



# **The Potential of the Western Silk Road**



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**The Potential of the Western Silk Road – Working paper**

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# 1 Introduction

This study is the first stage of an innovative initiative created by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) in cooperation with the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) of the European Commission (EC). It is implemented by the UNWTO Silk Road Programme.

As a unique network of destinations linked by a common heritage, the Western Silk Road presents significant opportunities for collaborative marketing and promotional initiatives. Additionally, to the potential of individual countries participating in the project, and the marketing and branding work already being carried by the UNWTO, the Western Silk Road is in a great position to levy from a change in the way people think about and approach travel.

In line with the changing tastes of travellers influenced by the global travel media, travellers are increasingly seeking a different kind of value return, favouring enriching experiences and authenticity along with the traditional product purchase. However, in order to establish a powerful brand with a positive image, precise research and tourism intelligence is necessary.

The following report on the potential of the Western link of the Silk Road has been undertaken to achieve a deeper understanding of the existing Silk Road potential for Europe at large and neighbouring countries, with a focus on transnational products. It is intended that, based on the results of this study, the next stage will be the creation of a Western Silk Road Handbook to guide interested parties in the next steps.

The study will review the challenges that will face the creation of a Western Silk Road brand Identity and implementing it alongside the existing brands and identities that are present across potential participant countries and look at the solutions and approaches needed for success.

Through the study the term Western Silk Road is applied, referring to the Western link of the Silk Road and covering a vast area of Eastern and Western Europe, as well as the Caucuses, Mediterranean basin and relevant regions of the Russian Federation. An abbreviation WSR is used to shorten the term. The term Classic Silk Road, opposed to the Western, is used to describe the Silk Road section passing through Central Asian and Middle East.

## 2 Background and Overview

### The Silk Road

The Silk Road is the greatest and oldest trading development in the World and the most well-known historical route. It is commonly thought that the Silk Road as a network of trade routes was formally created in the Han Dynasty of China around 130 BC, however it is now recognised that the routes are much older. The Persians were recognised as traders and diplomats over a much earlier period.<sup>1</sup>

The first recorded western contact with China dates back to the time of Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE). As one of the first Silk Road tourists he travelled extensively across the Persian Empire, Central Asia and Northern India with his army. His military conquests opened the potential for trading routes and set the foundation for the creation of an Empire that stretched from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Indus River.<sup>2</sup>

Silk was first introduced to Europe in a significant way during the Byzantine period. It was regarded as a product of absolute value equalling gold and precious gems. The fact that the secrets of sericulture were a closely guarded secret and export of the cocoons strictly prohibited greatly increased the value. It was not until 554 AD that monks smuggled silk worm cocoons out of China hidden in their staves and introduced the potential for silk production to Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst the common perception of the ancient Silk Road was that its primary trade was silk from the east to the west, when silk was only one product that travelled the ancient trade routes. The trade caravans carried many different types of goods and people from settlement to settlement, country to country.

Good ideas and innovation travel easily and far. Historically, these ideas spread along trade routes and the great Eurasian Silk Roads that linked China across Central Asia with the Mediterranean were no exception to this rule. They were a conduit of people, goods, ideas, beliefs and inventions. Many of these had a greater impact on western civilization than silk.<sup>4</sup>

A famous example of a Chinese invention that helped to transform the world is paper.<sup>5</sup> Paper was invented during the Han dynasty, probably just at the time the Silk Road trade was beginning to flourish. Many accounts ascribe the invention of paper to a Latter Han official at the beginning of the 2nd century CE, but actual paper at least two centuries older than that has been archaeologically excavated from Han tombs.<sup>6</sup>

Paper is superior to the narrow wooden strips or rolls of silk that the Chinese had previously used for writing, and thus paper became the writing material of choice throughout China and East Asia. It was also used in the Buddhist temples of China's northwest, but its spread was limited any further for a long time, probably due to the Chinese protecting the secret of its manufacture, and in part also because other writing materials, such as parchment and

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ancient.eu/Silk\\_Road/](http://www.ancient.eu/Silk_Road/)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ancient.eu/Silk\\_Road](http://www.ancient.eu/Silk_Road)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.silk-road.com/artl/silkhistory.shtml>

<sup>4</sup> <http://asiasociety.org/education/silk-road>

<sup>5</sup> <http://asiasociety.org/education/silk-road>

<sup>6</sup> <http://asiasociety.org/education/silk-road>

papyrus, were well established in the west.<sup>7</sup> But under the Mongols in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a group of Chinese workmen set up a papermaking establishment in Samarkand. Their product quickly spread by trade and imitation, and paper soon supplanted other writing materials in most of western Eurasia.

In China, the invention of paper stimulated the invention of printing, sometime during the 6th century — a development energetically supported by Buddhism, according to which the duplication of sacred texts was an act of religious merit. The re-invention of printing in Europe centuries later did not employ East Asian-style printing technology, but it may have been stimulated by accounts of Chinese printing that could have circulated in the Middle East.

Gunpowder was invented in China in the late 9<sup>th</sup> Century and it travelled along the Silk Road either through the Middle East or with the Mongols in the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Century to Europe where it changed the face of warfare irrevocably<sup>8</sup>. Prior to the arrival of gunpowder, warfare was carried out at close range and the walls of medieval fortresses supported long sieges. After the arrival of gunpowder, attacks could be made from a distance and many previously impenetrable citadels fell.

Another more peaceful invention that spread entirely across Eurasia was the noria,<sup>9</sup> or irrigation waterwheel. This simple, ingenious device, invented in Roman Syria, consists of a vertical waterwheel to the rim of which are attached a series of pots or tubes. As the current of a river rotates the wheel, the pots fill with water at the bottom of the cycle and empty into a chute at the top; a large noria can lift water as much as forty feet with no input of human or animal energy. The noria was such an effective tool that it can be seen in various forms from Portugal to China.

Food and agricultural products have also been key travellers along the Silk Road and influenced global tastes. Apples originally spread across the steppe, outward from the region that is now Kazakhstan; oranges travelled the maritime route from China to the West; grapes went from their heartlands in the West along the Silk Road to China.

Cuisine travelled with the traders along the Silk Road resulting in many common dishes each adapted as it travelled with its own local twist. Dumplings are a prime example of such a food that travelled the Silk Road and was adopted by many countries as part of their own food heritage.<sup>10</sup>

The exchange of cultural identity, arts and religious imagery along the route has greatly influenced the creative sector. European artists and crafts people were influenced by the exotic art coming from the East. The jewellery and pottery industries developed using innovative techniques from China and Central Asia using minerals, colours and designs previously unknown.

These examples illustrate the influence of the Silk Road: ideas, inventions, devices and techniques spread readily and far along the Silk Road, and the traffic was very much a two way, or perhaps one should say a multi-way, street. In the process the Silk Road enriched not just the merchants who carried and exchanged goods, but the people of countries and cultures all the way from Central Asia to modern day Europe.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://sites.asiasociety.org/arts/monksandmerchants/silk5.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <http://kaleidoscope.cultural-china.com/en/10Kaleidoscope8483.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://asiasociety.org/education/silk-road>

<sup>10</sup> UNWTO Silk Road Programme – Flavours of the Silk Road Conference, Baku, 2014

## **The Western Silk Road**

The focus of knowledge and activity regarding Silk Road tourism has traditionally been based on the Classic Silk Road from China to Istanbul. This is reinforced by focus of academic research, the portrayal of the Silk Road with a central Asia focus in historical films and in the travel media. Even modern tourism marketing primarily focusses on the Classic Silk Road with its western limit being Istanbul.

The reality is that the Silk Road as a trading route was not simply a predefined highway that started in China and ended in Istanbul. The movement of goods from the east took many directions across Central Asia and ended in diverse locations spread across Europe – from the north of the Russian Federation and Scandinavia, all the way around and across the Mediterranean and to many destinations in-between. The trade in silk and other goods and skills from the East was carried out by many civilisations and nations and impacted European heritage as we know it today in a huge way. As well as the great Silk Road trading centres in the East such as Kashgar, Samarkand, and Almaty – many of the trading centres in Europe were heavily influenced by if not dependant on the flow of goods from the East.

In recent years, the profile and value of the Silk Road as a tool for transnational tourism development has been raised in part by the activities of Silk Road Programme of UNWTO to bring together the national tourism organisations and tourism ministries to develop the Silk Road as the world's greatest and best tourism route. It has not just focused on the Classic Silk Road countries<sup>11</sup>, membership of the UNWTO Silk Road Task Force<sup>12</sup> has expanded to include countries from Western Europe and countries with non-traditional Silk Road links<sup>13</sup>.

The greater Silk Road profile in these countries, both amongst the public and private sector, has generated increased interest in utilising the Silk Road heritage and many countries and destinations have started activities to build on this link.

The UNWTO Western Silk Road Study activities have been instigated to discover the potential for building on the national capacity to create a transnational Western Silk Road tourism brand. This report and the supporting annexes will provide an initial analysis and guidance that will be further developed into a Western Silk Road branding handbook.

## **The modern Silk Road**

Outside of the heritage and tourism sectors, the Silk Road is taking on a new global importance. The increasing strength of the Chinese economy and the desire to build an economic bridge between east and west has resulted in the development of one of the biggest international development and cooperation projects of the modern world.

China's modern-day adaptation of the ancient Silk Road aims to revive those routes via a network of railways, ports, pipelines and highways. President Xi Jinping launched China's

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<sup>11</sup> Including countries such as China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran

<sup>12</sup> <http://silkroad.unwto.org/en/content/task-force> , Annex 6

<sup>13</sup> Bangladesh, DPR Korea, Republic of Korea, Indonesia

“One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) initiative in 2013<sup>14</sup> with the stated aim to connect major Eurasian economies through infrastructure, trade and investment. The initiative was later specified to contain two international trade connections: the land-based "New Silk Road Economic Belt" and ocean going "21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road".

The “Belt” is a network of overland road and rail routes, oil and natural gas pipelines, and other infrastructure projects that will stretch from Xi’an in central China through Central Asia and ultimately reach as far as Moscow, Rotterdam, and Venice. Rather than one route, belt corridors are set to run along the major Eurasian Land Bridges, through China–Mongolia–Russian Federation, China–Central and West Asia, China–Indochina Peninsula, China–Pakistan, Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar.

The “Road” is its maritime equivalent: a network of planned ports and other coastal infrastructure projects that dot the map from South and Southeast Asia to East Africa and the northern Mediterranean Sea<sup>15</sup>.

China emphasizes the Silk Road's role in boosting industrialization in the developing nations sandwiched between East and West. Economists agree that the initiative has the potential to stimulate Asian and global economic growth<sup>16</sup>.

Figure 1: Map illustrating Modern Maritime and overland Silk Road<sup>17</sup>



By the end of 2016, major steps have already been made in moving the One Belt, One Road initiative forward. It has been the major focus of discussion at global economic events such as the World Economic Forum in Davos. Goods are already travelling by train from China to the Port of Rotterdam – reducing a 60-day sea journey to a 14-day rail trip. All along the route businesses are developing the skills and understanding to trade with China. Over 30

<sup>14</sup> <http://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/china-one-belt-one-road-initiative-what-we-know-thus-far>

<sup>15</sup> <http://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/china-one-belt-one-road-initiative-what-we-know-thus-far>

<sup>16</sup> <http://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/china-one-belt-one-road-initiative-what-we-know-thus-far>

<sup>17</sup> <http://en.xfafinance.com/html/OBAOR/>

countries have signed inter-governmental agreements on the One Belt, One Road initiative with China to develop multilateral economic activities<sup>18</sup>. As a result of these agreements, China has built 56 economic or trade zones overseas, and created more than 163,000 jobs in Belt and Road countries and regions.<sup>19</sup>

From January to August 2016, trade along the road exceeded 600 billion U.S. dollars, about 26 percent of China's trade total<sup>20</sup>. Direct investment by Chinese companies was over 10 billion U.S. dollars, commerce ministry statistics show. Contracts were worth over 70 billion U.S. dollars, up 28.3 percent year on year. Projects such as a highway in Pakistan, high-speed railway in Turkey and rail link between Hungary and Serbia, are well under way<sup>21</sup>.

The modern physical implementation of the Silk Road presents many challenges – not just dealing with diverse political differences amongst countries on the route but also with technical issues. For example, the New Silk Road Rail project needs to overcome technical and regulatory challenges. The trains require at least two changes of gauge – as China and Europe use the standard of 1435 mm gauge while Belarus, Russian Federation, Mongolia and Kazakhstan use the broad gauge of 1520 mm. Many borders need to be crossed. Customs clearance processes need to be standardised – advanced information technology and digitisation might help. Ideally, the New Silk Road rail project will become a free-trade corridor.<sup>22</sup>

As the modern-day Silk Road develops, the tourism potential along its whole length will increase and offer new opportunities to reach new audiences and open up previously less known destinations. This provides an exciting incentive for development of the Western Silk Road as a brand on its own.

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.china.org.cn/china/Off\\_the\\_Wire/2016-12/25/content\\_39979093.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/Off_the_Wire/2016-12/25/content_39979093.htm)

<sup>19</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-12/25/c\\_135930253.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-12/25/c_135930253.htm)

<sup>20</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-12/25/c\\_135930253.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-12/25/c_135930253.htm)

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.china.org.cn/china/Off\\_the\\_Wire/2016-12/25/content\\_39979093.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/Off_the_Wire/2016-12/25/content_39979093.htm)

<sup>22</sup> <http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/2015/09/17/hurdles-ahead-along-the-new-silk-road/>

### 3 The Western Silk Road Brand study

#### Methodology

This section presents the implemented methodology for the study - a structured process for evaluating in a participative manner the potential for a Western Silk Road brand. The data collection process took into consideration different levels of geographic responsibility spanning from international to local. The outcome was a very active and diverse participation, and the feedback received highlights the possible approaches that can be implemented but also the common themes upon which a WSR brand can be developed.

Taking into account the unique characteristics of each researched level, a multi-method approach was considered appropriate. The data collection methods were both quantitative and qualitative in nature, including: an online survey; semi-structured interviews; SWOT analyses on a national level conducted by universities; and Focus Groups. The contacted participants were carefully selected regarding their relevance to Silk Road Tourism. Following, a thorough description of each research method employed.

#### The questionnaire

The lack of previous research and quantitative data on the topic led the research team to create an online questionnaire (Annex 1) that was distributed to selected participants. For the technical implementation, a professional account of the SurveyMonkey platform was employed. Having access to all the possible features of the platform, the team managed to create a questionnaire that was user friendly while being thorough and inclusive.

The questionnaire aimed to collect mainly quantitative data, but also some open-ended questions were introduced to provide the option to collect personalised responses from stakeholders.

Though an online survey, the research team decided to focus on strategically selected participants and not to publicly distribute the questionnaire. This resulted in receiving 71 strategic responses from current and potential Silk Road Tourism stakeholders. The core group contacted was the Silk Road Task Force<sup>23</sup> Member of each country - an official representative of the Member State<sup>24</sup> for the UNWTO Silk Road Programme. The Task Force was then asked to cascade the online questionnaire to relevant stakeholders (Museums, National Tourism Organizations, Academia, tourism professionals, etc.) within the country. As a result, the representation of each country was subject to the active participation of each Task Force member and the interest demonstrated by each country's stakeholders.

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<sup>23</sup> The Silk Road Task Force ensures that all Member States are duly represented and have the opportunity to provide input into the Programme. For more information follow this link: <http://silkroad.unwto.org/en/content/task-force>, and see the list in Annex 6.

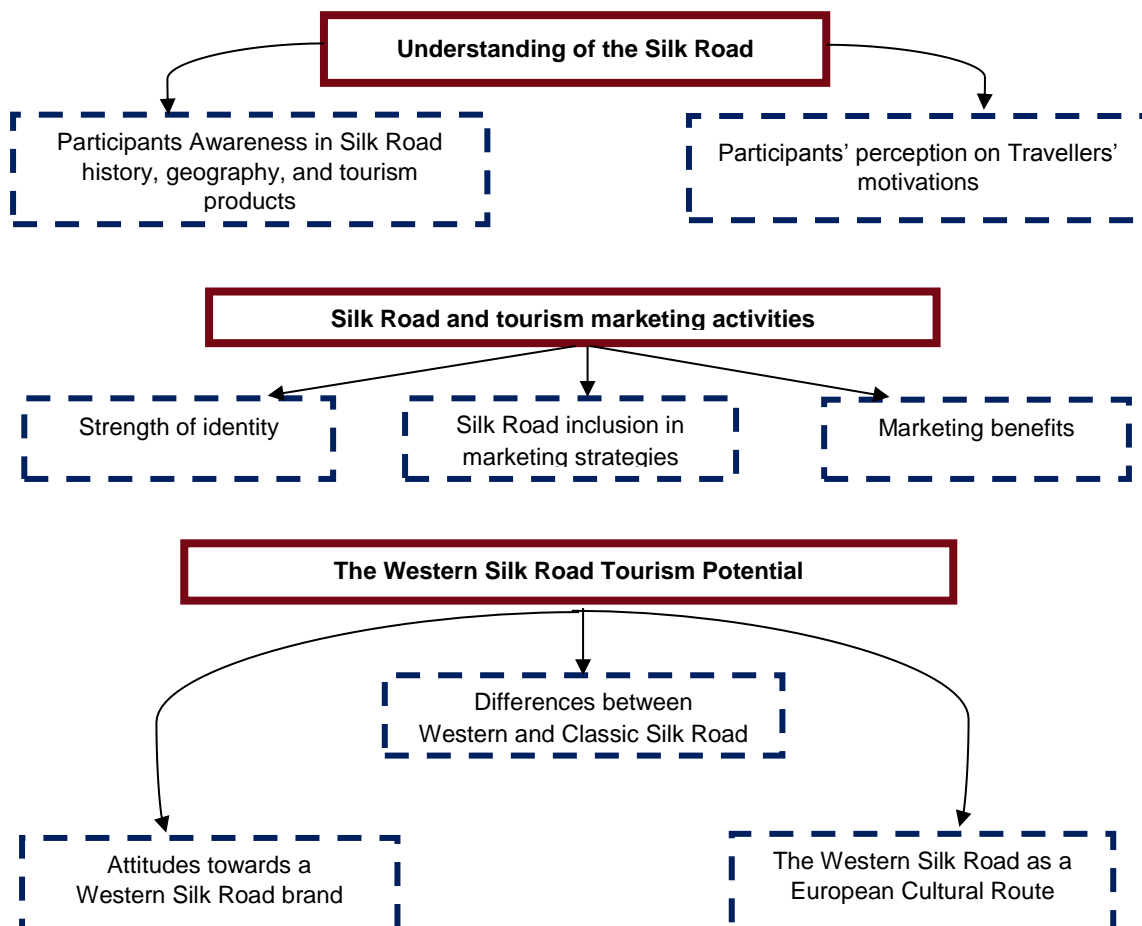
<sup>24</sup> The UNWTO Silk Road Programme has 33 official Member States. For the complete list please access here: <http://silkroad.unwto.org/en/content/member-states>

The design phase of the study included a number of trials within the research team and a pilot study. For the pilot study, the questionnaire was sent to 10 stakeholders, including Task Force members, academia, and entrepreneurs. The feedback received resulted in final alterations made to the questionnaire before the final survey dissemination. Most of the changes related to the length of the survey as well as to the inclusion of SWOT based questions within the questionnaire in the form of open-ended questions. Many of the pilot study participants noted that such type of information would be better obtained through interviews.

However, given the extended network of stakeholders and participating countries, interviewing the whole sample was considered not feasible. But in addition to the online survey questions, an option was introduced prior to that section so participants could request a telephone interview with one of the UNWTO Silk Road Team members. These interviews followed a semi-structured approach and were closely targeted in collecting SWOT related information.

The questionnaire design set out to identify the current participants' awareness regarding the Silk Road, its tourism potential, and attitudes towards the creation of a WSR brand. Aiming to maximise effectiveness, respondents would follow a different path according to their answers in key questions. This enabled limiting the time needed to complete the questionnaire, and present relevant topics to each participant according to the level of understanding of Silk Road and involvement in its tourism sphere. Figure 2 below presents a thematic illustration of the Questionnaire Design.

**Figure 2: The questionnaire design**



## Focus groups

While the Questionnaire was a very good method to obtain quantitative data, limited input was expected in terms of creative approaches, case studies, and insights regarding Silk Road tourism stakeholders' cooperation. Therefore, Focus Groups were considered as a more appropriate method to obtain additional information. As Malhotra (2013, p. 152)<sup>25</sup> states: "Focus Groups are the most important qualitative research procedure."

To ensure the best achievable homogeneity, UNWTO prepared a document that provided participants with guidelines and information on how to run the Focus Group (Annex 2). In some cases, a representative of UNWTO Silk Road Programme moderated the Focus Groups, but there were instances that this was not possible. For the latter situation, an external partner was the moderator after consulting and discussing thoroughly with the UNWTO Silk Road Team the course of actions and moderating techniques to be employed during the research.

Working with stakeholders of different levels, the Focus Groups were categorised as following:

- Interregional: Focus Groups with representatives from regions belonging to different countries to discuss interregional cooperation and product development for the Silk Road Tourism.
- National: Focus Groups with national Silk Road Tourism stakeholders. Participants discuss the Silk Road Tourism potential of their country as a whole.
- Regional: Focus Groups with participants from regional tourism authorities and other regional/local Silk Road Tourism stakeholders. The detailed knowledge gained from this type enriched significantly the data obtained.
- Organizational: Focus Group within an organisation that consists of the management and personnel of the entity.

## Academic national SWOT studies

The research team acknowledged that there was a need for a complementary method to collect data that could strongly support the creation of a Western Silk Road wide SWOT analysis on its tourism potential. As a collateral research method, universities of participating countries were contacted to develop a national SWOT analysis (Annexes 3 and 10) on their country's Silk Road Tourism potential which contributed to the wider SWOT analysis for the Western Silk Road. The selection criteria were based on universities with a relevant tourism department and the willingness to undertake pro-bono research within a limited timeframe.

Having the confidence that academic partners had the necessary know-how in conducting SWOT analyses, the UNWTO Silk Road Team created a document with guidelines sent out to all universities so that the reports would be as homogenous as possible. The guidelines included information on what should be included in the report, examples of secondary sources that could be used, the non-compulsory option to run a primary research, and a list of stakeholders to be considered (Annex 4).

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<sup>25</sup> Malhotra, N. (2013). *Basic marketing research: integration of social media*. Boston: Pearson.

Some universities followed the guidelines while others provided the researchers with non-compatible reports. Consulting the best of those, the input provided demonstrated the rich undocumented information that exists along the Western Silk Road, as well as the importance of partnering with academia to ensure the quality of the research.

### **Semi-structured interviews**

The UNWTO Silk Road Team conducted semi-structured interviews during the World Travel Market London 2016. The semi-structured interviews were selected as a method designed in a way that would guide the discussion to extract information regarding the research question raised while synchronously, it is flexible enough to leave space for new themes to rise.<sup>26</sup>.

The Silk Road Task Force was contacted prior to WTM asking for a possible attendee who could be engaged for a short interview. However, the response was limited and resulted in dependence on last-minute availability. The topics involved: understanding of the Western Silk Road geography, attitudes towards the creation of a Western Silk Road, possible identified benefits and challenges, and perceptions regarding the feasibility of such initiative.

Given the fast pace of the event, a few selected participants were approached and took part on a short semi-structured interview on-site. Participants were given the option to remain anonymous should they wished to. The average interview lasted for 15 minutes and the topics discussed, apart from the ones described above, included issues regarding each individual case.

### **Western Silk Road SWOT Analysis**

Utilising the information and data received from the research methods described above, a Western Silk Road-SWOT (WSR-SWOT) was created. The WSR-SWOT, which is presented later in Chapter 5, provides an analysis of the Western Silk Road as whole and takes into account the particularities of the involved destinations to form a solid understanding of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats that characterise the Western Silk Road.

### **Online survey results**

In this section, the results of the online survey carried out with 71 participants gathered from across the Western Silk Road region are presented. The participants were drawn from the members of the UNWTO Silk Road Task Force, and other interested parties (as explained in the Methodology section above) from both the public and private sector.

Elements of the information collected from the online survey will be analysed in greater depth in later sections of this report to guide the recommendations for strengthening the Western Silk Road brand.

### **Part 1 – Survey participants**

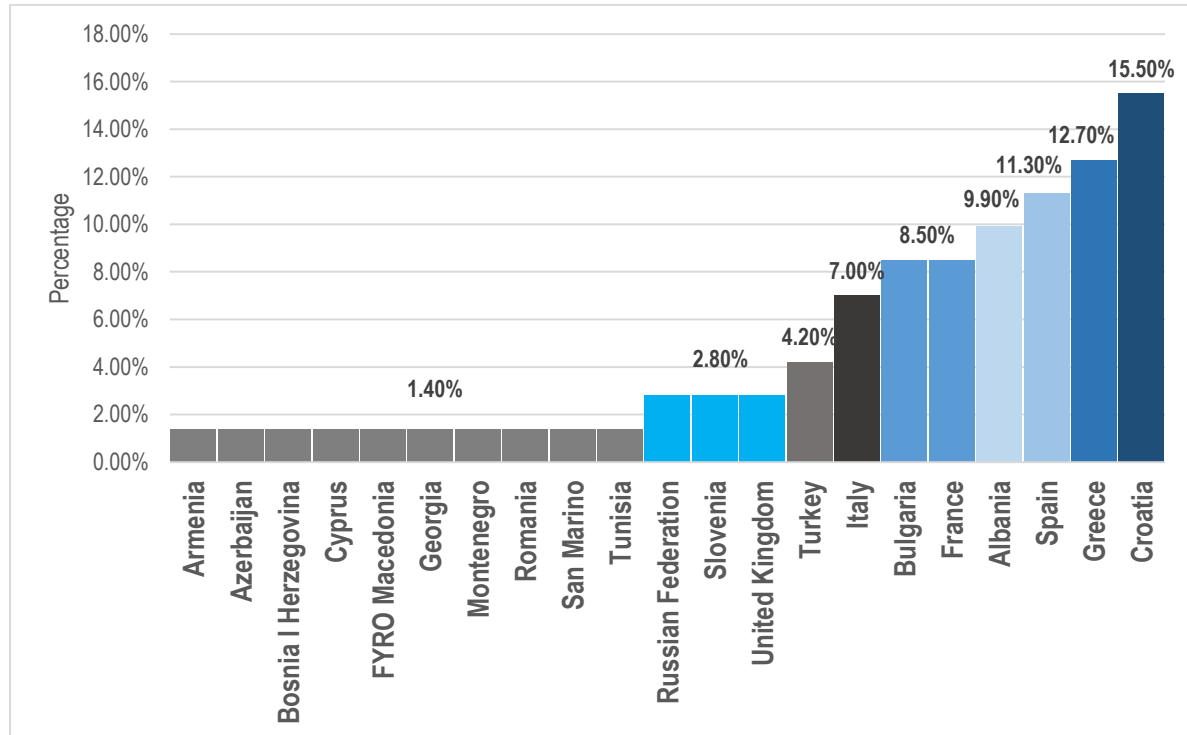
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<sup>26</sup> Galletta, A. (2013). *Mastering the semi-structured interview and beyond: From research design to analysis and publication*. New York City, NY: NYU Press.

## Q2: Countries and Geographical spread

A total number of 21 countries participated in the online questionnaire. Croatia ranks first dominating 15.50% of the sample followed by Greece and Spain represented by 12.70% and 11.30% respectively. Albania ranks 4<sup>th</sup>, covering a total of 9.90% of the sample while France and Bulgaria equally represent 8.50% of the participants. Lastly, the contribution of the rest countries was minimal with the exceptions of Italy (7%) and Turkey (4.2%). Figure 3 below presents the data above.

Figure 3: Sample Representation per Country

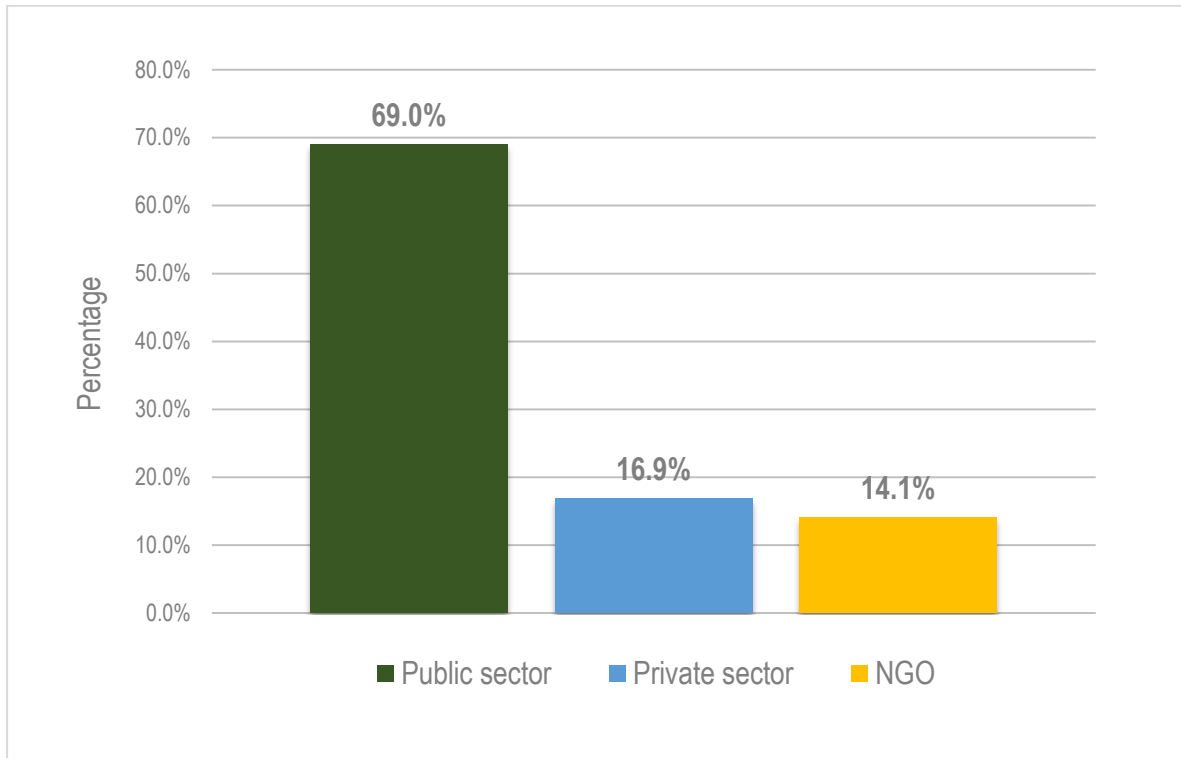


A number of countries that UNWTO considered as having links either through membership of the UNWTO Silk Road Task Force or relevant geographical positioning did not actually respond to requests to provide input into the online survey. These include: Hungary, Israel, Lebanon, Moldova, Czech Republic, Palestine, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine and Tunisia. Some of these omissions were followed up through the face to face interviews at WTM.

## Q3: Do you work in public, private or NGO sector?

Respondents were asked to name their sector of work. As shown in Figure 4, the majority of participants worked in the public sector (69%) while only 16.9% and 14.1% worked in the private sector and for NGOs respectively. This graph also demonstrates the significant input given by the national and regional tourism authorities contacted to contribute to the study.

