

## Possible Cultural Tourism Routes on the Silk Road in Bulgaria

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### Abstract

*This paper is dedicated to the presentation of conceptual activities for the creation of the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria according to the completed objectives in project BSB – 570 Silk Road Local Culture (SILC) on behalf of the Bulgarian side. The theoretical research is focused on a constructive review of all related achievements in the field of certification of cultural routes in tourism, cultural route programmes and the idea for development of the Silk road concept on an international level. In the discourse of this topic different institutional initiatives and legal practices take their relevant places as major prerequisites and essential drivers for the official establishment and further enhancement of a cultural Silk road. The Main SILC Route in Bulgaria has its all chances for a successful beginning.*

*Keywords: Cultural tourism routes, Cultural routes programme, Silk Road, Cluster points,*

*JEL Code: Z320*

### Introduction

The main reason for the publication of this article is related to the public announcement of a proposal for the creation of a thematic Silk Road in Bulgaria according to the objectives of the international project BSB – 570 Silk Road Local Culture (SILC).<sup>1</sup> This particular project is a logical continuation of internationally based efforts which have been initiated and consequently developed over 30 years ago in the common value proposition for connecting the ancient Silk road from East to West. The Bulgarian side along with the partners from Greece, Romania, Georgia and Armenia are already on the final track of completion of the SILC project. In this relation the *main goal* of this paper is to outline the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria along with an additional set of specific SILC routes on the premises of European and world-wide accumulated experiences for certification of cultural routes. A successful brand positioning of a cultural route is logically preceded by the processes of its official certification and subsequent promulgation in the public field.

### 1. Cultural routes as a basis for development of Silk road local culture

The theoretical review of the existing research is based on European policies, strategies, and legal frames which aim to facilitate the establishment and development of the Silk Road connection process across the European continent.

Considering a set of definitions, it has been established that the institutions of the European Union have a major contribution for the formation of the "cultural route" concept. According to the definition of the Cultural Cooperation Council, a cultural route is an "Entity on the territory of one or more countries or regions, organized around topics whose historical, artistic or social interest is proven to be European, either according to their geographical origin or according to their content and significance". (Cultural routes, a base for European identity, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes>).

Cultural Routes of European importance, in turn, are defined as:

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<sup>1</sup> The co-authors of this paper are currently involved on the position of chief experts on behalf of the University of Economics – Varna.

- transnational (affecting several countries);
- transregional (cross-border or not);
- regional (routes within a region, the interest to which regarding historical, artistic and social perspective goes beyond the borders of the region or the respective country).

According to the director of the European Institute for Cultural Routes “a cultural route is to be understood not only in the sense of physical pathways, but as a journey through space and time, demonstrating how heritage and cultures of different and distant regions of Europe contribute to a shared cultural heritage” (Culture and Cultural Heritage, <https://www.vaticannews.va>). In this relation European Cultural Routes are based on a number of shared values that enhance sensitivity to European cultural identity and European citizenship. They trace the history of influences, exchanges and developments that have shaped European cultures. Routes are a tool to preserve and emphasize cultural and natural heritage, as well as to improve the quality of life.

In addition to the European institutions, organizations such as ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) are also actively involved in the topic of cultural routes. In 2008, in Quebec the "International Charter for Cultural Routes" was adopted. It provides a definition for the concept and, along with that, identifies a specific classification. According to the definition, the cultural route represents “any route of communication, be it land, water, or some other type, which is physically delimited and is also characterized by having its own specific dynamic and historic functionality to serve a specific and well-determined purpose”.

ICOMOS, in collaboration with the International Committee on Cultural Routes, emphasizes on the following key features of the term "cultural route" (The ICOMOS charter on cultural routes, 2008):

- a traditional road representing a physically determined historical route
- corresponding to a specific historical function and purpose
- incorporating tangible and intangible cultural phenomena
- arising from, and at the same time reflecting, interactive human movements, as a result of a multidimensional, continuous and reciprocal exchange of goods, ideas, knowledge and values between people, countries, regions or continents over a considerable period of time
- having the need to be encouraged by the mutual enrichment of the affected cultures in the space and time that is reflected, both in tangible and intangible heritage
- integrating the historical relations and cultural values associated with its existence into a dynamic system

ICOMOS aims to promote international cooperation, the identification, study and improvement of cultural routes and their importance with respect to their basic qualities, integrity and synthesis. Equally important is their function, which is reflected in protection, maintenance and preservation of monuments, groups of buildings, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes and other sites connected through cultural values and historical links. Based on the activities of the aforementioned European institutions and international organizations, the Cultural Routes Program aims to encourage the realization of joint initiatives which interest the scientific community as well as elected representatives, executors of regional development projects, political individuals and the tourism business through the joint formation of European networks.

