



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]

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Executive summary

This Sustainable Regional Tourism Mobility Plan (SRTMP) is made for the future Pearl of Ruse region which will include the following municipalities: Svishtov, Ruse, Tutrakan and Silistra thus encompassing a huge region of eastern part of Bulgarian riverside of Low Danube.

The intention of this SRTMP is to give guidance and prescribe measures recommending how to improve mobility in the planned Pearl's territory with a focus on several sustainable means of transportation as use of public buses, shuttles and eco-trains, water transport, cycling, walking, as well as providing relevant mobility information in Tourist Information Centers and via mobile applications.

The Plan proposes six types of measures. All measures are coordinated with the City councils and are intended to contribute to cost internalization, i.e. to reduce environmental pollution and stimulate the efficient use of the available existing public transport infrastructure.

All the proposed measures have a time frame (short-term: up to 3 years, medium-term: 5-10 years and long-term: over 10 years). The priority of each measure for the corresponding municipality is defined (high, medium and low) and the necessary funding is indicated, as well as the responsible body.

The main objective of this document is to provide information to the Strategic Management of the Pearl (e.g. the regional and local representatives of the cities and municipalities within the Pearl) about the possibilities to improve the connectivity of different touristic points of interest, how to make the journey of the visitors or residents more sustainable, safer, environmentally friendly and at the same time - more exciting thus transforming the pearl into an attractive tourism destination.

The ultimate goal after the implementation of the SRTMP is to propose a new sustainable destination with higher standards of touristic offer and mobility.



Introduction

Following the “Common Vision for Sustainable Mobility in Tourism” adopted by the partnership of TRANSDANUBE, the main objective of Transdanube.Pearls is to contribute to the development of a Danube region, which provides socially fair, economically viable, environmentally friendly and health promoting mobility for visitors and inhabitants of the region by developing climate friendly, low-carbon and low-emission, multimodal and efficient transport systems and sustainable tourism services. By improving the possibilities to move along the Danube with environmentally friendly means of transport the project will counteract the ongoing popularity of private car usage and its negative impact on the environment. By better linking the different modes of transport the project will not only contribute to sustainable regional and local mobility but also support the connectivity between the regions, leading to a more balanced accessibility within the Danube regions.

These ambitious goals will be achieved by introducing the main innovation of the project – the Sustainable Regional Tourism and Mobility Plan (SRTMP). After the implementation of SRTMP in each partner region, the project will establish a network of destinations committed to sustainable mobility in tourism – the “Transdanube.Pearls”. Being part of this network will increase the visibility of the participating destinations offering their visitors the unique possibility to travel the Danube with sustainable means of transport. The network will facilitate the cooperation of stakeholders from the mobility and tourism sector of different levels. Common standards and appropriate organizational structures secure the operation of the network beyond project lifetime.*

This Sustainable Regional Tourism and Mobility Plan is in accord with the Strategy for Development Plan of Ruse Municipality 2014-2020 and the Strategy for Tourism Development of Ruse till 2020. It follows their main objectives and proposed measures regarding development of sustainable tourism, efficient, environmentally friendly transport and commuting.



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1. Preparation phase

At the beginning of the planning process, it is necessary to determine the state-of-the art (SoA) of the target region. The output of the SoA is a thorough SWOT-analysis showing what is necessary to improve in the target region in order to establish sustainable mobility to touristic sites.

- Defining the scope of the SRTMP

In our case, we decided to define as a pearl a core area (main touristic site) and a surrounding area with functional relations to the selected core area. Thus our pearl is a region along Danube encompassing four settlements: Svishtov, Ruse, Tutrakan and Silistra. They will present a common tourism destination with the city of Ruse as a central point and the surrounding towns as attractive tourism destinations. Most of international connections including those to the other Pearls are stemming from Ruse and it was taken into account when defining the scope. It is illustrated by a map showing the main transport connections. Ensuring a seamless integration of long distance connections (e.g. international train and bus lines, Eurovelo, cruise shipping, etc.) with the last mile is also crucial for the competitiveness of a region/pearl.

Agreement at political level on a suitable planning area and responsibilities was provided with the mayors/vice-mayors of the selected cities. It is an important requirement for achieving a sustainable tourism and mobility planning in the pearl.



Fig.1 Ruse region pearl

- Basic data and SWOT-analysis of the pearl



I. General characteristics of the pearl

The region occupies the north-eastern part of the North Central Region of Bulgaria. The administrative-territorial scope of the region includes 3 districts (Ruse, Veliko Tarnovo and Silistra) and 4 municipalities (Ruse, Svishtov, Tutrakan and Silistra).

The target region is characterized by a relatively uniform relief. It is predominantly lowland and hilly plain with an altitude of 300 m. The climate is humid continental. In this area there are strong colds during the winter and high heat in the summer. The average annual temperature is about 12 C°; the average July temperature is from 20 C° to 22 C°, and in January - from 0 C° to -3 C°. In this part of the Danube Plain one of the highest average annual temperature amplitudes for Bulgaria is - 25.5 °. The snow storms in the winter and the mists, which are usual for the Danube river bank, create difficulties for transport and communications.

Transport infrastructure

The transportation geographical location of the area is favourable as the region is crossed by two of the nine European transport corridors (N° 7 and N° 9). These corridors connect Baltic Sea and the North Seas with the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea. The transport network in the region connects the settlements with the main roads of the National Road Network. The geopolitical location of Ruse region provides wide opportunities for cross-border cooperation in the context of European regional policy.

The city of Ruse is a major transportation node, where rail, road and water corridors are crossing. The Port of Ruse is one of the largest in the lower reaches of the Danube River. Near Ruse is situated the first Danube Bridge. Ruse District has a rich diversity of roads from different categories. There is a lack of highways and the first category roads are only 3 with total length of 110 km. The current roads provide good quality of service. They connect Ruse District with all the main regions and municipalities in Bulgaria as well as with Romania and the Black Sea. The connections of great importance are the roads E-85 running parallel to Republican Road I-5, which goes across the Municipality of Ruse and the road connection through the Danube Bridge that makes the connection between Romania and Bulgaria.

The Municipality of Ivanovo is also a very strategic transport point because of its north border (the Danube River), the two main European corridors that cross its territory and the railway line of international importance.