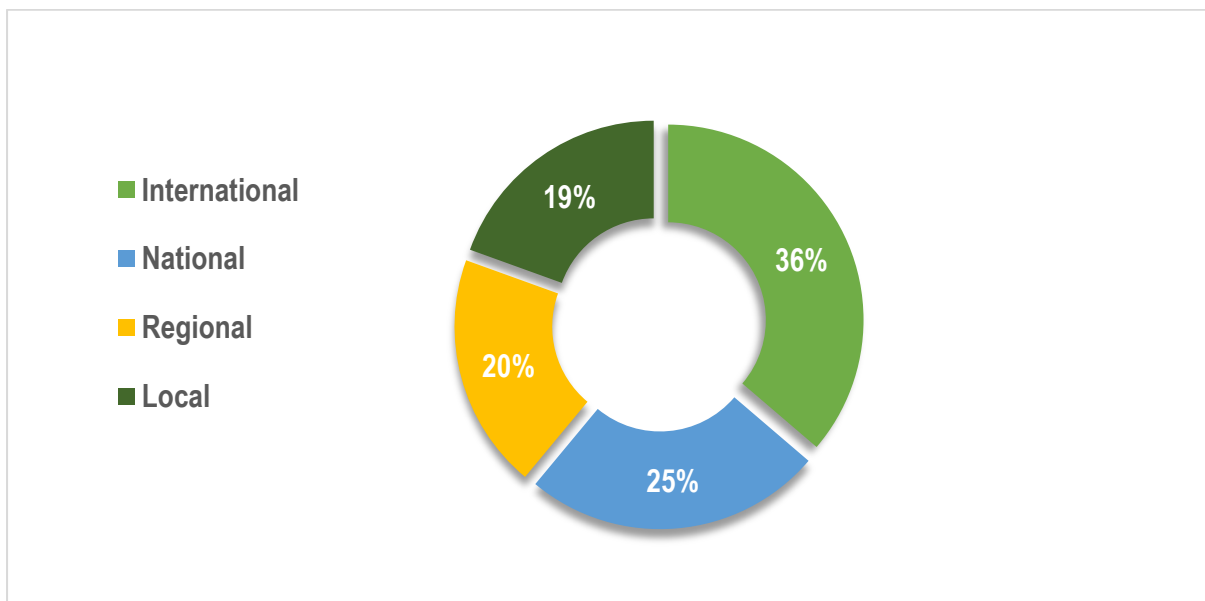
**Figure 4: Sample Representation per Sector**



**Q5: What is the geographical remit of your role?**

Figure 5 represents the geographical remit of participant's work-role. Interestingly, 36% of the participants work on an international level while a quarter of the sample worked on a national level. Almost equally represented, regional and local levels covered 20% and 19% respectively as presented in the chart below.

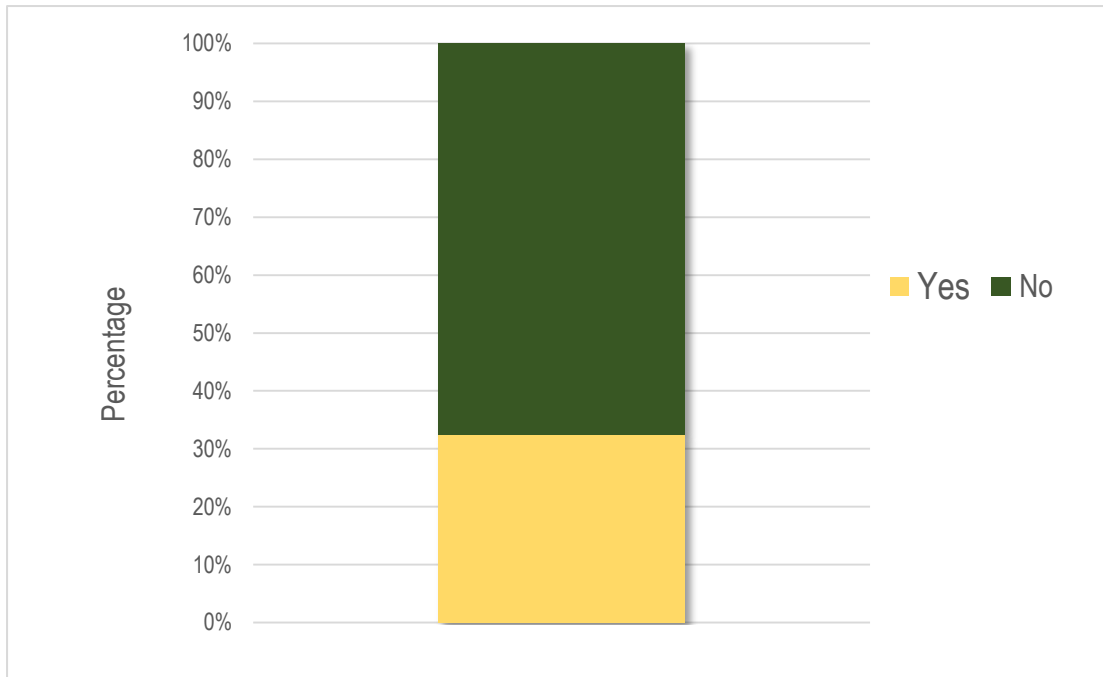
**Figure 5: Geographical Remit of Role**



### Q7: Do you have an existing connection with the UNWTO Silk Road Programme?

Question 7 of the survey measured how many participants considered themselves associated with the UNWTO Silk Road Programme. The question was designed to verify that the survey reached beyond the existing network. The vast majority of 67.7% noted that they are not connected with the Programme. Following, Figure 6 provides an illustration of the above.

Figure 6: Connection with the UNWTO Silk Road Programme

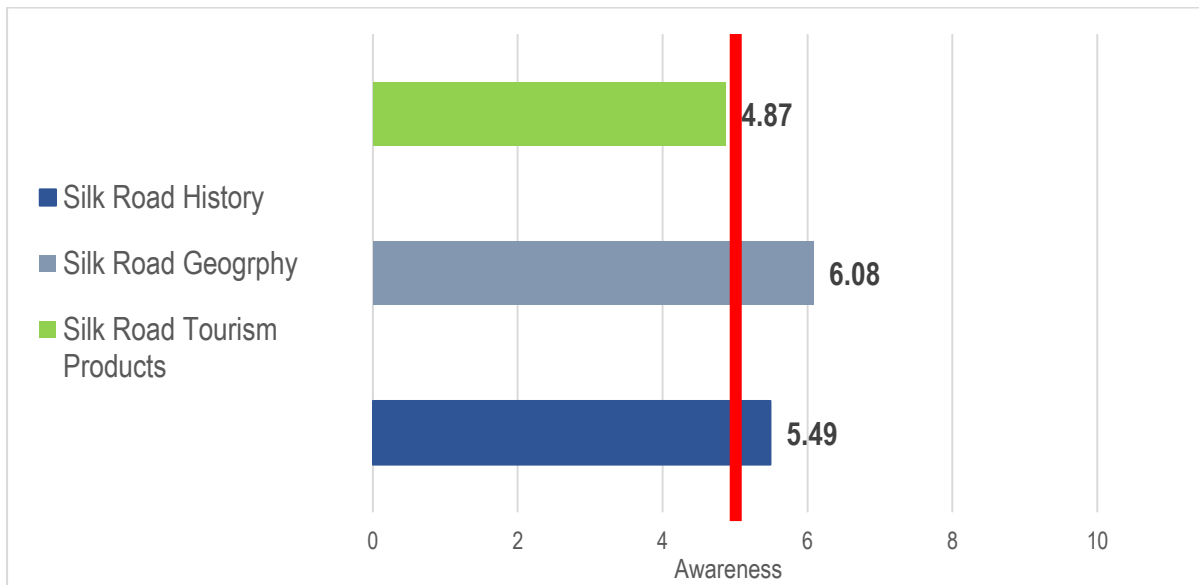


## Part 2 – The Silk Road

### Q 10, 12, 13: Awareness about the Silk Road

Later in the survey, participants were asked to indicate the level of their awareness regarding the history, geography, and existing tourism products along the Silk Road. Respondents were provided with a linear scale with 0 as a *Not at all aware* and 10 as *Extremely aware* to define their personal awareness. Figure 7 below illustrates the results in mean values, and the red, vertical line indicates the medium choice (5 out of 10). As presented, there was moderately adequate awareness regarding history and geography, with both aspects exceeding the medium. On the contrary, according to the sample, the average respondent is rather unaware of existing tourism products along the Silk Road, with the aspect reaching only 4.87 points out of 10.

**Figure 7: Respondents Awareness per Silk Road History, Geography, and Existing Tourism Products**



Participants were asked **what the Silk Road meant to them** and requested to give the top 3 keywords or phrases that came to mind with regard to the Silk Road. The following Figures 8 and 9 illustrate, using word clouds<sup>27</sup>, the strength and repetition of the most popular keywords in each of the 1-3 rankings. The size of the font increases as with the number of occurances. The bigger the word, the greater the trequency.

Figure 8 below shows that the first thoughts relate the Silk Road with History and Culture. Among the second thoughts that come to mind are Tourism, Heritage, and China. In the third place, respondents associate Silk Road with the words History, Trade, and Connection.

<sup>27</sup> A word cloud is a graphical representation of the relative frequency of occurrence of words in a data set, Collins English Dictionary, 2016

Figure 8: Word Cloud Ranking of Thoughts regarding the Silk Road



Next, Figure 9 mirrors the most well-known Silk Road destinations through a ranking system of the top 3 destinations participants associated with the Silk Road. The word clouds show that, for most of the respondents, first in mind is China, Turkey and India. At the second-place participants ranked, among others, China, Istanbul, and Samarkand. Lastly, ranking as third, the respondents introduced Iran, Greece, and Venice as new entries. From a total of 186 responses the top 3 responses were China (38 responses) Turkey/Istanbul (20 responses combined) and Iran (8 responses).

Figure 9: Word Cloud Ranking of Silk Road Destinations



The overall results clearly show that the majority perception is linked to the Classic Silk Road. Several potential Western Silk Road destinations appeared in the results – but mainly these were put forward by representatives of those destinations.

**Q14: According to your understanding, how influential are the following motivations for the Silk Road Traveller?**

The motivation of Silk Road travellers based on the participant’s experience was explored and they were asked to assess levels of importance of a pre-defined set of motivations. The set was created following an internal review based on the experience of the core UNWTO Silk Road Team and close collaborators.

Participants were asked to indicate how influential they considered various motivations for the Silk Road Traveller, employing a Likert scale with the following options: *Not at all*, *Slightly*, *Influential*, *Very*, and *Extremely*. Table 1 below presents the findings as mean values. According to the sample, *Silk Road Culture* (4.38), *Silk Road Monuments* (4.14), *Natural environment and scenery* (4.08), and *Gastronomy of Silk Road Destinations* (4) fell between the categories of *Very* and *Extremely* influential. *Interaction with local communities along the Silk Road* (3.96) was considerably influential, reaching almost the *Very Influential* category. The motivations of *Voluntourism* (3.04), *Increased self-status and prestige* (3.01), and *Extreme Sports* (2.93) were considered just influential. Lastly, rather irrelevant for the Silk Road traveller was the motivation of *Visiting friends and relatives* (2.4).

**Table 1: Silk Road Traveller Motivations**

Silk Road Traveller Motivations	Mean values
Silk Road culture (museums, music, artefacts, dances, festivals, etc.)	4.38
Silk Road monuments	4.14
Natural Environment and Scenery	4.08
Gastronomy of Silk Road destinations	4
Interaction with local communities along the Silk Road	3.96
Voluntourism (Visiting a destination while engaging in volunteering activities)	3.04
Increase self-status and prestige	3.01
Extreme sports in Silk Road destinations	2.93
Visiting friends and relatives	2.4

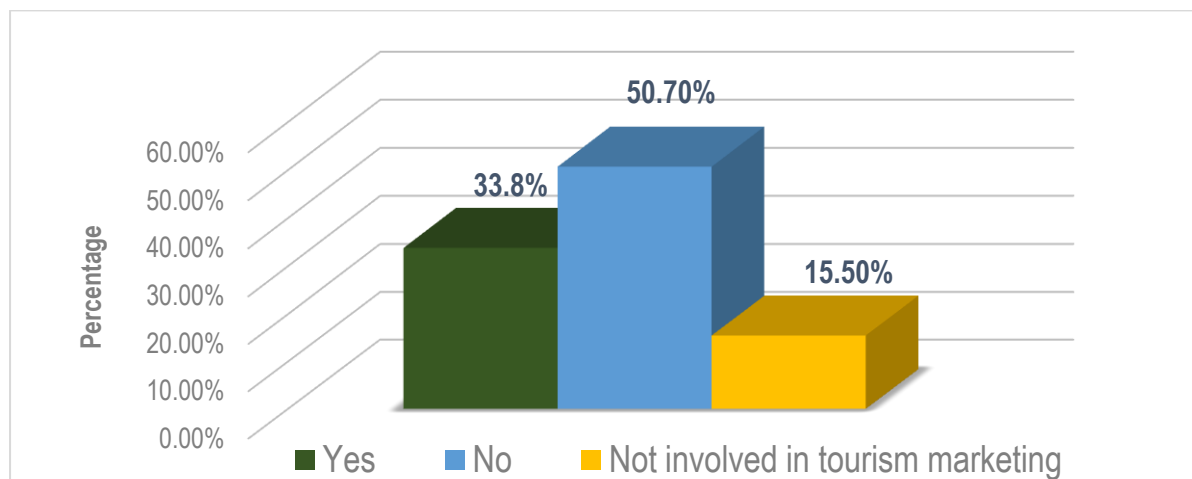
**Q15: How strong do you consider the Silk Road brand currently?**

Regarding the Silk Road brand, respondents were asked to measure the brand’s strength according to their perception. Provided with a linear scale spanning from 0 (Not Existent) to 10 (Extremely Strong), the findings reveal that in mean values, participants consider the brand's strength to be just above the medium, that is 5.25 out of 10.

**Q16: Do you use the Silk Road or links within your existing tourism marketing activities?**

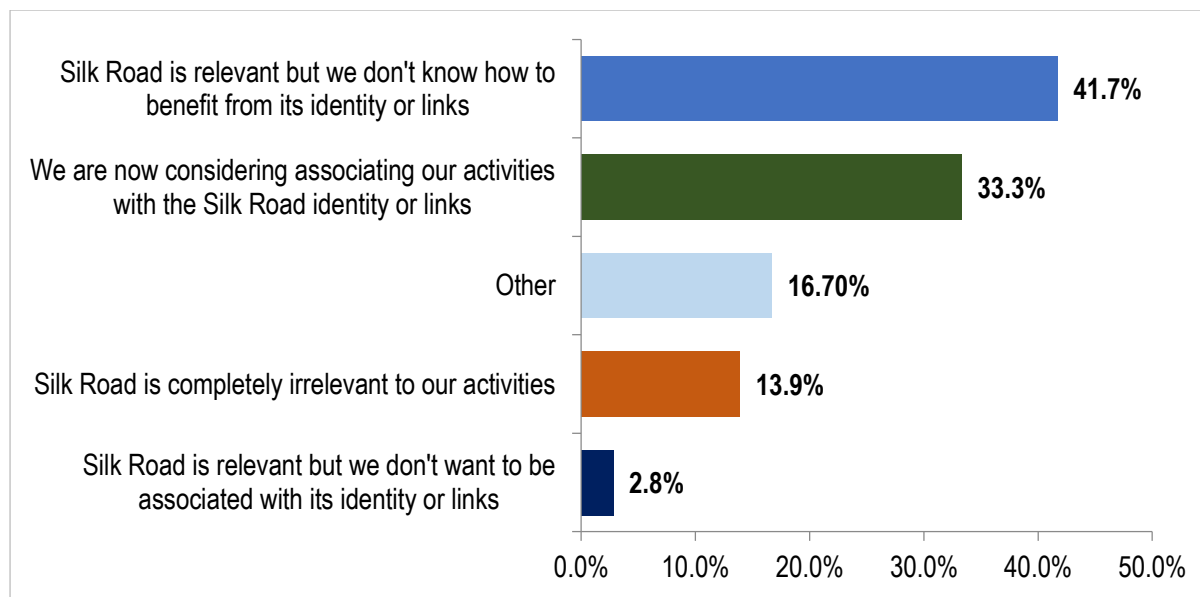
Figure 10 below presents the inclusion of the Silk Road in the tourism marketing activities undertaken by the participants as part of their organisations’ work. 15.5% noted that they are not involved in tourism marketing activities at all. Among the rest, 50.7% recorded that they do not include Silk Road in their tourism marketing activities comparing to 33.8% that they do.

**Figure 10: Inclusion of Silk Road in Tourism Marketing Activities**



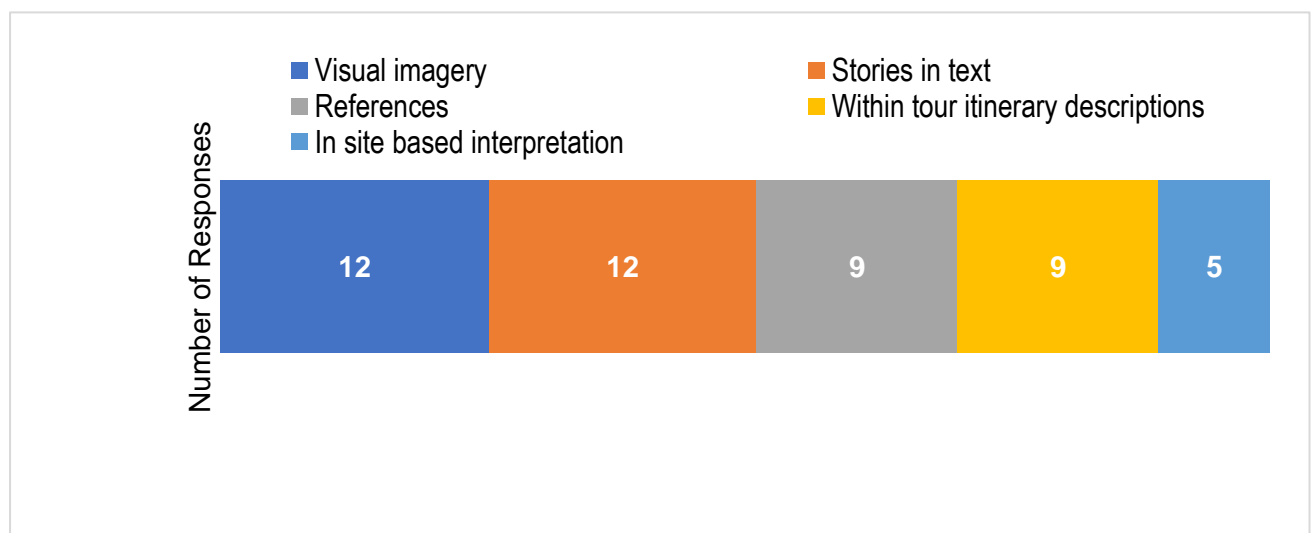
Out of the respondents who said they do not use Silk Road in their marketing activities, a considerably small percentage (13.9%) noted that Silk Road is irrelevant, while only 2.8% stated that they do not want to be associated with the Silk Road. However, 41.7% said they do not use Silk Road in their marketing activities because they do not know how to benefit from it, and a 33.3% underscored that they are now considering using Silk Road in their marketing activities. Figure 11 below presents the data in a bar-graph.

**Figure 11: Reasons for not Including Silk Road in Tourism Marketing Activities**



A list of possible activities was given to the 33.8% who already include Silk Road in their Tourism Marketing. *Visual imagery* and *Stories in Text* were selected by half of the respondents. Following, the *inclusion of the Silk Road within tour itineraries descriptions* and *other references* were chosen by 37.5% while *in site interpretation* was recorded by 20.08% of the respondents. Figure 12 below provides a visualisation of the data.

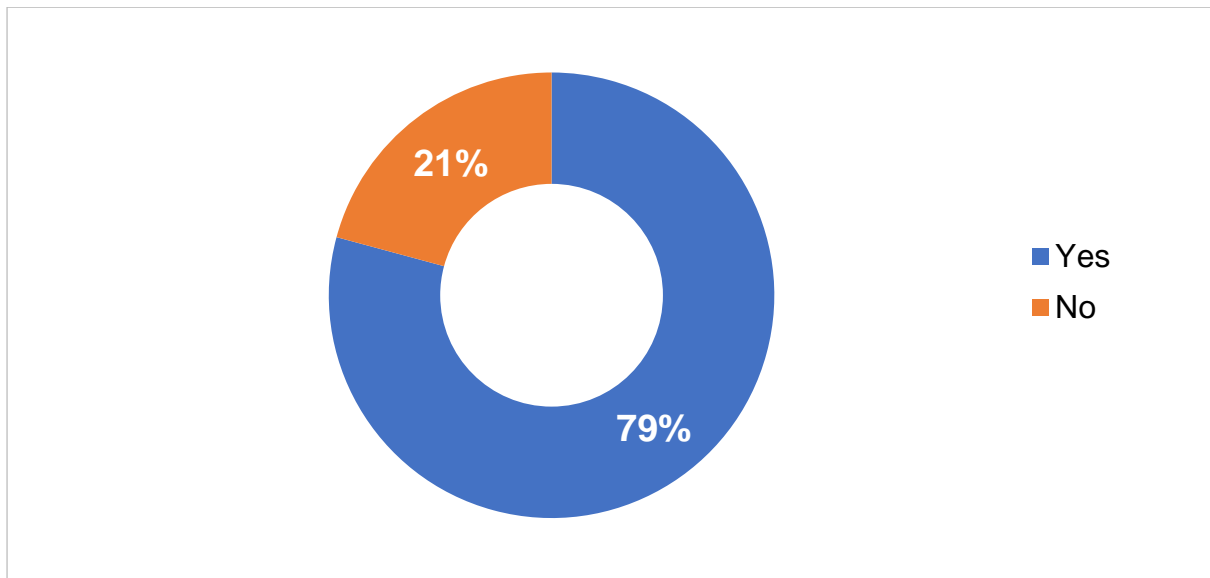
**Figure 12: Silk Road in Tourism Marketing Activities**



### Q19: Has the Silk Road brought you any marketing benefits?

As presented in Figure 13 below, for the 33.8% of participants who indicated that they use Silk Road in their tourism marketing activities (See also Figure 11 and Figure 12), almost 4 out of 5 (79.2%) said that it had indeed brought tangible benefits to their organisation.

Figure 13: Tangible Benefits from Including Silk Road in Tourism Marketing Activities



For this 79.2 % of respondents, a follow-up question asked how significantly the Silk Road identity contributed in bringing a list of benefits to the organisation. Using a Likert Scale, respondents could measure the significance of each listed benefit as *Not at all* (1), *A little* (2), *Somewhat* (3), *Very* (4), and *Extremely* (5). The following Table 2 shows the mean values of the responses for each benefit. Most of the benefits fell between the categories of *Somewhat* and *Very*, with 'expanding the network of partners' being the most acknowledged benefit of all, followed by 'improving the quality of tourism products' (3.63), 'strengthening the organisation's brand' (3.47), 'expanding the variety of tourism product' (3.44), 'being able to reach new markets' (3.39), and 'increase the organisation's visibility' (3.21). The only benefit that recorded in between the categories of *A Little* and *Somewhat* was the 'increase of earnings' (2.76).

**Table 2: Significance of Tangible benefits**

Benefits	Mean values
Expanding your partners network	3.84
Improving the quality of your tourism products	3.63
Strengthening your brand	3.47
Expanding your tourism product variety	3.44
Reaching new markets	3.39
Increase of your organisation's visibility	3.21
Increase of earnings	2.76

### **Q21: Existing use of Silk Road brand and related marketing activities**

Participants were also questioned about awareness of the Silk Road identity use in tourism marketing in their country or destination and asked to provide specific examples. Of the 71 respondents that answered, 26 (36.62%) indicated a positive answer and 15 of them provided specific examples and links which were integrated in the research.

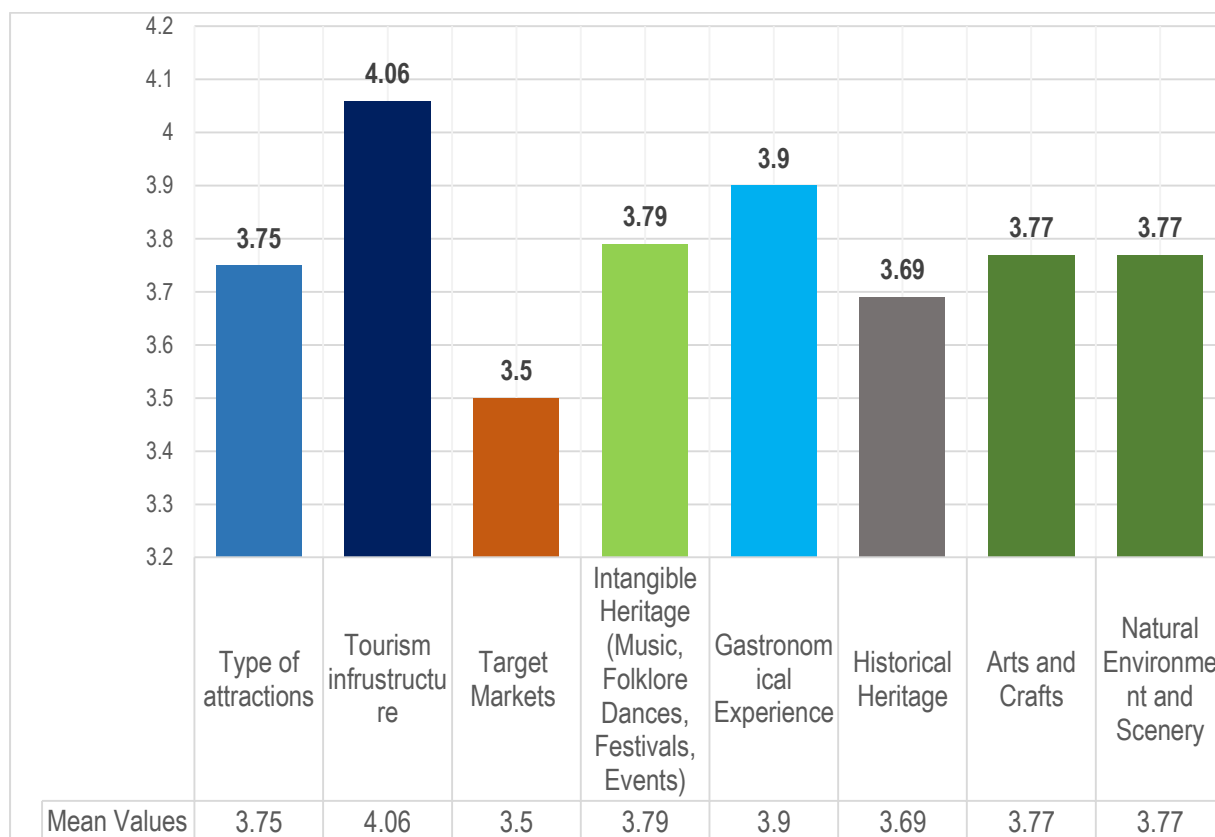
### **Part 3 – The Western Silk Road**

The next part of the survey then concentrated on the Western Silk Road brand and its potential.

### **Q23: Differences between Classic and Western Silk Road**

Respondents were asked to indicate how different they perceive a list of attributes when comparing Western Silk Road with Classic Silk Road. A Likert scale was provided with the following options: Strongly Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Slightly Agree, and Strongly Agree. According to mean values, the respondents agreed that Western Silk Road differs from Classic Silk Road to a small extent in Target Markets (3.5) and Historical Heritage (3.69), and to a larger extent in Type of Attractions (3.75), Arts and Crafts and Natural Environment and Scenery (3.77). Lastly, participants agreed that the Western Silk Road mostly differs in Gastronomical Experiences (3.9) and Tourism Infrastructure (4.06). The above results are illustrated below through Figure 14.

**Figure 14: Differences Between Western Silk Road and Classic Silk Road**



The participants were then asked to give their views on the differentiation between Western Silk Road travellers and Classic Silk road travellers. They were asked to give key words or phrases in response.

To highlight the diversity of responses to this question, the following quotes have been extracted from the raw data:

1. *"I don't guess that there is a real difference between Western Silk Road visitor and Classic Silk Road. Maybe they will prefer much comfort, but from my point of view, many people will do the Silk Road to discover the history, the culture and natural environment of it."*

Many of the responses did not recognise a major differentiation between the travellers exploring the Western and Classic Silk Road. It was perceived that the desire to experience history, culture and nature was common to both.

But in the differentiation between the characteristics of the routes, the potential for ease of accessibility and higher standard of accommodation on the Western were highlighted and this could make the Western Silk Road more attractive to travellers desiring an experience where access to comfortable quality accommodation is perceived to be more consistent than in Central Asia

2. *"I imagine the Western Silk Road visitor would be more interested to see the intersection of different cultures and the influence the Classic Silk Road had on the development of the societies especially going to the western direction. This visitor would be curious to discover another not so popular historical heritage part of the Classic Silk Road but at the same time*

*connected with its western branch, which would offer new sights reading of the dissemination of Silk Road political, religious and cultural influence."*

The responses indicated a curiosity to gain understanding of the impact of Eastern culture on the West. This is relevant especially to those that already have discovered the Classic Silk Road and are looking for new experiences. The search for cultural connections is also of interest for travellers originating in the Classic Silk Road region such as the Chinese and tourists from Central Asian Islamic countries.

*3. "Just unique...however locals should be also trained on the importance of the Western Silk Road in order to also make it unique also to the visitors."*

The need for the awareness of the unique qualities of the Western Silk Road amongst those delivering tourism services and experiences was identified. This is linked to the recognition of the potential for creating a Western Silk Road brand and the requirement of provision of capacity building to ensure it has a strong recognition.

*4. "The Western Silk Road visitor could be either a person who has already travelled to the Classic one who wants to disclosure hidden stories and legends of already known places, or a tourist worried about security issues such as seniors, people with disabilities or groups of students."*

As well as targeting experienced Silk Road travellers who are looking to expand their knowledge or visit more accessible sections of the route, the perception of ease of access and safety can attract diverse groups. The current unrest or perceived danger in many countries means that a lot of less adventurous travellers are looking for safe options. The Western Silk Road can provide that along with as previously referred to, an ease of accessibility due to the greater implementation of access for all standards in the Western countries.

The responses above give a general insight into the perception of differentiation between the Classic Silk Road traveller who is seen as an adventurer, and the Western Silk Road traveller who is seen as looking for easier more accessible options. The ease of access also allows for shorter visits with less planning needed – highly relevant as the way tourists plan and book their trips evolves in the information technology age.

