

Particularities/features of the CBC Bulgaria – North Macedonia Region

Project CB006.2.21.150 Sustainable Utilization of Cultural Heritage in Dupnitsa and Kriva Palanka

Lead Partner: Municipality of Dupnitsa

Project Partner: Municipality of Kriva Palanka

The project is co-funded by EU through the Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria–North Macedonia Programme

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Features of the Region: Municipality of Dupnitsa

- Municipality of Dupnitsa is located in Southwestern Bulgaria, Kyustendil district. The municipality is located in the northeastern part of Kyustendil region. With its area of 329,059 km², it occupies the 4th place among the 9 municipalities of the district, which constitutes 10.78% of the territory of the district. Its boundaries are as follows:
 - to the east – Sapareva Banya municipality;
 - to the southeast – Samokov municipality, Sofia region;
 - to the south – Rila municipality;
 - in the southwest – Boboshevo municipality;
 - to the west – Bobov dol municipality;
 - to the north – Radomir municipality, Pernik district.



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- The entire Municipality has mountainous and semi-mountainous terrain. To the southeast rises the northwestern part of Rila Mountain, to the northeast - Verila Mountain and to the west - Konevska Mountain. Depending on the relief, the low part of the outskirts is divided into three parts:
- - Gorno Dupniško field - covers the north-eastern part of the Municipality.
- - Razmetanitsa - the western part of the Municipality, surrounded by Konyavska and Pogled mountains.
- - Dolno Dupnishko Pole - occupies the southwestern part of the Municipality, which extends along the Struma River and the valleys and tributaries of the German River and the Rila River.

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- The climate of the Municipality of Dupnitsa is moderate-continental with a certain Mediterranean influence, which enters the valley of the Struma River, via the German River. The average annual temperature is 10.6°C.
- The warmest month is July and the coldest is January. The maximum temperature is 39.8°C, and the minimum is 26.7°C and the average annual temperature for the region is 12°C, which is due to the almost constant outflow wind along German river valley.
- Municipality of Dupnitsa has a variety of water resources. Surface waters are of primary importance. The largest river that flows through the Dupnishka valley is the Struma river. The German, Bistrice, Otovitsa, Jubrena, Topolnica and Gorica rivers are also important for the water balance.
- Part of the "Rila" National Park falls on the territory of the Municipality of Dupnitsa. The closest reserve to the town of Dupnitsa is "Skakavitsa" (on the land of the town of Sapareva Banya), distinguished by a century-old white-mud forest massif.

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- The territory of Municipality of Dupnitsa is mainly served by road and rail transport. Through it, production connections and civil travel between settlements are carried out. The E-79 highway Sofia - Kulata - Thessaloniki and the electrified railway pass through the location. line Sofia - Kulata.
- The total length of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th class roads in the municipality is 165.8 km, distributed as follows:

Type of road	Total length
I class road	42.3 km
II class road	34 km
III class road	25.5 km
IV class road	64 km

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- The local potentials of the Municipality of Dupnitsa for attracting young tourists are diverse and are being determined mainly from a favorable transport and geographical location, good territorial connectivity and natural resources and potential for the development of sustainable tourism.
- At the same time, the municipality faces significant challenges, typical of a large part of municipalities in Bulgaria:
 - insufficient growth and competitiveness;
 - insufficient efficiency of the workforce, incl. adaptability to need;
 - the challenges of the transition to a low-carbon economy and Industry 4.0.

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- Taking into account the revealed main deficits and needs for the development of the municipality of Dupnitsa, as well as the identified potentials, the vision and strategic priorities focusing the development policies of the municipality are determined: **Dupnitsa in the 21st century - Economic development, social cohesion, improved living environment and sustainable use of local natural and cultural resources.**
- The first priority - Sustainable development and support for ecological infrastructure is related to the sustainable improvement of the quality of life of the inhabitants of the municipality by means of achieving an optimized and well-managed infrastructure, as well as development of transport connectivity, both between settlements within the municipality, and between the municipality and neighboring municipalities and regions.
- *Priority 2 Preservation and development of human resources* includes active activities to improve the quality of life of the residents of the municipality, including enhanced measures to adapt people's skills in active age to the current requirements of the labor market in a regional context is key with a view to ensuring employment in the rapidly changing environment.