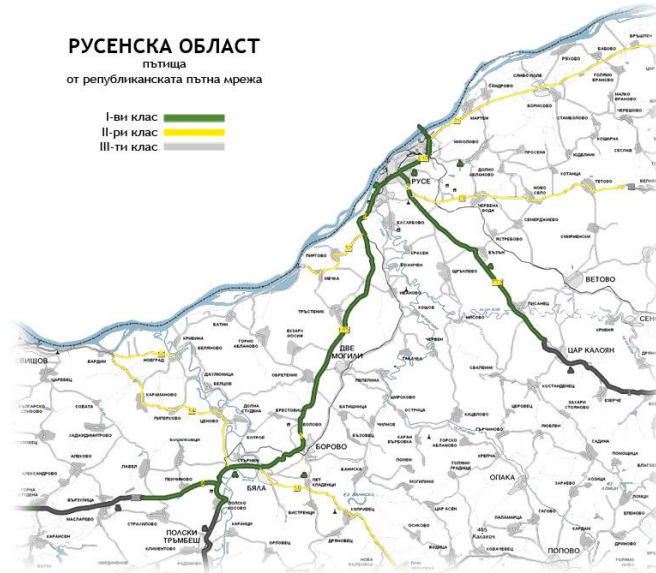


Figure 2 Map of Ruse District republican roads



Figure3 Ivanovo road and railway network

The railway transport is of great importance, as it is a key transport and logistics point for the Danube region – combination of at least three available transport modes (water, rail and road). A curious fact is that the first railway line that was built in Bulgaria is the line Ruse – Varna. It was built on 7 November 1866. The overall length of the railway lines in Ruse District is 155 km. The train kilometres for passenger trains for 2011 are 22,755.4 km. Ruse is connected by railway to Sofia, Bucharest and Varna. The railway line Ruse–Gorna Oryahovitsa–Podkova is of great importance for the tourism in the region, as it passes through the territory of Ivanovo Municipality that is a famous tourist destination



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Figure 4 Ruse railway network

The river bank line of Ruse is 25 km long, from km 505 to km 480. There are two major transport companies – the Bulgarian River Shipping and Rubiships, and a number of private businesses. There are 12 ports and port terminals.

The public transport in the city of Ruse uses the primary street network and part of the secondary street network in the central area of the town. The public transport is provided by fixed route trolleybuses, buses and minibuses. Except for the southeast residential areas, the rest benefit from relatively good public transport services.

Bike rental services are well developed in Ruse and visitors can use the "Danube Bike Route", which is a project implemented with the financial support of CBC Romania - Bulgaria 2007 - 2013. Seven routes have been developed, under the international cycling path No7 there is included the section " Ruse - Silistra (Rousse - Tutrakan - Srebarna - Silistra).

Svishtov is situated at 80 km. east of Ruse along Danube. Near Svishtov passes the highway I-3 (E83), which connects the town with Sofia and is part of the European road network. The town liaises with other cities in the country with 31 bus lines, which ensure good transport links. The presence of a large railway junction in Gorna Oryahovitsa presents good railway connections. The availability of regular transport links by ferry "Svishtov - Zimnich" favors connectivity not only with municipalities in the region, but also with communities of Romanian frontier territory. The railway connection with Sofia and Ruse is via Levski station.

Silistra is a Danube port city in northeastern part of Bugaria, situated on the border with Romania. Silistra is the nearest Bulgarian port to the largest transportation and logistics hub of



the Black Sea in Constanta. The railway branch serving the territory of Silistra named "Samuil Silistra" provides transport connections with the capital.

There is a possibility to rent a bike in Svishtov or in Silistra in some hotels and guest houses but as a whole the bike-rental system is not well developed.

Tutrakan is situated between Ruse (to the west) and Silistra (to the east) at some 60 km. from each of these cities. It is connected to them and to other major cities (Sofia, Varna) only by bus. There is no railway infrastructure on the territory of the Municipality of Tutrakan. The nearest railway stations are located in Rousse and Silistra. The development of the transport communication axes Tutrakan - Rousse and Tutrakan - Silistra will ensure good transport accessibility of the settlements on these axes to the municipal center. Tutrakan is part of the "Danube Ultra" cycle track with a total length of 730 km, following the Danube River along the Bulgarian coast. The starting point of the route is the most northwestern settlement of the country the Kudelin village, and the final- the most northeast settlement - Durankulak.

There is no infrastructure for renting bikes on the territory of Tutrakan Municipality, which makes the use of bicycle routes in the area and along the Danube River inaccessible to people who do not have their own bicycle. The possibilities for flexible and sustainable transport on the territory of the municipality are minimal. Flexible transport services or transport options are not available specifically for the needs of tourism. At the disposal of tourists is only a seasonal train that transports people between the lower and upper parts of the city and the Memorial "Military Tomb - 1916". Currently, access to tourist attractions outside the town can only be done by private car.

Population and economy

According to the last census in 2011, the population of Ruse is 148 502 inhabitants. Another important settlement close to Ruse is Ivanovo Municipality. It has a population of 9 414 people. The population of Silistra is 50 106, Svishtov has 29 786 and the smallest town in the pearl is Tutrakan with 9 503 inhabitants.

Ruse is the 7th biggest Bulgarian city characterized by good social environment and living standard. There is relatively high number of registered enterprises, which is mostly a result of its key location near the river bridge. Tourism is one of the most important and promising economy sectors. Ruse region has a series of advantages as a tourism destination.

Svishtov develops mixed economy, the main activity of the companies are manufacturing, marketing, services and supply of food. Chemical and food industries account for a significant share of the local economy. The combination of existing facilities, skilled workforce, experience in production of certain products and fertile land are prerequisites for the development of the local economy. Tourism is among the priorities of Svishtov.

Silistra and Tutrakan are characterized by favorable climatic and geographical conditions for the development of agriculture. There are mainly small and medium enterprises working in the service sector, second ranked is agrarian economy and the third is manufacturing. Businesses



operating in these municipalities are relatively inefficient as they are demanding, non-upgraded and therefore are not sufficiently profitable. This is a major reason for the low economic growth and the expectations to have more incomes from tourism activities.

