.

¹⁴ https://icbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CulTourE4Youth_Working-paper_October-2021-1.pdf

¹⁵ <https://blackseablueeconomy.eu/about/our-mission>

¹⁶ <http://connect2blacksea.org/the-sria/>

At **national level**, policies and programmes to support youth entrepreneurship, culture and tourism have been intensified during the last years. Especially in the post-covid period, tourism and culture gain ground in the countries' policy agendas as important sectors for economic recovery¹⁷.

For instance, **Georgia** has developed the “*Georgian Tourism Strategy 2015 – 2025*”¹⁸, aiming to empower Georgian cultural heritage in the international tourism market in a sustainable way¹⁹. In this framework, a mobile application “Cultural Routes of Georgia” was launched in 2020.²⁰ It is worth mentioning that Kutaisi City Municipality took part in the organisation of the 10th Annual Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe²¹, which focused on resilience and sustainability in the post-COVID-19 era.

At the same time, while concrete actions are envisaged to support **entrepreneurship**, they are usually not combined with tourism and culture, and even more rarely put in the context of blue economy.

For example, in **Türkiye**, the “*Türkiye Entrepreneurship Strategy and Action Plan (GISEP)*”²² includes solid objectives and actions for the development and implementation of a sustainable support system, targeting also women and youth entrepreneurship. Additionally, Türkiye's Strategic Document for “*2023 Tourism Strategy Plan*” also includes several areas such as regulatory framework, innovation, thematic and general supports, access to finance. Yet entrepreneurial culture, education and consultancy in areas concerning tourism are not covered in depth and mechanisms do not exist, especially concerning the marine and maritime sectors.

In **Azerbaijan**, an important step is the “*Youth Entrepreneurship Program*” that focuses on developing entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and attitude of young people at age 15-29 through various learning activities and practical workshops²³. Moreover, support and promotion of culture and tourism is a key priority, but youth business activity in coastal cultural tourism is discussed rarely.

ii) Challenges and Trends

Following the desk-analysis to establish a baseline of policies and national strategies to support youth entrepreneurship, culture and tourism, a series of consultations with the target stakeholders took place, with the aim to identify the common challenges and trends that emerge from the implementation of the said policy frameworks.

Cultural Tourism and Youth Entrepreneurship

Traditional tourism vs. niche tourism

¹⁷ https://icbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CulTourE4Youth_Working-paper_October-2021-1.pdf

¹⁸ <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/developing-cultural-tourism>

¹⁹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348153443_Cultural_Tourism_in_Georgia_Opportunities_at_Global_and_Local_Levels

²⁰ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/-/georgia-memorandum-of-understanding-with-the-national-tourism-administration-and-two-new-certified-cultural-routes-of-georgia->

²¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/2021-kutaisi-forum>

²² https://www.kosgeb.gov.tr/Content/Upload/Dosya/Mali%20Tablolar/Gisep_2015-2018_TR.pdf

²³ <http://ja-azerbaijan.org/youth-entrepreneurship-program/>

Despite the rich cultural heritage and tourist potential, Black Sea destinations are mostly popular for **urban tourism** and the **seasonal 3S** (sun, sea and sand)²⁴ which attract high numbers of international arrivals, nonetheless remain an important challenge for rural and coastal communities' development. Jobs are mostly part-time, often underpaid, and at seasonal level, e.g. April – October, making it almost impossible to support the tourism-dependent local communities and households through the year.

Eventually, the promotion of traditional tourism models in combination with the fragmented national policies noted earlier, impede the sustainable development of the culture and tourism industry.

For example, during the workshop in Mersin (November 2021), youngsters noted that the concept of entrepreneurial activities related to coastal and maritime cultural tourism is not clear, or to be more exact is exhausted in the traditional models of tourism.

According to the project's online survey²⁵, 60.3% said that cultural tourism is not well supported in their region, and 64.7% are not familiar with the concept of marine and maritime Cultural Heritage, especially underwater.

However, when asked about a potential career change, we observe that **culture** attracts most of the interest at 60.29%, indicating that there is potential in the said field. The following choices are 33.82% in nautical routes; 29.41% in athletic/youth events; diving tourism at 22.06% and gastronomy at 27.94%.

Furthermore, 63.2% of responders said they are not familiar with the UNWTO Silk Road for cultural exchange, trade and tourism Programme, and 64.7% do not know the Cultural Routes Programme of the Council of Europe, two important initiatives that could provide alternative tourist products for the local communities²⁶.