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- **Priority 3 Using local potentials to support economic development** will require economic measures to build a strong and competitive local economy with an emphasis on income-generating investments, business activation through entrepreneurship development, creating prerequisites for diversifying economic activities, building new and reconstruction of existing areas, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services, development of sustainable tourism and rural farming.
- One of the main aims under this third Priority is to develop natural, cultural and recreational tourism through identification of a complex tourist product. Measures for development and modernization, improving the socialization of sites and routes with tourist potential and related infrastructure:

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- Development of tourist routes Bistrica - h. Ivan Vazov - The Seven Rilka Lakes, the village of Bistrica - the village of Samoranovo
- Measures for socialization along the route St. Marena - Vangelova Cheshma - Bistrica village
- Construction of eco and mountain trails, shelters, infrastructure for socialization
- Feasibility study for the construction of lifts
- Construction of a tourist attraction, including a karting track, rope attractions and a secured infrastructure for extreme sports - ITI between the municipality of Dupnitsa and the municipality of Sapareva Banya
- Restoration, reconstruction and promotion of the Lighthouse town
- Construction of a park of architectural miniatures of the type "Bulgaria in the palm of your hand" on the grounds around or in the "Rila" park

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- Promotion and marketing of the local tourist product through:
- Inclusion of the local tourist product in regional and cross-border ones
- Development and implementation of a marketing strategy for the development of tourism, incl. active digital marketing
- Activation of online presentation of the natural and cultural heritage of the municipality of Dupnitsa, the available tourist routes and their inclusion in tourist catalogs and SEO optimization.

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Features of the Region: Kyustendil District

Kyustendil district is one of the 28 districts of Bulgaria. It occupies an area of 3084.3 km² and has a population of 116 619 people (according to express data from the 2020 Census).

The district is located in South-West Bulgaria and its area is 2.7% of the country's territory. It borders the districts of Sofia, Pernik and Blagoevgrad, and to the west - with North Macedonia and Serbia. The administrative, economic and cultural center of the district is the city of Kyustendil. Kyustendil district covers 9 municipalities - Kyustendil, Dupnitsa, Bobov dol, Sapareva banya, Rila, Kocherinovo, Boboshevo, Nevestino and Trekliano with a total number of 182 settlements.



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- The terrain of the district is diverse - fertile valleys and valleys separated by hilly lands and mountains.
- Its northern and western parts occupy the so-called Kyustendilsko Kraishte and have a highly fragmented relief, including parts of the border Milevska mountain, Chudinska mountain, Zemenska mountain and to the east the Konyavska mountain.
- To the south, Kyustendilsko Kraishte reaches the valley of the Dragovishtitsa River, the Lisets Mountain and the valley of the Bistritsa River.
- The southern part of the district includes parts of the Osogovo mountain, the Vlahina mountain and the North-western Rila with the enclosed lower lands between them and the Kraishte - the Kamenitsa valley, the Kyustendil valley and the Dupnishka valley. Geologically, the territory of the Kyustendil District belongs to the Kraishticides and the Rhodope region (east of the Struma River).

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- The administrative center of the district - the town of **Kyustendil**, is a historically separate communication node. It is located 86 km from the city of Sofia on the first-class road No. 6 /E 870/ and 22 km from the Gyueshevo checkpoint.
- The first-class road No. 6: Border - Kyustendil - Radomir - Sofia - Podbalkana - Burgas, is the main passenger artery and connection of the capital with neighboring Macedonia via Kumanovo and Skopje. Second-class road No. 62 Kyustendil - Dupnitsa - Klisura - Samokov starts from the city in the southeast, and third-class road No. 601 - Kyustendil - Dragovishtitsa - Dolno uyno - Granitsa in the northwest.
- The European corridors E8 and E4 pass through the territory of the district. With their construction and entry into operation, communication accessibility will be improved as a factor for realizing the potentials for socio-economic development of the area.

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- Kyustendil region has **millennial cultural traditions**. The region has been a cultural center for more than 2,000 years old.
- Part of the "**Rila**" **National Park** is located on the territory of the Kyustendil Region. It is the largest national park in Bulgaria and one of the largest European parks. It includes the treeless parts along the ridge of Rila Mountain and part of the coniferous forest complexes below it in the four main parts of the mountain with a total area of 81,046 ha.
- In 1986, the "**Rilomanastirska gora**" **reserve** was declared with an area of 3676.5 ha. It was created to preserve primary forest ecosystems of coniferous and mixed fir-beech forests, as well as the natural environment of the architectural-historical reserve "Rila Monastery", declared by UNESCO in 1983 as a world cultural monument.
- The "**Gabra**" **reserve** is located in the Vlahina mountain in the town of Malkia Sredok, near the village of Tsarvaritsa. It is one of the oldest reserves in Bulgaria, declared in 1949 on an area of 89.2 ha. The protected area is a natural plantation of black pine with an admixture of winter oak, cer, beech and hornbeam. The age of the trees is from 50 to 60 years, and their height exceeds 40 m.