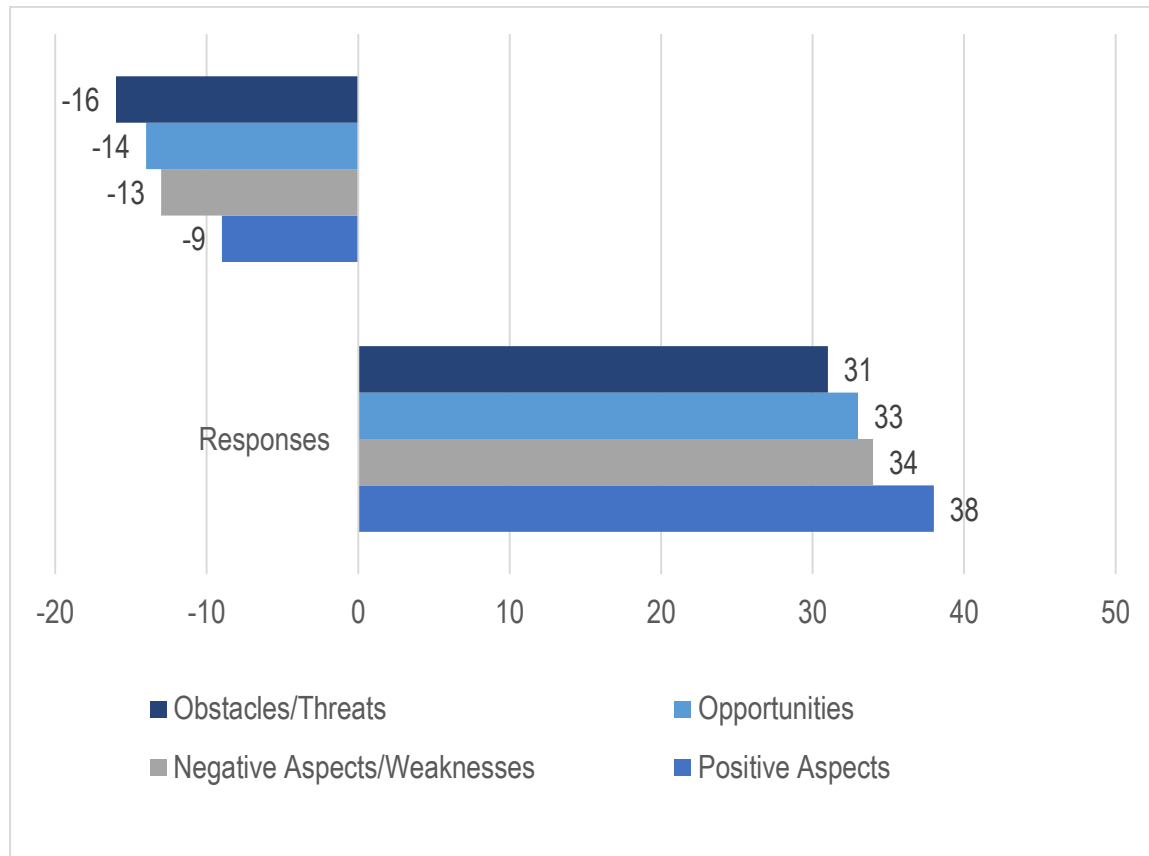
### **SWOT-related questions**

As explained in the Methodology section, a series of SWOT-related questions were incorporated within the questionnaire. Given the length of the survey and a perception that fatigue could cause a weakness in the quality of response to this section, an option was provided for participants to opt out and be contacted to take part in a telephone interview rather than completing certain sections of the survey. The results of both approaches are analysed in section 5.

24 out of 71 opted for a phone interview. 47 participants selected to complete the section online which requested respondents to name three attributes in each thematic question (Annex 1). According to the findings, the completed optional questions were as follows:

Positive Aspects (38), Negative Aspects (Weaknesses) (34), Opportunities (33), and 31 filled in the Obstacle/Threads question. Figure 15 below presents the above data.

**Figure 15: Completed VS Skipped SWOT Questions**



Note: Negative numbers indicate incomplete or non-responses

#### Part 4 – Creating a Western Silk Road Brand

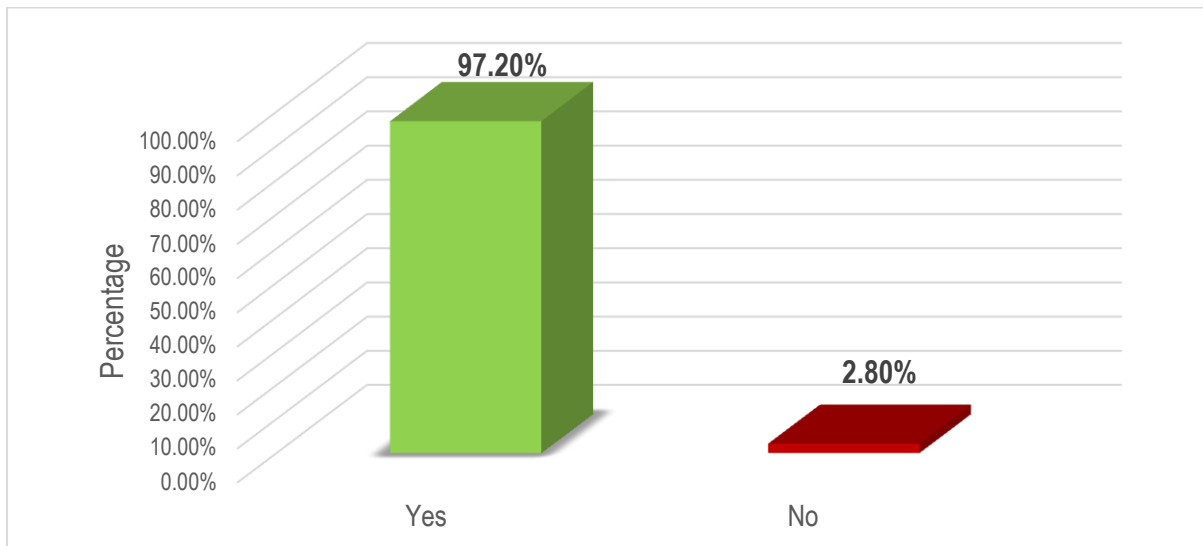
##### **Q32 How useful would you consider the creation of a Western Silk Road brand that can be used as part of tourism marketing activities?**

Respondents were asked to indicate how useful they found the creation of a Western Silk Road brand, using a linear scale from 0 (Not at all useful) to 10 (Extremely useful), with 5 (Moderately useful) being the medium. The mean value reached 7.48 out of 10, indicating that participants' opinion is that the creation of a Western Silk Road brand would be quite useful.

##### **Q33: WSR Toolkit**

The next question concerned the usefulness of the creation of a Western Silk Road brand identity tool-kit which could include a logo, story guides, branding handbook, Facebook page, and a web-portal. The vast majority (97.2%) responded positively, as shown in Figure 16 below.

**Figure 16: The creation of a Western Silk Road tool-kit**



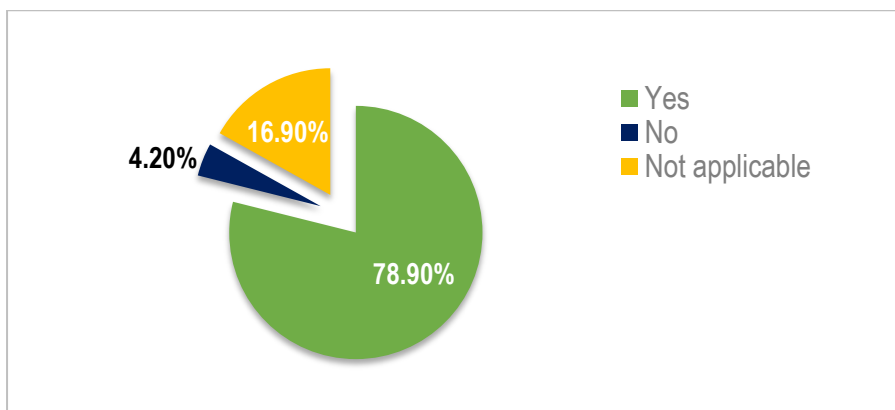
### Q34: The Western Silk Road as European Cultural Route

Participants were asked to indicate how useful they would consider a possible creation of a Western Silk Road European Cultural Route for strengthening the brand identity using a scale from 0 (Not at all useful) to 10 (Extremely useful), with 5 (Moderately useful) being the medium. The mean value reached 7.48 out of 10, indicating that the participants find considerably useful the inclusion of Western Silk Road as a European Cultural Route.

As will be discussed later in this report (Section 6), the Western Silk Road as a concept has many parallels with the European Cultural Routes and the activities of this project will in many ways support the first step for a potential route development exercise. This view appears to be shared by participants.

Additionally, the results from a follow-up question show that 78.9% would be willing to include their destination in a potential Western Silk Road Cultural Route in antithesis with 4.2% of the participants who preferred not to. The rest of the responses were allocated to the Non-applicable category. Figure 17 below presents this data.

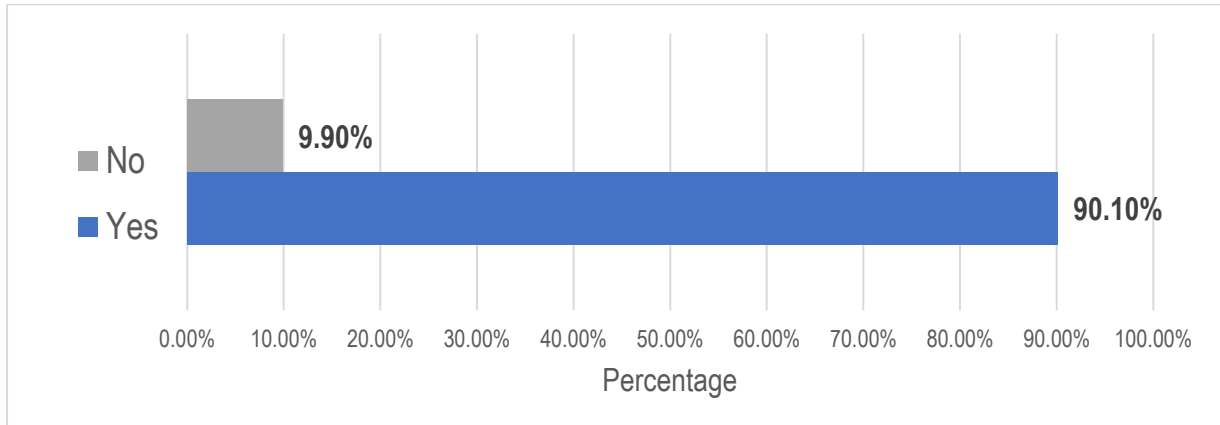
Figure 17: Willingness to be included in a potential Western Silk Road Cultural Route



### Q38 Future involvement in Western Silk Road activities

In the final section participants were asked about their willingness to be involved in future Western Silk Road Initiative related activities, including potential involvement in a Western Silk Road Working Group. 9 out of 10 participants were in favour and would consider being involved as future Western Silk Road Partners. Figure 18 provides an illustration of the responses.

**Figure 18: Inclusion in Future Western Silk Road Initiative Related Activities**



## 4 Untold stories and destinations – the Western Silk Road audit

Expanding recognition of the Silk Road opens up a wealth of new Western Silk Road destinations with high tourism potential and unknown heritage. The Western Silk Road brand Study has untapped Silk Road stories, routes and countries in its Western part.

This section presents destinations with a strong Silk Road heritage and brand development potential by summarising information extracted from the online survey, Focus Groups, SWOTs and background information.

Not intended as a comprehensive selection, this chapter serves an illustrative sample based on the input of academic partners to highlight the potential of the Western Silk Road. As the initiative develops, many more destinations will reveal their stories.

This chapter presents the following Western Silk Road destinations and experiences:

- Armenia
- Bulgaria
- Greece
- Italy
- Russian Federation
- Spain
- Vikings trading route

### 4.1. Armenia and the Silk Road

Armenia has a long history and a strategic importance on the Silk Road alongside with its neighbours in the Caucasus. The country provided a major gateway to the West for Eastern traders and vice versa. Legends say that due to the excellent quality of Mulberry trees growing in Syunik region of Armenia, Genghis Khan granted silk worms to this country: that was the beginning of the silk production in the Caucasus<sup>28</sup>. The first mentioning of silk use in Armenia dates back to 2nd century BC, to the funeral<sup>29</sup> of the Armenian king Artashes I (190-160 BC), whose body was covered with silk cloth.

Armenia is already actively engaging with the Silk Road within its tourism development and marketing to quite a high level. Its location and history have given it many excellent Silk Road connections and linkages in both tangible and intangible heritage sectors. The Black Sea Silk Road Corridor<sup>30</sup>, a European Union project co-financed by USAID, re-traced the route of the Western Silk Road through Armenia, Georgia, Turkey and Greece.

The Institute of Economics and Business of the Russian-Armenian University has greatly contributed to the study, presenting an extensive research and the SWOT analysis, as well as the Armenian Institute of Tourism, which provided the inventory of tangible and intangible heritage and the indicated traditions and celebrations in the country connected with the Silk Road.

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<sup>28</sup> Silk Road research on Armenia, Tigran Babayan, Armenian Institute of Tourism, a link to the full version is provided in Annex 3.

<sup>29</sup> Armenian historian Movses Khorenatsi (5<sup>th</sup> century AD)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.blackseasilkroad.com/en/>

Representatives of Armenia also participated in the online survey and contributed to the statistical data.

The Focus group on the Black Sea region took place in December 2016. As it was partly focused on Armenia, its contribution is included in the report. The Black Sea Silk Road Corridor is focused on the common cultural heritage of the Black Sea basin. Though the project has recently come to the end, it has been foreseen by the project's partners to apply for the next call to continue the work with possible inclusion of the Western Silk Road brand development.

Armenia had wide connections from Far East to Europe: Armenian merchants traded with China, India, Central Asian countries, Persia (Iran), Middle Eastern countries, Georgia, Russian Federation, Greece, Rome, and Byzantium. Besides trade, Armenia greatly benefited from the exchange of scientific knowledge and technologies. A 6200 BC Armenian astronomical observatory as well as other astronomical and scientific heritage sites (such as a prehistoric archaeological site of Zorats Karer or Karahunge, Metzamor ancient observatory, Armenian rock art, ancient and medieval calendars, medieval Gladzor University) are exceptional examples of the scientific exchange along the Silk Road.

Armenian Institute of Tourism established a Chair of Scientific Tourism to develop research<sup>31</sup> and promote scientific tourist destinations in Armenia and neighbouring countries. Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO) is an example of scientific tourism product as it offers visits and packages, training of students and scientific tourism guides. One of the main goals of this initiative is to use astronomy for the development, including for promotion of cultural exchanges and tourism.

As extracted from the aforementioned universities' research, Armenia's main Silk Road trade goods were artisanal products such as carpets, garments, belts and jewellery as well as nut tree, red and yellow arsenic, mineral pitch, mercury, blue copperas, silver, lead and medicinal herbs in large quantities. Armenia also traded cereals, vegetables, wine, beer and livestock. Among others Armenian horses, as well as mineral dyes had a great demand in many countries, including Rome. Armenian merchants transported raw silk, silk and other oriental products from Tabriz (now in modern day Iran) overland to the Mediterranean and from there to the European ports.

From ancient times, several Armenian cities were flourishing on the Silk Road. An ancient capital city of Artashat was an important centre of international trade between Byzantium and Persia.

To keep a record on journeys, quantities and balance of goods, encounters with locals and other observations, Armenian merchants kept specialised merchant journals. These trading books present valuable source of information about the Silk Road trade and life of merchants. These records are also a masterpiece of applied art, as they have rich decoration and are made of luxurious silk pieces. The world's largest collection of the Armenian manuscripts related to the Silk Road is in the Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan.

Numerous manuscripts were written for Armenian merchants, traveling along the Silk Road. They contributed to the development of cartography and geography, as the maps were

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.aras.am/SciTourism/eng/index.php>

urgently needed by merchants. For the first time a map of Armenia was printed in 1699 in Amsterdam, with the support of Armenian merchants.

Merchants in the return voyage from Europe, brought cultural goods as images, books, prints, and influenced the development of artisanal production in the country.

In addition to the rich tangible heritage, the Silk Road left strong intangible traces in the country. Rich gastronomical culture, festivals, unique folk music and traditional dances keep the heritage of the Armenian Silk Road alive and pass its knowledge to the future generations.

Armenia is famous for its gastronomic heritage. Armenian cuisine is known for its meat dishes, various dairy products and vegetables. Lavash, traditional Armenian bread, its preparation, meaning and appearance has become a UNESCO Intangible heritage as a cultural expression of Armenia. Tolma, another example of the Silk Road gastronomic heritage, is considered to be one of the most delicious national dishes of Armenia. The meal is prepared from minced meat, which is wrapped in grape leaves. Tolma was a typical merchants' meal as it was easy to transport and didn't require table- and silverware to be eaten.

Famous for its fragrant spices and seasoning, the country traditionally traded pepper, coriander, fenugreek, black pepper, mint, tarragon, basil, thyme, cinnamon, cardamom, clove, saffron and vanilla.

Clay pottery called *tonir* was traditionally used to cook food on the fire. Tonir rapidly spread over the entire area of Transcaucasia becoming an integral part of national cuisines of many countries and proving itself as an excellent example of gastronomy along the Silk Road.

Armenian gastronomy plays a significant role for tourism development and is one of the essential elements of future brand of the Western Silk Road.

Among other Armenian intangible traditions dance is one of the oldest, richest, and varied in the region. Different types of dances reflect the diverse culture and traditions of the country. Traditionally, Armenian dance is accompanied by a musical instrument or a vocal accompaniment. Duduk, the Armenian folk musical instrument, is recognised as UNESCO intangible World Heritage as an expression of country's identity and traditional accompaniment of dances.

A great number of festivals in Armenia reflect elements of the Silk Road heritage and greatly contribute to the Silk Road itinerary in Armenia. It is worth indicating festivals dedicated to tolma, carpet, honey and berries, barbeque and wine as well as festivals of national costumes and sheep shearing. These festivals introduce to the traditions and culture of the country and let vividly experience gastronomy, dance, arts and crafts.

The SWOT analysis provided by the Russian-Armenian University points the main strengths of the brand of the Western Silk Road related to the considerable tangible and intangible Silk Road heritage, as well as various UNESCO sites and intangible practices.

Famous Armenian hospitality, gastronomy and festival are other strong elements of the potential brand.

Resources for development of different types of tourism and improvement of tourism infrastructures and material-technological base are opportunities for the brand development.

“Open air” policy, relatively low prices of service, availability of free economic zone and favourable investment conditions would levy the area for economic development.

Privileged conditions of the country for collaboration with the European Union and the European countries within the framework of the system GPS+ present economic opportunities as well as increase of partnerships and economic relations.

However, lack of interpretation and marketing, as well as economic crisis and lack of infrastructure in certain areas pose challenges in tourism development.

Competition with neighbouring counties, lack of investment and visibility can be solved by joining the network of the Western Silk Road, which would bring collaboration opportunities and create a thematic trans-border tourist route.

## **4.2. Bulgaria on the Silk Road**

Situated in the Balkans, Bulgarian territory has been a contact zone for diverse ethnicities, religions and cultures since the early ages. As a cross-point between Europe and Asia, Bulgaria preserves historic memories, archaeological monuments and intangible heritage of the ancient civilizations, tribes and ethnic groups that used to inhabit these regions.

As observed from the survey, out of 21 countries that participated in the online questionnaire, Bulgaria represents 8.50% of the respondents (see Figure 3). This rate proves the interest of the National Tourism Authorities to develop the Western Silk Road brand in Bulgaria.

The research<sup>32</sup> submitted by the Bulgarian Task Force member details the historic background and identifies a number of sites relevant to the Western Silk Road story.

It is scientifically proved that ancestors of the contemporary Bulgarians, the nomadic tribes of Protobulgarian, came to Europe from Asia, bringing religious beliefs, culture and traditions, originated in China and India. Bulgaria witnessed the invading wars of Darius of Persia, Phillip of Macedonia, Alexander the Great, and Xerx. Its territories were turned into Moesia, a province of the Roman Empire, and have been crossed by the ancient road of "Via Egnatia".

The North-Western part of Bulgaria, particularly the Belogradchik region, offers diverse historical and cultural sights, directly connected with the Silk Road and its cultural, political and religious influence. In the Belogradchik region several very well preserved ancient roads are testimony of the uninterrupted cultural, religious and political exchange between East and West along the Silk Road. The Monastery of Chirpan and the fortress of Castra Rubra are other significant examples of Silk Road influence in Bulgaria.

The Monastery of Chirpan of Saint Athanasius the Great is considered as the oldest functioning Christian monastery in Europe. Its establishment in 344 AD was connected with the spread of Christianity through the Silk Road.

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<sup>32</sup> For the full version please access here: [http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/bulgaria\\_on\\_the\\_sr\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/bulgaria_on_the_sr_report_final.pdf)

The aforementioned sites present a potential for inclusion of Bulgaria in the Western Silk Road and development of tourism products based on the Silk Road heritage. According to the survey, the National Tourism Authorities in Bulgaria believe that the creation of the Western Silk Road will greatly contribute to the promotion of the intercultural interaction between different civilizations and would strengthen the international cooperation in cultural and economic aspects. The Western Silk Road could offer new tourist attractions for travellers, giving a unique cultural diversity to the Route.

### **4.3. Greece and the Silk Road**

#### **4.3.1. Introduction**

Greece is among the most ancient destinations of the Silk Road, connected both through land and sea routes. This part of the report discusses the tourism potential of the country on a national level while further insights are given on each of the thirteen Greek regions.

The information provided showcases the Silk Road tourism potential of the country and the activities that have already been put into motion from various tourism stakeholders. Though the research has been one of the first ever attempts to identify the Silk Road Heritage in Greece, the findings advise that the opportunities presented are of great potential. As Visit Greece states on its site:

*“Be ready to experience Greece as you have never before, through authentic Silk Road Experiences, shaped by the multicultural all-year-round hidden diamonds that are waiting to be explored.”<sup>33</sup>*

#### **4.3.2. Brief historical connection of Greece with the Silk Road**

During the ancient times Greece became a significant trading hub for the Mediterranean along the Silk Road. In fact, the country's connection is dual as both maritime and land routes cross Greek territories. The Empire of Alexander the Great initiated the trading connections between East and West, opened sea and land routes, and created a solid trading network.<sup>34</sup> The Greek Historian Strabo (63-24 CE) stated that Hellenes “extended their empire as far as the Seres”.<sup>35</sup> The name *Seres* refers to China, meaning ‘the land where the silk came from’.

The introduction of silk to Europe took place during the Byzantine era. At that time, Greece had a prominent role in the Empire and the trading of high-quality products. Among the most

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<sup>33</sup> VisitGreece. (2017). The Greek Silk Road. Available at: [http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/greeceonthespotlight/the\\_greek\\_silk\\_road](http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/greeceonthespotlight/the_greek_silk_road)

<sup>34</sup> World Tourism Organization (2013). Maximising the Potential of the Silk Road: A Strategic Approach to Tourism in 10 Destinations, UNWTO, Madrid.

<sup>35</sup> Mark, J. (2014). Silk Road. Ancient History Encyclopedia, available at: [http://www.ancient.eu/Silk\\_Road](http://www.ancient.eu/Silk_Road)

expensive and valuable products was silk, which was considered equal to gold<sup>36</sup>. According to the tales, two monks went on a mission to China when the exportation of cocoon was prohibited. However, the monks secretly stored silk cocoons in their sticks in order to introduce the art of sericulture in Byzantium and eventually in Europe<sup>37</sup>.

### **4.3.3. Tourism potential**

This section presents Greece's Silk Road tourism potential utilizing and synthesizing all information provided through: results from the Questionnaire; data included in the National SWOT Analysis of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki; findings from the Regional Focus Groups of Soufli; interviews with Greek Stakeholders; secondary sources such as existing literature; and lastly, the outcomes and observations from the 1<sup>st</sup> International Western Silk Road Workshop which took place in Alexandroupoli, Greece. The following analysis will elaborate on the Silk Road tourism overview on national and regional levels based on the available information.

#### **4.3.3.1. National overview**

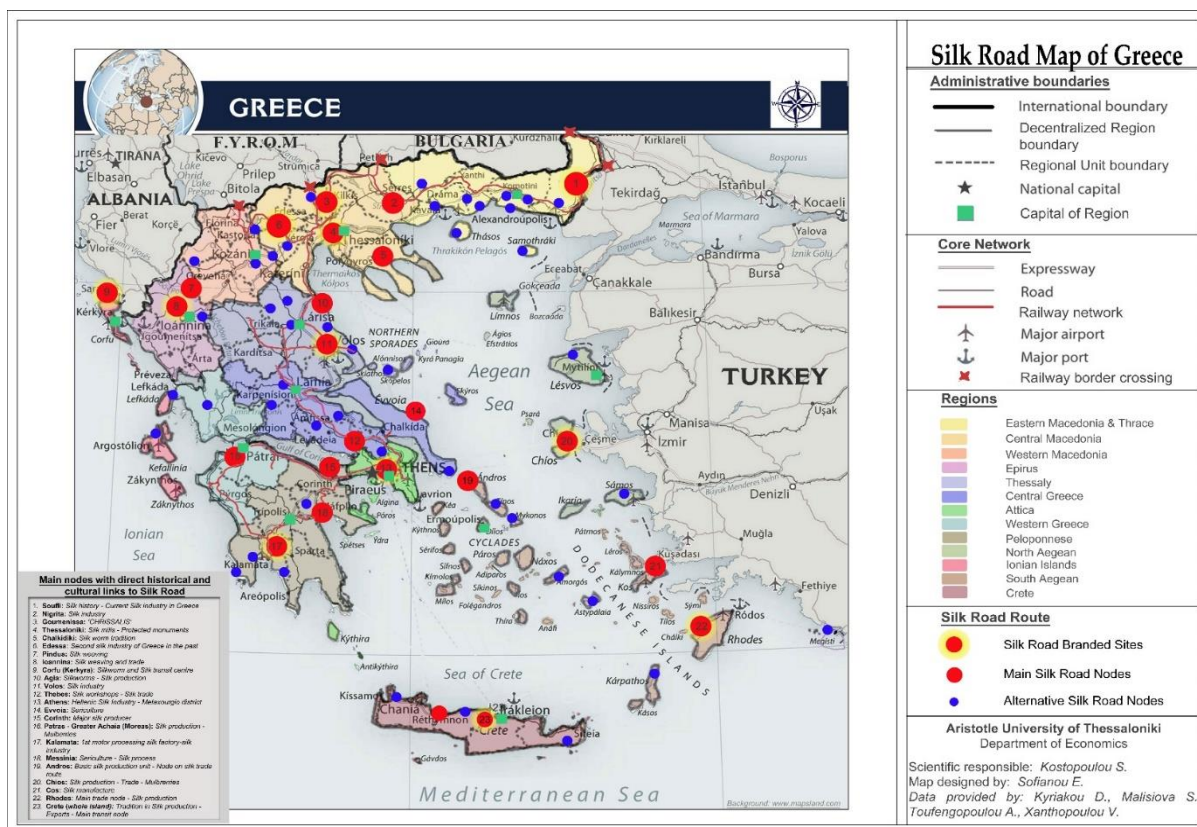
Existing data on the Greek Silk Road prior to the commencing of the *Western Silk Road Tourism Development Initiative* was scarce. However, the country has a surprising plethora of "hidden diamonds" that showcase the linkages between Greece and the Silk Road. The term "hidden diamonds" has been introduced by participating Greek tourism stakeholders to describe both tangible and intangible Silk Road heritage of Greece that has been brought to light through the recent activities of UNWTO Silk Road Programme in Greece. Figure 19 below presents the 'Silk Road Map of Greece', developed by the research team of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki as part of the National SWOT Analysis of Greece.

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<sup>36</sup> Kostopoulou, S., Kyriakou, D., Malisiova, S., Sofianou E., Toufengopoulou, A., Xanthopoulou–Tsitsoni, V. (2016). The Western Silk Road in Greece. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Available at: <http://silkroad.unwto.org/content/western-silk-road-research>

<sup>37</sup> Hunt, P. (2013). Late Roman Silk: Smuggling and Espionage in the 6th Century CE. Stanford University.

Figure 19: The Silk Road Map of Greece



The Silk Road Map of Greece is presented in the National SWOT Analysis of Greece, developed by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

This map is the very first attempt to depict the imprint of Silk Road in Greece through a tourism kaleidoscope and it will be enriched as more “hidden diamonds” are explored. While more information can be found in the National SWOT Analysis of the Greek Silk Road (Annex 3), the tourism importance of the findings has already motivated key Greek stakeholders to act and take advantage of the opportunity to develop the Greek Silk Road tourism product.

## Political support

Crucial paradigm of such initiatives is the case of the Ministry of Tourism of the Hellenic Republic. In particular, acknowledging the significance of the Greek Silk Road, the Minister of Tourism of the Hellenic Republic, Ms. Elena Kountoura, underlined during the 1<sup>st</sup> International Western Silk Road Workshop:

*“This workshop reflects our strong interest and commitment for further growth of tourism as well as the tourism development in the local communities along the Western Silk Road” (Kountoura, 2017)<sup>38</sup>*

<sup>38</sup> Kountoura, E. (2017). Opening Ceremony. 1st International Western Silk Road Workshop, Alexandroupolis, Greece. Proceedings available at: <http://silkroad.unwto.org/event/1st-international-western-silk-road-workshop>

In addition, the Secretary General for Tourism Policy and Development of the Ministry of Tourism of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Georgios Tziallas, mentioned during the 7<sup>th</sup> UNWTO Silk Road Task Force Meeting in Valencia that Greece is home of crossroads between the East and the West with “wealth of cultural assets which are connected to the Silk Road” (Tziallas, 2017)<sup>39</sup>

## Practical initiatives

The above statements represent the strong support and political will of Greek authorities to develop Silk Road Tourism. Though, it is not only the Greek government which favours the development of Silk Road in Greece. The Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO), which is responsible for promoting Greece and its tourism products abroad, identifies now the Greek Silk Road as one of the most innovative Greek tourism attributes. Practical initiatives for the promotion of the Greek Silk Road include the creation of a detailed travel book to be developed by the GNTO in cooperation with the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Moreover, Ms. Polytimi Vrachati, Head of Publications and Audiovisual Department of GNTO, referred to the Greek Silk Road tourism mentioning during the UNWTO Silk Road Social Media Seminar in WTM 2016 that:

*“There are some historical facts that could provide us with the basic materials of a myth. Visitgreece could deploy that myth in series, and together with other participating countries we could create a monumental story-telling depicting the hot points of the planet earth.”* (Vrachati, 2016)<sup>40</sup>

Ms. Vrachati also presented the progress of GNTO Social Media strategy during the 1<sup>st</sup> International Western Silk Road Workshop<sup>41</sup>. During her intervention, she introduced the need for Silk Road hashtags and a slogan for every country along the Western Silk Road. For the case of Greece, Ms. Vrachati proposed three possible slogans alongside with the hashtag #silkroadgreece:

1. #silkroadgreece – A journey to the future via the past
2. #silkroadgreece – Travel through history
3. #silkroadgreece – Revive the history, be a part of it

To achieve the promotion of the Greek Silk Road, Ms. Vrachati highlighted that the steps needed are: close cooperation with the local communities along the Greek Silk Road in order to gain specialized information about the local Silk Road cultural heritage, and create narratives and promote it under the national umbrella of GNTO, develop marketing materials that best showcase the Greek Silk Road through photos and videos, and lastly work hand in hand with national and local stakeholders in order to structure the Silk Road social-media strategy of Greece.

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<sup>39</sup> Tziallas, G. (2017). Raising Awareness for the Western Silk Road: The Case of Greece. 7th UNWTO Silk Road Task Force Meeting, Valencia, Spain. Available at: <http://silkroad.unwto.org/event/7th-unwto-silk-road-task-force-meeting>

<sup>40</sup> Vrachati, P. (2016). Online Marketing Strategy on Social Media: The VisitGreece approach. #SilkRoadNOW: Sharing the Experience, WTM, London. Available at: [http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/greece\\_silk\\_road\\_final.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/greece_silk_road_final.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Vrachati, P. (2017). Promoting Western Silk Road Nationally: Case Study of Greek Social Media. 1st International Western Silk Road Workshop, Alexandroupolis, Greece. Available at: [http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/alexandroupoli\\_silk\\_road\\_polina.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/alexandroupoli_silk_road_polina.pdf)

## Need for tourism intelligence along the Greek Silk Road

Another initiative based on the constant need for research are the activities of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki that has established an interdisciplinary scientific team that will look into the Greek Silk Road Tourism in depth focusing not only on academic work but also in developing instruments that can assist the private sector to develop the Greek Silk Road tourism. An example of the above is the workshop<sup>42</sup> under the theme of the Western Silk Road Tourism Development Potential in the Greek region of Central Macedonia which took place in the city of Thessaloniki and organised by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in collaboration with the Region of Central Macedonia and Thessaloniki Tourism Organization. During this workshop, the scientific team shed light on the existing Silk Road tourism intelligence of the region and set to identify future areas of research that will assist both public and private sector in developing Silk Road tourism.

