



## **AER Seminar on Cultural Tourism Fostering Entrepreneurship in Cultural Tourism**

### **1. Relevance of the action**

#### Context

AER's Cultural Tourism Initiative started in May 2008 with an introductory seminar that illustrated, how regions, through the preservation of their cultural heritage, can reinforce local identities, promote tourism, and economic growth.

A second seminar was organized in September 2008 on the topic of public-private partnerships in Cultural Tourism. The objective of this seminar was to exchange ideas on how regional governments can best cooperate with the private sector in order to ensure the sustainability of cultural tourism initiatives.

The upcoming seminar on entrepreneurship promotion in Cultural Tourism will be the third part of this series. The importance of local entrepreneurs in shaping a cultural tourism profile for regions becomes even clearer when analyzing the examples of successful regions. Cultural heritage has a strong human dimension and only becomes authentic if its owned and driven by locals and integrated in their every day life.

Getting locals involved and encouraging them to start their own small cultural tourism oriented business can contribute to the economic development of the area and to better standards of living for the locals, as it can reduce unemployment and create additional income. Furthermore, it increases the likelihood of sustainable tourism initiatives, because the benefits of tourism will be reaped by the local population rather than by big tourism operators.

#### Potentials of the stakeholders involved

Small local entrepreneurs make the tourism offer more appealing, as they create the framework for building a tourist destination atmosphere. They offer the infrastructure in accommodation, crafting, traditional cooking and local customs, which personalizes and enriches the region's tourism offer with coherence and strengthens identity. This raises the potential of the region for selling its cultural offer on the tourism market.

### Getting local entrepreneurs started

Entrepreneurship training is an excellent first step in providing locals with the information and with the incentives needed for starting their own cultural tourism business. Once they receive guidance and examples in the field of entrepreneurship, there are higher chances for them to have the initiative of starting their own business. Moreover, the success rate for these small entrepreneurs increases once they have received training and examples of best practices.

## **2. Description of the action and its effectiveness**

The discussions set for this AER seminar will bring together experts in cultural tourism and in entrepreneurship training. They will outline the importance of combining these two fields for maximizing the efficiency of plans set by local authorities in the scope of significantly stimulating cultural tourism profits of the regions.

Representatives of regions that successfully developed and implemented a training plan for local entrepreneurs will stand as examples of best practice.