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- In general, the **cultural-historical** material traces are unevenly located in the territory of the district. Their situation outlines the picture of traditional-sustainable historical development in several cultural zones and environments:
 - the Kyustendil zone, in which all the cultural-historical periods of development are intertwined and layered, represented by material samples of very high value;
 - the Boboshevo - Rila Monastery area, which contains the most significant examples of the medieval and Renaissance Christian cult tradition;
 - the Dupnitsa - Sapareva Banya zone, which collected a rich variety of historical material traces from prehistory to the present day in a limited territory.
 - The Rila Monastery is located here - an architectural-historical monument of world importance, situated in the unique natural environment of the Rila Mountains.

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- The cultural-historical material and spiritual traces in the Kyustendil region have been subject of research since the end of the last century and the beginning of this century. As a result, at the present time, 1052 individual and group objects are protected with the status of "cultural monuments". Of these, 194 are archaeological, 711 are architectural, 54 are historical and 94 are artistic.
- According to the approved and promulgated register of cultural monuments for the district, they are categorized by their value as follows:
 - *Cultural monuments of world importance - 1;*
 - *Cultural monuments of national importance - 35;*
 - *Cultural monuments of local importance - 218;*
 - *Cultural monuments in an ensemble - 776;*
 - *Cultural monuments for reference – 22.*

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- The magnificent combination of a favorable climate, mineral waters, an ecologically clean environment rich in natural sights and unique cultural monuments characterize Kyustendil and the region as a "gold mine" for the development of complex tourism: Spa, Balneological, Cultural, Mountain, Ski, Rural and other forms of tourism.
- **Rural tourism** is the fastest growing branch of tourism in Bulgaria in recent years. The possibilities for rural tourism here are unlimited, due to the specifics of our country. Many Bulgarian villages are currently experiencing a real renaissance, thanks primarily to the increased demand for this type of accommodation. Rural tourism is also practiced by many foreign tourists who come from countries where the infrastructure is much different. A few days' stay in a traditional country house with a yard can make anyone rethink their life and discover the charm of the Bulgarian countryside.

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- The Osogovo mountain is extremely favorable for the development of **winter sports and ski tourism**. The average height of the snow cover for the period November - April is about 45 cm. In places on the northern slopes, the snow cover exceeds 1 m and remains until the end of April. During the main winter months, the average height of the snow cover is 58.8 cm.
- **Hunting tourism** - In February 2001, the State Game Breeding Station "Osogovo" was established on the territory of the State Forestry "Osogovo" with an area of 16,812 ha. and an altitude of 600 to 1,700 m. Shelters and places for rest and camping have been built in maximum harmony with nature along the most visited routes. The roe deer, wild boar and rabbit are common in the area of the VAT "Osogovo", and from the predators: the wolf, the fox and the wild cat. In the lands of the villages of Ranentsi and Zhilentsi, partridge and grouse are found.

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- In the region, mountain tourism is represented by route-knowledge tourism, as excellent opportunities for it are offered by the well-marked routes in Rila and Osogovo, leading to well-known national sites.
- On the territory of the **Kyustendil region** there are warm mineral springs, which, in combination with the rehabilitation centers, could be utilized from a tourist point of view. The presence of geothermal waters directly in sites-monuments of culture and in areas with a concentration of **cultural-historical heritage is a potential for developing balneological tourism.**
- **Cultural tourism** - Currently, according to the approved and promulgated register of the region, 1052 individual and group monuments are protected with the status of "cultural monuments". On the territory of the region there is the cultural and historical monument of world importance Rila Holy Monastery, town of Rila - Rila Monastery, declared a Cultural Monument of World Importance (VII regular session of the World Heritage Committee - Florence, 5-9.XII. 1983).