Tourism

In recent years the tourist flow to the municipalities in the target region has steadily increased. This increase corresponds to both the growing bed capacity and the increasing interest in the tourist sites. The structure of the tourist flow is characterised by predominating internal tourism without any significant differences in the average stay of Bulgarian and foreign visitors. For the Bulgarian visitors a weak summer season is observed - typical of urban tourism. Peak season for international tourists is the summer. Below are shown the most recent data (2016) for the accommodation sites, number of beds and annual overnights:

Table 1 Distribution of sites, beds and overnights (NSI, 2016)

	Accommodation sites	Beds	Overnights
Ruse	38	1 651	145 000
Svishtov	11	300	35 000
Silistra	15	529	30 000
Tutrakan	5	77	9 000

The tourist accommodation sites include hotels, motels, guest houses, family hotels and bungalows.

II. Main touristic sites in Ruse

The main tourist flow passing through the city of Ruse comes from riverboats tourism. Tourist groups are mainly from the United States, Japan and Western Europe.

A tourist guide to the most important attractions and sites in the Municipality of Ruse was released in 2009 as a part of the Municipal Programme for Development of Tourism in Ruse. The developers of the strategy have selected eight itineraries covering almost all opportunities for cultural, religious, rural and ecotourism in the region.

Tourists can request a tour guide, and in addition, for most of the distant sites in the municipality transportation by taxi can be ensured. These services are provided by the Regional History Museum in Ruse.



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One of the main tourist attractions in Ruse is the walking tour around the city centre and a presentation on the Ruse urban community formation process focused on the 19th-20th century development. The museums of Ruse have a variety of exhibitions, educational programmes and cultural events that reveal the diversity of local cultural heritage. The relics of 11 saints and a small collection of 17th-19th century icons can be seen in the Holy Trinity Church.

Visitors can also make a tour around major fortifications in the environs of Ruse including Sexaginta Prista and Medieval Town of Cherven.

For the lovers of green tourism is recommended the eco-tour to Lipnic forest park, Prista Park and/or Rusenski Lom Nature Park where the tourists can visit the canyon of the Rusenski Lom River, the Realm of Birds by Pisanets and Nisovo villages, the Caves by Tabachka village and the famous Orlova Chuka Cave by Pepelina village.

III. Main touristic sites in Svishtov

The favorable location of Svishtov and the rich cultural and historical heritage of the municipality is a prerequisite for development of domestic and international tourism. The town has several very picturesque groups of historical buildings presenting the unique atmosphere of the past centuries when Svishtov had been an important commercial center along the river. The most prominent sites are "Aleko Konstantinov" Museum House, the Ethnographic Exposition with a workshop for drawing (mainly for children), the Catholic Church "St. St. Cyril and Methodius", the Orthodox Church "St. St. Cyril and Methodius", the Holy Trinity Temple and the Monument of Liberty.

A tourist path guides to the ancient town of Nove which is a Roman legionary camp on the banks of the Danube River, situated at 4 km east of Svishtov, 87 km northwest of Veliko Tarnovo and 240 km northeast of Sofia. Tourists can visit the remains of old forts and buildings as well as a virtual reconstruction of the military camp and the surrounding buildings. "Principles" or the headquarters of the legion is the largest building reconstructed in Nove. There are many statues and remains from the military hospital (valetudinarium). In the courtyard of the hospital is situated a small shrine dedicated to the gods of health Asclepius and Hygeia.

IV. Main touristic sites in Tutrakan

Due to its picturesque location on the hills along the Danube, Tutrakan is known as the Danube Tarnovo. The geostrategic location of the Municipality of Tutrakan predetermines the existence of cultural layers and traces of human presence since antiquity. Here are many archaeological and architectural monuments, such as the ancient Roman fortress Transmariska, the St Nikolay



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Temple, the Ribarska Mahala Architectural Ensemble, the only Renaissance fishing village, the Historical Museum, the Ethnographic Museum, the Military Tomb Memorial - 1916." - the largest military cemetery of the Wars for National Reunion and a whole complex of buildings - architectural monuments from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

The Historical Museum of Tutrakan is the main center that offers cultural and historical attractions for tourists. Currently, it runs the Fishery Museum on the Danube river, the Historical Museum with exhibition of valuable exhibits from the funds Archaeology, The Revival, Present-day History and Ethnography, the Art Gallery, the Outdoor Museum "Ribarska Mahala", which presents the individual crafts and lifestyle, as tourists have the opportunity to stay in authentic fishing houses. Historical monuments in the municipality of Tutrakan are the memorial "Military Tomb - 1916" Memorial "Ritual home" - Tutrakan old junior high school since 1897, the Transmariska Roman fortress. However apart from the monumental tourist attractions, Tutrakan has attractive nature and leisure park within 11 km providing food and overnights, which is also an appropriate starting point for bike-trips.

About 40 km away from Tutrakan is one of the seven cultural monuments of UNESCO in Bulgaria "Sveshtari Tomb".

V. Main touristic sites in Silistra

Silistra is the successor of the Roman Durostorum (translated "strong fortress") , founded by Emperor Trajan. In 169 the city was one of the earliest centers of spreading Christianity. Here, in 390, was born the great commander Flavius Aetius, who had defeated Attila the Hun. It was the first recognized town between Bishops cities in Bulgaria, and under the government of Tsar Simeon Veliki, the Dorostol Bishop was enthroned as the first Patriarch of the Bulgarian Church - Patriarch Damian.

The region has signs from different eras, which together with the natural resources are becoming a prerequisite for the development of the region. The Danube Park is a place of relaxation with a wonderful view of the Danube. The Danube garden was established 100-150 years ago. The park has a wide variety of tree species.

The National Architectural and Archaeological reserve "Durostorum - Drastar - Silistra" covers two thirds of the territory of the town as the major part of the excavations is positioned in the central part of the territory of the Danube Park. The fortress wall is one of the most powerful military defence facilities in Bulgaria dating from Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Near the fortress was built cathedral church of the first bishop of Drustar After 927, when Drustar became the residence of the first Bulgarian Patriarch Damian, the church was converted into a cruciform basilica.