At the same time, **funding for new businesses** in the tourism and culture sectors is very limited as other technologies or services have priority for private and public investors, even in coastal areas. For example, in the Mersin region, a popular tourist destination, priority is given to agriculture as a more stable and year-round income provider.

Evidently, as long as the niche market for year-round tourism remains untapped, thus, failing to open new business opportunities in the sector, more and younger people will leave their communities in search for work in urban areas or abroad.

Lack of an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem

In reply to what would be the best way to tackle youth unemployment in coastal communities, we observe that **access to funding** attracts most responses, i.e. support through funding projects at 85.29% and support to youth start-ups at 70.41%; the third being vocational education and training (64.71%).²⁷

However, funding is one of the many challenges for young people in the process of starting their own business.

²⁴ https://blackseablueeconomy.eu/sites/default/files/blue_economy_regional_assessment_for_black_sea_1.pdf

²⁵ https://icbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CulTourE4Youth_Report-of-Questionnaire.pdf

²⁶ https://icbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CulTourE4Youth_Report-of-Questionnaire.pdf

²⁷ *ibid*

As many youngsters underlined a major setback in their willingness to launch a start-up in their city is their deficiency in **entrepreneurial skills and culture**, and more importantly the absence of the relevant supporting mechanisms to help them through all entrepreneurial steps, i.e. from motivation and business plan development to securing funding, market entry and eventually, networking and business resilience.

For instance, describing his path to success in the Mersin workshop, a successful young entrepreneur pointed out how he was left alone to develop, and more importantly, to maintain the viability of his business after receiving the grant.

Existing **business incubators**, such as for example the Mersin Technology Development Zone (Technoscope)²⁸, constitute a good basis for supporting youth entrepreneurship, however their focus rarely includes the tourism and culture sectors.

When asked about the main actors for supporting youth entrepreneurship in cultural tourism, we observe that 77.94% of responders identify Local and Regional authorities, which on the one hand indicates the centralised character of policy making and implementation in the target countries. On the other hand, it stresses the inability of **industry and academia** to assume a more active role in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Industry, Academia and Research Centres received only 1.47% of responses.²⁹

It is worth noting that this is a challenge met in the wider Black Sea region. Policy, academia and industry gaps feed the perception of entrepreneurship equaling risk and uncertainty. As a consequence, young people are discouraged from or unable to pursue their business ideas in a structured, result-oriented and sustainable way, therefore, resulting often in failure and/or youth migration.

In the same context, **discrimination against women, persons with disabilities, the elderly, people with lower education**, aside from being a major human rights violation, feeds unemployment and economic migration. Vulnerable groups are usually recipients of poor work conditions and violations, such as informal employment, unpaid work, absence of basic health benefits, etc, while they are often excluded from the decision –making processes³⁰. The problem is intensified further when it comes to entrepreneurship, as discouragement comes from the close family environment and society, mainly due to the perceived hardship of being an entrepreneur.

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability constitutes a principal pillar of the CulTourE4Youth Project taking into consideration that tourism has a high environmental footprint and at the same time is vulnerable to climate change.

The unregulated development of the tourism industry and the unsustainable use of natural resources to satisfy the industry's energy and consumption needs threaten the preservation of local ecosystems. Threats for the sector are diverse, including direct and indirect impacts such as more extreme weather

²⁸ <http://www.technoscope.com.tr/>, <https://www.iasp.ws/our-members/directory/@6329/mersin-technopark>

²⁹ https://icbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CulTourE4Youth_Report-of-Questionnaire.pdf

³⁰ <https://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.news.2172>

events, water shortages, biodiversity loss and damage to assets and attractions at destinations, among others³¹. **Coastal communities** are threatened by sea level rise and coastal erosion, coastal and marine pollution, including plastic litter, overexploitation of natural/cultural resources, and activities, such as the trawling fishing.

It is worth noting that environmental sustainability (69.12%) comes first among the fields of general interest for the participants to the Questionnaire; cultural tourism follows with 60.29 and blue and green economy as third choice (54.41%)³².

Identification of priorities for future action

Supporting youth entrepreneurship in cultural tourism for coastal communities is a unique opportunity for the Black Sea countries which combine a dynamic youth workforce, and a rich natural and cultural heritage. Fostering youth entrepreneurship in cultural tourism with policies and tailor-made programmes will contribute to the socioeconomic development particularly of **local communities, thus addressing crucial challenges such as brain drain and youth migration due to unemployment**.