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- Cultural-tourist route "Kyustendil region - center of ancient cultures" covers a total of 14 cultural monuments of extremely high scientific-historical and architectural artistic value from all cultural-historical periods in the chronological interval of the 7th millennium BC. - XIX century. The route includes 4 of the most vivid and preserved ancient monuments of Pautalia, located within the boundaries of the "National Architectural and Archaeological Reserve Pautalia - Velbzhhd - Kyustendil", Roman baths - III century, acropolis of Pautalia - IV century, ancient and late-antique fortress on the hill "Hisarlaka" /IV - XV century/, medieval "Pirgova kula" /XIV century/, mosque "Ahmed Bey" / 1575/, the church "St. Georgi" - city of Kyustendil / X century /.



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- The route is provided with relatively good tourist and communication infrastructure. A tourist information center in Kyustendil and information desks in Rila and Sapareva Banya have been opened for the service. The construction of a common information network unites efforts for an effective and full-fledged advertising campaign and modern information provision and meets the needs of the local community and potential tourists.

Architectural, archaeological monuments and museum expositions are benchmarks of the cultural memory of the ancient city and its urban territory.

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Features of the Region: Municipality of Kriva Palanka

- **Kriva Palanka** (also known in the old literature as Krivorechna Palanka or Egri Palanka, in Macedonian literary norm: Kriva Palanka; in Turkish: Egri Palanka, Egri Паланка) is a town in the northeastern part of North Macedonia, the center of the municipality of the same name Kriva Palanka.
- Kriva Palanka is 100 km from the capital Skopje. In the immediate vicinity of the city is the Deve Bair border crossing with Bulgaria. Only 2 km from the city center is the Osogovo Monastery.
- The city has a positive demographic growth and one of the few in the country where this growth is due to a non-Albanian population.
- Due to the strategic location of Kriva Palanka on pan-European transport corridor 8, it is planned to extend the railway line to the border with Bulgaria and Gueshevo, which was built to the village of Belyakovtse

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- The **Municipality of Kriva Palanka** has a moderate-continental climate with moderately cold winter, moderately hot summer, fresh spring and relatively warm autumn, which is due to the geographical location and certain influences that enter from the White Sea through Kriva Reka. The higher parts of Osogovia are influenced by the steppe climate.
- The average annual temperature is 10.2 C. During the year, the hottest month is July with an average value of 20.0 C. The coldest month is January with an average value of -0.3 C.
- The average annual temperature variation is 20.30 C. Compared to the areas that surround it, the Krivopalane area receives significant rainfall. This is due to the absolute high altitude, which is a natural condenser for water vapor that is carried by the west and south winds.
- The average date of the first snow cover in this area is November 30.

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- The region is characterized by numerous shallow rivers and small pools. The most famous are Kriva reeve and Durachka reka.
- Kriva River springs at the foot of Tsarev Vravv, from a strong source at about 1800 meters above sea level. The total length of the Kriva Reka river is 69 kilometers with a fall of 2.5%. In the center of the city, it receives its largest tributary, the Durachka river.
- Durachka River is formed by three small rivers: Stanechka, Kozya and Durachka. The total length of the river is 15 km. So far, two reservoirs have been built in the area of the municipalities, namely the Bazychko Bardo dam with 14,100 m³ of water and the Vlachki Kolibi dam with 6,200 m³ of water, located on the Kalin stone at 1590 m.a.s.l.

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- The extent and structure of the forests represent one of the most significant natural potentials of the municipality of Kriva Palanka. Forests occupy 36.47% of the total area of the municipality.
- About 60% of the total forested area is high forest and the rest is low forest.
- The most widespread is the beech forest, which extends from 700 to 1200 m above sea level. According to land ownership, about 60% of the forests are state property and 40% are private property.
- The state forests are managed by PE "Macedonian Forests" - a subsidiary of DHS "Osogovo" Kriva Palanka.

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- Of the total land in the municipality, 31% is arable and there are great natural prerequisites and opportunities for profitable investments in this industry. The total arable land in the municipality is 14906.8 ha, of which:
 - ✓ Fields (arable land) – 11881.5 ha (24, 7 %)
 - ✓ Gardens (garden crops) – 45.9 hectares (0.09%)
 - ✓ Orchards – 630.9 hectares (1.31%).

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Features of the Region: North-Eastern Region, North Macedonia

The North-Eastern region in North Macedonia stretches along the borders with the Republic of Kosovo, the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Bulgaria. Its total area is 2310 km², i.e. 8.98% of the total territory of the Republic of North Macedonia.