#### ○ **The Council of Europe’s programme for Cultural Routes**

The idea of developing cultural routes is based on the growing collective attitude to Europe's most important cultural landmarks and their integration into civilizational exchange during leisure time. In response to this need, the European Institutions are looking at the opportunity to rediscover Europe's common cultural heritage through travel. In this context, all Member States are invoked to contribute to the creation and promotion of European cultural routes.

The Council of Europe is the oldest European political organization uniting 47 countries and its role in the field of heritage is to concentrate efforts to promote ethical and regulatory principles. The organization facilitates the exchange of information about policies and best practices and also engages civil society in these policies, providing residents with a sense of identity and belonging through the common European heritage.

The basis for the work of the Council of Europe in the fields of education, culture, heritage, sport and youth is the European Cultural Convention. A key objective of the Council of Europe in the field of cultural and natural heritage is to increase concern regarding the common European heritage and enhance cooperation for its preservation. To achieve this, the organization launches a variety of specialized programs which help cultural communities to discover and understand one another. At the same time, the programs include also opportunities for development. Southeastern European countries participate in these programs, developing cross-border cooperation networks and exchanging experience in the areas of protection, promotion, legislation and sustainable development of cultural and natural heritage. (Source of information: official site of the Council of Europe, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/home>).

The Council of Europe's programme for Cultural Routes was launched in 1987 with the Declaration of Santiago de Compostela. The program is a framework for cooperation between the 47 countries that have ratified the European Cultural Convention; its rules are defined in Resolution 2007 (12).

Through its Cultural Routes Programme the Council of Europe imposes a model for cultural and tourism management. The certified routes are evaluated based on compliance with a number of criteria. Regular meetings, trainings and seminars are organized to enhance the initiation and exchange of common and innovative strategies for cultural and economic development, sustainable tourism and European civil society.

The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe /EPA/, dating back to 2010 continues the Council of Europe policy, defines the programme strategy and implements "Council of Europe Cultural Route" certification. In December 2013, the Committee of Ministers accepted the Resolution CM/Res (2013) 66, confirming the establishment of the EPA. The agreement is open to member states and non-member states of the Council of Europe. It is aimed towards providing political support to national, regional and local initiatives to promote culture and tourism. As of 2020, the EPA has 34 member states: Andorra (2012), Armenia (2015), Austria (2011), Azerbaijan (2011), Bulgaria (2011), Cyprus (2011), France (2011), Germany (2013), Greece (2011), Hungary (2013), Italy (2011), Lithuania (2012), Luxembourg (2011), Monaco (2013), Montenegro (2011), Norway (2011), Portugal (2011), Romania (2013), Russian Federation (2011), Serbia (2012), Slovakia (2014), Slovenia (2011), Spain (2011), Switzerland (2013), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2016); Georgia (2016); Croatia (2016); Finland (2018); Poland (2017); San Marino (2017); Turkey (2018); Latvia (2019); Vatican City (2018); Sweden (2020) (The European Institute of Cultural Routes (Luxembourg), <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/epa-member-states>). Based on the agreement between the Council of Europe and the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg since 1998, the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR), located in Neumünster Abbey in Luxembourg, is the technical agency for the implementation of the Council of Europe's Program for Cultural Routes. The Institute advises and evaluates the activities of the already certified cultural routes, supports certification of new routes, organizes trainings for cultural route managers and coordinates a university network in the field of culture and tourism.

Cultural routes preserve and highlight Europe's natural and cultural heritage as a factor for improving the environment and as a source of cultural, social and economic development. The routes promote the development of cultural tourism in its sustainable form.

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe are an invitation to travel and discover the

rich and diverse heritage of Europe by bringing people and places together in networks of shared history and heritage. They convert into practice the values of the Council of Europe: *human rights, cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and mutual cross-border exchange*.

Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe offer a variety of leisure and educational activities for all citizens across Europe and beyond. They cover a wide range of topics: from architecture and landscape to religious influences, from gastronomy and intangible heritage to the major figures of European art, music and literature.