During the CulTourE4Youth project consultations, a number of priorities have emerged that set the basis for future targeted actions and policy recommendations in response to the emerging challenges. Priorities are interconnected; the development of each one with concrete actions supports the realization of the others in a sustainable and result-oriented way.

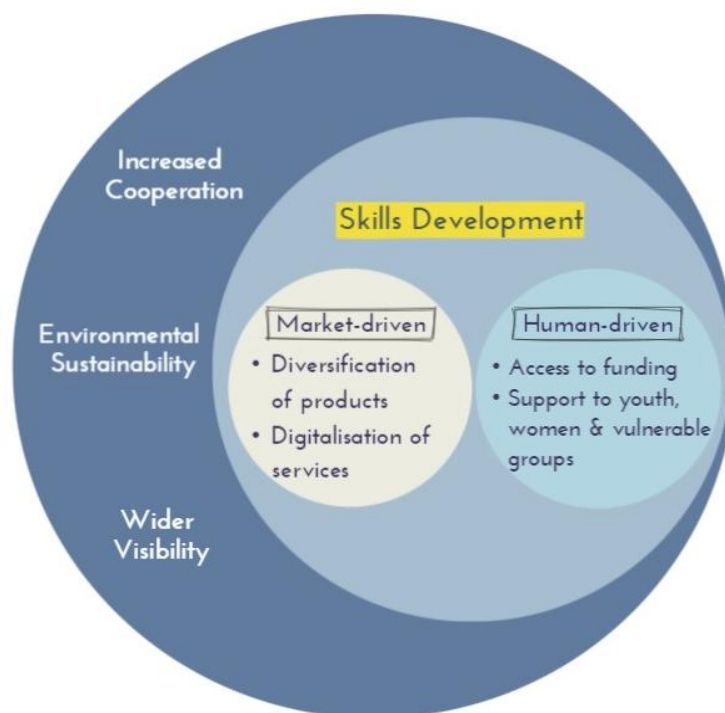


Table 3.

³¹ <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>

³² https://icbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CulTourE4Youth_Report-of-Questionnaire.pdf

Diversification of tourism products plays a catalytic role. Diversification is mainly a market-driven need that if addressed properly will tackle unemployment and contribute to job creation and growth. During the last years, as a consequence of the economic crisis, climate change and, recently the Covid-19 pandemic, we observe an increased interest in career change and the development of new, innovative and eco-friendly services and products that meet market demands and are tailor-made to satisfy the diverse tourists needs.

It is worth noting that 67.70% consider that diversification is necessary for job creation with new tourism products and services attracting increasing interest, e.g. fishing tourism. In the same context, 35.29% of participants have already made a career change; while a fair share of 22.06% are considering it as future scenario, esp. in the post-covid era³³.

Digitalization of services has improved travel planning to meet actual tourist needs and has contributed to increased visibility of tourist products and services in a cost and time efficient way.

Aside from the traditional digital tools, i.e. websites, social media, blogs, online apps, however, the pandemic resulted in the emergence of new communication digital tools. The digitalization of tourism products helped mitigating the negative impact of the pandemic to the tourism industry in a sustainable and flexible manner. Virtual Reality applications, 3D visits of museums, drone footage of cultural sites allowed people around the world to travel virtually with no geographic, time and cost limits. Digital services could present a sustainable solution to massive unregulated tourism; however, they could not replace the traditional on-site travelling.

79.4% of responders acknowledged the importance of digitalization in cultural tourism, noting that is sustainable, appeals to more people globally and promotes wider visibility³⁴.

At the same time, the human capital prioritizes increased actions related to **funding and support to the youth, the women and the vulnerable groups**, either financially or, and equally important, with the provision of incentives for new businesses; trainings/mentorships; psychological support, among others.

Despite being just one aspect of an entrepreneurial journey, the ability to be able to secure the initial capital to get started with their new business is still the most important step for the potential young entrepreneurs.

It is without a doubt one of the basic priorities but it should not be limited to that. As mentioned before, it is crucial to promote the establishment of **inclusive and supportive entrepreneurial ecosystems** in order to help young entrepreneurs successfully navigate through the whole process.

Capacity building and mentorship programmes; business networks; access to state-of-the-art infrastructure; match-making events are just some of the services to be considered while supporting youth entrepreneurship.