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- The region is bounded from the north by the state border and by the Kozjak and German mountains, from the east by the border with Bulgaria, from the south by the Osogovo mountains, and from the west by Skopje Montenegro.
- At the same time, these are the more remarkable landforms in the region. Among them are Kumanovsko Pole and the valley of Kriva Palanka with Slavishko Pole.
- Its total area is 2,310 km² or 8.98% of the total territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. 172,787 inhabitants live in the North-East region in a total of 192 settlements, of which 189 are rural settlements and 3 urban settlements (Kumanovo, Kriva Palanka and Kratovo). The administrative center of the northeastern region is Kumanovo with 76,000 inhabitants.

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- The North-East planning area is characterized by protected natural areas and ecological corridors of the national ecological network for connecting protected areas and ecologically significant areas.
- Several localities have been designated as representative areas, such as the Kumanovo Kozyak, which has been proposed for a nature park, and despite the rocky areas important for the nesting of several species of birds of prey, the area represents the northernmost distribution range of some Mediterranean species (Greek tortoise, large black-headed woodpecker, creeping woodpecker).
- Other important bird species (red-throated flycatcher, *Ficedula semitorquata*) are also found in the remains of oak and beech forests on the northern slopes.

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- Along with the great cultural significance, the **Kokino site** also has great geomorphological value. It is a geological phenomenon, an outpouring (separation) of pyroxene andesites and andesites with an age of 32-33 million years.
- **Potrošnica River** has great ornithological and botanical importance. The area is of special importance due to the nesting of several species of birds of prey and is the main area of the important ornithological site Pchinya-Petroshnica-Kriva Reka.
- **The Bislim Gorge** is a short gorge with a pronounced sub-Mediterranean climate, rich in underground and surface karst forms. The caves are home to significant colonies of bats and the presence of troglomorphic species has been recorded. It is of particular importance for the nesting of some Mediterranean and predatory bird species: Egyptian vulture, peregrine falcon, golden eagle, leaf mouse, black stork, etc. Chasmophyte vegetation grows along the rocks and this deposit has great biological and geomorphological value.

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- A large number of internationally and nationally important flora and fauna species have been identified, a significant part of which are affected, endemic or rare species. In addition, Osogovo has been identified as: Important Plant Area (IPA), Important Ornithological Area (IBA), Important Corridor for Movement of Wild Plant and Animal Species within the Pan-European Ecological Network for South-Eastern Europe (PEEN SEE) and Emerald Area.
- One of the main characteristics of part of the area of this region are the attractive artificial reservoirs - Lake Lipkovo and Glazhnia - in the municipality of Lipkovo. The first one was accumulated on the Lipkovska river, in the immediate vicinity of the village. Lipkovo, on an area of 0.40 km² and 2,250,000 m³ of water is accumulated in it. The larger Lake Glažnja is located on the northeastern slopes of Skopje Montenegro and accumulates about 22,000,000 m³ of water.

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- The most important sectors of economic activity of the Northeast region are industry (food, chemical and metal industry, tobacco and cigarettes) and construction. The volume of investment in fixed assets in the region is low and below the national average. While the national figures for the volume of investment show a growth of 15.8%, the growth in the North East Planning Region was 9.56%.
- The road infrastructure in the North-East region consists of local, regional and A road network. European Corridors VII and X pass through the region. The existing road infrastructure in the North-East region consists of 888 kilometers of local roads, 99 kilometers of A state roads and 370 kilometers of regional roads.
- Main roads that connect this region with other regions are the state road A1 (Skopje - Kumanovo - Border with Macedonia) and the state road A2 (Kumanovo - Kriva Palanka - Border with Bulgaria).

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- In addition to the roads, the railway lines are also within the transport corridors. There are two railway lines in the North-East region, and more precisely in corridor number VIII is the route of the railway line from Kumanovo with a connection to the railway line from corridor number X, through Kriva Palanka it continues to the Republic of Bulgaria. In corridor number X is the railway line border with Serbia - Kumanovo - Skopje - border with Greece.
- "Alexander the Great" Airport is located in the immediate vicinity of Kumanovo. The proximity of this airport makes it possible to serve some of the municipalities in the Northeast region. These are primarily the municipalities near Kumanovo.

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Tourism trends in the Northeast region have undergone relatively large changes in recent years. The needs of tourists visiting the region are specific and divided into segments, and according to them, the tourist offer has also been adapted. Greater attention is paid to the creation of development plans, programs and strategies in these destinations.

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