Most importantly, it is worth mentioning that the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki took the initiative and proposed to establish a research body that will focus on exploring and observing the progress of tourism development along the Western Silk Road. This proposal is currently under development and enjoys the support of UNWTO and the Ministry of Tourism of the Hellenic Republic.

## National SWOT analysis – a first glance

As mentioned before, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki conducted a SWOT Analysis on the Silk Road Tourism potential of Greece. Table 3 below presents a shortened version of the SWOT including only major findings in an attempt to provide a basic idea on Greece's case in relation to its Silk Road tourism development.

**Table 3: National SWOT Analysis of Greece – A shortened version**

Aspect	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<b>Tourism supply</b>	Links with the history of Silk Road (e.g. Soufli, Edessa, Goumenissa, Messinia, Kos, etc.)	Low level in tourism investments related to Silk Road	Unexploited potential for differentiation of tourism supply towards higher-value added and 365 days attractions, through WSR based experiences	Absence of European and national funding sources
<b>Tourism demand</b>	One of the highest rated Silk Road countries	Low level of familiarity with the new emerging markets (especially China)	Increase of tourists looking for authentic tourism experiences to share the lifestyle of local communities	Changes in European – international tourism demand for Greek tourism products due to geopolitical changes in the broader region

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.auth.gr/sites/default/files/programma\\_hmerida\\_silk\\_road\\_programme-neo.pdf](https://www.auth.gr/sites/default/files/programma_hmerida_silk_road_programme-neo.pdf)

Aspect	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<b>Tourism image</b>	Some areas have already well established brand name as Silk Road destinations (i.e. Soufli)	Low awareness of local Silk Road routes	Differentiation of the tourism product, according to regional comparative advantages, by strengthening the Silk Road Tourism	Economic crisis may deprive of resources necessary for the operation and maintenance of cultural infrastructure.
<b>Tourism stakeholders</b>	Tourism stakeholders interested in cross-border partnerships, markets and engage new partners willing to explore new markets and engage new partners	Difficulty of local authorities in leading the development of best practices for cultural tourism and WSR initiatives	Further research analysis of niche markets and specific strategies to be undertaken by both public and private sector tourism stakeholders to upgrade the WSR position within these markets	Changing demographics, shifting travel patterns and volatile economic conditions are increasing the pressure on industry stakeholders to develop effective campaigns and business strategies
<b>Tourism policy, planning, and management</b>	The ongoing restoration programmes of historical industrial heritage buildings (i.e. Chryssalis silk industry restoration in Central Macedonia)	Lack of a comprehensive and rational tourism policy and planning for Greek tourism towards WSR	Upgrading tourism in the political agenda at the national, regional and local levels	Difficulty in establishing the necessary linkages to ensure the development of collaborative strategies in conjunction with WSR initiatives may lead to critical weakening of a high development potential

## Conclusion

To sum up, Greece has recognised its Silk Road tourism potential, has already mobilised its stakeholders and is moving forward with utilising the opportunities for tourism development that the Western Silk Road presents.

### 4.3.3.2. Regional overview

The section below describes the Silk Road heritage of each region of Greece that has tourism potential. Every case presents unique characteristics as the strategic geographical position of Greece allowed the development of both land and maritime Silk Road routes. Thus, depending on the region, the so-called “hidden diamonds” differ in terms of origin and purpose. While more information about every region’s tourism profile, Silk Road cultural connection and regional SWOT analysis is provided in the National SWOT Analysis of Greece (Annex 3), this section focuses on the regions’ key heritage, tangible and intangible. In most regions tourism intelligence related to the Silk Road is limited as this study was the

first ever to be conducted on the topic. However, additional data and discussions are available for the Regions of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Attica, and Peloponnese. At the end of every region's section, a table presents the known Silk Road cultural heritage based on the information received during our research. It must be underlined that these tables are provisional and non-exhaustive.

## **Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace**

The Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace has one of the strongest links with the Silk Road. Being placed on the northeast side of Greece, this region neighbours with Bulgaria and Turkey, making an ideal case for intraregional cooperation. The region is also home of one of the most prominent Silk Road destinations of Greece, Soufli. Among the information collected, Soufli stakeholders noted that:

### **Target group**

*“During the last years, more and more travellers are coming from the North (Ukraine, Moldavia, Romania and Bulgaria). Of course, from the East, Turkish tourists is also a group to target to. It is more difficult for Western Europeans to discover us but we believe the Silk Road project can give us more tools and channels to attract them.”*  
(Focus Group in Soufli, 2016)

### **Soufli Silk Road tourism**

*“The youth wants to experience the past by engaging in interactive activities related to all stages of Silk production, the cultural imprint of the Silk Road in Soufli, and experience both past and modern Silk Road related heritage. Also, we need to use tourism in a way that will allow us to conserve the old cocoon houses and implement policies that will showcase the assets of the city.”* (Focus Group in Soufli, 2016)

### **Unknown facts**

*“The young women who were working at the Silk Factories in Soufli protested for their rights, an action so unforeseen during that times. Some say that these events were the start of a change in the political mindset of Greece”* (Focus Group in Soufli, 2017)

Figure 18 is an illustration of the legal working document of an under-aged girl. The document is now exhibited at Tzivre Silk Factory in Soufli.

Figure 20: Tzivre Silk Factory – Document of Employment



### Inter-regional cooperation

*“Among others issues concerning tourism, the Silk Road Project affect us, not only by the “Silk town” of Soufli but also through the ancient “VIA EGNATIA” route which was the “Silk Road” of Roman Era and the same route was active until the end of 19th century. For that reason, in our Region the towns, even today, have the same position as the ancient stations of travellers in Silk Road - Via Egnatia. We currently work on a project called VIA EGNATIA cultural heritage, based on the route that connected east and west, Rome and Constantinople, the road of trade and culture, the SILK ROAD route in our Region.” (Focus Group in Soufli, 2016)*

Table 4: The Silk Road heritage of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace

Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace	
1.	Art Silk Museum of Soufli, as a living thematical museum of silk production and processing
2.	The Silk Museum of Soufli, run by the Piraeus Bank Cultural Foundation
3.	Ta Gnafala, Folklore Museum of Soufli
4.	Tzivre Silk Mill, one of the most significant signs of the industrialised silk production in Thrace
5.	Silkworm farm in the small town of Soufli
6.	Cocoon houses (spaces of breeding silkworms) found in Evros
7.	Abdera, a significant historical economic, commercial and cultural centre in Xanthi Regional Unit, with numerous art crafts, works of stone, clay and bronze, mosaics, jewellery, relics of public and private buildings of unique architecture

- |  |
|--|
| 8. Tobacco Museum of Xanthi in Kougioumtzoglou Mansion (first tobacco tradesmen)   |
| 9. Tobacco Museum of Kavala, exhibiting the commercial processing of oriental tobacco and highlighting the social history of Kavala - Eastern Macedonia & Thrace |

## Region of Attica

During our research, the Rangers of Greek Guiding Association (Soma Hellinikou Odigismou) expressed a strong will to include Silk Road Tourism into their pedagogical programme and activities during the Spring and Summer of 2017. In April 2017, the Greek Rangers gathered in Metaxourgeio, the Silk neighbourhood of Athens, for a weekend and worked on various projects aiming to the development of the area. With the support of UNWTO Silk Road Programme, one of the pillars they focused on was Silk Road tourism. Two of the projects included the creation of a video under the title 'This is Metaxourgeio'<sup>43</sup> that aims to promote Metaxourgeio as the Silk Hood of Athens, and an exploratory research on the knowledge and attitudes of residents and domestic visitors towards the tourism development of the area<sup>44</sup>.

For Salamina Island, and according to the *Lyceum Club of Greek Women of Salamina*<sup>45</sup>, the connection with the Silk Road is based on the Silk fabrics contained in the traditional female costume; in particular, on the shirt (*πουκάμισο* or *poukamiso*) and on the wedding silk scarf called *Bolia* or *Skepi*, which length is usually from 2.5 to 2.7 meters. The old *Bolias* are made of precious silk and embroidered with gold threads. The silk fabrics of *Bolia* is said to have been imported to Salamina from Constantinople and Soufli, while Salaminian women were considered to be state of the art embroiders. Apart from the costume, Salamina's seamen had been bringing Silk fabrics from all over the world as gifts to their wives and families.

**Table 5: The Silk Road Heritage of Attica**

Region of Attica	
1.	<b>Hellenic Silk Company at Metaxourgio in Athens (Silk Reeling factory)</b>
2.	<b>Traditional Embroidery technique of Bolia - the wedding Silk Scarf of the female folklore costume, Salamina Island</b>

## Region of Peloponnese

The Region of Peloponnese is home to a very significant Silk Road destination of Greece, Kalamata. As described in the sources delivered by Kalamata's tourism stakeholders, the city and the region of Messenia have a long standing tradition inseparably connected to the Silk Road heritage. In particular, they mention:

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEPPxOZGCEo&t=6s>

<sup>44</sup> Information on the exploratory research of Metaxourgio was not available at the time this report was written

<sup>45</sup> Lyceum Club of Greek Women of Salamina is an organisation that aims at preserving the folklore dances, culture, and traditions of Salamina Island, Greece

*“Historical accounts, along with accounts of travellers visiting the region clearly show the important position held by sericulture in the economic and social life of the people since the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Kalamata. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the production grew steady, and silk factories were built, surviving until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century” (Kalamata Stakeholders, 2016)*

The key player was the “Monastery of Nuns” or else Monastery of Saint Constantine and Helen, established in 1796 where a 13<sup>th</sup> century church used to stand. In this Monastery, young girls would learn the art of silk weaving, which it is believed to have been introduced by nine nuns who came from Constantinople. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Monastery was so successful that became the centre of silk production in the city. It was only until 1986 that silk weaving, silkworm breed, and cocoon processes were terminated due to a disastrous earthquake.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kalamata became a silk trade hub through land and sea, with big investments accompanying the socioeconomic developments of this era. Villages established in the surroundings bear names derived from the word “metaxi” (silk in Greek language), like *Metaxada-Sapriki*. Foreign investors introduced technologies using steam generated power for that epoch, which for that epoch were considered state of the art. In particular, during the mid-1870s, Kalamata had five factories that generated 43 horsepower through steam technologies. The dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century found Kalamata with an increased demand for finished items of clothing that supported the local employment, especially for women.

Today Kalamata considers that there is a new impulse for silk production revival which will generate further income and socioeconomic development for the city and the surroundings. Most importantly, the cultural tourism potential of the city goes hand in hand with the silk production developments. As the stakeholders noted:

*“On the cultural front, several places in the region hold testimony to the immense richness silk brought to the area, with notably the Koroni and Methoni castles where historians describe treasures found as tens of chests of precious gems, gold and silver, and silk embroideries. Finally, the Monastery of Saint Constantine and Helen still enables visitors to see looms and tools once used for the regional production of silk, a testimony of a rich and glorious past.” (Kalamata Stakeholders, 2016)*

**Table 6: The Silk Road Heritage of Peloponnese**

Region of Peloponnese	
1.	<b>Peloponnese was renamed into Morias or Moreas, a name coming from the Greek word "mouries" i.e. mulberry trees used in the reproduction of silkworms</b>
2.	<b>Staninopoulos Brothers Silk Factory in Kalamata, which accounted for almost a third of the country's production in 1853</b>
3.	<b>Silk School in the Monastery of Saint Constantine and Helen</b>
4.	<b>Tripolis festival in Peloponnese, documented in the late 18th century, involving commercial exchange in cloth of all types (e.g., felts, silks) and other commodities</b>

## Other regions

The following Table 7 provides a list of the rest regions of Greece and their Silk Road heritage. More information on each region can be found in the National SWOT Analysis of Greece.

Table 7: The Silk Road heritage of Greece per region

<b>Region of Central Macedonia</b>
1. Future museum of silk and repository of the Chryssalis factory (silk production firm) in Goumenissa
2. Spinning-weaving mill YFANET historical monument in Thessaloniki
3. Open air museum of the old Silk mill known as Benozilio in Pilea-Chortiatis, nearby Thessaloniki
4. Palaiochori village in Chalkidiki, with rich tradition in the craft of weaving
5. "Vermion" Spinnery, an inactive spinning mill in Veroia
6. Textile factory 'Longou-Tourpali' in Naoussa, the first textile industry in the Balkans with modern standards, an important industrial monument that has been restored and today houses a University Technology Management Department
7. Yarn factory of G. Tsitsis, the first water driven textile factory in Edessa
<b>Region of Western Macedonia</b>
1. Kozani "Crocus" (saffron), known from Homer for its aromatic, colour and therapeutic attributes
2. Servia (called 'Little Bursa') sericulture and silk processing heritage in monasteries
<b>Region of Thessaly</b>
1. Silk Factory in Volos, restored buildings complex now hosting museum and recreation facilities
2. Mt Pelion traditional villages (Zagora, Metaxochori: silk village in Greek) known for silk production
<b>Region of Epirus</b>
1. Koukouli village in Pindus, which takes its name from the Greek word "koukouli" i.e. silkworm cocoon
2. Syrrako Folk Art Museum in the mountainous bulk of Tzumerka, Epirus
<b>Region of Ionian Islands</b>
Corfu town, port of major strategic importance as key stop on the route to the Indies
<b>Region of central Greece</b>
Thebes in Boeotia, the centre of high-quality silk textiles production during the Byzantine Empire, where inhabitants dyed the silk textiles by using special sea shells, called porphyry
<b>Region of western Greece</b>
Achaia re-emerged in the development scene as a result of the silk production in the region
<b>Region of North Aegean</b>
Silk production was for many centuries an important source of income for Chios
<b>Region of South Aegean</b>
1. Embroidery from the islands of Astypalea and Karpathos, where workers simply used the rich-hued silks in mass effects, producing broad borders with disk-like motives in the field worked in a solid surface stitch with loosely twisted silk
2. Top floors of Andros houses that most of the inhabitants used them as workshops to cultivate the silkworms and to produce fine silk materials;
3. Traditional silk women costumes across the Aegean Sea islands (Amorgos, Nisyros, Ios, Naxos, Tinos and Keos);
4. In the Island of Kos, according to Aristotle, Pamphile, a woman of Kos, was the first to unwind a cocoon of the silkworm and to weave it into silk, a discovery that led to the monopoly of the silk trade by the Island of Kos for nearly 500 years
<b>Region of Crete</b>
1. Mountain villages of Mylopotamos, Anogeia, Zoniana, Livadia in Crete, where local women create traditional weaving, knitting and embroidery
2. Historic Museum of Gavalochori in Crete, divided into seven rooms-units: "The Arched House", "Silk", "Pottery", "Lace-making", "Masonry and Stone Carving", Church and Woodcarving;

#### 4.4. Italy and the Silk Road

Situated on the crossroads of trading routes, Italy has a long historical connection with the Silk Road. The country historically exported and imported various goods, while its merchants travelled long distances looking for exotic products and establishing new commercial relations and markets.

The Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism of the University of Bologna prepared a SWOT analysis of Silk Road tourism potential in Italy with a focus on the present day Italian territory. The SWOT analysis investigated the principal sites of the Silk Road heritage, the role they played in trade and silk production and the evidence found at the present day.

Two Focus Groups – Venice and Forli – contributed to the generation of ideas, identifying the potential Silk Road tourism products and strategies of developing the Silk Road tourism in Italy.

Italian representatives actively participated in the online questionnaire, placing Italy in top 10 countries-respondents.

#### Historic background

The Silk Road trade imported raw materials, arts and crafts and influenced urbanisation and the establishment of ports and trading centres in Italy.

Since the time of the Roman Empire<sup>46</sup> silk was one of the most precious commodities in Italy, which was first brought from Far East by merchants and then produced on the territory of Italy. The Silk Road routes passing through Italy, connected corners of the Roman Empire. Maritime trade routes passed through the South of Italy, while inland paths crossed the Italian North.

Italian catholic missionaries<sup>47</sup> were one of the first Europeans to explore the Silk Road. Their missions contributed to the peace-building and establishment of relations with countries from the Far East, which were further developed by the Italian merchants.

Marco Polo<sup>48</sup>, one of the most well-known Silk Road figures, is claimed to have originated from the Venice Republic, travelled along the historic trade routes, discovering new countries and cultures and bringing knowledge about the East.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the demographic boom, Italy experienced urban expansion, established trade centres and built its commercial and military fleet<sup>49</sup>. Trade centres such as

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<sup>46</sup> The Roman Empire (27 B.C.–393 A.D.) [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/roem/hd\\_roem.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/roem/hd_roem.htm)

<sup>47</sup> John of Montecorvino (1246–1328), was an Italian Franciscan missionary, traveller and statesman, founder of the earliest Roman Catholic missions in India and China; the archbishop of Peking and the Patriarch of the Orient.

<sup>48</sup> Marco Polo (1254-1324), is probably the most famous Westerner travelled on the Silk Road. He excelled all the other travellers in his determination, writing, and influence. His journey through Asia lasted 24 years. He reached further than any of his predecessors, beyond Mongolia to China <http://www.silk-road.com/artl/marcopolo.shtml>

<sup>49</sup> SWOT analysis of Silk Road tourism potential in Italy, Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism of the University of Bologna, p 7, see Annex 3

Venice, Genoa and Pisa, initialized a dialogue with the Asian countries, fostered trade and developed nautical knowledge. The Republics of Venice and Genoa became the main maritime centres and trade hubs. Detailed nautical charts - *portolani*, produced by navigators from Venice and Genoa - greatly contributed to the development of nautical knowledge, cartography and geography<sup>50</sup>.

While the maritime republics<sup>51</sup> dominated commerce with Far East, the cities on the Adriatic coast traded with the Balkans and the Caucasus.

Among many arts, crafts and techniques, trade brought mosaic-making, which was further developed to its splendour in Ravenna, while glass-making technique was mastered in Venice<sup>52</sup>.

After the secret of producing silk became known in Europe, its production flourished in Bologna, Como, Naples, Piedmont, Lucca, Forli, Genoa and Venice<sup>53</sup>.

As observed, several Italian cities prove strong connections with the Silk Road, which consequently influenced manufacture and artisanal production, local architecture, traditions, gastronomy. However, the most important Silk Road cities remain Venice and Genoa.

## Case study of Venice

The Venice Focus Group and the University of Bologna paid special attention to the main role played by the city of Venice in trade along the Silk Road and its reflection in diverse Venetian tangible and intangible heritage.

Among the monuments of the city, the remarkable Saint Mark's Basilica is a witness of flourishing trade of this Maritime Republic – the Basilica was continuously enriched and decorated with sculptures, columns, gold, marble and precious stones brought by the merchants via the Silk Road maritime routes. The Saint Mark's bell tower was originally meant as a beacon for merchants' ships.<sup>54</sup> The Venetian Arsenal served as the centre of shipbuilding industry and assured Venetian power in the sea. In Fondachi, richly-decorated buildings along the canal, were used as warehouses and inns for the merchants<sup>55</sup>.

The Venice focus group indicated that the Silk Road tourism should be trans-regional and trans-national. As the Venice city centre experiences overcrowding, the Silk Road tourism could be used to spread the tourists throughout the city and the region of Veneto and show them the untapped heritage of the area.

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<sup>50</sup> SWOT analysis of Silk Road tourism potential in Italy, Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism of the University of Bologna, p 8, see Annex 3

<sup>51</sup> The maritime republics were thalassocratic city-states which flourished in Italy and Dalmatia during the Middle Ages. The best known among the maritime republics are Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Ragusa, and Amalfi. Less known are Gaeta, Ancona, Noli. From the 10th to the 13th centuries they built fleets of ships both for their own protection and to support extensive trade networks. <http://www.venicethefuture.com/schede/uk/017?aliusid=017>

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.venicethefuture.com/schede/uk/017?aliusid=017>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.silk-road.com/artl/marcopolo.shtml>

<sup>54</sup> SWOT analysis of Silk Road tourism potential in Italy, Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism of the University of Bologna, p 9, see Annex 3

<sup>55</sup> SWOT analysis of Silk Road tourism potential in Italy, Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism of the University of Bologna, p 9, see Annex 3

The concept of inter-regional cooperation was supported by the Forli Focus Group. As the city lacks tourists' attention, Forli would greatly benefit from cooperation with other Italian regions to attract the visitors and relieve saturated hubs.

## Forli

The city of Forli and the neighbouring town of Meldola have a tradition of silk production dating from the 17th century. The town of Meldola, former regional centre of the silk production, houses a silk museum, offers artisanal production of silk and related arts and crafts, as well as it conducts youth projects on topics related to silk production. Neighbouring Forli complements Meldola's silk story by adding a modern chapter: Forli is known for industrialization of the silk manufacturing and a passage to artificial silk production<sup>56</sup>.

Forli, being a headquarters of ATRIUM – Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th century, the cultural route of the Council of Europe, could benefit from the Silk Road tourism to diversify its offer. At the same time the ATRIUM cultural route adds a human rights aspect to the tourism product. Forli offers guided tours on history of female labour within the context of industrial silk production in Forli linked to the political awareness of female workers' rights and the women's contribution to antifascism as a part of the ATRIUM cultural route activities.

According to the Forli Focus group the city lacks visibility on national and international level and struggles to turn its visitors into tourists. The city therefore actively searches for ways to diversify its offer and to propose innovative tourism products. The Western Silk Road presents an opportunity for Forli to enhance its tourism potential and attract the visitors. The Focus group proposed creation of a tourism triangle of Bologna-Forli, Meldola - Padova and further Venice to attract more visitors and facilitate fair distribution of tourists.

## Key elements of tourism development

The research of the University of Bologna and findings of the Focus Groups point the key elements of the Silk Road tourism development in Italy as follows: **arts and crafts, international and interregional cooperation and diverse cultural heritage.**

The **artisanal crafts** reached its peak in Italy during its golden age of commercial trade<sup>57</sup>, thanks to the flourishing trade, imported goods and technologies. Artisans, specialized in spinning, weaving, boiling, dyeing etc. were capable of developing high-skilled techniques to process the materials delivered from the East.

Murano glassmakers inherited the use of the soda-lime glass technique from the masters of the Far East; however, refining and improving it to the peaks of sophistication.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> <http://www.italia.it/en/discover-italy/emilia-romagna/forli-cesena.html>

<sup>57</sup> 13-15<sup>th</sup> centuries

<sup>58</sup> SWOT analysis of Silk Road tourism potential in Italy, Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism of the University of Bologna, p 9, see Annex 3

The Italian artisanal production in Italy presents great opportunities for experiential tourism development. A blueprint of using arts and crafts in tourism is given by the Venetian tourism portal Vivovenetia, which offers experiential tourism activities. Vivovenetia proposes tours and participation in traditional workshops and ateliers of making carnival masks, watching craftsmen at work, visiting historic costumes' workshops, designing and producing personalized jewellery.

Integration of arts and crafts in the Silk Road tourism product presents a modern approach to tourism development and enrichment with new experiences. The artisans, becoming a part of an international tourism network, would be able to gain greater visibility and promotion which would imply increasing financial revenues and incentive to preserve their arts.

**Interregional cooperation**, the second identified key area, can be showcased by the thematic bicycle route, developed through the Italian regions and based on the heritage of the Silk Road. The Silk Cycleway starts in Venice, crosses Ferrara, Bologna, Lucca, Pisa and arrives to Livorno, counting 418 kilometers in total. The Silk Cycleway offers a guidebook and a map, indicating routes, facilities and Silk Road cultural heritage. Traveling along this route, tourists have a chance to discover little towns and villages, beautiful landscapes, local festivals and gastronomy.

An interesting example of international cooperation is the European Project VeRoTour<sup>59</sup> (2007-2013), which developed international maritime routes along the Adriatic coast based on the nautical travels of the Venetian merchants. The project involved public and private stakeholders and focused on the production of a map and a web portal. VeRoTour offered nautical routes and varied heritage attractions linking the diverse cultures and traditions that flourished during the reign of the Venice Maritime Republic. Originally established for commercial purposes, this complex and extraordinary amalgam of maritime routes, settlements and defensive fortifications, functioned as a central link between Venice and the ports and cities along the Euro-Mediterranean region. These routes also contributed and facilitated the fruitful exchange between peoples and cultures, some as diverse and far-ranging as the civilizations located along the historic Silk Road routes. Because of centuries of trade and exchange, countless historic and cultural sites remain along the network of these famous routes and continue to enrich us to the present day. The public and private partners of the project aim to diversify the thematic tourism offer in Europe by developing trans-national and sustainable tourism products. Building upon the immense cultural heritage available, this initiative is also expected to make sustainability a key element of competitiveness.

The Focus groups and the University of Bologna identified the lack of coordination and political instability in the country as weak points of the Italian Silk Road tourism. The University of Bologna also pointed a strong necessity for joint efforts and mutual management of the route.

A possibility to overcome the weaknesses and challenges is offered by a newly created Marco Polo committee within the Italian Routes Board. The committee is a permanent forum, bringing together institutional authorities to share the common vision, define mutual actions

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.verotour.eu/>

and develop interregional cooperation on the base of the Silk Road heritage. The Marco Polo committee is in the position to foster the coordination of the Silk Road tourism and join the mutual efforts to develop a viable product.

#### 4.5. The Russian Federation and the Silk Road

Rarely identified with the Silk Road heritage, the Russian link of this trade route stretched through South and West Siberia, the Southern Urals and the Lower Volga region, steppes, Caucasian mountains and the Black Sea, sustained by archaeological findings and ancient written sources<sup>60</sup>.

Various archaeological remains such as ancient settlements, religious sites, fortifications, dwellings, places of caravan parks were found in the abovementioned regions of the Silk Road in the Russian Federation.

This lesser known and almost undeveloped potential provides exciting opportunities for new tourism product development and the creation of a whole new set of destinations with rich culture and experiences for the Silk Road traveller to discover.

The SWOT analysis of the Russian University of the Peoples Friendship<sup>61</sup> (RUDN), the results of the Survey and the research of the Russian Museum of Ethnography<sup>62</sup> (RME) gave historic, geographic, cultural and ethnological overview of the Silk Road heritage in the Russian Federation. They proposed tourist itineraries and routes and offered methodology for tourism enhancement.

The aforementioned SWOT analysis<sup>63</sup> together with the RME study identifies three key priority areas for development of the Russian Silk Road:



Figure 21: Map of Russian regions, UNWTO Silk Road Programme

- Silk Road key cities: Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Kazan;
- Silk Road regions of the Russian Federation: Dagestan, North Caucasus, the Caucasus, the lower Don region, Azov, Taman, Kalmykia;
- The area located at the crossroads of the Silk Road trade with other Eurasian trade routes: the Volga river region;

Russian biggest cities, **Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Kazan** are proposed as entry points to the country. The Silk Road

<sup>60</sup> Cultural and historical heritage of Russia in the context of cultural and educational project "Great Silk Road", report of the Russian Museum of Ethnography for the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, 2013, p.50

<sup>61</sup> A link to the full version of the SWOT analysis is provided in Annex 3

<sup>62</sup> Russian cultural and historic heritage in the framework of the project "Great Silk Road", prepared under supervision of Mr Vladimir Grusman, PhD, Director of the Russian Museum of Ethnography Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation <http://mkrf.ru/>

<sup>63</sup> A link to the full version of the SWOT analysis is provided in Annex 3

collections in the museums of these cities are excellent gateway experiences for capturing the imagination of international and domestic tourists. These cities are well known for hospitality, gastronomy and cultural offer and can provide a diverse range of attractions to visitors.

Collections of oriental art, ethnographic collections, silk fabrics and textile as well as archaeological findings are presented in the museums of Moscow (Moscow State Historic Museum, State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow Kremlin Museum), Saint Petersburg (Saint Petersburg Russian Ethnographic Museum; Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of Peter the Great, State Museum of the History of Religion) and Kazan (Asian Institute of Oriental Manuscripts and the State Hermitage Museum).

The cities surrounding Moscow, the so-called the Golden Ring of Russia, are ancient towns presenting an excellent example of technology development thanks to the Silk Road. These towns have advanced artisanal manufactures of porcelain, ceramics, gold embroidery, lacquer miniature painting on papier-mâché. Thematic Silk Road tours could be organised to the towns of the Golden Ring.

**Silk Road regions** in the Russian Federation are **Dagestan, North Caucasus, the Caucasus, the lower Don region, Azov, Taman, Kalmykia.**

These regions in the Caucasus are rich in cultural and natural heritage. This zone of Caucasus is famous for its late medieval towers, which can be found in the entire alpine zone of Ingushetia, North Ossetia and Chechnya. The region of Dagestan is well-known for the city of Derbent and its fortress, recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Site. Dagestan is also known for its artisanal manufactures and intangible heritage, in particular for the epic and lyric songs and traditional dances.

Steppe regions of Stavropol have two reconstructed Silk Road paths leading from the steppe regions of Kalmykia and Dagestan via Mineralnie Vody to the Kislovodsk Basin. The main heritage of the area includes the archaeological sites of Alan and Golden Horde times, the remnants of the outpost of the Byzantine Empire in the North Caucasus and Majar (town of Budyonnovsk).

The Black Sea coast of the Caucasus and the Republic of Adygea are famous for the dolmens, as well as Christian churches and Byzantine fortresses. Azov (ancient Greek colony of Tanais) and the city of Anapa (historical Sindika, ancient Greek Gorgippia, Genoese Mapa, Ottoman fortress Anapa) are Silk Road sites on the Black Sea coast, attracting many tourists by their cultural and natural heritage.

**Crossroads of the Silk Road trade with other Eurasian trade routes** pass through the Volga river region and the republic of Tatarstan.

The region of the Volga basin is famous for the remnants of the cities of the Golden Horde - Mashaikskoe (Xacitarxan), Selitryanovoe (Sarai), Tsarevskoe (Saray al-Jadid), Vodyanskoe (Gulistan), Uvekskoe (Ukek), Bolgarskoe, Bilyarskoe (Bilyar), Kazan (Kazan), as well as coin treasures and numerous finds of items of eastern origin (silk, porcelain, glass, gold and silver jewellery) which can now be found in the museum collections of the region.

A traditional Tatar celebration, called Sabantui, representing the unification of all members of the community and all communities into one single nation, attracts visitors to this region.

Tourist routes could be organized along the river Volga between the cities of Kazan and Astrakhan following cruise ships, already working along the Volga<sup>64</sup>.

Elements of the Russian Silk Road story are intrinsically tied to that of the Vikings on the Silk Road as the Vikings used the Russian rivers of Volga and Dnepr to navigate and transport goods. This connection offers opportunities for creating transnational links, expanding the Vikings Cultural Route and reinforcing the brand. A specialised thematic itinerary could be elaborated along the rivers and will be discussed in more details in the chapter focused on the Vikings heritage.

According to the SWOT provided by the Russian University of the Peoples Friendship<sup>65</sup>, the main strengths of the potential brand are rich cultural and natural heritage of the Russian regions. The historic understanding of Russia as a “bridge between East and West”, archaeological sites, ethnological collections, gastronomy, intangible traditions and artisanal manufactures give a solid base to develop a successful brand of the Western Silk Road in Russia.

The Silk Road heritage, in particular the Mongol conquest of the Russian territories and the times of the Golden Horde, are studied at schools as a part of the history curriculum. Thereby the domestic market is aware of the Silk Road and would be interested to discover more of its heritage.

Renowned Russian museums, such as Hermitage, the Russian Museum, Ethnographic Museum, have rich collections of the Silk Road heritage and are well-known by general public.

The results of the SWOT exercise highlight the potential for expanding Silk Road tourism in the Russian Regions has much greater strengths than weaknesses or threats. The greatest strengths are based on the tourism potential arising from the rich cultural and natural attractions these regions possess.

As observed from the survey, the Russian National Tourism Organisation is interested in diversifying the domestic tourism offer and dispersing tourists to the less-known destinations, a strategy which would benefit from the Western Silk Road brand development as a driver.

Involvement of Russia in the Western Silk Road brings an opportunity of international partnership and collaboration. The cooperation might be extended after the brand is **elaborated and potentially nominated as a Council of Europe Cultural Route**.