In parallel, **support to the Youth, Women and Vulnerable groups**, i.e. persons with Disabilities, the elderly, people with no or low income should be a top priority in order to enhance social inclusion and boost (youth) employability. As noted before, support to vulnerable groups should have a multi-layered

³³ https://icbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CulTourE4Youth_Report-of-Questionnaire.pdf

³⁴ https://icbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CulTourE4Youth_Report-of-Questionnaire.pdf

approach, starting from policy provisions, access to funding and training, but should also take into account **psychological support** to mitigate the stress-related impact of starting a new business.

At the same time, **skills development** ranks high in priorities, especially for NEETs and long-term unemployed. Skills development should not be limited to the early stages of education but should include the upskilling of the existing workforce and other life-long learning opportunities to address the current market needs, such as digital skills and the use of new technologies. Youth mobility for educational purposes, such as students' exchange, or entrepreneurs' mobility to learn from best practices in other countries should be supported.

A good example, that could be replicated in the Black Sea region, is the EU co-funded **Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs**.³⁵ New entrepreneurs gather and exchange knowledge and business ideas with an experienced entrepreneur, with whom they stay and collaborate for a period of 1 to 6 months. Besides, the Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY) are present in the Black Sea³⁶.

Furthermore, cross-cutting priorities include **increased cooperation** among all involved stakeholders, **environmental sustainability** and a **wider promotion** of existing products and good practices.

When asked "*what are the best ways to achieve **environmental friendly practices** in cultural tourism*", we observe that the top-3 replies underline the need for **coordination and cooperation among all involved stakeholders**, notably policy, industry, academia, civil society and media. More specifically, 70.59% indicated through conscious maritime and marine sectors, 66.18% through science-based policy and 47.06% through ocean-literate societies.

Evidently, increased cooperation, coordination and knowledge-exchange among the different levels of governance, stakeholders and citizens are a key element for the successful implementation of any actions and policies aiming to support youth entrepreneurship and cultural tourism. Policy-making is a top-down procedure; nonetheless, an up-to-date policy agenda setting requires a bottom-up dialogue process.

In the same context, stakeholders underlined the importance of increased **visibility and communication** actions in order to unleash the full potential of cultural tourism.

Many good examples are not widely known. For instance, we noted before that the Culture Routes of the Council of Europe and the UNWTO Silk Road are not well known particularly among young people.

In this sense, 88.24% of participants replied that Social Media is the most useful means for promotion, especially of existing good practices; while 55.88% acknowledge the contribution of mass media in general.

³⁵ <https://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/>

³⁶ <https://tesim-enicbc.eu/news/eni-cbc-for-young-volunteers-the-network-is-growing/>

Good practices and existing tools from other sea-basins

Regional practices from other sea-basins could inspire similar actions and policies in the Black Sea region, as well as generate synergies for joint programmes and knowledge exchange. Indicative examples of cultural tourism in the EU macro-regions:

- **The Adriatic and Ionian Region.** This area is composed of *“very heterogeneous countries in terms not only of geographic area but also of socio-economic development”*. There is *“a wide linguistic and cultural diversity, but the culture of the Mediterranean lifestyle connects the entire region”*. The objectives of the EU Strategy are *“marine and maritime growth (“blue growth”), connecting the region, environmental quality and sustainable tourism”*. Culture, tourism, sustainability and diversification constitute vital factors of the field of action.
- **The Danube Region.** The EUSDR has several member countries in common with the EUSAIR and, in particular when it comes to culture and tourism, the Croatian EUSAIR Pillar 4 Coordinator’s experience and expertise is more than welcome by the Romanian and Bulgarian coordinators of EUSDR PA3. The EUSAIR Action Plan is currently under revision and European Commission officers have recommended us to take into account the EUSDR’s embedding process.³⁷
- **The Mediterranean Region.** The Mediterranean Youth Council is an assembly of 30 young Mediterraneans committed to the co-construction of a model of youth representative body at the Mediterranean level. It is an opportunity to make ideas heard, to pass on messages through common actions but also to engage in a dialogue with local, regional and national authorities in the respective countries. The Mediterranean Youth Council is coordinated and led by the association Les Têtes de l’Art, and co-managed by the Provence Alpes Côtés d’Azur Region, the Lazio Region, the Conference of Peripheral and Maritimes Regions (CPMR), and the Foundation Assembly of Citizens of the Mediterranean (FACM), with the support of EuroMed France and the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)³⁸.
- **The Baltic Sea Region.** It was the first case for which a macro-regional strategy was adopted. This *“almost entirely enclosed marine region”* has many *“environmental, economic and social challenges”* to confront. The EU Strategy aims at *“saving the Baltic Sea, connecting the region and increasing prosperity”*. On this basis, the policy area includes the sectors of culture and tourism in order to achieve prosperity.