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The Fortress Mezhid Tabiya is located on one of the most beautiful hills in Silistra and dates from 1841-1853. This is the best preserved of the six points of the fortification system along the northern border of the Ottoman Empire. It is one of the seven fortresses- forts located in a semicircle around the central Turkish fortress defending Silistra during the Crimean War.

The Metropolitan cathedral "St. Apostles Peter and Pavel", the Ethnographic museum, the regional History Museum and the Art Gallery are prominent monuments of the local history and culture.

The Biosphere Reserve "Srebarna" is included in the list of sites of World Heritage of UNESCO. "Srebarna" is located 18 km west of Silistra, on the road to Ruse, it is a freshwater lake adjacent to the Danube. The Pearl of the Reserve is the nesting colony of Curly Pelican. The lake is unique with freely floating on its surface reed poisons that in their movements change the pattern. Extremely inspiring view is the frozen lake in winter, which strongly contrasts with the bright yellow reeds. The number of established in the reserve and its surroundings species is 223. This is the only traditionally in Bulgaria nesting habitat of the great white heron. It is located on the main migration route for birds migrating between Europe and Africa, called "Via Pontica".

Having in mind the detailed profile of the Ruse region pearl, we can summarize the positive aspects of its components, their weaknesses, the opportunities for development of an attractive tourist destination on the lower Danube and the eventual threats to its implementation.

The SWOT-analysis presented below shows that actually the negative points are more than the positive but from the other hand the opportunities for successful introduction of the concept and its implementation at regional scale are much more than the threats. It means that the responsible stakeholders have to work hard for achieving the goals of the SRTMP and its measures are fully relevant and feasible.

- SWOT-analysis of the pearl



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Table 2 SWOT-analysis

	Positive	Negative
Internal Characteristics	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Existence of ecologically clean territories, favorable climate and rich biodiversity, as well as nature reserves and protected areas. <input type="checkbox"/> Presence of a variety of archaeological, architectural and historical monuments as well as events having potential for the development of national and international tourism <input type="checkbox"/> Numerous tourist destinations within a radius of 80 km, including one of the seven cultural monuments of UNESCO in Bulgaria. <input type="checkbox"/> Well-developed transport communications to regional centers and larger cities in the region, as well as to Sofia. <input type="checkbox"/> Presence of thematic touristic routes (cycling along the Danube, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> High potential for the development of photo-tourism, ornithological and soft extreme expeditions <input type="checkbox"/> Prerequisites for development of alternative, individual and family tourism as a sector aimed at target groups outside the mass and organized tourism. <input type="checkbox"/> High entrepreneurial activity <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory educational structure of the population; <input type="checkbox"/> Implemented investment projects for the rehabilitation of technical infrastructure in the water and transport sectors <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism is declared as a priority in the municipal strategies of participating settlements. <input type="checkbox"/> Well developed road infrastructure 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unutilized potential for sustainable water transport and tourism <input type="checkbox"/> No railway infrastructure on the territory of Svishtov and Tutrakan. <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of a single information structure providing information on tourist destinations in the region and surrounding cities as well as convenient access to them. <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of regulated, flexible and adaptable options for transporting individual tourists and small groups directly to tourist destinations <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient infrastructure for cycling and bike rentals. <input type="checkbox"/> Underdeveloped transport to tourist attractions (mainly by private car) <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary road infrastructure in need of rehabilitation and development <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient financial resources for building new and rehabilitating the existing infrastructure <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient tourist flow – international tourists coming mainly from ferry-boats; <input type="checkbox"/> Short touristic visits in the city and district sites – about 1/2 day dedicated to Ruse; <input type="checkbox"/> Touristic itineraries mostly unknown on national and international level, most of them stay only on paper; <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of educational initiatives and training programs at all levels for sustainable mobility in tourism; <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of public awareness about sustainable mobility options in transport and tourism; <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of cooperation between tourism and transport sectors for achieving sustainable tourism transportation;
External Characteristics	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use of the favorable transport-geographic location and the presence of a major road artery, river and port <input type="checkbox"/> The development and synchronization of the transport system within the boundaries of the municipality and the region to achieve an effect on spatial, tourist and socio-economic activity. <input type="checkbox"/> The development of tourist attraction initiatives involving local and private sector responses, the 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Deterioration of demographic characteristics and unfavorable migration processes; <input type="checkbox"/> An unfavorable economic situation, reflecting the size of the business investment in the tourism sphere; <input type="checkbox"/> Financial inability of municipal budgets to provide the necessary co-financing in the process of absorption of structural and European funds. <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient awareness and lack of communication between individual administrations and process



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	<p>creation of conditions for stay, the transport of tourists to tourist sites in the region and the development of economic activities related to their service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Development a strategy and concept to adapt transport opportunities to the needs of tourism and local mobility, and to provide a convenient, affordable and environmentally friendly alternative to the private car. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring the necessary financial resources from national and international programs for realization of projects on the territory of the municipality <input type="checkbox"/> Use of the available financial resources, incl. in the next planning period to improve and optimize mobility between settlements and tourist destinations throughout the region <input type="checkbox"/> Development of measures to attract foreign investors and support local pre-emption with a focus on sustainable mobility and tourism <input type="checkbox"/> Co-ordinate and implement joint projects with neighboring municipalities to unify and coordinate mobility across the region. <input type="checkbox"/> Creating coordinated information structures to enable visitors of the region to obtain data on the entire Danube region in one place, to create a customized program for visiting the sites and to gain access to them. <input type="checkbox"/> International cooperation with organizations and experts in the field of sustainable mobility and Tourism Marketing. 	<p>actors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of functioning marketing strategy for popularizing of the tourism in the region <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of flexible mobile service for the people working in the cross-border region <input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned river transport system, which is an obstacle for foreign investments in the region, trade and tourism.
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- Identification of the stakeholders

Since June 2017 the project team has performed a number of meetings and discussions in the four settlements of the future pearl for identifying which stakeholders should be involved in the process of planning. A common meeting with all possible stakeholders was held in Ruse in November 2017 when draft measures were discussed. The list of the stakeholders for the Ruse region is as follows:

Government/authorities	Business/operators	Communities/local neighborhoods	Others
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Local authorities of Ruse, Svishtov, Tutrakan and Silistra	Transport operators	Environmental NGOs	Universities in Svishtov and Ruse
Local transport authorities	Other mobility providers	Media	Association of cyclists
Traffic police	Bike rental companies	Citizens	Cultural institutions/museums /galleries
Local politicians, members of the Parliament	Ruse Trade and Commerce	Visitors	Foundations
Project managers and professional staff	Hotel/guest house/restaurant owners		
Ruse Regional Government	Tour-operators and Tourism agencies		

Table 3 Ruse region pearl stakeholders

2. Create a common ground and vision of the pearl

- Vision

The vision provides a qualitative description of a desired future of the pearl and serves to guide the development of appropriate planning measures. It needs to place transport and mobility back in the wider context of tourism development. CSDCS was a TRANSDANUBE partner and decided to refer to the elaborated vision in the frames of this project when proposed the pearls' one for the enlarged region with the same central point – the City of Ruse.

“The common vision and aim is to develop a Danube region, which provides socially fair, economically viable, environmentally friendly and health promoting mobility and tourism for citizens and guests of the region by developing of climate friendly, low-carbon and low-emission, multimodal and efficient transport systems and sustainable tourism services based on renewable energy sources, saving energy and resources, preserving natural and cultural heritage and taking care of the sensitive Danube ecosystems and landscapes while at the same time ensuring sustainable regional development and offering new chances for green economy and green jobs in the region.”



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The vision was presented and accepted by local citizens during several meetings with the project team. In order to bring some promotional power for attracting visitors to the pearl, a short variant has been elaborated:

Let's develop a car-free and care-free tourism along Danube

Да развием устойчив туризъм край Дунав без коли и без грижи

Based on this common vision the main goal and the specific objectives were defined for the pearl.

- Main goal and objectives of the SRTMP

The main goal of SRTMP is to develop an attractive, accessible and environmental friendly touristic destination along Danube in a perimeter of 100 km. surrounding Ruse as a central starting point.

The objectives are:

- To develop sustainable mobility services to touristic attractions in Ruse, Svishtov, Tutrakan and Silistra
- To develop sustainable transport connections between Ruse as a central starting point for visits and the other three towns.
- To reduce emissions of pollutants and noise by reducing the car traffic
- To increase the income from tourism and accompanying economic activities

3. Selection of set of measures

The development of effective set of measures was a process of consultations and discussions with all stakeholders in the pearl. The experience from more advanced countries (Germany, Austria, Hungary, etc.) was studied by analyzing many good practices implemented along



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Danube and their impact on tourism. The local decision-makers were asked to fulfill a special template indicating the most suitable measures for the corresponding city/town shown below:

SRTMP Planning template for (city/town).....

Measure name	Priority (high, medium, low)	Time- frame (short, medium or long term)	Necessary funding (EUR)	Responsible unit	Remarks

Table 4 Measures planning template

After a series of public consultations on-site the local governments of Ruse, Svishtov, Silistra and Tutrakan provided the fulfilled templates by February 2018.

CSDCS identified 6 types of relevant measures planned, common for all four settlements. In total our SRTMP has 6 mobility measures in the pearl:

- **Establishment of Tourism and Mobility Information Centers (TMIC)** in each of the four settlements, provided with the necessary technical equipment, at least one employee trained in mobility, paper and electronic information materials and good internet connection;
- **Construction/rehabilitation of cycling infrastructure to the main tourist attractions in the pearl**
- **Establishment of bike-rental scheme in each settlement**
- **Construction of eco-trails** to some convenient touristic sites for strengthening the walking tours
- **Launching flexible transport services (FTS) running during the high season** – bus shuttles, small eco-train, bus on demand, water transport
- **Providing relevant mobility information for visitors** by elaborating 3 thematic mobility packages for the pearl (for green, cultural and historical tourism) containing information about the main attractions and how to get there in a sustainable way



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(information about the walking and cycling possibilities, FTS, public transport options and timetables). The information will exist also as a mobile application.

Below the planned measures are described in details:

1.Establishment of Tourism and Mobility Information Centers (TMIC)	3 pictures of the buildings where the TMIC will be created
Short description of the measure	In the core of SRTMP
Estimated impact of the measure and contribution to the overall objective	The measure is of crucial importance because without TMIC the integrity of the pearl can't be achieved. The presumption is that all local TMIC will provide information for the tourist attractions at regional level (on the territory of the whole pearl) and how to get there in a sustainable way.
Estimated cost in EUR of implementation	The four municipalities received the necessary equipment for the functioning of the TMICs and their staff will be trained in the frames of the TRANSDANUBE.pearls project. Ruse has an existing TIC run by the municipal company "Ruse Art" that will be transformed into a modern TMIC for €20 000. Silistra, Tutrakan and Svishtov will establish their TMIC in the municipal premises for the total cost of €20 000. The total cost of this measure is €40 000 . The costs for information and promotion are calculated as a separate measure.
Financing options	Municipal budgets, EU-projects
Realization horizon	short term – 2020
Responsible organizations to be involved in the next steps of the process	The municipal administrations, "Ruse Art" company and MIG in Tutrakan
Responsible organization of implementation	Municipal administrations
Priority	high



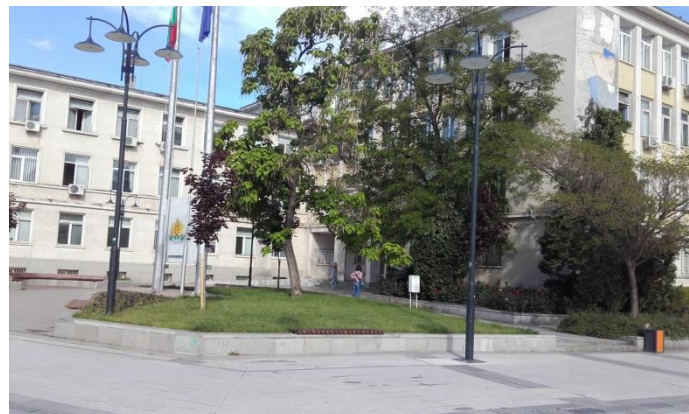
SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]



TMIC in Svishtov (in the Municipality building)