The Russian authorities favour international arrivals and promotion of the country on the international level. Creation of a network of partners and being a part of an international brand would interest and involve the public and private sectors, besides it will improve Russia's image on the international level and contribute to better relations with other countries.

In the times of economic crisis in Russia, national tourists are likely to discover an extraordinary heritage of the Silk Road in their own country. The Russian passion for quality shopping is an added value to the brand, easily associated to artisanal products.

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<sup>64</sup> Link to the study “Russian cultural and historic heritage in the framework of the project "Great Silk Road", prepared under supervision of Vladimir Grusman, PhD, Director of the Russian Museum of Ethnography, in Russian language: <https://goo.gl/PdQoXt>

<sup>65</sup> A link to the full version is provided in the Annex 3

The well-developed inexpensive train system in Russia allows sustainable travel between the regions and provides the needed transport infrastructure along with an excellent network of connecting internal flights.

Domestic tourism in the Russian Regions has in the past been a low priority for central Government, but the recent adoption of a policy of 'import substitution' has redirected support and a positive willingness to invest in the regions. The Russian regions lack of heritage interpretation and joint marketing cooperation to promote the Silk Road heritage are the greatest threats to the brand.

A key will be raising awareness and standards on the ground – especially in human capacity where there is a common weakness in service standards and understanding around quality tourism.

The SWOT exercise in general identified positive energy for the development of the Silk Road in Russia and key actions that are needed but recognised that the primary limitations are linked to external influences in the form of sanctions and the need to build appropriate agreements with other countries in order to develop the transnational nature.

## **4.6. Spain and the Silk Road**

Spain ranks third in questionnaire responses, while three Western Silk Road Focus Groups were created as part of the explorative Western Silk Road research. One focus group, of national character, took place at UNWTO Headquarters and counted upon the input of the Spanish Secretariat of Tourism, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, the Spanish National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO and the Spanish Institute for Quality Tourism. In addition, two regional Focus Groups took place: one focus group organized by the Fundación Turismo Valencia, and a second focus group that counted upon the participation of a wide range of Valencian stakeholders from the tourism sector and beyond. Information received from the questionnaire and the focus groups was further strengthened by secondary source material. While far from being all-encompassing, the below is intended as an introduction into what is currently being developed within the Valencian region and how implemented initiatives could be of value for the Western Silk Road tourism route.

### **4.6.1. Historical background**

Spain's connection to the Silk Road dates back centuries, and local experts with an interest in silk history proudly mention that the fabric was well-known within the Spanish territories long before Marco Polo initiated his first voyage to China.

Indeed, Spanish silk tradition dates as far back as the 9<sup>th</sup> century, a period during which silk and other valuable goods reached the Iberian Peninsula via a route passing through India, Arabia and the Islamic North African territories<sup>66</sup>.

Famously known as “spaniscum”, Andalusian silk soon gained an international reputation for quality, which allowed for a strong industry to emerge from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards<sup>67</sup>. Primarily centred on the cities of Granada, Almeria and Malaga, the silk trade had a great impact on the Spanish territories, affecting trade relations, regulatory provisions, land rights and city-land relations<sup>68</sup>. The decentralization and specialization of the silk trade, also measurable along regulatory lines, soon extended to the regions of Murcia, Valencia and even, in truce times, to Castile<sup>69</sup>. Making full use of the Mediterranean as a cost-effective trading channel, Venice, Florence, Genoa, Montpellier and Lyon, but also Flanders further North, were connected to a pre-industrial but highly specialised industry that initially survived the change of rule and dogma in late fifteenth century Spain<sup>70</sup>. Although foreseeable developments, such as economic progress and increased competition, both local and foreign, were to be expected, other, more unforeseeable changes, such as diseases affecting the mulberry tree and the need to finance military campaigns through tax, led to the progressive decline of the trade.

However, far from disappearing, silk, and its related trade, achieved a life of its own, symbolically permeating through Spanish customs and thus contributing to the development of festivities, architecture, gastronomy and culture in general.

Examples of the multifarious benefits to be derived from exchange are to be encountered throughout Spain, mostly in the coastal regions of Andalucía, Murcia, Valencia and Catalonia, but also in cities that have historically enjoyed political importance such as Toledo.

In the following, the case study of Valencia will be presented. As will be made visible, the region’s connections to the historic routes largely transcended the economic sphere and enriched the social landscape in ways still identifiable in present time.

#### **4.6.1.1. Valencia and its connection to the Silk Road**

Heritage is vital because it breaks the shackles of time. By relating events of the past to those in the present it shines light on a future that, depending on circumstances, may appear menacing, anxious or, on limited occasions, in a more prosperous and promising disguise. Be that as it may, local heritage, in the form of a street name, a statue, a dish or similar, is always meant as a tribute – a tribute to the prominence of a local character, to the impact of a historical events or, as is the case with the *barrio de Velluters* in Valencia, to the importance of a trade that changed the physical landscape of the city.

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<sup>66</sup> López de Coca Castañer, José Enrique (1998): “Silk in the Kingdom of Granada (15th-16th Centuries). In: Comisión Española de la Ruta de la Seda, 1 ed., “Spain and Portugal in the silk routes: ten centuries of production and trade between east and west”; Publicacions, Universitat de Barcelona

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

Valencia, home to one of the most important trading ports of the Mediterranean, was heavily influenced by the silk trade. Local artisans of Jewish and Islamic descent converged with Genovese business-minded merchants shaped by European trading routes to form what was to become a potent regional industry: “Valencian silk production would occupy a thousand artisans in a city population of around 70.000 inhabitants at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>71</sup> Although Valencia remained an important silk manufacturing centre way into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the silk trade and those cultural landscapes that sustained it, such as the College of High Silk Art (*Colegio del Arte Mayor de la Seda*) or the Silk Exchange (*La Lonja de la Seda*), gradually decayed and lost importance during the industrial era, only to be rediscovered late after what can be considered a reinterpretation of the city’s history and its connection to the historic Silk Road routes.

Reformed and placed within a historical-cultural context that builds upon World Heritage Sites, gastronomy and popular traditions, the legacy of silk is nowadays promoted to the local and tourist alike, in what can be considered as a best-practice example in terms of adding attractiveness and potential to a region already well-established within the tourism circuit.

#### **4.6.2. Developing the Valencian Silk Road**

In a very short period of time, basically since 2015, the city and region of Valencia have developed and implemented a comprehensive tourism strategy that includes marketing and brand positioning, tourism research and an inventory of available heritage, training initiatives and targeted projects aimed reviving and re-positioning the Valencia as a Silk Road destination.

Before an overview of the tourism strategy and individual initiatives is presented, it is necessary to define the key motivations and initial difficulties encountered by the project partners. The text draws hereby on information provided by the stakeholders who accepted to participate in the three organized Focus Groups.

#### **Motivations**

**The Silk Road is strong in its diversity:** Local singularity is a key component highlighted by all stakeholders, both public and private, contributing to the development of the Valencian Silk Road. This premise, while recognizing the potential of an umbrella concept capable of uniting destinations in Europe, Asia and Africa, underlines the importance of local heritage and a singular tourism concept. A destination like Valencia should not try to imitate what is already available or try to adapt to prefabricated concepts people may have of the Silk Road, but should concentrate on the local Valencian Silk Road imprint or distinctive touch. It is the diversity and richness of the Silk Road, its variants across thousands of kilometres, that ultimately appeals to and attracts the traveller.

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<sup>71</sup> Iradiel Murugarren, Paulino and Navarro Espinach, Germán (1998): “Silk in Valencia in the Middle Ages”. In: Comisión Española de la Ruta de la Seda, 1 ed., “Spain and Portugal in the silk routes: ten centuries of production and trade between east and west”; Publicacions, Universitat de Barcelona; p.105

**The Valencian Silk Road is a melting pot:** The concept of the region and the city of Valencia as a melting pot is directly related to the point above. The idea behind this concept is to transcend the purely economic or commercial discourse focused on the ramifications of the silk trade and to shift the perspective towards the long-lasting benefits produced by cultural and personal exchange. For example, a re-shifting or re-telling of the Valencian Silk Road story would imply highlighting the ancient Muslim tradition of Valencia, the effects of which, in terms of jewels and craftsmanship, can be encountered throughout Silk Road countries with a strong Muslim population<sup>72</sup>. Similarly, an available and highly beneficial storyline capable of attracting the attention and interest of the Chinese tourism market could focus on the similarities between Valencian and Chinese customs<sup>73</sup>. The folkloric role of powder and pyrotechnics, the artistic use of ceramics, traditional silk costumes and accessories such as hand-held fans and shawls made of silk, plus the recurrent use of animals as symbols (the Valencian bat, the Chinese dragon), are just some of the most evident connections capable of increasing the attractiveness of Valencia as an international tourism destination.

**The importance of Cultural Tourism:** To place Valencia within a wider cultural and historical context implies to identify and involve stakeholders capable of keeping local heritage alive. When the World Heritage Convention was conceived in the early 1970s, the impact of tourism was not fully addressed. However, in current times, no destination, especially a region at the forefront of the trade that attracts visitors by land, sea and air, can progress without properly managing its available tourism assets. The idea is simple: when managed responsibly, tourism can be a driver for preservation and conservation of cultural and natural heritage and a vehicle for sustainable development. However, if not planned or managed effectively, tourism can be socially, culturally and economically disruptive, harming hereby fragile environments and local communities<sup>74</sup>. Valencia is aware of the potential threats that it aims to counteract through broad stakeholder participation, local community involvement and the promotion of beneficial public-private partnerships. A good example of this is the use of public-private partnerships to safeguard heritage, such as the restoration of the *Colegio del Arte Mayor de la Seda* by the Foundation of Hortensia Herrero (*Fundación Hortensia Herrero*) – a two year restoration project concluded in 2016 that saved the heritage site from irreplaceable decay<sup>75</sup>.

**The importance of economic return:** Finally, an important point is the importance of economic return: ideas brought forward need to materialise as specific tourism products and services. Valencia, but, generically speaking, all destinations in Spain rely upon their good name, as a high-quality tourism experience at a reasonable price. Jointly maintained by a public sector that guarantees a stable policy-framework and a dynamic private sector, the importance of economic return capable of including businesses, local communities and the

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<sup>72</sup> See: <http://www.vicentegraciajoyas.com/en/>

Vicente Gracia is a jeweller who has specialized in the connections between Valencia and the Arabian Silk Road legacy

<sup>73</sup> As outlined by Victoria Liceras during one of the Focus Groups. Ms. Liceras is a traditional Valencian silk clothes designer and manufacturer.

<sup>74</sup> “Developing a Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Silk Roads Heritage Corridors”, UNWTO publication available here: <http://silkroad.unwto.org/publication/developing-sustainable-tourism-strategy-silk-roads-heritage-corridors>

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.levante-emv.com/valencia/2016/06/17/museo-seda-muestra-esplendor/1433347.html> (last accessed 13 April 2017)

authorities in charge of city maintenance should be deemed a golden rule applicable to Valencia, the Western Silk Road and the Silk Road as a whole.

### **Initial difficulties**

Valencia identified difficulties or tourism gaps that needed to be addressed before the positive aspects of the strategy could flourish. As lessons learnt for other destinations eager to work under a trans-national brand, these include:

**The lack of a unified Silk Road Brand:** The lack of a unified brand supported by marketing strategies weakens the overall product and its potential benefits, both internally and externally. Although the Western Silk Road has a powerful foundation to build on, consistent and cohesive marketing will be necessary if the project is to be successful. As will be demonstrated below, one of the first steps developed by Valencia included the creation of a corporate image.

**The problem of diversity when developing an international tourism route:** Once available, the promotion of a shared brand presents many challenges, mainly due to the disparity between countries. Available heritage and a shared history may not be enough to unite countries separated by language and by different political, social and economic systems. The concentration on a core group of countries, as is happening with the Western Silk Road, may be a strategy to overcome this difficulty. However, a trans-national strategy plan addressing this issue is still pending, meaning that involved partners are left alone when deciding upon relevant strategic issues. To exemplify, should specific initiatives, such as trans-national tourist discounts at Silk Road sites, be given priority over a common brand and logo shared by all Western Silk Road partners?

**Raising awareness and know-how: engaging the local population:** Storytelling or re-interpreting available heritage is only possible through the inclusion of local communities. Applicable to all Silk Road destinations, a sense of common ownership is vital for a destination because it ensures that heritage is looked after. Also, local involvement and participation secures the singular touch of a destination and ensures that initiatives, both profit and non-profit, can emerge. Initiatives aimed at mobilising and raising awareness among local stakeholders can take many forms, including conferences, research, training for local guides and specialised tours. Valencia is already implementing several of these activities, a good example being the tour “Discover the Valencian Silk Route” promoted by Visit Valencia. The initiative consists of a 2-hour guided walking tour connecting the main Silk Road heritage points of the city, including the Velluters district, the Silk Museum and the Silk Exchange. Visits to typical Valencian textile shops are also included in the guided tour<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> See: <http://www.visitvalencia.com/en/what-to-visit-valencia/city-routes/silkroad> (last accessed 13 April 2017)

### 4.6.3. Promoting the Valencian Silk Road: a best-practice example for the Western Silk Road

The tourism plan currently being implemented by Valencia is characterised by a collaborative and multi-party approach involving stakeholders on all policy levels – local, regional, national and trans-national, in addition to private sector input.

On a local and regional level, the departments of tourism and culture of the Agència Valenciana del Turisme (regional government), the Valencian city council, the Fundació Turismo Valencia / Visit Valencia, the Chamber of Commerce, Feria Valencia, the Valencia Business Confederation, the University of Valencia, local businesses connected to the silk trade, and heritage sites such as the Silk Museum and the College of the High Silk Art, are the main stakeholders implementing initiatives on-site<sup>77</sup>.

An institutional declaration by the *Corts Valencianes* (the autonomous parliament of Valencia), supported by all political parties, calling for a *Silk Road strategy for Valencia* in July 2015 helped secure broad stakeholder involvement. This was followed by the branding of Valencia as “City of Silk 2016”, the kick-off to a strategy, supported by the Spanish national authorities, aimed at positioning Valencia as a Silk Road destination<sup>78</sup>.

2015 was also the year of Spain joining the UNWTO Silk Road Programme as the 32<sup>nd</sup> Member State, a measure that underlined Spain’s and Valencia’s commitment to regional collaboration and to the development of singular tourism routes with cultural heritage at its core<sup>79</sup>. Apart from broad stakeholder involvement and official support, the alignment of interests and strategies in key work documents, such as the regional strategy plan (*Estrategia de la Comunitat Valenciana en la Ruta de la Seda 2016-2020*) and the *Visit Valencia: Strategic Plan 2017-2020*, can also be considered an important measure that helped secure private sector engagement and long-term (financial) commitment.

#### Developing a corporate image



<sup>77</sup> "The Silk Road as a case-study" by Ms. María Ruiz Arévalo, Agència Valenciana del Turisme – presentation held during the 7th UNWTO Silk Road Task Force Meeting in Valencia, Spain. Presentation available here:

[http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/maria\\_avt\\_task\\_force.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/maria_avt_task_force.pdf) (last accessed 13 April 2017)

<sup>78</sup> "Oportunidades de València en la Ruta de la Seda" by Fundación Turismo Valencia, p.3. Available here:

[http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/oportunidades\\_de\\_valencia\\_en\\_la\\_ruta\\_de\\_la\\_seda\\_def\\_-\\_castellano.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/oportunidades_de_valencia_en_la_ruta_de_la_seda_def_-_castellano.pdf) (last accessed 13 April 2017)

<sup>79</sup> UNWTO Press Release: "The UNWTO Silk Road Programme welcomes Spain as its 32nd Member State" (published on 14 April 2015). Available at:

<http://silkroad.unwto.org/news/2015-04-14/unwto-silk-road-programme-welcomes-spain-its-32nd-member-state> (last accessed 13 April 2017)

The tourism brand *Ruta de la Seda Comunitat Valenciana* was launched in 2016.<sup>80</sup> Designed by Juan Martínez of Martínez Branding, the corporate image draws upon multiple sources: a floral motive of an 18<sup>th</sup> century textile recalls the textile manufacturing past of the region, while the typography used is similar to 16<sup>th</sup> century engravings found in the Silk Exchange and the College of High Silk Art<sup>81</sup>. The rediscovery of Valencian Silk Road heritage and its recodification as a tourism route, as symbolised in the trail-like aspect of the logo, are further motives represented.



The availability of a strong corporate image, deeply connected to the region's heritage and history, is a strong asset. Apart from structuring and giving sense to Silk Road initiatives developed thereafter, a clearly defined corporate image increases the attractiveness of a destination, raises awareness among the host community and enhances the overall investment potential. Valencia further enhanced such added value by including the corporate image and Silk Road related themes (newsfeeds, updates, etc.) on official partner websites, social media outlets and newsletters<sup>82</sup>.

### Research and an inventory of available heritage

As was mentioned above, a corporate image, no matter how good, does not suffice if not supported by concrete initiatives – a destination must deliver on the promises it makes. Therefore, in parallel to the development of a corporate image, the Agència Valenciana del Turisme commissioned an inventory to determine what was available in terms of Silk Road heritage. Awarded to the Universitat de València, the main objective of the study was to identify, collect and classify Silk Road related resources, be these specialised museums, monuments, workshops, factories, festivities or gastronomic heritage, within the three provinces of the region – Castellón, Valencia and Alicante<sup>83</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> Images taken from "The Silk Road as a case-study" by Ms. María Ruiz Arévalo, Agència Valenciana del Turisme – presentation held during the 7th UNWTO Silk Road Task Force Meeting in Valencia, Spain on 30-31 March 2017: [http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/maria\\_avt\\_task\\_force.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/maria_avt_task_force.pdf) (last accessed 13 April 2017)

<sup>81</sup> Press Release by the Generalitat Valenciana: "Colomer resalta que 'la nueva marca turística 'Ruta de la Seda Comunitat Valenciana' contribuirá a proyectarnos por todo el mundo" (published 12 July 2016):

[http://www.gva.es/es/inicio/area\\_de\\_prensa/not\\_detalle\\_area\\_prensa?id=684461](http://www.gva.es/es/inicio/area_de_prensa/not_detalle_area_prensa?id=684461) (last accessed 13 April 2017, available in Spanish only)

<sup>82</sup> As an example see: <http://comunitatvalenciana.com/que-hacer/turismo-cultural/ruta-seda-valencia> (last accessed 13 April 2017)

<sup>83</sup> Information taken from "VALENCIAN SILK: Tangible and intangible heritage and the development of sustainable tourism" – presentation by Rubén Arandis-i-Agramunt, University of Valencia. Presentation held during the 7th UNWTO Silk Road Task Force Meeting in Valencia, Spain on 30-31 March 2017. Accessible here:

[http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/university\\_valencia\\_valenciansilk\\_7thunwtotf\\_2017.03.30.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/university_valencia_valenciansilk_7thunwtotf_2017.03.30.pdf) (last accessed 13 April 2017)



In what can be considered a best-practice example of high trans-disciplinary value, available heritage was mapped and three possible thematic routes were proposed:

- **North Corridor focused on silk and ceramics in Castellón:** A region famous for tiles and ceramics, available heritage identified included an Ethnography Museum and a Fine Arts Museum, both containing valuable traditional costumes made of silk, a Ceramics Museum in Alcora and a Cathedral Museum in Segorbe.
- **Central corridor linking the city of Valencia, Ribera del Júcar and Requena:** Home to the highest amount of available heritage, the central node has the city of Valencia at its core, an aspect also beneficial in terms of connectivity and traveller awareness. That said, important heritage is also located outside the city of Valencia, which includes a handheld fan museum in Aldaia, a silk museum in Moncada, a silk factory in Vinalesa, silk related workshops in Valencia and Burjassot and architectural heritage in Valencia and Albalat.
- **South Corridor focused on Silk, Festivities & Attire in Alicante:** Although the whole region is famous for its popular festivities, heritage identified in the province of Alicante was strong in religious and popular motives. Tapestry and religious heritage located in Orihuela (Diocesan Museum, Monserrate Sanctuary, Holy Week Museum) and Elche (Mystery Play of Elche) converge here with popular festivities such as the Bonfires of San Juan.

Generally speaking, the tourism potential of local and regional festivities is highlighted by all actors involved. With Las Fallas at the forefront, a festivity held in commemoration of Saint Joseph and part of the intangible cultural heritage list elaborated by UNESCO, additional festivities include the Bonfires of San Juan previously mentioned, the Moors & Christians celebrations and other popular festivities such as the Mocadorà, a tradition by which loved

ones are courted with scarves containing marzipan and other delicacies of the region. How these established festivities could be linked in a clearer way to the silk tradition of Valencia and to the Western Silk Road tradition as a whole is a question of great tourism importance.

### **Practical initiatives aimed at raising awareness for the Valencian Silk Road**

Bringing the available heritage to the people, raising awareness on how Valencia contributed to the development of the historic Silk Road routes, is an important task being addressed by the Valencian stakeholders. The following is a brief overview of the initiatives launched, with its potential application across Western Silk Road destinations as points to be considered.

- **Research activities and the creation of know-how:** In collaboration with the Universitat de València, an international silk congress titled “The routes of silk in Spain and Portugal” was organized focused on scientifically assessing the role of Spain and Portugal within the Silk Road context. This was followed by a further conference cycle titled “Fil d’Or” in May 2016 attended by numerous stakeholders from the tourism sector and beyond<sup>84</sup>.

Additional initiatives with a trans-disciplinary focus have included the publication of a “Valencia, city of silk” book focused on the historical emergence and development of the silk trade, which will be available in Spanish, Valencian, English, Italian, French and Chinese. Also, a children’s publication, “From Xi’an to Valencia”, available in Valencian and Spanish, and a painted sidewalk itinerary connecting the main Silk Road heritage of the city of Valencia, have also been implemented<sup>85</sup>.

As these examples make clear, the development of research is not only essential for the development of routes, itineraries and guided tours, but is also for raising a sense of purpose and common ownership among the host population.

- **Audio-visual material:** Based on available research, the Agència Valenciana del Turisme has also developed a video documentary titled “Valencian Silk Road”. Available in Spanish, Valencian and English, either in full length (30 minutes) or as a 2-minute promotional video clip, the documentary functions as a great educational and promotional tool<sup>86</sup>.
- **Valencian gastronomy and the Silk Road:** Rice, tiger nut milk (“horchata”) and citrus fruits, just to name a few, are well-known components of the Valencian diet, these ingredients being also well established in various other Silk Road destinations. Thus, the elaboration of a Silk Road recipe book, developed by the Agència del Turisme in collaboration with the Hostelry Federation of Valencia, is another good example of how to diversify and strengthen the tourism offer of a destination.

Food or gastronomy tourism is a phenomenon of universal scope, comprising approximately 30% of global tourist expenditure. It acts as a gateway into local culture

<sup>84</sup> See [http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/maria\\_avt\\_task\\_force.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/maria_avt_task_force.pdf) (last accessed 13 April 2017)

<sup>85</sup> See [http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/maria\\_avt\\_task\\_force.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/maria_avt_task_force.pdf) (last accessed 13 April 2017)

<sup>86</sup> See the YouTube channel of the Generalitat Valenciana: <https://www.youtube.com/user/comunitatvalenciana> short promotional clip available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pa5-j86d5Z0> (both accessed last on 13 April 2017)

and creativity, and has a positive impact on local economies, employment and heritage<sup>87</sup>. As Valencia correctly identified, gastronomy creates unique opportunities for destination marketing and, according to 88% of the respondents of UNWTO's Global Report on Food Tourism survey, can be considered a strategic element in defining the brand image of a destination<sup>88</sup>. Released as a bilingual publication (Spanish/ English), the publication collects 10 recipes from local chefs based on Silk Road related products and cooking techniques<sup>89</sup>.

- **Valencian fashion and music and its connection to the Silk Road:** Additional initiatives that highlight the potential of the creative art industry have included the production of a specialised CD, *Mar de Seda*, a musical collaboration with local DJ's who produced pieces inspired by Valencia's connection to the Silk Road, and a collaborative initiative with the College of the High Silk Art focused on certifying Valencian silk and textile productions<sup>90</sup>.

#### 4.6.4. Summary

Valencia provides a good model for other destinations looking to build on their Silk Road heritage. In a very short period of time, Valencia, an already established tourism destination, has strengthened its tourism offer by focusing on a new tourism concept fitted to the globalised age we live in. In a highly structured approach, Valencia ensured two key issues before moving forward: (1) political support on all levels for a joint project, and (2) broad stakeholder support and engagement, which includes universities, civil society organizations, the business sector and actors from the cultural sphere. With stakeholders capable of contributing to and seeing their ideas reflected in a strategy plan, initiatives can evolve and grow within a stable and long-term framework.

Although many questions still need to be addressed, for example, how to integrate the growing cruise tourism market or the possibility of future partnerships under the Western Silk Road umbrella, Valencia can be considered a strong and valuable partner when it comes to developing the Western Silk Road as a trans-national tourism route.

#### 4.7. The Vikings as Silk traders

Whilst the popular image of the Vikings is one of plunder and raids, the reality is that the Vikings had an extremely prolific heritage.

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<sup>87</sup> "Flavours of the Silk Road: International Conference on Food, Culture & Tourism", available here: [http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/flavours\\_of\\_the\\_silk\\_road\\_conference\\_-\\_conclusions\\_and\\_highlights.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/flavours_of_the_silk_road_conference_-_conclusions_and_highlights.pdf) (last accessed 13 April 2017)

<sup>88</sup> UNWTO Affiliate Member Report Vol. 4 'Global Report on Food Tourism', available here: <http://affiliatemembers.unwto.org/en/publication/unwto-am-report-vol-4-global-report-food-tourism> (last accessed 13 April 2017)

<sup>89</sup> "Un recetario para recorrer la mítica Ruta de la Seda", article by europa press: <http://www.europapress.es/comunitat-valenciana/noticia-recetario-recorrer-mitica-ruta-seda-20161115142142.html> (last accessed 13 April 2017)

<sup>90</sup> see "The Silk Road as a case-study" by Ms. María Ruiz Arévalo, Agència Valenciana del Turisme – presentation held during the 7th UNWTO Silk Road Task Force Meeting in Valencia, Spain on 30-31 March 2017: [http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/maria\\_avt\\_task\\_force.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/maria_avt_task_force.pdf) (last accessed 13 April 2017)

During the so-called Viking Age (dating from AD800 to 1050), Vikings reached significant boat building achievements as well as developed unprecedented navigation skills. This allowed them to travel, trade, raid and settle in Europe and beyond.

The Vikings left rich and diverse heritage, such as elaborate judicial system called “thing”, or assemblies for law courts, social structure and navigation heritage. They also left to future generations artistic heritage, crafts, the language and name places. Vikings intangible heritage is represented by sagas, literature and storytelling traditions<sup>91</sup>.

Despite the existing research on the Vikings and their rich legacy, little is known about Vikings’ connection to the Silk Road and silk trade.

Marianne Vedeler, Associate Professor at the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo in Norway has carried out a thorough study into the Silk Trade of the Vikings<sup>92</sup>. Vedeler collected information on silk and its trade in the Nordic countries by studying manuscripts on silk production and trade along the Russian rivers as well as in Byzantium and Persia.

The study has revealed that the Norwegian Vikings maintained trade connections with Persia and the Byzantine Empire. Both through Vikings’ travels and a network of traders from different locations and cultures, silk was brought to Scandinavia.

Initially it was considered that silk came from hoards plundered from religious sites in England and Ireland; however, recently the perception has shifted towards trade. The specific types of silk and products indicate that the goods had been imported and that certain artefacts were made locally from imported silk thread.

The research shows that in the Viking Age, silk was imported from two main areas: Byzantium, from the area around Constantinople, or Miklagard as it was called by the Vikings, and Persia.

Design, weaving methods and religious motifs of silk found in key Vikings site indicate its Persian origin. Another indicator of trade origin of silk is its low and medium quality as strong restrictions were put in place to control amounts and quality of silk to be traded.

Though silk may have been brought northwards along different routes, it is believed that most of the silk arrived to Europe via the Russian rivers Dnepr and Volga. The Dnepr was the main route to Constantinople, while the Volga leads to the Caspian Sea.

The online survey identified potential synergies of cooperation between the Western Silk Road, activities of the Destination Vikings association and the projects of the Vikings Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. As the Vikings used the Russian rivers to transport the goods, it was proposed to enhance collaboration between Russia and the “Destination Vikings” to develop a mutual tourism product based on the Vikings silk trade.

According to the SWOT provided by the Vikings Cultural Route<sup>93</sup>, the main strengths of the potential tourism product are the rich Vikings heritage, general interest of public in the Vikings and the romanticism around the Silk Road. The Russian rivers present opportunities to connect the country with Europe via thematic cruises to make it possible to discover the untapped Silk Road heritage. Rich culture, gastronomy and traditions would be additional elements of the product.

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<sup>91</sup> <http://www.destinationviking.com>

<sup>92</sup> Vedeler, Marianne, “Silk for the Vikings”, Oxbow Books, 2014

<sup>93</sup> For more information see Annex 10

As for the weaknesses of the brand, a low level of awareness and a lack of heritage interpretation are identified alongside with challenges such as difficulties in obtaining a visa, lack of hospitality services or linguistic skills. Contemporary uneasy geo-political relations between Russia and the European Union present a threat to the product, as the Vikings trade centres are located in Russia and Ukraine and should logically be included in the itinerary.

As pointed by the aforementioned SWOT, potential development of the Vikings Silk Road in Russia would reinforce the identity of both products and develop niche tourism in Russia. It has all possibilities to facilitate communication between the counties in uneasy relations.

During the interview with “Destination Vikings”, joint actions as exhibitions, books, events, publications, cross web marketing and re-enactment were proposed and should be further developed.

Taking into account a vivid public interest in the Vikings, as shown by the number of drama series and films along with corresponding documentaries produced in recent years, there are perfect pre-conditions to develop a Silk Road tourism product along the Vikings routes.

Viking related heritage attractions are among some of the most visited and high quality interpretive centres in Northern Europe. The availability of good archaeological and historical information and artefacts provide a solid base for tourist interpretation of the heritage.

This makes the Vikings on the Silk Road a powerful tool of promotion of the Western Silk Road. The Vikings provide a good existing tourism vehicle that can be utilised relatively easily to create Silk Road tourism products.

A greater profile for the Viking Silk Road could be established via integration of the Silk Road heritage into the Vikings’ story and interpretation of the Vikings Cultural Route of the Council of Europe<sup>94</sup>.

Preliminary discussions have already taken place with regard to potential Western Silk Road collaboration; and the Vikings Route is also looking to expand its membership to new destinations in the Russian Federation.

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<sup>94</sup> More on Cultural Routes in the chapter “Western Silk Road as a cultural route of the Council of Europe”

## 5. The Western Silk Road as a brand

### 5.1. Introduction to Western Silk Road brand creation and implementation

This study is the first stage of the Western Silk Road Tourism Development Initiative. One of the primary objectives of the initiative is to create and implement a brand identity that promotes the concept of the Western Silk Road and links a diverse range of appropriate and engaged destinations from the Caspian Sea to the Atlantic, from the Mediterranean to the Baltic.

The study needs to capture the essence of the Western Silk Road along with a differentiation from the Classic Silk Road. The brand should be capable of working in harmony with the existing brands that are used by the destinations and attractions.

This chapter of the study is divided into the following subsections:

1. **Interpretation of data** gathered across the participative process regarding current perception of the Silk Road, the existing usage of the brand and the motivations that restrict its use.
2. **Differentiation between the Classic and Western Silk Road** and analysis of the results of the WSR-SWOT of the Western Silk Road brand.
3. **Specifics regarding the brand building** using a structured approach and best practice on brand building tools. These are used to capture the personality of the brand and define a draft identity.
4. **Structured approach to brand management** and the creation and involvement of the Western Silk Road Working Group.
5. The **final recommendations** related to initial steps in raising brand awareness and promotion of the brand

#### 5.1.1 Branding objectives

In consideration of developing a Western Silk Road brand it is important to be aware of the key points regarding the objectives of defining the brand. This is a critical first step in the process of brand creation. This awareness should be consistent amongst all those involved in creating and implementing the brand.