Furthermore, we have to take also into account other relevant tools that have been adopted in order to boost the economy through the fields of culture and tourism.

- **Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe**³⁹. The Cultural Routes programme was launched by the Council of Europe in 1987 with the Declaration of Santiago de Compostela. Over 45 Cultural Routes in Europe and beyond cover a range of different themes, from architecture and landscape

³⁷ <https://danube-region.eu/projects-and-funding/embedding-2021-2027/#:~:text=The%20EUSDR%20embedding%20tool%2C%20including,Policy%20regulation%20has%20been%20released>

³⁸ <https://www.medyouthcouncil.com/>

³⁹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/home>

to religious influences, from gastronomy and intangible heritage to the major figures of European art, music and literature. The programme offers a model for transnational cultural and tourism management and allows synergies between national, regional and local authorities and a wide range of associations and socio-economic actors. The certification “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” is a guarantee of excellence.

- **Mission Starfish 2030**⁴⁰. According to the Mission Starfish 2030, the Mission’s objectives can be achieved *“through the active cooperation with and co-ownership by all public authorities involved in the Mission’s implementation, notably by:[...]Using local cultural traditions and art as a means to build local visions of new economies, social contracts and community identities and to inspire and empower people and local communities[...]*”
- **Cultural and Creative Regional Ecosystems (CCRE-S3)**⁴¹.The CCRE-S3 partnership, under the Industrial Modernisation Platform of the Smart Specialisation Platform of the European Commission, aims to stimulate new insights and opportunities related to cultural and creative experiences for local communities and residents by involving several groups of professions that use, apply and implement new technologies (including digital forms) within the Cultural and Creative Industries sector, such as creative entrepreneurs and cultural heritage professionals, as well as traditional shipbuilders, maritime archaeologists etc. The partnership is both policies and projects-oriented and open to the countries covered by CulTourE4Youth.
- **European Pact for Skills**⁴². The European Commission has launched this Pact for Skills, *“a shared engagement model for skills development. The Commission invites public and private organisations to join forces and take concrete action to upskill and reskill people in Europe”*. Culture and tourism are parts of this innovative program.

Conclusions

The Black Sea countries host a dynamic human capital that when faced with the challenge of unemployment will migrate abroad. Youth mobility for labour purposes and brain drain are crucial challenges for the wider region, particularly affecting rural and coastal communities.

In light of poor wage-earning jobs creation, youth entrepreneurship presents as a good way out from long-term unemployment. At the same time, culture and tourism with a maritime dimension attracts increased interest.