TMIC in Tutrakan (in the Historical Museum)



TMIC in Silistra (in the Municipality building)



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]



TMIC in Ruse (in the Tourist center)

<p>2.Construction/rehabilitation of cycling infrastructure to the main tourist attractions in the pearl</p>	<p>3 pictures of the future cycling paths allocations</p>
<p>Short description of the measures</p>	<p>This measure will be developed in all 4 settlements in the pearl thus improving its cycling facilities and allowing visitors to make cycling tours. In Ruse two cycling paths are planned connecting the city center with the Danube bridge and with the Lipnik forest park and Besarabovski Monastery. In Silistra the new cycling path will link the local Danube park with the city centre and the border checkpoint. The cycling path in Svishtov will connect the east and west recreation zones and will lead to the Roman remains. The path in Tutrakan will lead from the centre to the protected wetland area Kalimok-Brashlen.</p>



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]

Estimated impact of the measure and contribution to the overall objective	The measure will facilitate the accessibility to eco- and cultural tourism attractions in the pearl. The visitors will have the possibility to go from the city centres to several points of interest in a sustainable way using the new cycling paths that will complement the existing ones on the pearls' territory.
Estimated cost in EUR of implementation including the information and promotion	The estimated total cost is € 3.5 Mio (3 Mio for Ruse, € 0.3 Mio for Silistra, € 0.1 Mio for Svishtov and € 0.1 Mio for Tutrakan)
Financing options	SF through OP Regions in growth, EU-projects, municipal budgets
Realization horizon	medium 2025
Responsible organizations to be involved in the next steps of the process	Municipalities in cooperation with SMEs and NGOs
Responsible organization of implementation	Municipalities
Priority	medium



Cycling path along the Nove Roman remains in Svishtov



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]



Cycling path along the Roman remains in Silistra city centre

<p>3.Establishment of bike-rental scheme in the four settlements</p>	<p>Please provide 1 to 3 pictures of the site where the measure will be implemented – don't forget the photo credits</p>
<p>Short description of the measures</p>	<p>In Ruse, Silistra and Svishtov occasional bike-rental services exist provided by some guest-houses and private companies, but there is no a strong network and information about the whole scheme. It is necessary to develop a bike-sharing scheme covering the whole pearl in order to allow tourists to rent a bike in one place and to leave it in another one after visiting the local attractions. The plan is to establish strong bike rental-schemes in each of the four settlements Ruse, Svishtov, and Silistra and afterwards to link them into a pearl's bike-rental network.</p>
<p>Estimated impact of the measure and contribution to the overall objective</p>	<p>The expectations are that this measure will contribute to the development of sustainable mobility services to touristic attractions in the pearl and of sustainable transport connections between Ruse as a central starting point for visits and the other three towns.</p>



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]

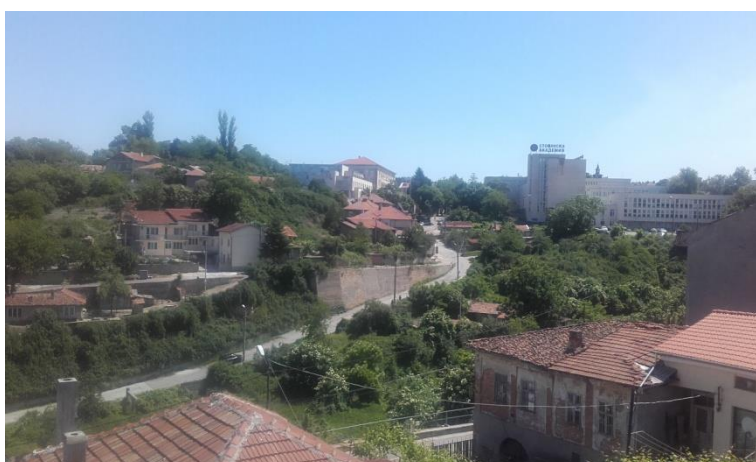
Estimated cost in EUR of implementation	The total cost is € 200 000 (€ 140 000 for Ruse, € 50 000 for Silistra and € 10 000 for Svishtov)
Financing options	Municipal budgets, private investments
Realization horizon	short term for local rental schemes, medium for the integrated scheme for the whole pearl
Responsible organizations to be involved in the next steps of the process	Municipalities, private entrepreneurs, NGOs
Responsible organization of implementation	Municipalities
Priority	High to medium

4. Construction of eco-trails	Please provide 1 to 3 pictures of the site where the measure will be implemented – don't forget the photo credits
Short description of the measures	All four members of the pearl plan to construct eco-trails for strengthening the green and healthy tourism. In Ruse it will lead to the forest park Lipnik, in Silistra – to the biosphere preserved area Srebarna, in Tutrakan – to the Tutrakan island in the season of low water and in Svishtov the eco-trail will be panoramic offering nice view to Danube from the hills situated to the south of the town.
Estimated impact of the measure and contribution to the overall objective	This measure will contribute to the increase and extension of the possibility for walking tours that are performed till present only in the city centres.
Estimated cost in EUR of implementation including the information and promotion	The total cost of the infrastructure and signing will be € 2.0 Mio spread as follows: € 1.6 Mio for Ruse and € 20 000 for each of the other three towns
Financing options	SF through OP Regions in growth, EU-projects, municipal budgets
Realization horizon	short to medium
Responsible organizations to be involved in the next steps of the process	Municipalities, NGOs



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]

Responsible organization of implementation	Municipalities, Nikolovo mayoralty
Priority	high



Panoramic eco-path in Svishtov



Eco-path in Srebarna lake



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]



Forest park Lipnik, Nikolovo village near Ruse



Eco-path in Tutrakan island

<p>5.Launching flexible transport services (FTS)</p>	<p>Please provide 1 to 3 pictures of the site where the measure will be implemented – don't forget the photo credits</p>
<p>Short description of the measures</p>	<p>The FTS will be developed for serving the increased tourism flow during the high season (June-September). The municipalities of Ruse and Tutrakan are planning to launch e-buses or hybrid busses (shuttles) to the main points of interest. Svishtov envisages running a small</p>



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]