UNWTO<sup>95</sup> defines the objectives of branding as:

- To **differentiate** from its competitors;
- To **increase awareness and recognition**, and therefore, memorability of the destination over time amongst potential visitors;
- To create a **positive image**,
- To give the destination a **strong and compelling brand identity**.

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<sup>95</sup> UNWTO/ETC, Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding 2009

Awareness of the objectives and potential benefits that Western Silk Road can bring should be spread across all stakeholders from tourism businesses to the highest levels of tourism management within governments and NTOs. Stakeholders should also be aware of time that it takes for a brand to become established and start bringing real benefits, thereby a long-term commitment is needed to ensure success.

## **5.2. The current perception and existing usage of the Silk Road brand**

### **5.2.1 Current perception of the Silk Road identity**

The research has shown clearly that the current perception of the Silk Road is focussed on the Classic Silk Road from China through Central Asia. The connections and perceptions are in line with the Classic Silk Road as it is currently defined by UNWTO Silk Road Programme.

In the online survey when asked about the most well-known destinations, China was rated as the highest by 46% of the respondents. China also came amongst the top responses when asked what the Silk Road meant to them.

As shown in Figure 9, other leading destinations included Samarkand, Istanbul, Turkey, Central Asia, Mongolia and Iran and were reflected in the results of both areas of questioning. Greece and Italy appeared initially as coming in the top ten destinations, but closer review showed that they were self-nominated rather than identified by the wider respondents.

Regarding the thematic perception of the Silk Road, the top response was trade, followed closely by culture and history as shown in the Figure 8. Tourism also rated highly in the responses.

Reviewing all the responses, other recurring perceptions were:

- Connection or bridge between East and West
- Cultural transfer or exchange
- Sharing of ideas and knowledge
- Desert and camels
- Connecting ancient civilizations
- Marco Polo

The above results present a clear indication of the perceived characteristics of the Classic Silk Road amongst the participants of the online survey. They provide a baseline for considering how to differentiate the identity of the Western Silk Road.

## 5.2.2 Existing Silk Road Brand Positioning amongst Western Silk Road Countries

In Section 3, Figures 8 and 9, and Table 1, presented insights regarding the attitudes and the current situation towards the marketing of Silk Road. From the data collected, both quantitative and qualitative, amongst the respondents, the one of the strongest marketing usages of the Silk Road was in the city of Valencia where they have created a brand identity based on their Silk Road heritage. In this case they have created a strong visual brand and linked it across attractions in the city and region. It is visually used in promoting the city across many different media and marketing tools.

A list of possible activities was given to the 33.8% who responded in Q16 of the online survey that they did include Silk Road in their Tourism Marketing. Visual imagery and Stories in Text was selected by half of the respondents. Following, inclusion of the Silk Road within tour itineraries descriptions and other references were chosen by 37.5% while on site interpretation was recorded by 20.08% of the respondents. In Section 3, Figure 12 provides a visualisation of the data.

Korcula in Croatia is another key destination that makes positive use of the Silk Road story through its links with Marco Polo. There are claims (hotly disputed by Venice<sup>96</sup>) that Marco Polo was born in Korcula.<sup>97</sup> This has resulted in a strong use of Marco Polo and his travels on the Silk Road in the marketing of the town, tourism product development and in the identity of many local businesses.

Soufli in Greece has a strong silk connection that shaped the very culture of the city and markets itself as the 'Silk City' with a diverse range of silk related attractions. It plays an active role in the Black Sea Silk Road Corridor.<sup>98</sup>

Individual attractions such as museums and locations with a direct silk link are more likely to be utilising the Silk Road story. These are often standalone features but can act as a catalyst for developing wider support.

Macclesfield in the north of England was an important centre of the silk industry in the UK and has increasingly built on its Silk Road connections starting from the activities of the Silk Museums Trust responsible for key heritage sights to the naming of a major trunk road 'The Silk Road'.

The strongest transnational presence of the Silk Road identity is that resulting from the Black Sea Silk Road Corridor project<sup>99</sup> involving Armenia, Georgia, Greece and Turkey. The Black Sea Silk Road Corridor was a tourism and creative industries promotion project funded by the European Union with additional funding from USAID, the Turkish Government and bodies in Greece, Georgia and Armenia.

It had two objectives building on existing initiatives: firstly to enhance visitor experience of a wide range of both tangible and intangible heritage and secondly to promote cross border cooperation. Among its outputs there are a smartphone virtual Silk Road tourism trail and a comprehensive online directory.

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<sup>96</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/8471174/Italians-furious-as-Croatia-lays-claim-to-Marco-Polo.html>

<sup>97</sup> <http://www.korcula.net/mpolo/mpolo2.htm>

<sup>98</sup> [http://gr.blackseasilkroad.com/en/wiki/Soufli\\_Silk\\_Factories/506/682](http://gr.blackseasilkroad.com/en/wiki/Soufli_Silk_Factories/506/682)

<sup>99</sup> <http://gr.blackseasilkroad.com/en/about>

A review was taken by the UNWTO Silk Road Programme of the visibility of the Silk Road amongst participating member countries during World Travel Market 2016 in London. The 'mystery shopper' approach to gain a consumer's perspective was backed up by several face-to-face interviews carried out with public and private sector representatives.

The strongest presence was amongst Armenia and Azerbaijan's tourism offer with several tour operators on each stand referring to the Silk Road in their marketing material. This was expected, given their closeness to and involvement in the Classic Silk Road. As the investigation moved further west the Silk Road presence became less visible except for the promotion of Valencia in Spain and Korcula in Croatia. In general, the visibility of the Silk Road brand at the World Travel Market was limited to countries associated with the Classic Silk Road – China and Central Asia.

The results of all of the above indicate that whilst the current use of the Silk Road identity in Western Silk Road destinations is low there is a high interest and willingness to make greater use of the Silk Road with appropriate support and guidance. The WSR- SWOT compilation of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, gathered from the questionnaire, Focus groups, interviews, national SWOT analyses - indicates that a major limitation of the Western Silk Road is the concern regarding the capacity to coordinate effective brand implementation.

It could be argued that the low level of existing aligned product development is not a negative situation as it provides a 'clean canvas' for new brand and product development as opposed to rebranding existing product.

### **5.3. The Western Silk Road – understanding the differences, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats**

#### **5.3.1 Differentiation between Classic and Western Silk Road**

In order to develop a strong Western Silk Road brand, it is important to understand the differentiation between the Classic and Western Silk Roads. The following key points have been extracted from Focus Groups, online survey and interviews carried out. The text in italics reflects a generic quote obtained from the raw data.

*The main differentiation will be in the geographic location – many responses when participants were asked to define the Silk Road showed a focus on the Classic Silk Road of Central Asia and China – 'I usually think of the Eastern part, China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, etc.'* This highlights a need to provide a clear geographical definition when developing the Western Silk Road as a brand identity. A common response recognised that *the Western Silk Road is mostly referred to European destinations that were part of the ancient trading routes. The Western Silk Road also implies more mature destinations and services while offering a very fresh product.*

*The Western Silk Road combines the Silk Road history with different way of living and experiencing. The Western countries have quite different culture than the Asian ones, yet they share a fascinating common history.* The potential of the Western Silk Road to provide understanding of the cultural crossover created by centuries of trade and exchange of skills

and tradition is huge. Other parts of the survey identified that many Western Silk Road visitors would be interested to see the intersection of different cultures and the influence the Classic Silk Road had on the development of the societies especially going to the western direction.

*The Western Silk Road will appeal to those that have already explored the Classic Silk Road and wish to discover more of the story. The Western Silk Road opens opportunities for experienced Silk Road travellers to expand their range of destinations. The perceived ease of accessibility will attract those who are looking for less adventurous options along with the ability to plan at short notice as it was identified that *The Western Silk Road destinations will make for good short notice city break type trips*. This is also strengthened by the recognition that *a key differentiation will be that for Western originating tourists there will not be a requirement for obtaining difficult visas*.*

The issues of accessibility were also highlighted by the recurring response that *the traveller will be able to visit a destination that will offer higher services in terms of quality. Also, the security will be higher and we should not forget that destinations with history in tourism have better capacity to deal with potential problems that might arise for the traveller*.

The ease of accessibility also brought a recognition of a negative risk that whilst the *Western Silk Road will be easier to reach and interact with locals but at the same time offer less authenticity*. This should be considered carefully when developing new tourism product.

Tour operators and NTOs identified that the differentiation would bring opportunities through the above distinction - *That would be indeed very beneficial for us and it will help us open new markets. I think that the potential of the Western Silk Road is very big, and through the fact there are so many countries involved. Secondly, it is a transnational product which means that we can rely on and work with our neighbouring countries to provide a stronger and more diverse experience to the traveller*.

In identifying new opportunities, the perception that *the Western Silk Road can offer more sophistication of tourism experience*, along with the fact that *many Western Silk Road destinations are more economically developed than those on the Classic Silk Road* brings interesting benefits. The Venice Focus group pointed out that the 'Bleisure' sector – travellers that combine business trips with leisure - could be an important target as recent research shows 86% of these travellers are looking for festivals and cultural events.

Within the online survey the respondents were asked how they perceived the greatest difference between the Classic and Western Silk Road, which was presented in Section 3 through Figure 14. The results highlight that Gastronomical Experiences, Intangible Heritage (especially with regard to music, folklore, festivals and events) and Tourism Infrastructure are key areas for both brand development and product development. They will provide a valuable focus in later stages of the Western Silk Road Development Initiative.

### **5.3.2 The results of the WSR-SWOT assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a Western Silk Road Brand**

The creation of the Western Silk Road brand and successful implementation needs a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities that the creation of a brand faces and can build upon.

The study carried out a 'SWOT' type exercise across the participants involved. It was undertaken in several forms: questions within the online survey, telephone interviews, Focus Groups and formal national SWOT studies with academic partners.

These activities have resulted in a high volume of data, which is presented in the Annexes 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10. Responses were given that applied to the overall concept of a Western Silk Road development and the tourism potential in individual countries and destinations. The following are the principle WSR-SWOT related points that have been extracted from the various approaches to the exercise.

The combined 'SWOT type' exercises with regard to the potential for the development of a Western Silk Road brand mirrored the online survey question results with a generally positive attitude. The responses based on strengths and opportunities were much greater than those related to weaknesses and threats. This supports the results from the online survey in favour of creating a Western Silk Road brand.

#### **Strengths**

Most respondents felt that overall and within their regions there was a strong wealth of relevant culture and heritage to justify the brand development. The Western Silk Road was seen as a way of rediscovering an alternative history of existing Western tourism destinations and would bring opportunities for creating new and unique visitor experiences, improve the status and awareness of existing tourism destinations.

The new brand and product development would provide a way linking East and West and showing the connections between cultures. It would especially bring opportunities in the sectors of intangible heritage – food, arts and crafts, festivals and events.

The Western Silk Road has a greater strength in accessibility compared to the Classic Silk Road, both in terms of transport connections and other aspects of travel facilitation (especially for Western travellers) and with regard to the issues of access for all. Along with a perception of better infrastructure and higher standard destinations, this can make the Western Silk Road more attractive for less adventurous, less experienced, physically limited and time poor travellers who may avoid the more demanding Classic Silk Road destinations.

The creation of a Western Silk Road brand is seen as a powerful tool for sustainable economic development. By promoting lesser known destinations and bringing the higher spending cultural tourists, it could stimulate weaker local economies and bring employment across the value chain.

## Weaknesses

The greatest threats and weaknesses centred on two key areas – the issue of creating a new brand alongside existing brands and the challenges of co-ordinating stakeholders across many different countries. Both of these concerns are straightforward to deal with by choosing the correct approach to positioning of the brand and in selecting an appropriate management structure.

The fact that the Western Silk Road is a new brand concept was widely raised. There is insufficient recognition of the nature of the brand and identity, based on a lack of publicity and advertising. The potential confusion amongst stakeholders was highlighted as the Silk Road identity is widely associated with the East and the Classic Silk Road and is well known to visitors.

As mentioned earlier, one of the biggest weaknesses for the Western Silk Road brand is currently perceived to be a lack of coordination and understanding amongst countries.

*“An existing risk is that, instead of understanding that the opportunity to raise awareness about the Western Silk Road relies on coordinated efforts and transnational projects, single countries will take on a competitive approach to catch the benefits stemming from the project.”* This would eventually lead to an uncoordinated development of the brand Western Silk Road, but on the contrary, in order to be effective, it needs an integrated positioning and targeting, common promotional campaigns, transnational experiences and a usable international network of sites and regions to widen the overall market share and spread all the potential benefits.<sup>100</sup>

The lack of integrated and coordinated knowledge about Silk Road Heritage was highlighted by several participants' groups (for example in the SWOT carried out by the University of Bologna). *“During the interviews with institutions, associations, local experts, researchers and members of private sectors, many resources and assets have emerged that are strongly related to the Italian heritage and legacy of the Silk Road’.* However, the absence of an integrated database collecting and structuring the existing sources related to the Silk Road in Italy and in other destinations is a weakness, as it would provide material for a digital mapping of the areas and for a fundamental endowment of knowledge, useful to better shape tourism experiences.<sup>101</sup>

The Western Silk Road Development Initiative has already started to stimulate studies such as the excellent research carried out in Greece. But this should be built on further in other destinations and a mechanism sought to collate this research in order to make it more accessible to all.

An appropriate management or network structure will also provide the tools through training and sharing of experience to face the lack of capacity amongst local tourism authorities. These are dealt with in the recommendations in the later parts of this report.

The development of the Western Silk Road Working Group and potentially a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe could be the key elements for a long-term coordination and sustainability. This approach is explored later in the report as a possible mechanism for long term sustainable management.

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<sup>100</sup> University of Bologna Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism, Western Silk Road in Italy 2017, p22, see Annex 3

<sup>101</sup> University of Bologna Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism, Western Silk Road in Italy 2017 p13, see Annex 3

Several countries are already being proactive in creating structures to support the Western Silk Road Development concept. Within the Italian Cultural Routes Board (a national forum dedicated to cultural route development) the Marco Polo Committee has been created which is gathering many institutional authorities in order to develop projects based on the Silk Road heritage: among them, there are Italian regions of Adriatic dorsal, the Adriatic Ionian macro-region and Mirabilia (European Network of UNESCO sites realized by the Chambers of Commerce of 12 Italian cities<sup>102</sup>).

The enthusiasm and support that this study has been shown in many countries is indicative of a prime time for moving forward.

## **Opportunities**

One of the greatest listed opportunities is the power of the Western Silk Road in linking East and West and showing the connections amongst cultures. This can be an excellent lever for product development and a marketing tool for opening lesser known destinations and promoting intangible heritage.

The East-West connection is seen as a strong opportunity with regard to the high desire amongst destinations to capture the major Chinese cultural tourism market. To a lesser extent this applies to the growing Halal or Islamic tourism sector. The promotion of shared heritage can contribute to a wider goal of promoting mutual understanding across cultures and diffusing the growing mistrust present in today's world.

Several participants (especially Valencia) expressed a perception that a Western Silk Road tourism product and identity would be beneficial in linking the West and East in a manner that could support neutralizing the current wave of Islamophobia. At a local destination level, it would enable Western destinations to showcase local Muslim legacy and also to promote Halal tourism from Arab and Central Asian countries to visit their European heritage. The Western Silk Road would be powerful to showcase recognition of the positive outcomes that occur when the civilizations of West and Orient are brought together and mixed. Direct silk heritage attractions and ancient historical records as for instance "Els Llibres del Mores" in Valencia, would be excellent additions to the tourism offer and promotion of awareness of the cultural coexistence that took part previously.

Above mentioned approach to the Western Silk Road highlighted positive opportunities for the creation of a new brand and a modern image for the Silk Road. The innovative nature of a Western Silk Road brand will drive creative methods to marketing and online marketing tools.

A common opportunity is the potential attracting new tourism segments and expanding the market. At the same time a Western Silk Road brand could popularise significant, but unknown destinations, cultural and historical sites. The new innovative approach would stimulate potential for the diversification of tourism types on the relevant markets (religious, business, ecological, rural, sport and extreme).

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<sup>102</sup> <http://www.mirabilianetwork.eu/en/>

Many participants highlighted the importance of the Chinese market. It is perceived that Chinese visitors would find attractions that highlight the linkages between China and Western Silk Road destinations to be highly desirable. This is in the same way as the primary interest of Israeli tourists in Europe is to visit attractions with a strong Jewish heritage.

This issue should be taken into consideration in both product development and marketing. It provides opportunities for innovative and interesting experiences that would be attractive for both Chinese and Western visitors. In most of the potential Western Silk Road countries there is already a strong interest in engaging China for trade and tourism, while many of the countries already have tourism representation in China.

The University of Bologna identified that “the image of Marco Polo raises a special awareness in China and especially in the cities of Hangzhou, Suzhou and Yangzhou in the Yangtze River Delta Region. The Western Silk Road is an important tool to capitalize upon the fame and recognition of Marco Polo.”<sup>103</sup>

It suggested that “the Brand Western Silk Road can be the motive around which to structure an integrated promotional campaign addressed to Chinese travellers. Since the present tourism marketing and promotion from Italy are fragmented without a concerted thrust, a partnership approach involving multiple regions and tourism companies built on the Western Silk Road brand is highly recommended.”<sup>104</sup>

An interesting approach was put forward by Victoria Liceras, a Valencian traditional silk clothes designer and manufacturer, and private collector of local and international traditional silk dresses.<sup>105</sup> She has carried out research to identify parallel habits and instruments between China and Valencia. Liceras states that both cultures are surprisingly similar and that nexus can show it. Similarities can be found, for example, in traditional silk costumes (both manufacturing systems and final products) and in lacquers, shawls, fans or jewels. Both cultures are alike in food preparation (wok and paella pans) and children’s games such as the spin or flying kite, and adult games such as playing cards. Similar icons like the Valencian bat and the Chinese dragon prove close nature of cultures as well as in agricultural methods and the manufacturing of ceramics. Victoria Liceras proposes an exhibition showing these similarities.

This concept could be applied to other Western Silk Road destinations after relevant research has taken place. The growth in Chinese studies in many academic institutions could provide mechanisms for this.

The launch of the 2018 EU-China Tourism Year (ECTY), by the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs of the European Commission, will be a further opportunity to foster the cooperation exchanges on one of the fastest growing markets interested in cultural tourism. Forli Focus group suggested building a cultural Silk Road link with a local Chinese investor for developing its Silk Road story exhibition. The European Travel Commission/ EU Pilot Joint Promotion Platform Initiative<sup>106</sup> could provide a useful mechanism for some initial Western Silk Road marketing activities especially in the context of the ECTY. It brings the potential for accessing co-financing from public funds for a variety of marketing and promotion activities.

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<sup>103</sup> University of Bologna Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism, Western Silk Road in Italy 2017 p16, see Annex 3

<sup>104</sup> University of Bologna Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism, Western Silk Road in Italy 2017 p16, see Annex 3

<sup>105</sup> Analysed data from the WSR Regional Focus Group – Valencia 2017

<sup>106</sup> ETC, Joint Promotion Platform Pilot project on joint promotion of Europe in third markets briefing note 2017

The increased opportunities to maximise the value of both tangible and intangible heritage will give greater strength to conservation and preservation.

The new revised focus on silk related products could provide a driver to revitalise dying skills and tradition. Reviving silk heritage is both a means of strengthening the creative industries sector and protecting lesser valued industrial heritage infrastructure.

Events and festivals were seen as a strong attraction for Silk Road tourists. Encouraging local events and festivities based on silk traditions is seen as an excellent opportunity to raise awareness on the Western Silk Road and revitalize traditional arts and crafts.

With regard to the creative industries sector, the Western Silk Road has a much higher opportunity to provide access to modern arts and crafts, influenced by the heritage of the ancient Silk Road, as opposed to the Classic Silk Road destinations often focus on 'traditional' products. This provides an opportunity to promote the Western Silk Road themed as Ancient meets Modern and East meets West.

A similar interpretation could be applied to food or gastronomy tourism. Western Silk Road countries have taken Eastern recipes and products, which journeyed over time along the ancient routes of the Silk Road. These meals and ingredients were incorporated into national cultures and cuisines, and are reinterpreted by the new wave of chefs, which provides opportunities for strong gastronomically themed products and food journeys along the Western Silk Road. Claimed by many countries as their typical meals, dumplings in their many forms and the stuffed cabbage or vine rolls are great example of typical Western Silk Road meals. Throughout the study, shared gastronomic heritage of the Silk Road and the way both recipes and ingredients travelled has been a strong recurring theme. Given the importance and power of food and gastronomy based tourism internationally, this domain provides excellent opportunities for brand related tourism product development. Such development takes place at local destination level as well as it can open excellent transnational opportunities such as an international Silk Road cuisine festival with events happening in multiple destinations in parallel and exchange of international chefs.

Many countries and destinations already have existing events that can be utilised without major investment to build on this area, as for instance Valencia Focus group highlighted the potential of their Gastrónoma Gourmet Festival to be used in this way.

The creative and gastronomy tourism development will stimulate opportunities for utilization of local products that will both bring economic benefit and enhance visitor experience.

Due to the developed nature of many principle Western Silk Road destinations, they tend to offer a higher standard and concentration of existing visitor attractions. This makes them more attractive to tourists – especially those looking for short city break type trips.

Several participants and Focus Groups saw a Western Silk Road Tourism Initiative as a valuable tool to disperse tourists away from saturated destinations. There is an opportunity to develop a gateway approach promoting the dispersal of tourists to rural or less known destinations. The economic benefits can be spread by using a well-known and accessible destination as a promotional point with product that draws tourists to surrounding areas. Experience-based tourism can be used as an example of an extremely relevant area for product development and an effective tool for engaging tourists.

It was highlighted that even "if some of the Silk Road evidences are related to the most known Italian cities, a large part of manufactures, centre of production and masterpieces are located in less-known regions. Putting local communities first, promoting their villages, their

treasures and their landscapes could be beneficial both at touristic and economic level. Link(ing) “new” itineraries different from the standard ones, creating a high-level touristic product, is a great opportunity”.<sup>107</sup>

Overall tourism development has presented positive opportunities for economic development and support to the SME sector across the value chain.

The Western Silk Road, being developed as a network, opens up opportunities to promote new cross-border and business cooperation that could widen collaboration and bring benefits to all.

As the Western Silk Road Development Initiative moves forward in delivering one of its key outputs of a transnational working group, it was suggested that this collaboration between NTOs should be used to facilitate bringing together joint Western Silk Road promotion at trade fairs. Establishment of a specific rotating Western Silk Road fair or a fashion week event could be an excellent tool of promotion and marketing. Some participants linked the idea of the network with the creation of a Western Silk Road European Cultural Route and utilising the “Route Network Association as the vehicle to manage and coordinate this process”. One respondent highlighted the model of the Danube Competence Centre<sup>108</sup> as relevant to creating an independent shared secretariat structure with human resources to deliver joined activities.

The study has also shown a need for mechanisms for easy exchange of knowledge and lessons learnt. Promoting best practice on destination management is seen as a key opportunity. A mechanism for Knowledge Exchange should be created and potentially regular annual events such as a Western Silk Road Conference should be held.

## **Threats**

As mentioned in Weaknesses section, the concerns were raised about the coinciding Classic Silk Road brand and the Western Silk Road brand, which might cause confusion among stakeholders and act as a threat to creating the new brand.

Some concerns focused on the political instability and current security issues. However, it is widely recognised that cultural and adventure tourism are very resilient and do not react in a longer term to such issues. Besides it should be taken into consideration that none of the potential components of the Western Silk Road are in a major conflict zone.

Some Western Silk Road destinations such as Greece and the Balkan countries might be associated with immigration epicentres and thereby present a threat to the identity of the Western Silk Road.

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<sup>107</sup> University of Bologna Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism, Western Silk Road in Italy 2017 p20, see Annex 3

<sup>108</sup> <http://danubecc.org/>

## 5.4. Creating a Western Silk Road Brand identity

Overall the results of the study show a very positive response for the development of a Western Silk Road brand. In Q32 of the online survey, respondents were asked to indicate how useful they find the creation of a Western Silk Road brand. The mean value reached 7.48 out of 10, indicating that participants' opinion is favourable to creation of the Western Silk Road brand.

The feedback from the participating countries has shown a diverse range of attractions that have strong Silk Road links. These are mainly within the cultural sector – both in the form of tangible heritage (historic locations with a part in the Silk Road story) and intangible heritage (crafts, food traditions, storytelling). This sets a favourable and enabling environment to justify moving a Western Silk Road brand Development process forward.

This study looked at the perceptions of tourism professionals from countries with a potential link to the Western Silk Road. However, given the time and resource constraints, it was not able to undertake a review of the perceptions from consumer point of view. It can be assumed, that despite their close personal connections with the Silk Road, the participants would also share perceptions as potential consumers, because many of them enjoy tourism in their private lives.

The feedback obtained through this study can facilitate setting a foundation for brand development. Nevertheless, a successful brand creation process will require further interaction with both tourism specialists and marketing professionals, as well as with potential consumers. This type of further research will be critical in developing a long-term and sustainable brand identity, and that is why it is important that the brand creation process is thorough and detailed.

### 5.4.1 Key factors to be considered in Western Silk Road brand development.

There are some key factors or pillars that are common for the creation of a successful brand and should be considered in the context of a Western Silk Road brand. They were highlighted in the Council of Europe Cultural Routes Management Handbook<sup>109</sup> in guidance for creation of a brand for cultural routes:

**Consistency:** the most successful brands maintain a high level (100%) of consistency, which means all the physical forms and shapes that the visual identity takes. This can include fonts, layout structures and colours. In most circumstances a major brand is under the control of a single overseeing entity – corporation, business, sports team, band, government. All the outlets, branches, franchises etc. are contractually responsible to report to the central organisation. However, unless a strong management structure is created, the responsibility for implementing and managing the brand visibility of the Western Silk Road could risk being devolved to multiple organisations – both public and private. Such structure will not have any governance linking various stakeholders; hence it will present a major challenge in achieving consistency.

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<sup>109</sup> CoE Cultural Routes Management: from theory to practice p84-85

**Brand Values:** the brand values are the strengths and qualities that underpin all aspects of the brand – its unique selling points. Brand values are closely tied to the concept of authenticity. This is linked to the type and the quality of experience. A close examination of the existing tourism offer and their corresponding qualities will be required to ensure that the defined brand values of the Western Silk Road are compatible with the destinations and attractions, which wish to engage with the Western Silk Road.

**Uniqueness and differentiation:** In developing a Western Silk Road brand Identity it is very important to maintain an awareness of the need for clear positioning and differentiation against the globally known Classic Silk Road, as it has been recognised as one of the top global brand identities in research carried out by MDS Ideas on behalf of the UNWTO<sup>110</sup>.

This means that in developing a successful Western Silk Road brand it will be critical to create an identity that builds on the overall concept of the Silk Road as the greatest global trade route and at the same time presents the concept of a new and unique experience. This area of activity will require great creativity.

**Creating a recognisable visual identity:** the visible brand identity is the aspect that is most critical to public awareness. It needs to capture the essence of the values of brand and portray the unique qualities that differentiate the Western Silk Road. A logo is one part of a brand's visual identity; it needs to be accompanied by a consistent visual approach that incorporates colour palettes, typeface, critical layouts, straplines. The most successful brands are instantly recognisable even if the logo is not present.

#### **5.4.2 Positioning regarding existing destinations and other brands**

Given the reality that the Western Silk Road brand will need to stand against and be complementary to the existing brands— both at local and national levels, thorough management and design should be applied to its development. The development process will have to engage existing brand identities to add value and have a participative approach.

Open and free usage of a simple brand identity could result in a dilution and devaluing of perceived brand values by association with inappropriate businesses or destinations. Without effective brand management, there is a risk that use of the brand without an element of quality control will at the least weaken it and in the worst case create a negative brand image.

In order to avoid this, it is important that a Western Silk Road brand Identity is developed in a way that it embraces quality and ensures that that is reflected in the products and destinations that utilise it. An approach that builds elements of quality certification into the creation and implementation of the Western Silk Road brand would respond to many of the concerns and issues raised during the brand study.

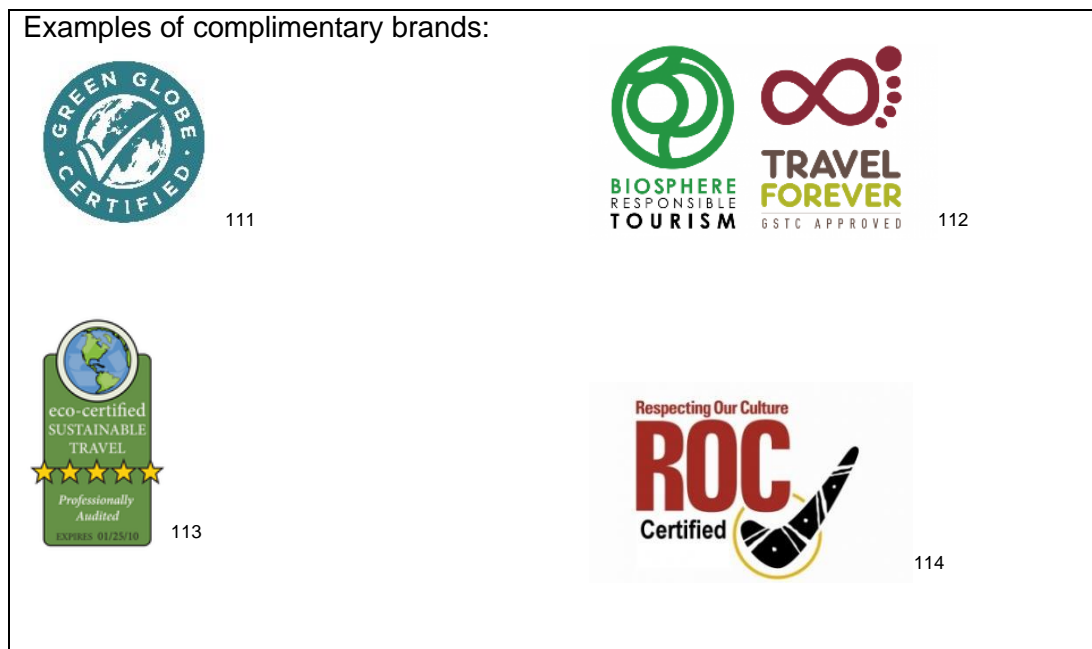
Consideration of other complementary brands in the tourism sector brings a focus on quality certification schemes. Many of them relate to sustainable and ethical tourism principles which are intrinsic to the ethos of the Silk Road along with policies related to the involvement

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<sup>110</sup> MDS Ideas/UNWTO Silk Road Programme, Social media and the Silk Road Study

of UNWTO and the European Union. Figure 22 illustrates a selection of international complimentary tourism brands based on quality certification for sustainability.

**Figure 22: Examples of Complimentary Tourism Brands**



Potential criteria of awarding the Western Silk Road brand as a quality certification could include:

- Authenticity: users of the brand have a genuine link with the Silk Road.
- Sustainability: users of the brand adhere to a defined set of sustainable tourism standards.
- Network: users of the brand maintain an active connection within the Western Silk Road network.
- Sub criteria: potential for differentiation of products – destination, experiences, crafts and gastronomy.

The criteria would need to be created through a participative process amongst the proposed Western Silk Road Working Group members. It would be important to ensure that the criteria maintain a balance between strength and achievability. Many proposed eco-certification schemes have failed due to unrealistic criteria or administratively complicated processes.