The certification “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” is proclaimed as a guarantee of excellence. The stakeholder networks, based on the routes, carry out innovative activities and projects relating to five priority areas of action: co-operation in research and development; preservation of memory, history and European heritage; cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans; contemporary cultural and artistic practice; cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.

#### ○ **Initiatives of the European Union and the European Commission**

A special sector (Directorate-General for Education and Culture) for education and cultural policies has been set up within the European Commission. According to Article 151 of the EC Treaty, “*The population should contribute to the blooming of Member States' cultures while respecting their national and regional diversity and highlighting the common cultural heritage*”. Among the European Union's cultural objectives are the preservation and protection of cultural heritage which is of European importance. In order to achieve these cultural objectives, the European Commission is taking the following actions: *First*, the European Commission manages the Culture Program, which is dedicated to supporting the implementation of specific and innovative projects, multiannual cooperation agreements, organization of specific cultural events with a European and/or international dimension. *Second*, through the programme “Culture”, the European Commission is also cooperating with the Council of Europe, for example through joint activities concerning cultural heritage in the context of the Regional Programme on Cultural and Natural Heritage in Southeastern Europe (SEEAP), European Heritage Days (EHD) and the European Heritage Network (HEREIN). *Third*, some specific programmes of the European Commission focus on cultural heritage and practices for its sustainable development: for example, the Phare program for cultural tourism. *Fourth*, another very popular activity is dedicated to the European Cultural Capitals, designed to promote the gathering of European citizens. It is becoming more popular among Europeans, which is observed with the increase of its cultural and socio-economic impact among visitors it attracts.

With the help of the European Union and the Council of Europe, the HEREIN (European Heritage Network) project is being implemented, with the aim to gradually integrate all European countries into one common heritage information network.

In 1999, six countries (France, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom) created HEREIN. In the years that followed, within HEREIN 2 (International project “European Heritage Net – HEREIN 2e” (2002-2003). <http://icomos-bg.org/?p=25&l=1&id=111>), participants increased to 34, including most of the Southeastern European countries - Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Greece, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia.

The main objective of the project is to monitor the results of the implementation of the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada, 1985), the European Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (Valletta, 1992), and The European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000). This important task is included in: the Declaration on the Cultural Diversity adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (07 December 2000); the resolutions of the 5th Conference of Ministers responsible for cultural heritage at the Council of Europe (Portoroz, April 2001) and the UNESCO instructions

regarding ethics in the information society.

The HEREIN project is a tool for promoting cultural diversity on the background of globalization processes and a means of providing practical forms of support between UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Union. It provides real opportunities for comprehensive presentation of cultural heritage in Europe, as well as good opportunities for international support for its conservation. The project also provides access to standardized sources of cultural heritage information at national level, providing full, objective and periodic information about the cultural heritage of partner countries, their cultural policies and current legislation in this field. One of the most valuable contributions is the specifically designed professional thesaurus<sup>2</sup> in 11 European languages, supplemented with explanatory texts. The HEREIN project is a modern, effective and necessary mechanism for exchange of information and practical experience between administrators, professionals, researchers, associations and non-governmental organizations for the purposes of a united Europe, through which the countries of Southeastern Europe could join forces to preserve their rich cultural inheritance.

A joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission is the South East Europe Regional Cultural and Natural Heritage Program (SEEAP). It was proposed to countries from Southeastern Europe in 2003 as part of the contribution to ensuring democratic stability in the region and has been adapted to the specific economic and transitional context of the area. (Culture and Cultural Heritage. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage#TopOfPage>)

Another joint program of the Council of Europe and the European Union is "Routes4U". (Joint Programme with the European Commission - DG REGIO | Routes4U // <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/eu-jp-2017-20>). It enhances regional development through the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes in the four macro-regions of the EU - the Adriatic-Ionian, Alpine, Baltic and Danube regions. These EU macro-regional strategies have covered 27 countries with more than 340 million people in a thirty-month period.

The Council of Europe's Routes4U programme emphasizes the role of the closeness and connectivity of local people with their region in identifying cultural heritage. Local involvement through the networks of the Council of Europe's Routes4U programme attracts new activities and promotes sustainable tourism, while ensuring that economic use does not endanger the heritage itself.