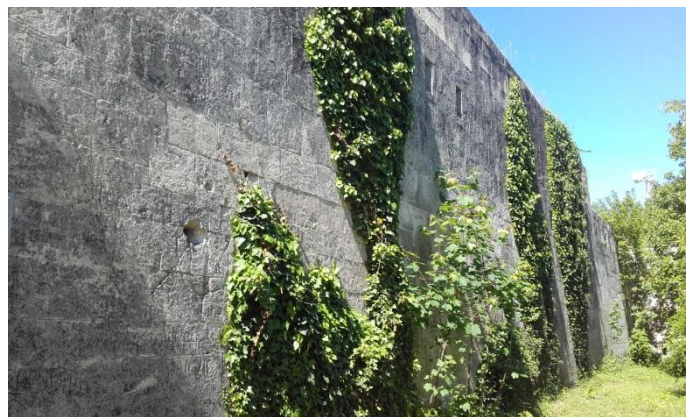
	<p>eco-train from the port to the city center. E-shuttles on demand are planned in Silistra and Tutrakan.</p> <p>The flexible transport services in Tutrakan Municipality require launch of eco minibuses (shuttles) to the tourist points of interest and to the larger cities like Ruse and Silistra, where is concentrated most of the tourist flow in the Pearl.</p> <p>Bike-rental in Tutrakan is not applicable due to the large altitude of the terrain. However the municipality has taken steps to develop a technical plan for yacht port and to enhance the river transport of tourists and local inhabitants.</p>
Estimated impact of the measure and contribution to the overall objective	The FTS will have a very important impact on the sustainable mobility in the pearl. They will cover the last-mile segments of the tourist trips and will serve not only visitors but also the local population. If they show profitability, the service will be extended all over the year, especially in Ruse and Silistra.
Estimated cost in EUR of implementation including the information and promotion	The total cost for FTS introduction will be of € 1.3 Mio (€ 0.7 for Ruse, € 0.3 for Tutrakan, € 0.2 for Silistra and € 0.1 for Svishtov).
Financing options	SF through OP regions in growth, EU-projects, municipal budgets
Realization horizon	medium
Responsible organizations to be involved in the next steps of the process	Municipalities, PT-companies, NGOs
Responsible organization of implementation	Municipalities
Priority	High



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]



FTS in Svishtov



FTS in Silistra to the Medjidi Tabia



FTS in Tutrakan to the Fishermen neighbourhood



<p>6. Providing relevant mobility information for visitors</p>	<p>Please provide 1 to 3 pictures of the site where the measure will be implemented – don't forget the photo credits</p>
<p>Short description of the measures</p>	<p>Till present the Tourism Information Centers disseminated brochures with description of the points of interest for visitors but it was never mentioned how to get there. The measure consists in the elaboration and dissemination of Mobility packages for tourists promoting the sustainable mobility in the pearl. The package will contain a brochure with information about the main attractions in the pearl and how to reach them by foot, bike or PT/FTS and a leaflet with timetables. The materials will be created and printed in BG, EN and RU. The packages will be disseminated in the TMICs, hotels, PT-stations and tourism agencies. They will be also downloadable via internet from the pearl's main site and the municipal sites of the four settlements.</p>
<p>Estimated impact of the measure and contribution to the overall objective</p>	<p>The role of the relevant information about the mobility options is very important for the success of the SRTMP. The potential visitors should be informed about the sustainable ways of transportation in the pearl and it will increase its attractiveness.</p>
<p>Estimated cost in EUR of implementation including the information and promotion</p>	<p>The collection of information, design and translation of the package will cost € 10 000. The printing and dissemination of € 30 000 packages (€ 10 000 in BG, EN and RU) will cost 90 000. The total cost is € 100 000.</p>
<p>Financing options</p>	<p>EU-projects, municipal budgets</p>
<p>Realization horizon</p>	<p>medium</p>
<p>Responsible organizations to be involved in the next steps of the process</p>	<p>TMICs, municipalities, NGOs</p>
<p>Responsible organization of implementation</p>	<p>Municipalities, NGOs</p>
<p>Priority</p>	<p>high</p>



Some places in Svishtov historical houses and Srebarna museum where the advertising materials will be disseminated.



4. Connections of Ruse with smaller tourist sites in the pearl

There are regular bus connections from Ruse to the other tourist towns of the pearl. The timetables are presented below:

Table 5 Timetables of inter-city connecting lines to Ruse



Ruse-Svishtov	Svishtov-Ruse	Ruse-Tutrakan	Tutrakan-Ruse	Ruse-Silistra	Silistra-Ruse
9:00	7:00	7:30	7:00	7:30	6:00
10:00	8:00	8:30	7:30	8:30	6:30
11:00	11:00	9:30	7:40	9:30	6:40
14:00	12:00	10:30	7:47	10:30	8:00
15:00	13:00	12:30	8:02	12:30	9:30
16:00	17:00	13:00	10:23	13:30	11:30
		13:30	11:11	16:00	12:00
		16:00	13:05	16:15	13:30
		16:15	13:15	17:00	15:30
		17:00	14:05	17:30	17:00
		17:30	15:06	18:00	
		18:00	17:05	20:00	
		20:00	18:40	22:00	
		22:00			

5. Incorporating of monitoring and evaluation of measures' implementation

Monitoring and evaluation of both the planning process and of the implementation of the measures are crucial to the effectiveness of the plan. A monitoring and evaluation mechanism helps to identify and anticipate difficulties in the preparation and implementation of the SRTMP, and, if necessary, to "repackage" measures in order to achieve targets more efficiently and within the available budget. It will also provide proof of the effectiveness of the plan and its measures. This allows those responsible for the actions to justify where money was spent.