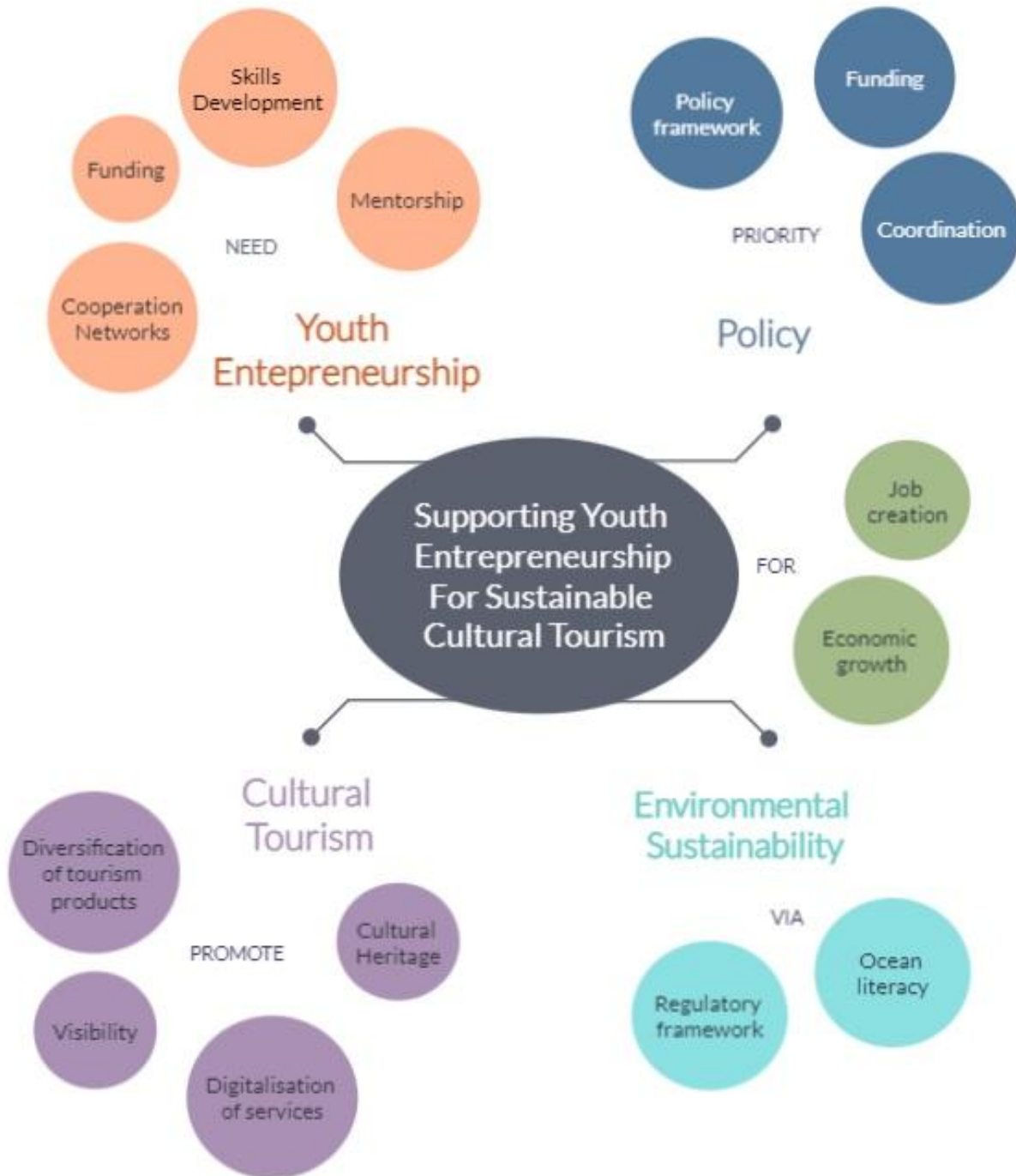
To this end, supporting youth entrepreneurship in cultural tourism through targeted policies and actions should be high in the policy agenda in order to empower the youth and local communities, boost blue economy, and protect the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Black Sea region.

⁴⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/mission-starfish-2030-restore-our-ocean-and-waters_en

⁴¹ <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/cultural-and-creative-regional-ecosystems>

⁴² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en>

In the context of this initial assessment and proposed approach, several **key outputs** can be extracted. Overall, great emphasis has to be put on cooperation, coordination and a bottom-up dialogue process to respond to the actual market and human needs.



At policy level, harmonization of national policies with regional frameworks such as the CMA and the SRIA would allow for tailor-made actions to facilitate the sustainable development of blue economy sectors; thus, unleashing its full potential and creating an attractive environment for investments.

The role of policy stakeholders is traditionally identified as pivotal but as it is noted, the sustainable development of entrepreneurship in tourism is a multi-layered process that requires the active engagement of all societal and economic groups.

Environmental sustainability ranks high in stakeholders' priorities, especially among young people, which indicates the increasing environmental consciousness in younger ages.

Digitalization and the use of new media and technologies in general, has increased due to the pandemic and is assuming a dominant position in tourism and cultural services as it responds to tourist needs for facilitation, cost and time efficiency.

At the same time, skills development and upskilling of the existing workforce is a vital component in tackling unemployment and high numbers of NEETs, particularly for the youth, women and the vulnerable groups.

Youth entrepreneurship is a good solution to expand employment opportunities but should not be considered a solution to everything; a one-size fits all remedy. It is important to identify the potential entrepreneur with true interest and viable business ideas. To this end, the establishment and promotion of inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems play significant role⁴³.

⁴³<https://www.unicef.org/media/72406/file/Youth-entrepreneurship-concepts-and-evidence-issue-brief-2019.pdf>



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