The project aims to promote regional development through cultural heritage policies. Among the most prominent activities are: supporting the certification of new cultural itineraries in the EU macro-regions, identifying and developing guidelines for transnational regional policies for cultural routes, developing new competences and skills through e-learning modules and designing new tourism products through map tools for cultural routes and more.

This information concerns 38 officially registered Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe which are presented on the platform of the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR) and focus on the exceptional diversity of the Old Continent.<sup>3</sup> (Council of Europe. Cultural Route of the Council of Europe Certification, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/certification1>)

## **2. General prerequisites for the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria to be certified on European level**

Certification is a way to ensure that a particular activity or product meets certain standards. (Marinov, S., 2013). The beginning of certification dates back to the 15th century (1411), when

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<sup>2</sup> It comes from the Greek word thasaurus - a treasure and has the following meanings: 1. A systematic set of knowledge that is possessed at a certain stage by society, the collective or the individual. 2. Normative vocabulary of descriptors, keywords and main connections between them in a specific area of knowledge

King Charles VI recognized and assured the residents of the French village of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon a monopoly on the production of Roquefort cheese. Gradually, a number of certification standards specific to individual industries have emerged. Most guarantee the quality of products to wholesalers and industrial consumers. In tourism, certification has its history in the face of the American Automobile Association (AAA), which introduced in 1937 its Diamond rating system for hotels and restaurants. In 1958, the petrol company “Mobil” began publishing the Mobil Travel Guide, now Forbes Travel Guide, which offers a five-star categorization of hotels, restaurants and spas. In Europe, in 1926, initially in France and later in other countries, the Michelin Guide launched the use of a three-star system for evaluation and categorization of restaurants and hotels. These certifications along with others that have emerged subsequently, measure and evaluate the quality of the tourism product (usually hotels and restaurants), as well as some aspects of *health, hygiene and safety*.

As a reference for certification of cultural heritage and cultural routes are taken into account the resolution criteria and procedures used by the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR) in Luxembourg by the Council of Europe, which are based on CM / Res (2013) 67. The resolution was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 18.11.2013 and revises the rules for issuing the “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” Certificate.

Meeting the requirements of CM / Res (2013) 67 is a prerequisite for a successful certification of a cultural route within the European Union. In this regard, the administration of the certification process is conducted in two stages:

- at the first stage by the European Institute for Cultural Routes (EICR)
- at the second stage, final consideration and decision are made by the governing board of The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. Currently, the Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA) includes 34 partner countries from within and outside the European Union and one monitoring member since 2020 - Belarus. All countries, from which the SILC partner organizations originate, are members of the EPA, with Bulgaria and Greece being members since 2011, Romania (2013), Armenia (2015), Georgia (2016). Along with that membership, SILC project meets another important EICR criterion for initiating the certification process, which is that at least three partner organizations have to originate from countries in the European Union. In this regard, the participation of SILC partners from Bulgaria, Greece and Romania fully complies with the criterion requirement.

The EICR Certification Start-up procedure is 1.5 calendar years in duration. The duration of the process is determined by the set up mechanism for control, performance of evaluation activities by designated experts and institutions, implementation of reports, meetings and discussions (Guidelines for certification in EICR, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes-and-regional-development/certification-guidelines>).

Related to the content of the criteria of the groups from resolution CM / Res (2013) 67, SILC project has the following characteristics:

- The topic of the Local Silk Road under the SILC project reflects part of European values of at least three Member States in the European Union, together with Georgia and Armenia, as associate partners of the community.

- Multidisciplinary experts from different regions of the European continent are involved in the development of the Local Silk Road topic, as project activities are managed and implemented in consensus between partners. The fulfilment of this criterion is ensured by including specialists (experts) from three universities - University of Aristotle - Thessaloniki (Greece), University of Economics - Varna (Bulgaria), the Russian - Armenian University (Armenia) and two NGOs - National Association for Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism - Tulcea (Romania) and International Center for Social Research and Policy Analysis (Georgia);

- The topic of the Local Silk Road under SILC project actually reflects part of Europe's memory and history, while contributing to a better re-evaluation of modern Europe by recreating and resurrecting the ancient Silk Road that I located in the Balkans, and along the Black Sea basin.

- The Local Silk Road has a clear potential for the initiation and development of educational exchanges of young people in the field of cultural heritage and tourism.

- The Local Silk Road allows the development of initiatives and other similar projects in the field of cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.