For the monitoring and evaluation of the measures of the SRTMP for Ruse region pearl a special Regional Monitoring Commission will be created including representatives of the four municipalities (tourism departments) and four independent experts. They will strictly follow the process of implementation of each measure and will present reports to the management body after completing of each phase as follows:

- Research and planning phase
- Procurement phase
- Implementation phase
- Conclusions and recommendation phase



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]

The proposed evaluation targets and indicators are summarized in the template below:

Objective	Target	Core Indicators
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRTMP implemented Introduction of FTS (flexible transport services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modal shift – more use of PT (increase with 20%) Acceptance and satisfaction of visitors and locals increased with 30% People informed about SUMP goals and committing – increase with 60%.
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road traffic specific emissions: CO, VOC, NO_x and CO₂. Noise exposure for residential areas. Green spaces. Conservation of historical sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased emissions level produced by the traffic flows with 20%. Decreased noise level produced by the traffic flows by 20%. Increase of green spaces with 30%. Increase the number of visitors of historical sites with 10%
Equity & Social Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the mobility by improving the multi-modality and the ticketing system Adapting infrastructure to the needs of different social categories (elderly people, disabled, small children, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constructed new crosswalks and sidewalks with facilities for specific groups At least 50% of PT rolling stock adapted for the needs of the specific groups Improved city transport network for serving remote neighborhoods
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving road safety for pedestrians and cyclists Improving the road safety for disabled people Making safe cycling paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased number of victims of road fatalities Increased the satisfaction among disabled Increase the number of bike users with 20%
Economic Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased income from tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of visitors in the high season – statistical data
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening new green jobs related to mobility Participation in EU projects related to transport and mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased the number of employees in the Tourism and Mobility Information Centers 30% Participation in two new projects in 2021-28



6. Overall Conclusions

The concept of SRTMP enlarges the planning area up to regional level. The proposed SRTMP represents a complement to the traditional SUMP concept applicable in the cities (Ruse, Svishtov and Silistra) and will be used for mobility planning for the Ruse region pearl. Its main benefits could be enumerated as follows:

- Better environment and human health - More sustainable mobility directly translates into better air quality and less noise. Travelling more actively (by walking and cycling more often) is good for the health of both visitors and locals.
- Better quality of life - Well-coordinated policies, as defined by a SRTMP, result in a wide range of benefits, such as more attractive public spaces, improved road safety, better accessibility and more possibilities for social communications.
- Climate change mitigation – Regions need to play their part in reducing greenhouse gases in the transport sector. Sustainable mobility planning is a core element of any climate policy.
- Tourism development and economic benefits - Mobility is a major enabler for a local economy. A healthier environment and reduced congestion attracts more tourists and businesses and helps to substantially reduce costs to the local community. In the global and national competition of tourism destinations, a well organized and sustainable region is also a more attractive one for investors.
- Effective use of limited resources - At a time when financial resources are limited, it is even more important to ensure that the solutions adopted make the most cost-effective use of the funds available. Sustainable mobility planning changes the focus from road-based infrastructure to a balanced mix of measures including lower cost mobility management measures.
- Providing public support - Involvement of stakeholders and citizens is a basic principle of a SRTMP. Regional/local government that shows that it cares about what its citizens need and want is in a much better position to obtain a high level of “public legitimacy” and reduces the risk of opposition to the implementation of ambitious policies.

The ratio of tourism in overall economic activity in the proposed Pearl area is not at a high level and it can't be compared with tourism numbers on the Black Sea coast. However, many of its natural beauties represent a solid base for a future development and increase of domestic and foreign tourist arrivals. The SRTMP supports the development of riverside tourism which could be developed in many different directions attracting many potential target groups:

- recreation and sport-tourism - walking and cycling tours, water sports



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]

- eco-tourism - green activities, bird-watching, photo safari in the protected wetlands and parks
- cultural tourism – city tours, visit of cultural events, culinary and wine tours
- historical tourism – Roman remains, Ottoman and old Bulgarian monuments

The regional or local administrative units in the proposed Pearl area are advised to implement all mandatory and contingent measures in this Plan, in order to fulfill the common standards prescribed in the Transdanube.Pearls project, as well as to increase and improve the attractiveness, visibility and image of the future Pearl-destination.

The proposed measures will improve the accessibility and inter-modality in the points of interest in the pearl. The major challenge is the lack of cooperation and common vision of the tourism cities and towns in the pearl till present, as well as the total lack of sustainable means of transport to the existing tourist attractions. The cycling infrastructure is not well developed, as well as the PT-connections between the settlements in the pearl. The trans-boarder transport corridor to Romania and the link to the European cycling network need a lot of investments and are part of the National Transport Strategy 2014-20.



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]

Project Partners

	<p>LP Environment Agency Austria</p>	<p>EAA</p>	<p>AUSTRIA</p>
	<p>ERDF PP1 Danube Office Ulm/Neu-Ulm</p>	<p>DOULM</p>	<p>GERMANY</p>
	<p>ERDF PP2 WGD Danube Upper Austria Tourism Ltd.</p>	<p>WGDOOE</p>	<p>AUSTRIA</p>
	<p>ERDF PP3 Regionalmanagement Burgenland Ltd.</p>	<p>RMB</p>	<p>AUSTRIA</p>
	<p>ERDF PP4 Bratislava Self-Governing Region</p>	<p>BSGR</p>	<p>SLOVAKIA</p>
	<p>ERDF PP5 West Pannon Regional and Economic Development Public Nonprofit Ltd.</p>	<p>WESTPA</p>	<p>HUNGARY</p>
	<p>ERDF PP7 City of Vukovar</p>	<p>CIVUK</p>	<p>CROATIA</p>
	<p>ERDF PP8 Development agency Sinergija</p>	<p>RASIN</p>	<p>SLOVENIA</p>
	<p>ERDF PP9 Regional Administration of Vidin Region</p>	<p>VIDIN</p>	<p>BULGARIA</p>
	<p>ERDF PP10 Club "Sustainable Development of Civil Society"</p>	<p>CSDCS</p>	<p>BULGARIA</p>
	<p>ERDF PP11 National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism</p>	<p>NIRDT</p>	<p>ROMANIA</p>



SRTMP of RUSE REGION - [Thema]

	<p>ERDF PP12 The South-East Regional Development Agency</p>	<p>SERDA</p>	<p>ROMANIA</p>
	<p>ERDF PP13 Government of Baranya County</p>		<p>HUNGARY</p>
	<p>IPA PP1 Danube Competence Center</p>	<p>DCC</p>	<p>SERBIA</p>
	<p>IPA PP2 Regional Development Agency Eastern Serbia</p>	<p>RARIS</p>	<p>SERBIA</p>

Table 6: List of Project Partners



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