The need to manage the use of the Western Silk Road Brand would present challenges to ensure that quality is maintained and the consumer trust is built. For effective implementation, it would require a brand manager or secretariat to assess and control brand usage. The certification of the Western Silk Road as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe could potentially provide solutions.

<sup>111</sup> <https://greenglobe.com>

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.biospheretourism.com/en>

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.ecolabelindex.com/ecolabel/sustainable-travel-eco-certification-program>

<sup>114</sup> <http://qualitytourismsouthaustralia.com.au/sa/information/respecting-our-culture>

### 5.4.3 Building the brand

A detailed brand development exercise should be carried out in consultation with the Western Silk Road Working Group to refine the details of the brand, and to ensure ownership of the stakeholders.

The preliminary steps can be carried out to develop a framework to move forward. UNWTO guidance<sup>115</sup> recommends the two most common formats – the Brand Pyramid and the Brand Wheel.

In the Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding the two brand development models are compared. After having reviewed their strengths, the **brand pyramid** combined with the addition of a **brand assets template** is identified as the most suitable.

The handbook<sup>116</sup> identifies the advantages of this approach as:

- Brand pyramid provides a simple overview of the brand's main elements; it is therefore more accessible and understandable.
- The 2 stage approach allows a separate focus on brand development followed by inclusion of products that make up the brand in the second stage. This is important as the products to be included are not defined at this point.
- The brand assets template is a limitless inventory and allows for organic growth.
- The brand assets template can be adapted and used by stakeholders as the brand grows and spreads.

The Brand Pyramid is a modelling tool to guide the brand development, however, it should be customised for the Western Silk Road taking into account its dimension and particularities. It can still be used to provide useful input into creating a brand identity, but must be supported by interaction between a working group and the designer.

### 5.4.4 Western Silk Road brand pyramid

Following components were considered as part of the Western Silk Road Brand Pyramid:

**Rational attributes:** These are the main tourism assets of the Western Silk Road; that is, what visitors want to see and do. The following key points can be considered rational attributes:

- Cultural heritage attractions
- Gastronomy
- Textile heritage, tradition and crafts, and arts
- East meets West
- Tales of great explorers

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<sup>115</sup> UNWTO/ETC, Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding 2009

<sup>116</sup> UNWTO/ETC, Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding 2009

**Emotional benefits:** After assessing the rational attributes, the next step is exploring the 'emotional take out'; that is, what emotional reactions a visitor feels:

- Sense of exploration and WOW upon discovering new stories, destinations, and linkages
- Cultural awareness and valuing diversity

**Brand Personality:** The brand personality focuses on what is unique about the Western Silk Road compared to other competing brands. Major components of the brand personality would be:

- A Modern and Creative Cultural Experience that links East and West,
- Concept of *Ancient meeting Modern*

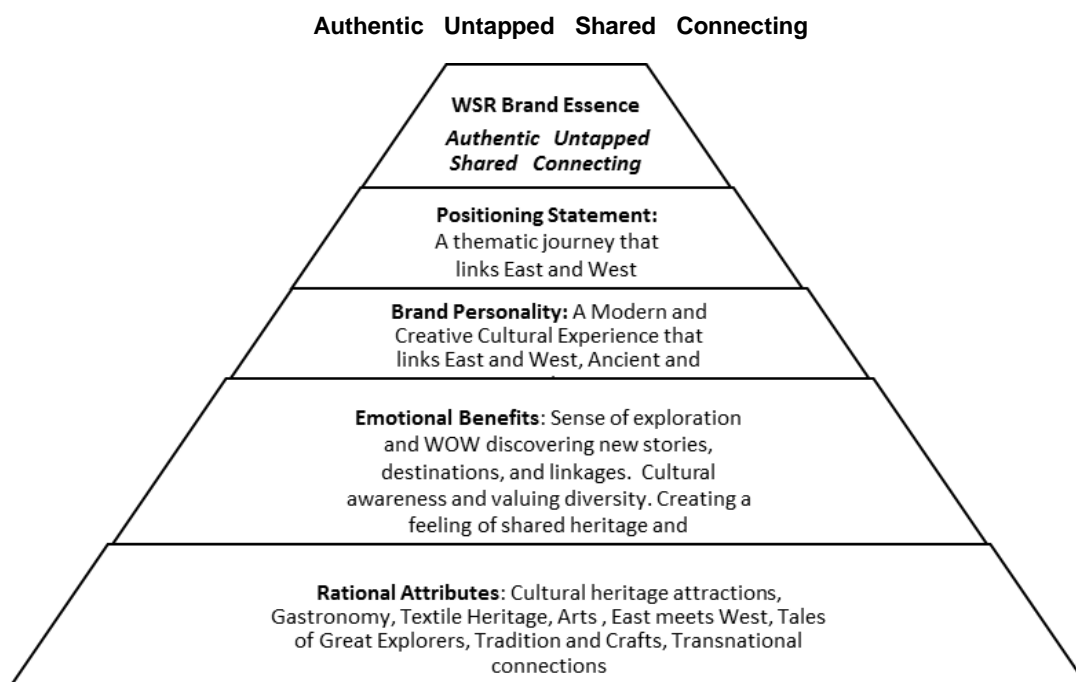
**Positioning Statement:** This point relates to competitive features that would allow the Western Silk Road brand to stand out: A thematic journey that links East and West

**Brand Essence:** The brand essence would be the 3 or 4 key values that make up the 'DNA' of the Western Silk Road. These values are captured in single word descriptors. The 4 values resulting from the work of this study are initially perceived as:

- Authentic
- Untapped
- Shared
- Connecting

Figure 23 is the graphic description of the brand pyramid that visualises the components above.

Figure 23: Western Silk Road Brand Pyramid<sup>117</sup>



The content of the Brand Pyramid should be reviewed and revised in the context of a workshop with the Western Silk Road Working Group. The nature of the brand study covered a very large diversity of participants and destinations providing a huge amount of data. This has resulted into an in-depth insight to the potential components of the Western Silk Road but also an overload that restricts the ability to distil down to the very essence of Western Silk Road.

A focused and facilitated face to face workshop that concentrates overall on the whole rather than the parts will enable refinement, consensus, the finalisation of this process and feed the brand Identity development process.

#### 5.4.5 Western Silk Road brand assets template

The Brand Assets template is a tool to help stakeholders to apply the brand values to their destinations, products and experiences. It is a reference checklist to match products and experiences against each of the brand values. The tool can also be used to check that they have utilised the relevant brand values in the text and imagery of promotional materials.

It is intended to evolve as an organically evolving inventory of the products and experiences that will be offered across the Western Silk Road. It will support marketing activities and link them to the Western Silk Road.

<sup>117</sup> Adapted from UNWTO/ETC, Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding 2009 p45

**Table 8: The Western Silk Road brand assets template<sup>118</sup>**

Products experiences	and	Brand Values			
		Authentic	Untapped	Shared	Connecting
Products					
Experiences					

<sup>118</sup> Adapted from UNWTO/ETC, Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding 2009 p49

## 5.4.6 Creating the visual brand identity – The Western Silk Road visual identity

The visual identity consists of 3 key components:

1. **Logo:** The logo is a symbol that will be recognised widely as representing the Western Silk Road, it is a link between destinations and products to the greater entity.

There are some essential qualities of a logo that must be taken into consideration in its design:

- *Simple/Clean* – to ensure it is distinctive, memorable and has a strong impact. Best practice shows that ideally no more than 3 components should be incorporated.
  - *Attractive* – whilst attraction is subjective, the testing of possible designs should be undertaken and a consensus decided on.
  - *Consistently applied and not changing.* Once the final version of the Western Silk Road logo is defined, it should be consistently used and not changed. Consistency is the key to reinforcing the strength of recognition of the brand amongst consumers.
2. **Slogan or Strapline:** the use of a descriptive and evocative slogan or strapline alongside the logo can help to reinforce the differentiation between the Classic and Western Silk Road. It should be short and succinct and capture the essence of the brand. As opposed to the logo, the slogan or strapline can change over time or might be customised to suit the context.

The strapline will not be essential in all situations as the logo, however, if created properly should be strong enough to stand alone.

3. **Consistent design approaches – fonts and colours:** As pointed out earlier, the strongest brands are recognisable without the inclusion of their logo. An appropriate font should be selected that visually compliments the logo and is consistently used in materials about the Western Silk Road.

The use of colour should be carefully considered by the designer to create a defined palette. Colour is a powerful tool as proven by the research: different colours instil different emotional reactions. For example, primary colours appear confident and self-assured whereas pastel shades convey trustworthiness. Green is associated with harmony, freshness, fertility and nature but black is associated with power, elegance, formality but also death, evil and mystery.<sup>119</sup> Different associations within different cultures should also be reviewed as part of the consultation process.

In developing the visual identity package, variations should be created that allow for a differentiation between product categories such as destination, gastronomy, cultural attraction and experiences. Building in this subtle differentiation will strengthen the brand by promoting the diversity of experiences offered by the Western Silk Road.

The resulting visual identity package should be properly communicated to stakeholders and integrated both into destination and product marketing materials as

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<sup>119</sup> COE, Cultural Routes Management 2015 p86

well as into a standalone Western Silk Road marketing initiative. The key tool for this is the production of a Western Silk Road brand handbook.

#### 5.4.7 Western Silk Road brand handbook

The need for a common and consistent communication strategy was highlighted widely in the different focus groups and SWOTs. When asked 97.2% of participants would find the creation of a possible Western Silk Road Toolkit which could include a logo, story guides, branding handbook, Facebook page, web-portal, etc useful. The results of this question are illustrated in Section 3, figure 16.

This strengthens the recognition that development of the Western Silk Road brand handbook will be a critical step. It is important to create a usable toolkit to guide destinations in utilising the Western Silk Road identity.

The brand handbook should be an organic resource that can evolve as the Western Silk Road growing stronger and applying best practices. The final structure and management approach should be developed to create a strong brand and tourist product.

The brand handbook should be a clear toolkit and set of guidelines that explains to all stakeholders how to use the Western Silk Road brand in their marketing communications. The brand handbook/toolkit should contain clear guidelines on two main subjects<sup>120</sup>:

*Brand Personality Guidelines* –specify how to integrate the Western Silk Road brand values into the destination or products marketing communications. This will ensure a consistency of approach over all the stakeholders that make use of the brand.

*Technical Design Guidelines* –specify how to use the logo, visual imagery, colour palette in all materials. It should give clear design instructions on consistent logo positioning, its application in different formats, the specific font and an approved colour palette. It should assist both in aligning the brand identity alongside existing identities without conflict of interests and in utilising it in its entirety where appropriate.

It is important to prepare the handbook in a simple manner, clearly written and easily understandable. It should include examples of good and bad usage to assist in compliance. The design should itself follow the Western Silk Road visual identity in order to inspire and inform readers. The brand handbook should provide details of the process for getting approval on using the brand and clear references to the criteria for use.

The handbook should be available online and supplemented by comprehensive resources that include all the downloadable components such as logos, fonts, colour palettes, sample texts. It should be translated into all the key languages to promote ease of use.

The need for training for tourism professionals on understanding the Western Silk Road brand and how to incorporate it in their activities is an essential area of activity. A first step could be the development of a simple syllabus and supportive training materials that can be cascaded down.

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<sup>120</sup> UNWTO/ETC, Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding 2009

## 5.5. Making the Western Silk road brand strong: Managing the brand

Strong management and coherent support are critical to the success of any brand. In the creation of the Western Silk Road brand it is important to decide on and implement the most appropriate management structure.

A priority action within the Western Silk Road Initiative is the formation of the Western Silk Road Working Group comprising interested representatives from across participant countries (especially from NTO members of the Silk Road Task Force, as well as from the private sector, academia, NGOs etc.). It is the **Working Group** who will guide and support the finalisation and implementation of the Western Silk Road network.

Brand management and control of visual identity usage should be considered by the Western Silk Road Working Group in conjunction with the decisions for approach to a sustainable management structure. It is recommended that a mechanism for control and monitoring is put in place to protect the brand from potentially harmful and inappropriate usage.

Given the large potential geographical spread of the brand it is suggested that at national level the control is designated to the relevant lead national member of the Working Group or network association, with a responsibility to report approvals to the central meetings on a regular basis. A provision for direct appeal to the main management structure could be built in to allow for transparent review of negative or controversial awards of brand usage.

## 5.6 First stages in promoting the brand

Once the Western Silk Road brand identity is created, the next step will be to promote it so it would become recognisable.

This process means launching the brand to the consumer market as well as to all key destinations and stakeholders to ensure their understanding and support. The UNWTO Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding additionally recommends 'to include inward investment agencies, manufacturers, sports teams and diplomats.'

The greater the level of understanding, the greater the success in getting a positive and consistent awareness of the brand.

The Western Silk Road Working Group and its final choice of management structure will be the key tool taking the first steps amongst destinations and attractions through their national feedback and promotion. It has been highlighted across the participants that there is a feeling that for the benefit of tourism, institutions involved need to improve their information accessibility and presentation with regard to the Silk Road. What information is available is perceived as being presented in a dated, not modern or appealing manner. The creation of the Western Silk Road brand now provides an ideal opportunity to resolve this situation.

Whilst it is appreciated that for many stakeholders, resources and funding are restricted there are a number of simple steps that can be made to start building brand awareness.

These activities could include:

- **NTOs especially should review their existing Silk Road presence and then develop strategies for incorporation of the new Western Silk Road identity.** Simple first steps could be the creation of a page on their national promotion site and linking relevant sites to it. This in turn should be linked to the proposed Western Silk Road Portal.
- Participant **NTOs should integrate the Western Silk Road story into their media activities** – especially regarding the organisation of press and tour operator familiarisation trips. They should consider the potential for developing transnational promotional trips that create linkages between partner Western Silk Road destinations and create story opportunities that the media can utilise.
- Creation of **a downward cascade of awareness raising on the Western Silk Road initiative amongst the private sector** would also be relatively easy, time efficient and low cost. This could be delegated to relevant national industry associations.

The main role of the Western Silk Road Development Initiative at the UNWTO and Working Group level at this stage will be to build mechanisms for wider public promotion. It is recognised that funding and human resources are limited but it is important that the foundations for promotion are created.

Throughout the study, it was highlighted that technology and e-marketing is critical to promoting the Western Silk Road. Common recommendations coming out from the study include:

- Creating a Western Silk Road Portal
- using a unified hashtag and running photography contests that can be viewed both on line and eventually as exhibitions touring Silk Road destinations,
- developing Western Silk Road app that acts as a virtual guide as well as Silk Road apps for specific locations,
- creating online Western Silk Road open education resources to enable the topic to be taught to a high common standard in schools.

A **Western Silk Road web portal** would enable the promotion of linked destinations and give an easier access to publicly accessible interpretation. It can give access to the powerful stories of the Western Silk Road, information about the destinations and cross links to national and local sites, updated stories and images of modern day Silk Road travellers.

This could be done in conjunction with a private sector partner such as TripAdvisor and with public sector and international organizations, such as European Travel Commission and their website Visit Europe. It needs to be created in a way to preserve the ownership of the brand management mechanism and to maintain and update it without major financial implications. A dynamic consumer-generated element should be incorporated in the content of the Western Silk Road online presence and supported by promotional activities to raise the profile. An important tool for this will be the creation of an effective e-marketing campaign that optimises the power of social media in its various forms.

A **Western Silk Road Knowledge Exchange Network** should be created that enables easy exchange of ideas and Silk Road related knowledge that encompasses built and intangible heritage (especially crafts and gastronomy). Utilising the best ideas submitted by the participants, an online reference could be produced to assist those, working on tourism product development in Silk Road destinations.

The background research has identified that the Western Silk Road story is under-represented in the travel media. Whilst in recent years partly through the activities of UNWTO Silk Road Programme there has been a greater number of travel documentaries featuring the Silk Road, it has focused on the Classic Silk Road with the exception of Venice and the Marco Polo story.

It is recommended that the Western Silk Road Working Group and the UNWTO Silk Road Programme **lobby the production and commissioning media to create Western Silk Road focused programmes**. There is wealth of stories and destinations to generate interest by travel media under the support of respective National Tourism Organisations. Experience shows that once a successful pilot project is produced, interest in other networks is automatically generated.

The UNWTO Silk Road Programme has been able to raise the awareness of the Classic Silk Road though working with international media, reaching millions of viewers. This experience and ability to facilitate transnational collaboration should now be used for the benefit of the Western Silk Road.

The UNWTO Silk Road Programme is in a powerful position to support awareness raising activities to the tourism industry through its depth of connections. It is suggested that to launch the brand, **specialised events packaging Western Silk Road destinations together are held at the major industry travel fairs**. These events should have marketing and promotion focus to engage tour operators and media with the powerful stories and potential synergies.

The longer-term promotion of the Western Silk Road will require a more strategic approach. Once the governance model is agreed, a **formal structured promotional and marketing plan** should be prepared by the management and funding to be sought and/or allocated. It is important to create it in a participative manner rather than to impose through this report.

## 6 Creating a sustainable management structure for the Western Silk Road

As a development initiative, the UNWTO Silk Road Programme has the initial capacity for development and management of the start-up phase through the DG GROW support, but in the longer term a sustainable approach is needed. It is very important that once created the brand has effective structure and supporting management. This could include a devolution of responsibility away from the UNWTO Silk Road Programme/ NTOs to a structure with a greater involvement from the NGO sector.

Regarding this priority area, a possible approach would be to develop a Western Silk Road Cultural Route or in the very least, to utilise the model of a successful tourism orientated Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. This would provide a proven format for long term management and sustainability.

### 6.1. The potential of the Western Silk Road Cultural Route

The Cultural Routes is a long-standing initiative of the Council of Europe created in 1987. The "Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe" programme aims at the protection, the valorisation and the transmission of the European cultural heritage as well as the cultural diversity of Europe.

Initially the focus of the routes was cultural heritage preservation and academic research, tourism was a low priority. However, over the last 10 years, the European Cultural Routes programme and the European Institute for Cultural Routes based in Luxembourg has recognised the importance of tourism for sustainability and supporting core conservation values.

Certification of a Cultural Route is based on resolutions made by the Council of Europe and the currently applicable resolution - Council of Europe CM/Res(2013)67 – integrates tourism into the core thematic eligibility criteria:

*5. the theme must permit the development of initiatives and exemplary and innovative projects in the field of cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development;*

*6. the theme must lend itself to the development of tourist products in partnership with tourist agencies and operators aimed at different publics, including school groups.*

The full text of Council of Europe CM/Res(2013)67 is included in Annex 5 for reference.

As a result of this integration of tourism as a core value and through a greater tourism focused approach across the cultural routes membership with a desire to support local economic development and financial sustainability, cultural routes are now recognised as a valuable tool for tourism promotion and development.

The very concept of the Western Silk Road is ideal for consideration for further development into a European Cultural Route under the Council of Europe. The process of gaining Council of Europe certification is based on compiling a Route file that allows an independent evaluation to confirm conformity to all the criteria.

By its very nature, *the Western Silk Road fits all of the thematic certification criteria of the Council of Europe. The Cultural Route should be:*

- Representative of shared European values,
- Researched and developed by multidisciplinary experts from different regions of Europe,
- Illustrative of European memory, history and heritage and contributes to an interpretation of the diversity of present day Europe,
- linked to cultural and educational exchanges for young people.

The second part of the certification criteria focuses on the proposed route delivering activity in a set range of priority fields of action and fulfils certain criteria with regard to each. The Western Silk Road fulfils these in that it facilitates enhancement of memory, history and European heritage as well as contemporary cultural and artistic practices and contributes to the sustainable cultural development.

These are defined in greater detail in the full resolution text in Annex 5. However, it is clear from the results of the study that a Western Silk Road Cultural Route project bringing together selected participants that have already been part of this process and expressed a willingness for further activity *would be able to fulfil many of the criteria through existing or proposed activity.*

For instance – The Spanish National Focus Group suggested the involvement of students and high school students in cooperation, youth tours, promotion and awareness raising for the youth (Spanish Institute of the Youth) as a key transnational activity priority. This fits perfectly with the Cultural Route priorities of action.

This would set a strong foundation for further development during the preparation of a Cultural Route file and for ongoing activity in future years.

The final criteria for certification relates to the governance structure in the form of the creation of a Cultural Route Network with a legal status.

*The creation of the Cultural Route Network Association for the Western Silk Road could potentially provide the mechanism to manage the route and the brand distribution.* The requirement for a route manager would provide the secretariat needed to fulfil role of Brand Manager. The status of the Association, along with the potential geopolitical spread of members would enable the Western Silk Road to access NGO targeted tourism and heritage funding from diverse sources.

Whilst many of the senior cultural routes are more focussed on academic research and cultural connections, the revision of the Council of Europe Resolution and its joint projects with the European Union encouraged recently certified routes to place tourism in their focus. Key examples could be the Vikings Route, Via Francigena, Roman Emperors and Wine Route. The network of the Cultural Routes has an increasing visibility and profile amongst cultural tourists and would provide a supportive peer group to the Western Silk Road route.

The Western Silk Road Cultural Route Association could act as brand manager and potentially 'licence' associate destinations and attractions to use brand identity outside of the core European route.

The process of developing the route and taking it to certification would take a minimum of 2 years. It is suggested that even if the final decision is not to apply for certification as a

European Cultural Route, the model structure and process could be followed. The core elements and protocols of route development established by the Council of Europe having been developed over many years and provide a solid road map for constructing a transnational cultural tourism route.

The methodology of creating the certification dossier acts as an excellent tool for self-assessment of the routes development and structuring. The creation of an independent network association provides a management structure and the ability to create financial sustainability mechanisms.

Based on the feedback gained in this survey and the experience of the project team, there is strong support for the development of the Western Silk Road as a Cultural Route. In the online survey 78% of relevant participants expressed that their destinations would consider taking part in a possible Western Silk Road Cultural Routes. Several of the participants and destinations involved in this study have experience of being a part of European Cultural Routes, such as ATRIUM route, the Vikings Route and the Phoenicians Route<sup>121</sup>.

## **6.2. The benefits of Cultural Route certification**

The UNWTO Global Report on Cultural routes and Itineraries looked at the benefits of Cultural Routes<sup>122</sup>. It particularly highlighted the potential for implementing new tourism products, economic efficiency and increased involvement of local communities.

The report stated that the dynamics and energy helped destinations respond to new tourism trends and that producing new cultural products is a key aspect to make a destination stand out.

The unique heritage resources that could be brought to the market through their linkages to the Silk Road, built on specific historic points and with high levels of authenticity have high tourism value.

The report also commented that the profile of cultural tourism products that a route can create are supportive of the modern trend for experiential tourism that is a key driver in tourist decision-making today.

The energy and potential for new Cultural Routes tourism product is a tool of diversifying mature destinations. Such diversification can increase visitation across the year as cultural tourism is less seasonally dependent. Cultural Route membership can enhance destination branding and complement more traditional tourism offering to improve and expand experience.

In addition, membership in a wider peer group of established routes will bring support from other similar destinations and exchange of good practices. At a local level the network strengthens capacity and can produce a more profitable tourism economy and bring benefits to local communities.

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<sup>121</sup> <http://culture-routes.net/routes/the-phoenicians-route>

<sup>122</sup> UNWTO Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries 2015 p51. See also: <http://media.unwto.org/press-release/2015-12-23/world-tourism-organization-presents-global-report-cultural-routes-and-itine>

Cultural Routes can help strengthen local ownership and pride as many attractions are at the heart of the spirit and sense of place of those communities. That is different from the connection between tourists and communities in the traditional 'beach and sun' type offer. The connection with communities increases the offer for gastronomy and intangible heritage, which are top level focus of the Western Silk Road and can result in the creation of memorable experiences and visitors' satisfaction.

The increasing awareness of the value of cultural routes amongst the 'informed cultural tourist' will bring a greater visibility of the lesser known destinations that are part of the Western Silk Road and hence bring economic development. The nature of the community level tourism opportunities will 'help to promote social equality and help to disperse tourists resulting in a horizontal distribution of profits'<sup>123</sup>. ...

Though no structured research has been done on the topic, it could be perceived that being part of a Cultural Route network could bring similar increased economic value for destinations and attractions that sign up to being part of the Western Silk Road in a similar way that World Heritage Sites benefit. Research into the increased value for tourism<sup>124</sup> of World Heritage Status showed that more remote and less famous destinations benefit most. The research used a case study of a small, remote, national park in northeast Germany. It was found that a per-person increase in willingness to pay of €4.70 which translates into an overall value increase of €3.8 million annually. Additionally, 9% of the visitors report they only know of the park because of the media coverage of its WH inscription and 15% report to have been convinced about the park's quality by its WH status.

NTOs are increasingly recognising the value of European Cultural Routes as part of the national tourism offer and starting to highlight them in their international promotional activities. A prime example of this is the collaboration between the Roman Emperors Route and the NTOs of Romania and Serbia. Both NTOs supported media events at international travel fairs such as ITB and in country press trips. The Route and its member destinations/attractions have received greater promotional visibility.<sup>125</sup>

The above benefits are in addition to those related to being part of a structured development and regular evaluation mechanism supported by the European Institute of Cultural Routes as a central secretariat in Luxembourg.

### **6.3. The Western Silk Road as Cultural Route model**

The research has shown that as with the Classic Silk Road, the Western Silk Road does not cover one fixed linear geographical route, but is a collection of many different trade routes and ideas. In moving forward with the development of the Western Silk Road it is important to consider the most appropriate model for the route and brand.

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<sup>123</sup> UNWTO Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries 2015 p53

<sup>124</sup>David Wuepper, What is the value of world heritage status for a German national park? A choice experiment from Jasmund, 1 year after inscription, Tourism Economics 2016

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Boris Camernik, Danube Competence Centre at ITB 2017

The UNWTO Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries has identified that the Cultural Routes fit into 3 primary models that can be considered when defining the Western Silk Road:<sup>126</sup>

- **Territorial routes** – routes based on geographical areas that share the same theme. They include areas linked to productive cultural landscapes (the Route of the Olive Tree), historical and geographical landscapes (Route of the Al-Andalus Legacy<sup>127</sup>) etc. The territorial routes are characterised by the close proximity of the areas involved in the development of the thematic route.
- **Linear routes** – routes which connect locations and sites and cross large distances. They contain historic infrastructure to welcome travellers along the route, such as Saint James Ways and Via Francigena<sup>128</sup>.
- **Networks routes** – routes with an interconnected pattern (archipelago model) which include individual elements, as locations (the European Mozart Ways Route); urban zones (the European Route of Jewish Heritage<sup>129</sup>, The European Route of Significant Cemeteries<sup>130</sup>) entire cities (The Hansa, the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns).

The very nature of the Western Silk Road over multiple geographical regions, and with diverse trade routes and concepts presents a major challenge to create a transboundary tourism itinerary based upon a fixed route linking set destinations.

There are possibilities such as in Russia and the Caucasus/Black Sea countries where there are definite researched possibilities for physical trail type route development. This is highlighted in the research on the Russian Silk Road and through the activities of the Black Sea Silk Road Corridor.

There are possibilities for national trails in countries such as Greece, Italy and Spain that link attractions/destinations with a strong Silk Road heritage at national, region or local level. Valencia has already started activities in this area and the Greek study by Aristotle University sets good academic foundations for Greece. The Black Sea Silk Road Corridor partnerships set a good foundation for building future development in that region. But in general, potential destinations are dispersed and diverse.

Taking the above into consideration *the most appropriate format as a Cultural Route would be as a thematic network route.*

This approach would also carry over to the development of the brand. *Over the wider Western Silk Road it is much better to think about a thematic brand concept based on shared cultural heritage joined by a common brand identity.* This approach would not limit the creation of localised physically linked routes or clusters of attractions. This approach has been shown to be very successful amongst tourism focused cultural routes such as the Via Francigena and the Roman Emperors and Wine European Cultural Routes.

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<sup>126</sup> UNWTO Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries 2015 p49

<sup>127</sup> <http://culture-routes.net/content/legacy-alandalus>

<sup>128</sup> <http://www.viefrancigene.org/en/>

<sup>129</sup> <http://culture-routes.net/routes/the-european-route-of-jewish-heritage>

<sup>130</sup> <https://cemeteriesroute.eu/european-cemeteries-route.aspx>

It is recognised in the UNWTO/ETC handbook on tourism destination branding<sup>131</sup> that ‘thematic branding can be more powerful than geographic brands’ and that ‘thematic brands can establish a direct relationship with potential visitors on an emotional level’.

Thematic branding would allow for diversity of product development along sub themes such as Silk Manufacturing, Creative Arts, Marco Polo etc. It will allow for manageable transnational partnerships to be created between destinations and attractions with tangible links under the umbrella of an overall Western Silk Road brand. It would also allow for easier integration of destinations that are part of existing route initiatives such as the Vikings or the Phoenician Routes.

This flexibility of a thematic brand concept additionally allows for the creation of sub partnerships under the Western Silk Road brand that can react to funding opportunities that arise especially under regional initiatives such as European Eastern Partnership, EUROMED, INTEREG etc.

The geopolitical spread of the Western Silk Road means that certain countries will be restricted in their ability to interact with neighbours due to existing conflict, political and religious differences. A flexible thematic approach will negate the restrictions these issues can create and support ethos of establishing cooperation based on intercultural exchange.

One of the most critical reasons for considering the thematic approach will be discussed in greater depth in the branding sections – the challenges of positioning a Western Silk Road brand identity alongside the existing branding and identities of destinations and attractions. A thematic approach would allow for incorporation for example of ‘geographically isolated’ Silk Road related attractions such as an important collection of silk carpets in a town in the Carpathian Mountains or a modern-day artisan producing silk road inspired jewellery or other crafts in the centre of Berlin.

## **6.4 Governance structure of the Western Silk Road**

As referred to in the above section on the European Cultural Routes criteria, the requirement for the creation of a Network association and the appointment of a route manager presents a potential model structure for governing the Western Silk Road as a Cultural route. If the decision is made to apply for certified status it would be a formal requirement.

The Western Silk Road has the potential to be one of the largest and most complex Cultural Routes in terms of geographic range and nature of potential membership. This means that it will require an extremely effective governance structure for the Route and Brand management.

The UNWTO Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries stated that a key element in effective tourist management of cultural routes is the presence of ‘an organisation managing the route, generally with an executive secretariat with a political and managerial council, and

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<sup>131</sup> UNWTO/ETC (2009) Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding p18

a consultative advisory body formed by academics and professionals<sup>132</sup>. It also recommends the preparation of both a short/medium term management plan and a longer-term strategy.

The UNWTO Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries highlights the success of a cultural tourism route lies in a public private partnership model that assists in the structuring of participative and inclusive public policies supported by the private sector and responds to the needs of the communities that it travels through<sup>133</sup>.

The Public – Private Partnership approach is critical as the strength of Western Silk Road brand would depend on the quality of visitor experience that will primarily be the responsibility of the private sector in the form of tour operators, guides and those operating key visitor attractions/facilities, combined with the influence of tourism legislation and the greater promotional activities that fall under the remit of the Public Sector.

At local level and regional level, community involvement is critical and “the community needs to be included in the design processes of cultural tourism plans and their implementation”<sup>134</sup>. Successful cultural routes need communities to be ‘regarded as leading stakeholder in the planning, development and operation of cultural routes’<sup>135</sup>. This is the key to bringing both high quality visitor experiences and local economic benefits. Community engagement at this level is usually carried out by local/regional level public bodies often with the involvement of the NGO sector.

The greater geographical spread and diversity of the Western Silk Road needs a mechanism that can provide co-ordination across international borders bringing together many different countries. This is beyond the remit of the private sector and requires the input of the public sector with governmental support at high level. This would come primarily under the NTOs.

Creation of a strong governance structure for the Western Silk Road would require bringing all these components together in a well-structured and appropriate way. It would need to be developed in a planned staged process.