- The topic of the Local Silk Road clearly states the intention for the development of tourism products, which can be achieved through a close partnership between tourism organizations, institutions, education experts and other stakeholders.

### **3. Constituent elements of the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria**

The Main SILC Route in Bulgaria starts from the Bulgarian border with Romania (Dobrudja region) and ends-up with the border of Turkey (Figure 1). On a cross – border level the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria could be regarded as a connecting indirect section between Romania (Tulcea region) and the Northeastern part of Greece. The Main SILC Route in Bulgaria has the nature of a linear (fishbone) type with numerous branches and it can be traveled in both directions - from North to South and backwards.

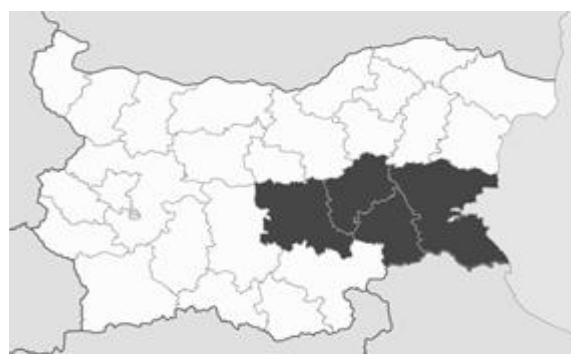
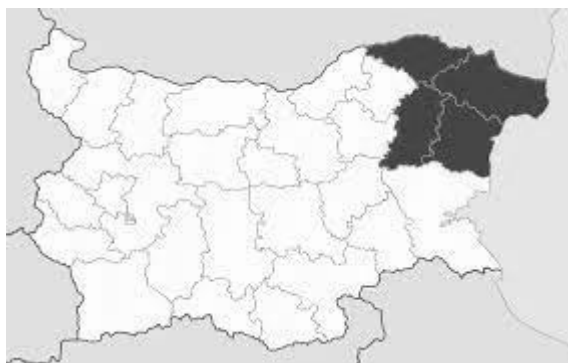


Figure 1. North Eastern and South Eastern regions on the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria

From structural and organizational stand points the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria consists of the following elements:

- I. Cluster (gravity) points forming the backbone of the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria;
- II. A key SILC resource from a cluster point;
- III. SILC Cluster tourist sites;
- IV. SILC tourist sites (attractions);
- V. Specific SILC routes;

Every Cluster (gravity) point from the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria is represented by the highest in rank regional historical / archaeological institution located in NER or SER. The Key resource from a Cluster point is of a historical / archaeological type. A Cluster tourist site could be of high or secondary importance in relation to the Main SILC Route. Cluster sites and SILC attractions are related to one or more specific SILC topics.

Every specific SILC route may gravitate around a particular Cluster point or cover places and topics from other Cluster points or may be expanded on the scale of the whole Main SILC

Route (Figure 2).

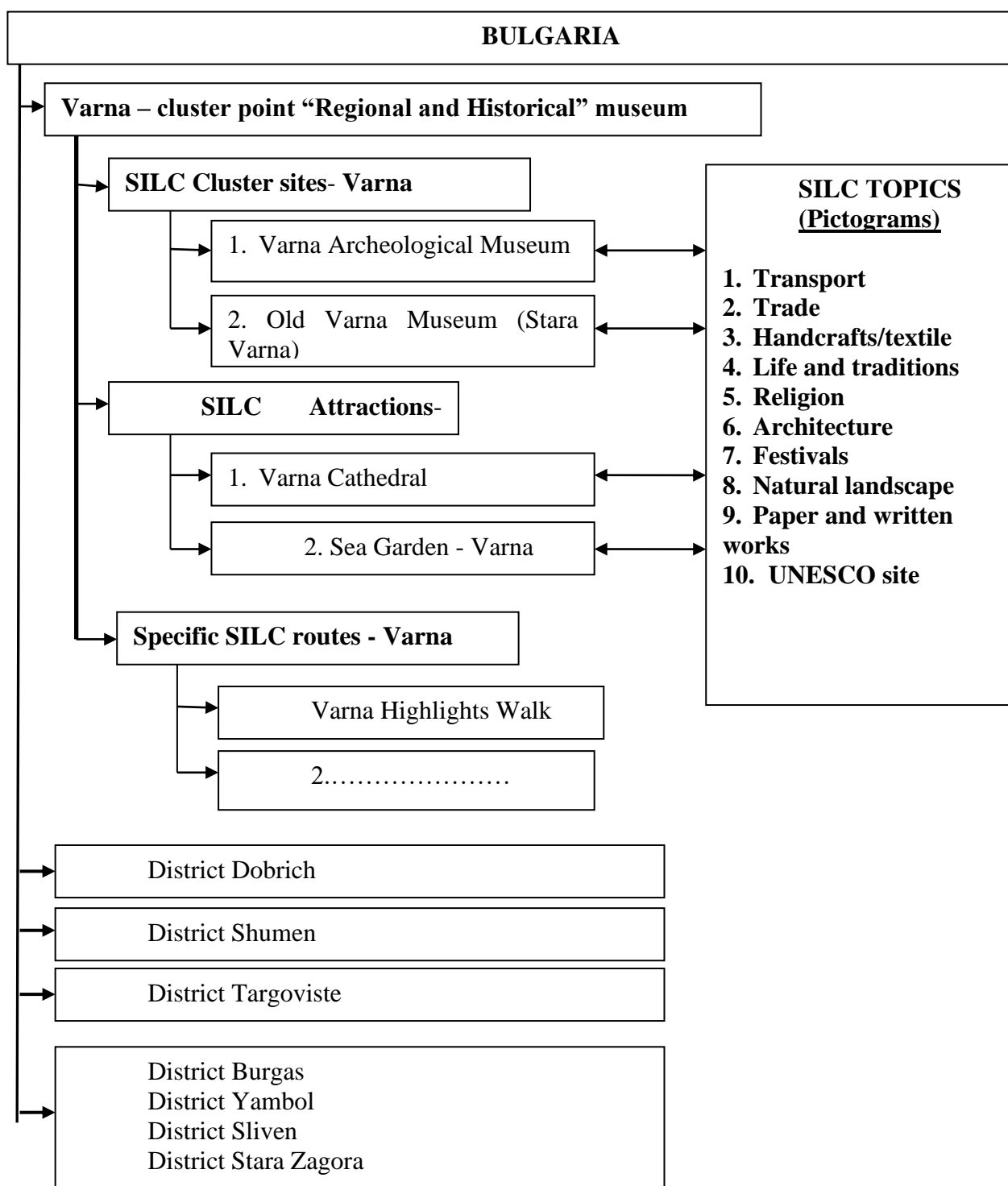


Figure 2. Deployed structure of a Cluster point on the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria

The necessary marketing communications for the presentation and organization of a SILC attraction on the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria have to include the following elements:

- a) History of the attraction - emphasis to be placed on its contribution and importance to the topic of the route;
- b) Map of the site – a geographical map with exact location of the site;
- c) Address information for the site to be provided for - post address; telephone; web site;



tourist information centre; profiles in social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and etc.); Tripadvisor rating; shared links through social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, email);

d) Tourist service as a comprehensive information about: suggested duration of visit; duration of a guided tour; entrance – with or without fee; access for people with disabilities; infrastructure for children; options for catering; visitor center on site; gift and book shop on site;

e) Opening hours - information about the opening hours of the site during different days of the week and different seasons;

f) Different types of guided tours - information on the availability of different types of guided tours and gallery talks - optional or obligatory; multilingual guides and talks; childrens' guides and talks;

g) Thematic connection to the route - indicates which thematic directions of the route correspond to the respective attraction;

h) Biography and history - biographies of world-famous or nationally known historical and cultural figures related to the topic of the route that is to be presented. Stories of interesting historical events related to the attraction and topic of the route should be also presented;

i) Documents for downloading - opportunities to download promotional materials (leaflets, brochures, films, etc.);

The Main SILC Route in Bulgaria is based on the following Cluster (gravity) points located in a row of sequence from North to South (Table 1.).

Table 1. Cluster points and essential SILC attractions / tourist sites on The Main SILC Route in Bulgaria

<b>№</b>	<b>Localization</b>	<b>Cluster point</b>	<b>SILC attractions</b>
<b>1</b>	Balchik	Historical museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Architectural-and-park complex „the Palace“</li> <li>- Religious-and-cult monument Teke – village of Obrochishte</li> <li>- Medieval fortress – Cape Kaliakra</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	Varna	Regional historical museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Archaeological museum</li> <li>- Roman thermae and small thermae</li> <li>- Provadia – the Salt-production centre</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	Shumen	Regional historical museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National archeological and architectural reserve “Madara”</li> <li>- National historical-archeological reserve „Pliska“</li> <li>- National historical and archeological reserve and museum “Veliki Preslav”</li> <li>- Antique fortress Misionis</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	Nessebar	Archaeological and Cultural Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Architectural – Historical Reserve Nesebar</li> <li>- International Folklore Festival “Nesebar Jewel”</li> <li>- Cape Emine</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	Stara Zagora	Regional historical museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Thracian tomb of Kazanlak</li> <li>- Holiday of the roses and Kazanlak Rose Festival</li> <li>- Chirpan monastery Saint Athanasius</li> </ul>

<b>6</b>	Yambol	Archeological reserve “Thracian and antique town of Kabile”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Archeological reserve “Thracian and antique town of Kabile”</li> <li>- "Bezisten" - The covered market</li> <li>- Sliven – Museum of textile industry</li> </ul>
<b>7</b>	Burgas	Regional historical museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mishkova Niva</li> <li>- Beglik Tash</li> <li>- Nestinari dances in the village of Balgari</li> </ul>

The Main SILC Route in Bulgaria also reveals additional untapped potential for development based on barely researched and registered SILC resources, like:

- The amulet made of jade from cape Kaliakra – a 14 th century testimony of particular commercial contacts on the Silk road between the Second Bulgarian Kingdom and the countries from Eastern Asia;

- Particles of the relics of Saint John the Baptist in Sozopol – an artifact with high authenticity dating from the times of the beginning of The New Testament;

- The silk veil from a Christian burial in Varna – dated 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.;

A set of specific SILC routes in Bulgaria stemming from the Main SILC Route could be additionally branded with their own labels (visual signs / logos), like:

- *“Roses, glass and fabrics”* – Kazanlak (The rose festival), Beloslav (Museum of glass), Sliven (the Museum of textile), Yambol (Bezisten – the covered market);

- *“The path of civilizations”* – Kaliakra (the fortress), Varna (Chalcolithic necropolis), Varna (Roman baths), Pliska (the Medieval capital), Ovech (the fortress), Preslav (the Medieval capital), Provadia (the Salt production center), Missionis (the Roman fort);

- *“Land of Gods and people”* – Obrochiste (the Tekke), Pomorie (St. John the Baptist’s relics), Madara (Capishte – the pagan temple), Mishkova niva (the temple of Bastet), Bekligtash (the Thracian sanctuary);

- *Way of life and customs* - Chiflika Chukurovo (ethnographic complex), Beloslav (Festival of the Shevitsa), Kazanlak (Kukerski games), Yambol (Masquerade festival Kukerlandia), Malko Tarnovo (Nestinari dances);

- *“From legends to discoveries”* – Kaliakra (the legend of the 40 virgins), Obrochishte (the legend of the Order of Dervishi), Aladja monastery (the legend of the ghost monk), Madara Horseman (the legend of the Prehistoric Bulgarian origin);

- *“Culinary and wine”* - wineries, wine cellars and traditional restaurants;

Generally several activities should be implemented for successful positioning of the brand of the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria:

- The Main SILC Route in Bulgaria will be officially branded under the logo of the SILCNET label;

- Each specific SILC route in Bulgaria will be branded under the logo of the SILCNET label and will have its own thematic name;

- The Main SILC Route in Bulgaria will be software positioned through the Virtual Observatory of the SILC Road Local Culture project and through the common efforts of the members of the SILCNET network;

- All 10 SILC topics used in the SILC cluster sites, SILC attractions and Specific SILC routes could be additionally denoted by particular pictograms, commonly acknowledged and mutually applied by all SILC partners;

- The Main SILC Route in Bulgaria could be subsequently applied for certification to the European Institute of Cultural Routes as well as to the system of Cultural Routes within the current practices of the Ministry of Tourism in Bulgaria;

### **Conclusion**

The Main SILC route in Bulgaria has the potential for a successful development in times of severe crises and socio-economic challenges. This kind of a national asset can efficiently contribute for the repositioning of destination Bulgaria out of the mass recreational concept which has dominated over the last 50 years as a main type of tourism business. The road to success for a market implementation of the Main SILC Route in Bulgaria should be guaranteed by the collaborative efforts of the private and public sectors. The benefits of the Main SILC route in Bulgaria are still to come as a logical hope of the revitalization of Bulgarian tourism business after the end of pandemia.

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