Within the terms of reference of the Western Silk Road Development Initiative is the creation of the Western Silk Road Working Group. This would set the foundation for creation of a Network Association. It is primarily envisaged to be comprised of members of the UNWTO Silk Road Task Force or their delegated representatives.

During the initial route/brand creation, the Western Silk Road Development Initiative has resources to develop the Western Silk Road Working Group.

A key role of the members of the working group will be to promote the Western Silk Road concept and to encourage participation in their respective countries. As the route develops and a critical mass of membership is reached then the move to a formalised network association in line the Council of Europe rules can be made.

In the long term, the potential size of the Western Silk Road as a Cultural Route may see the need for a two level approach to the Network association. The core Network Association steering the route at transnational level with appropriate representatives coming from national level associations or membership. This would enable devolved responsibilities to make activities achievable.

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<sup>132</sup> UNWTO Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries 2015 p69

<sup>133</sup> UNWTO Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries 2015 p78

<sup>134</sup> UNWTO Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries 2015 p76

<sup>135</sup> UNWTO Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries 2015 p76

A strength and benefit of potentially joining the Cultural Routes network is that the Western Silk Road would become part of a 'co-operation network that would make it possible to exchange best practice and share experiences. It means that the Western Silk Road would benefit from the know-how and lessons learnt of the Cultural Routes network

There have been issues on other Cultural Routes where there have been limitations on National Tourism Agencies or other Government bodies formally joining an Association or other legal structure required by the Council of Europe resolution. This is due to restrictive legislation in those countries rather than CoE rules. This can be circumvented through substituting a relevant NGO from the country in question and the national agency retaining a representation on an advisory board or other supportive structure.

A key issue after creation of a new cultural route is generation of its sustainable financing. To be based on the lessons of other routes, a thorough management plan of the Western Silk Road Cultural Route should be developed to secure possible donor funding from public and private sectors. Long-term financing for the route and its management would be achievable through a combination of a membership programme (as for instance used by the Vikings Route or Via Francigena) and project-based funding from donors and grants. The development of a viable business plan for the route should be integral to its creation process.

Having diverse potential members, The Western Silk Road could present opportunities for a stronger member to provide support for hosting the secretariat within existing institutions, possibly in a rotating manner.

## 7 Conclusions

The overall conclusion is that the creation of a Western Silk Road brand would be valued by tourism stakeholders and would become a strong tool for strengthening the economic potential of the Silk Road along its Western region. It is perceived as a good mechanism for fostering transnational cooperation and raising awareness of the impact that Eastern culture has had on modern day Europe. A Western Silk Road brand would open up new opportunities for lesser known Western Silk Road destinations through the untold stories and new tourism products.

The brand study targeted participants from more than 20 countries with a potential link to the Western Silk Road. A diverse range of participants was involved, including National Tourism Organisations, public and private sector, research institutions, NGOs.

The results of the brand study indicate that there is positive support for the development of a Western Silk Road brand. This was reflected through the results of the online survey where in section 3, Question 32, 7.48 out of 10 participants regarded the development of a Western Silk Road brand as useful.

The feedback from both the online survey and the SWOT indicated recognisable differences between the Classic Central Asian Silk Road and the Western segment, which should be taken into consideration while creating the brand.

The online survey, 7 Focus Groups and 5 National SWOT analyses provided necessary information to gain understanding and support for creation of the Western Silk Road brand. They provided insights on the challenges and opportunities of the future brand.

The weaknesses and threats centred on two key areas – the threat of creating a new brand alongside existing brands and the weakness of co-ordinating stakeholders across many different countries. Both of them are straightforward to deal with by choosing the correct approach to positioning the brand and in selecting an appropriate management structure.

Lesser concerns focused on political instability and current security threats. However, it is widely recognised that cultural, eco and adventure tourism sectors are very resilient and do not react in the longer term to these issues.

The strengths and opportunities identified greatly outweighed challenges and opportunities. One of the greatest strengths identified is the power of linking East and West and showing the connections amongst cultures. This can be an excellent lever for product development and a marketing tool for opening lesser known destinations and promoting intangible heritage.

In highlighting lesser known Western Silk Road destinations, it particularly brought to light Silk Road connections beyond the obvious Caucasus, Turkey and the Mediterranean Basin links. The Russian segment of the Silk Road and the Vikings connections with the Silk Road are relatively unknown but present immense tourism potential. Greece, Italy and Spain presented a diversity of less known connections with the Silk Road which should be further uncovered in future.

The SWOT exercise indicated that the Western Silk Road has excellent potential for promoting understanding between East and West in current political and social climate. Raising awareness of the shared heritage and the major influence of Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures on modern Europe can support an intercultural dialogue and understanding.

The Chinese One Belt One Road initiative creating a modern trade network, provides excellent timing for developing the Western Silk Road and building on the Chinese tourism market to develop cross cultural tourism.

The launch of the 2018 EU-China Tourism Year will foster cooperation exchange on one of the fastest growing markets interested in cultural tourism and a prime segment for the Western Silk Road. Recommendations were given regarding a targeted marketing campaign specifically for the Chinese market as the brand develops<sup>136</sup>.

In particular, the European Travel Commission/EU Pilot Joint Promotion Platform Initiative<sup>137</sup> could provide a useful mechanism for initial Western Silk Road marketing activities especially in the context of the 2018 EU-China Tourism Year, as it brings potential for accessing public funds. As the Platform is still in the development stage, that is a momentum for the UNWTO Silk Road Programme and the Western Silk Road Working Group to open discussions with the corresponding officials to discuss the mutual fit.

The diversity of intangible heritage – traditional and modern - is a real strength of the Western Silk Road. Within the creative industries sector, the Western Silk Road provides access to modern arts and crafts and generally to creative industries, whereas the Classic Silk Road destinations often focus on 'traditional' products.

Gastronomy tourism has a high potential across the Western Silk Road. The Western Silk Road countries have adopted Eastern recipes and products, which journeyed over time along the ancient routes of the Silk Road. These meals and ingredients were incorporated into national cultures and cuisines, and are reinterpreted by the new wave of chefs, which provides opportunities for strong gastronomically themed products and food journeys along the Western Silk Road. Claimed by many countries as their typical meals, dumplings in their many forms and the stuffed cabbage or vine rolls are great example of typical Western Silk Road meals. Throughout the study, shared gastronomic heritage of the Silk Road and the way both recipes and ingredients travelled has been a strong recurring theme. Given the importance and power of food and gastronomy based tourism internationally, this domain provides excellent opportunities for brand related tourism product development.

The Western Silk Road has a greater strength in accessibility compared to the Classic Silk Road, both in terms of transport connections and other aspects of travel facilitation (especially for Western travellers) and regarding the issues of 'access for all'. Along with a perception of better infrastructure and higher standard destinations, this can make the Western Silk Road more attractive for less adventurous, less experienced, physically limited and time poor travellers who may avoid the more demanding Classic Silk Road destinations.

The creation of a Western Silk Road brand is seen as a powerful tool for sustainable economic development. By promoting lesser known destinations and bringing the higher spending cultural tourists, it could stimulate local economies and bring employment across the value chain.

This study has reviewed various data sources and proposed a relevant brand model utilising best practice tools as recommended in the UNWTO Handbook on Destination Branding.

The Brand Essence – the DNA of the Western Silk Road distilled down into 4 words – has been defined as: **authentic, untapped, shared, connecting.**

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<sup>136</sup> University of Bologna Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism, Western Silk Road in Italy 2017 p16

<sup>137</sup> ETC , Joint Promotion Platform Pilot project on joint promotion of Europe in third markets briefing note 2017

The draft Brand Pyramid in figure 23 in chapter 5 on creating a Western Silk Road brand Identity illustrates the values and attributes of the Western Silk Road brand.

The data provided has given foundation for initial drafting of the brand, however to ensure the success of a Western Silk Road brand a core participative approach and involvement of stakeholders is needed. The brand qualities should be further reviewed and finalised by the Working Group in conjunction with the designer developing the visual identity. It is important for long term success that the Western Silk Road develops with stakeholder ownership and the support of the UNWTO and the European Union.

The development of the Western Silk Road within the context of a living network is critical for success. As a transnational network, it opens opportunities to promote new cross-border cooperation and business partnerships that could bring mutual benefits. There is greater strength and value in a joined up promotional programme.

As a development initiative, the UNWTO Silk Road Programme has the initial capacity for development and management of the start-up phase within the framework of the cooperation with DG GROW, however a sustainable approach is needed for the longer-term development. It is crucial for the brand to have an effective management structure, an initial step being the Western Silk Road Working Group. The study makes solid recommendations for a governance structure based on good practices including the Cultural Routes of Europe model .

Western Silk Road Working Group should be established to guide and facilitate the next steps in a participative bottom up manner. This activity is already defined in the work package and the principle is well accepted amongst participants. In the online survey 90% of participants expressed a willingness to take part in future activities.

The initial activities of the Working Group should focus on the following priorities:

1. Finalising the Western Silk Road brand identity;
2. Development of a sustainable management structure;
3. Taking the first steps in promoting the brand;
4. Governance of the Western Silk Road

The recommended approaches and actions related to these priority activity areas are discussed in greater details in subsections 3, 4 and 5 of the previous chapter on brand development.

The Western Silk Road brand Study is the first stage to establish the Western Silk Road as a strong tourism brand. Success will depend on engagement of stakeholders at all levels.

As an initiative was led and facilitated by UNWTO in conjunction with the European Union it has optimum chances to build on the lessons learnt by the UNWTO Silk Road Programme. The Western Silk Road Initiative has brought together the countries of the wider Silk Road in increasing cross border collaboration to raise the global recognition of the World's Greatest Route and breakdown many of the obstacles that historically limited tourism.

## 8 Annexes

1. UNWTO Western Silk Road Initiative Study Questionnaire - 2016
2. WSR Focus Group Interview Guide
3. List of Universities that conducted SWOT Analyses
4. The Guidelines Document sent to Universities for the National SWOT Analyses
5. Resolution CM/Res(2013)67 revising the rules for the award of the “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” certification
6. List of Task Force Members from Countries on the Western Link of the Silk Road
7. Extracted SWOT data from the online survey
8. Extracted country specific SWOT data from focus groups and other reports
9. Audit of potential Silk Road destinations extracted from across the online survey, National SWOTs and Focus groups
10. Extracted and Summarised National SWOT tables

## Annex 1.

### UNWTO Western Silk Road Initiative Study Questionnaire 2016



Project is co-financed by the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme of the European Union

### Welcome!

The UNWTO Silk Road Programme is currently undertaking a programme of work on developing and strengthening the Western links of the Silk Road for tourism. The Western Silk Road routes, an area comprising EU Member States, the Mediterranean basin and the Caucasus, are home to a unique Silk Road heritage which has yet to be fully developed for tourism.

We want this work to be based on your insight and knowledge - the people directly involved in managing and delivering tourism on the ground. The first stage is a Western Silk Road study assessing the tourism potential of the Western Silk Road, in particular:

- **Potential strengths and weaknesses** of the Western Silk Road tourism brand
- **Analysis of existing Silk Road brand positioning** within participating member countries along the Western Silk Road
- **Analysis of segments** of the Western Silk Road with a promising tourism potential
- **Key travel motivations** linked to transnational tourism routes, and potential source markets

***There are 25 to 34 questions to be answered depending on your selections throughout the survey.***

At the end of the process there will be the opportunity to be entered into a prize draw to receive a special Silk Road gift to say thank you for your input.

All data provided will be used solely for the purpose of this study and your personal information will not be shared with any external organisation. Names and personal data will be separated from the general statistical analysis.

By submitting the survey, you consent in participation and acknowledge the above.

This project is co-financed by the European Commission DG-GROW. You can find more information about the Western Silk Road Development Initiative and other activities of the UNWTO Silk Road Programme at **website**: <http://silkroad.unwto.org>

**Facebook page**: <https://www.facebook.com/VisitSilkRoad/>

**\* 1. Contact Details**

<b>First name</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Surname</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Organization</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Email Address</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Phone Number</b>	<input type="text"/>

**\* 2. Country**

Other (please specify)

**\* 3. Do you work in the public, private or NGO sector ?**

- Public sector
- Private sector
- NGO

Other (please specify)

**4. What is your role/job title?**

**\* 5. What is the geographical remit of your role?**

- International
- National
- Regional
- Local

**6. If you operate at regional/local level - please say where?**

\* 7. Do you have an existing connection with the UNWTO Silk Road Programme?

Yes  No

8. If yes - please state what?

9. What does the Silk Road mean to you? Please give the top 3 keywords or phrases that come to mind in order of ranking.

1

2

3

\* 10. How aware would you consider yourself regarding Silk Road history

No knowledge                      General awareness                      Extremely aware

\* 11. How aware are you regarding the geography of the Silk Road?

No knowledge                      General awareness                      Extremely aware

\* 12. How aware would you regard yourself about existing Silk Road tourism products?

No knowledge                      General awareness                      Extremely aware

13. Please rank the top 3 destinations you associate with the Silk Road. 1 being the top.

1

2

3

**\* 14. According to your understanding, how influential are the following motivations for the Silk Road traveller?**

	Not at all	Slightly	Influential	Very	Extremely	Not Relevant
1. Silk Road monuments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Silk Road culture (museums, music, artefacts, dances, festivals, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Gastronomy of Silk Road destinations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Interaction with local communities along the Silk Road	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Natural Environment and Scenery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Voluntourism (Visiting a destination while engaging in volunteering activities)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Extreme sports in Silk Road destinations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Increase self status and prestige	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)						
9. Visiting friends and relatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\* 15. How strong do you consider the Silk Road brand currently?**

\* *By strong we mean easily recognisable that generates feelings of confidence for Silk Road branded tourism products.*

Non existent Extremely strong

\* 16. Do you use the Silk Road identity or links within your existing tourism marketing activities ?

- Yes       No

t involved in tourism marketing

\* 17. How do you currently use the Silk Road identity or links to it within your existing tourism marketing activities?

- Visual imagery
- Using the Silk Road story in text
- 'On the Silk Road' references
- Within tour itinerary descriptions
- In site based interpretation

Other (please give examples)

\* 18. Which of the following are the reasons for not using the Silk Road identity or links to it within your existing tourism marketing activities?

- Silk Road is completely irrelevant to our activities
- Silk Road is relevant but we don't know how to benefit from its identity or links
- Silk Road is relevant but we don't want to be associated with its identity or links
- We are now considering associating our activities with the Silk Road identity or links
- Other (please specify)

\* 19. Has the use of the Silk Road identity within your marketing brought tangible benefits?

- Yes
- No

## UNWTO Western Silk Road Initiative Study Questionnaire - 2016

\* 20. How significantly the Silk Road identity and its links contributed in delivering the following benefits to your organisation?

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very	Extremely	N/A
1. Increase of earnings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Increase of your organisation's visibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Strengthening your brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Reaching new markets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Expanding your tourism product variety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Expanding your partners network	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Improving the quality of your tourism products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other benefits not listed above (please specify)

## UNWTO Western Silk Road Initiative Study Questionnaire - 2016

\* 21. Are you aware of the Silk Road identity being used within tourism marketing in your country/destination?

- Yes  
 No

If YES - please provide specific examples and illustrative links if possible

## The Western Silk Road

A primary purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth participatory input as the first stage of the UNWTO initiative to strengthen and develop the Western part of the Silk Road for tourism. The rest of this questionnaire is aimed at sharing your knowledge and thinking with regard to the potential of the Western Silk Road and identifying the destinations, attractions and heritage that can be linked together to promote the world's greatest route in the West.

Please use your knowledge and creativity to help us build a strong foundation for future activities.

If you would be willing to take part in a short telephone interview with a member of the UNWTO Silk Road team, you may skip the next section. Please indicate this in the next question and you will be contacted to arrange a convenient date and time.

If this is not convenient for you, we would like you to spend the next few minutes contributing to the mass Silk Road brainstorm to inform the future steps of this initiative. We really appreciate your time and thought you are putting into this questionnaire.

22. Please indicate your preference with regard to giving your insight with regard to the potential for a Western Silk Road Brand.

- Yes, I would be willing to be contacted to take part in a short telephone interview
- No, I would rather give my input through the questionnaire

Thank you again for taking your valuable time to help support this important initiative. Please answer the following questions as completely as possible - your insight and knowledge is critical to guiding the Western Silk Road Initiative to a successful and relevant result.

- \* 23. The Classic Silk Road invokes images of ancient culture, historic monuments and camel trains. How strongly do you agree or disagree that the Western Silk Road differs from the Classic Silk Road in the following aspect

	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
Type of attractions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tourism infrastructure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Target Markets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intangible Heritage (Music, Folklore Dances, Festivals, Events)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gastronomical Experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Historical Heritage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Arts and Crafts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural Environment and Scenery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please provide further comments on the aspects you identify as presenting the greatest differences

24. How would you see a Western Silk Road visitor as different from the Classic Silk Road traveller?  
please give keywords or phrases.

25. Please give the top 3 positive attributes you see as key aspects of developing the Western Silk Road as a tourism brand and identity

1

2

3

26. Please give the 3 key negative aspects or weaknesses of developing the Western Silk Road as a tourism brand and identity.

1

2

3

27. Please give the 3 key opportunities of developing the Western Silk Road as a tourism brand and identity.

1

2

3

28. Please give the 3 key obstacles or threats towards developing the Western Silk Road as a tourism brand and identity

1

2

3

## UNWTO Western Silk Road Initiative Study Questionnaire - 2016

**We need you to share your knowledge to help build up a detailed picture and map of the components that make up the Western Silk Road - key destinations, attractions, heritage, creative arts and linkages. Please share as much information as you can in the following section. Information that does not fit into this format can be sent directly to the UNWTO Silk Road team at [silkroad@unwto.org](mailto:silkroad@unwto.org)**

29. Are there any destinations and attractions that you consider linked to the Silk Road in your country/destination? Please enter in order of importance to you.

1.

2.

3.

\* 30. Have you or your organisation carried out market research with relation to any of the suggested destinations above, or are aware of studies carried out by others?

- Yes
- No

31. If YES - please provide more information and links, contacts etc. here



36. Are you aware of existing transnational cultural route activities in your country that you would regard as examples of best practice? If so please provide more information

and links below.

## UNWTO Western Silk Road Initiative Study Questionnaire - 2016

37. Are there any key contacts in your network that you could suggest that we talk to with regard to potential Western Silk Road destinations, attractions or themes? If so - please provide their details after receiving their consent.

\* 38. Would you be willing to be considered for inclusion in future Western Silk Road Work Group or other Western Silk Road Initiative related activities?

Y  
e  
s

N  
o

Please provide us with the activities/areas you are interested in

## UNWTO Western Silk Road Initiative Study Questionnaire - 2016

**We really appreciate the time and thought you have put into completing this survey. This is the first step in delivering the vision of the Western Silk Road Tourism Development Initiative. There will be more activities happening over the coming months. We may be in touch directly with some of you for further input. Updates will be posted on [silkroad.unwto.org](http://silkroad.unwto.org)**

39. Your details will be entered into a random prize draw to receive a special thank you gift from the UNWTO Silk Road Programme. You have the option below to opt out if you wish.

I would like to opt out of the prize draw.

## Annex 2

### WSR Focus Group Interview Guide

#### UNWTO – EU Western Silk Road Brand Study WSR Focus Group Interview Guide

Thank you for taking part in the biggest research ever done on the Western Part of the Silk Road. We are very pleased to have you on board and look forward to your participation as a group that will discuss and brainstorm about the potential of the WSR brand and the WSR tourism product in your region. We welcome your creativity and knowledge as you come up with suggestions on how we can sustainably commodify the invaluable Silk Road heritage into tourism experiences.

#### **Please follow the guidelines below:**

- Appoint the leading researcher of the Group
- Form a Group of people who are enthusiastic and interested in the study. The group should be consisted of 5 to 7 people
- The discussion should be recorded (video or audio)
- Identify the Silk Road heritage of your destination
- Decide which of them presents interesting and competent tourism potential
- Focusing on the above, brainstorm on:
  1. Destination based WSR tourism experiences
  2. Transnational WSR tourism experiences
  3. Assessment of the feasibility of the ideas
  4. What is required to make your ideas come to life
  5. Which are the targeted markets
- Consider the findings of the focus group as primary research results and use them to consult your SWOT analysis
- Choose a representative of your group to participate in the international WSR focus group to take place in the headquarters of UNWTO in Madrid, Spain – to be confirmed.

**Don't forget** to enjoy it and share pictures and videos using the Silk Road social media portals:

- Facebook page: UNWTO Silk Road (/VisitSilkRoad)
- Twitter: UNWTO Silk Road (@unwto\_silk\_road)
- Instagram: UNWTO Silk Road (@unwtosilkroad)

Please submit your report and associated material by **12<sup>h</sup> of December 2016**

## **Annex 3**

### **List of Universities that conducted SWOT Analyses**

#### **1. Armenia**

Institute of economics and business, Russian-Armenian University (EN)  
Armenian Institute of Tourism

#### **2 Greece**

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (EN)

#### **3. Italy**

University of Bologna (EN)

#### **4. Russian Federation**

People's Friendship University of Russia (EN)  
People's Friendship University of Russia (RU)

All reports are available here: <http://silkroad.unwto.org/content/western-silk-road-research>

## **Annex 4**

### **The Guidelines Document sent to Universities for the National SWOT Analyses**

#### **1. Introduction to the Western Silk Road Tourism Development Initiative**

The UNWTO/EU Western Silk Road Tourism Development Initiative is an ambitious tourism project aimed at revitalizing the Silk Road heritage located in the European region, from the Caspian Sea, around the Black Sea and along parts of the Mediterranean basin.

The Western Silk Road region is home to a unique Silk Road heritage which in many parts has yet to be fully developed for tourism. Available land and sea routes, a diverse cultural offer and a market that increasingly demands an authentic travel experience, are assets that have motivated UNWTO and the European Union (EU) to pursue this joint project. The overall vision and expected benefits of the Western Silk Road Tourism Development Initiative are:

- Provide the foundation for the Western Silk Road to function as a fully operative tourism brand
- Enhance the capacities of tourism stakeholders willing to explore new markets and to engage new partners
- Combine available tourism assets to increase visitor length of stay, regional dispersal and yield across the region
- Diversify the tourism offer and potential of participation destinations and partners

The project is designed to create new opportunities for destinations and tourism stakeholders interested in cross-border partnerships and in developing novel products focused on untapped Silk Road heritage. Several interlinked activities are planned in the coming period including capacity building workshops and the creation of a Western Silk Road working group.

The first activity is the development of a Western Silk Road Brand Study and Handbook. The Brand research will examine the existing usage of the Silk Road identity, audit connections through tangible and intangible heritage in key destinations and develop concepts to strengthen the use of the Silk Road Brand to bring benefits.

In order to obtain the best insight into the potential of the Western Silk Road, identify destinations, sites, events and Western Silk Road linkages - an online questionnaire will be sent to the tourism industry and its stakeholders for completion. We want to provide ownership of this initiative to those involved in tourism development, marketing and delivery across the region and this activity will set the foundation. Whilst we would strongly encourage your participation in the online survey, we need your input and academic research expertise to conduct a SWOT analysis of the Western Silk Road Brand of your country – your role is described in the following section 2.

#### **2. Universities and the WSR – your role**

Your contribution is indeed one of the most important components of the study. In particular, we kindly ask you to conduct a SWOT analysis of the Western Silk Road Brand at your own national level. Along with you, universities across 29 countries are creating significant

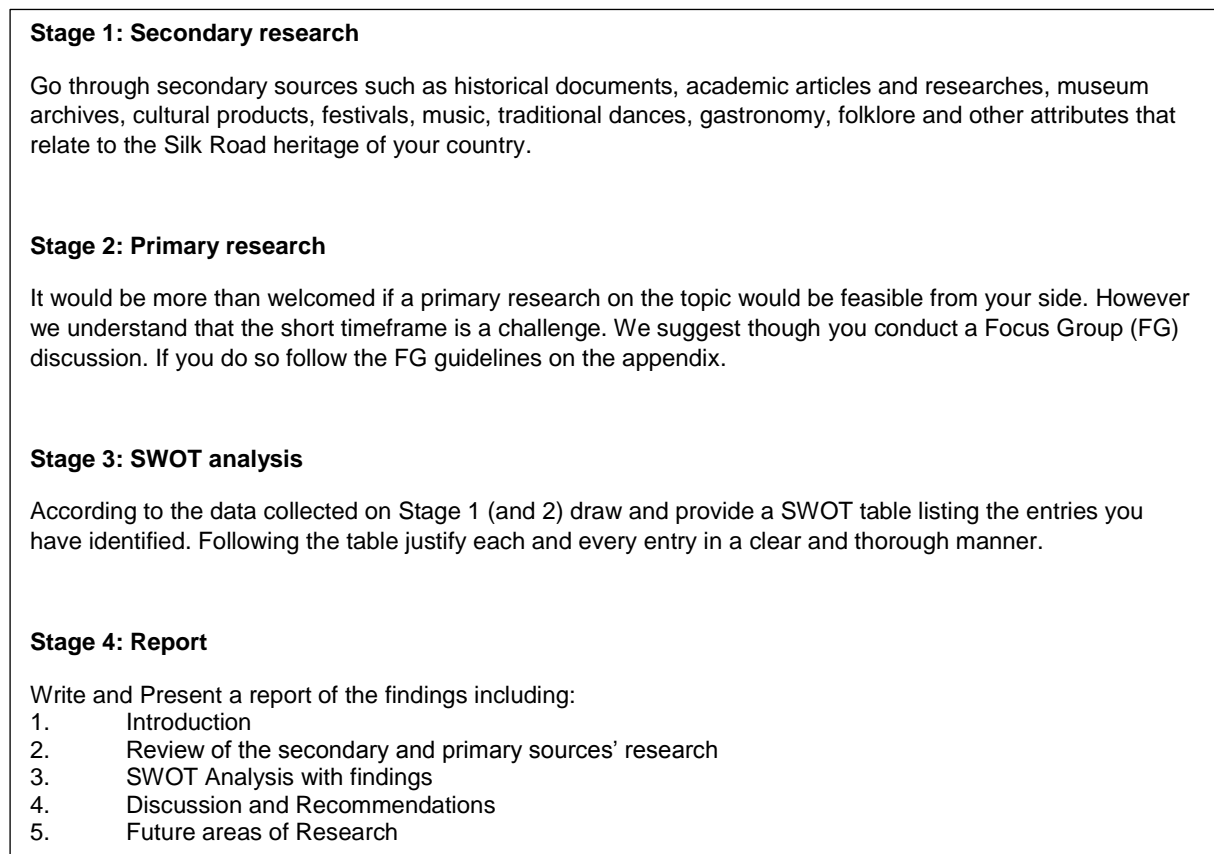
knowledge to foster the tourism development of the Western Silk Road, and your input will add to the widest research ever done on this exciting and challenging topic.

We are confident that you are quite familiar with conducting a proper SWOT analysis and this is why we seek your contribution. The main aim is to identify which are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of the Western Silk Road tourism potential of your country, with a particular focus on what will be the impact of creating and using a Western Silk Road Brand in your country. We consider that this research topic has merits and we welcome your involvement to the maximum. Eventually, all the SWOT analyses conducted, including yours, will consult the development of a Western Silk Road wide SWOT – making your role one of the fundamental milestones to be achieved. To build a solid understanding though, we need the pieces of this masterpiece to be compatible, thus we kindly ask you to follow the methodology as outlined in the following section 3.

### 3. Methodology

As research experts we understand that you would completely support the establishment of a common methodology followed for each and every individual SWOT analysis. Figure 1 below describes the methodology stages:

**Figure 1: Methodology stages**



#### **4. Future participation**

We expect this ambitious initiative to be the milestone of an ever evolving tourism development along the western Silk Road. Such development though has to be monitored and closely examined. Here we present to you an opportunity to become an official member of the academic research body of the Silk Road Programme for the WSR - a body that will work in collaboration with the Programme in creating invaluable tourism intelligence regarding the stage and the potential of the tourism industry across the countries of the WSR.

To join this body please express an official interest on behalf of your university to participate in the academic research body of the Silk Road Programme for the WSR. Your interest should be addressed to [silkroad@unwto.org](mailto:silkroad@unwto.org) under the subject: WSR academic body.

## Annex 5

### Resolution CM/Res(2013)67 revising the rules for the award of the “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” certification



*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 18 December 2013 at the 1187bis meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members and that this aim may be pursued through joint action in the cultural field;

Considering that the main aims of European cultural co-operation are to promote the European identity in its unity and its diversity; to preserve the diversity of Europe's cultures; to encourage intercultural dialogue and to facilitate conflict prevention and reconciliation;

Considering that highlighting the influences, exchanges and developments which have formed the European identity can facilitate awareness of a European citizenship based on the sharing of common values;

Considering that it is essential for younger generations to acquire this awareness of a European identity and citizenship and the common values on which they are based;

Considering that in order to **uphold these common values and make them more tangible, it is necessary to promote an understanding of Europe's history on the basis of its physical, intangible and natural heritage, so as to bring out the links which unite its various cultures and regions;**

Noting that the identification of European values and a common European cultural heritage may be achieved via cultural routes tracing the history of peoples, migrations, and the spread of the major European currents of civilisation in the fields of philosophy, religion, culture, the arts, science, technology and trade;

Aware that such routes lend themselves to long-term European co-operation programmes in the fields of research, heritage enhancement, culture and the arts, cultural and educational youth exchanges, cultural tourism in Europe and sustainable cultural development;

Considering that such co-operation mobilises and brings together a large number of individuals, organisations, institutions and structures in Europe, and thereby contributes to the process of European construction;

Considering that in order to provide an intellectual and technical support to this co-operation, which requires considerable human and financial resources, a formal operational framework should be established enabling the reaffirmation of fundamental values, the qualitative and quantitative assessment of implementation, training of actors and a coherent communication;

Considering that such a framework enables common objectives to be pursued and guarantees the quality of the initiatives undertaken;

Considering Resolution CM/Res(2013)66 confirming the establishment of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (hereafter “EPA”);

Having regard to the objectives and activities of the EPA,

Adopts this resolution which annuls and replaces Resolution CM/Res(2010)52 of 8 December 2010 on the rules for the award of the “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” certification;

Adopts the rules for the award of the “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” certification which are appended to this resolution.

*Appendix to Resolution CM/Res(2013)67*

## **Rules**

The certification “Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe” may be granted to projects which deal with a theme that complies with the eligibility criteria in part I below, involve priority actions as indicated in part II and are presented by a single network meeting the criteria in part III.

### **List of eligibility criteria for themes**

Themes must satisfy all of the following criteria:

1. the theme must be representative of European values and common to at least three countries of Europe;
2. the theme must be researched and developed by groups of multidisciplinary experts from different regions of Europe so as to ensure that the activities and projects which illustrate it are based on consensus;
3. the theme must be illustrative of European memory, history and heritage and contribute to an interpretation of the diversity of present-day Europe;
4. the theme must lend itself to cultural and educational exchanges for young people and hence be in line with the Council of Europe's ideas and concerns in these fields;
5. the theme must permit the development of initiatives and exemplary and innovative projects in the field of cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development;
6. the theme must lend itself to the development of tourist products in partnership with tourist agencies and operators aimed at different publics, including school groups.

## List of priority fields of action

The projects must pertain to the following priority fields of action, while fulfilling the criteria enumerated below for each field of action:

### 7. *Co-operation in research and development*

In this field of action, the projects must:

- play a unifying role around major European themes, enabling dispersed knowledge to be brought together;
- show how these themes are representative of European values shared by several European cultures;
- illustrate the development of these values and the variety of forms they may take in Europe;
- lend themselves to research and interdisciplinary analysis on both a theoretical and a practical level.

### 8. *Enhancement of memory, history and European heritage*

In this field of action, the projects must:

- enhance physical and intangible heritages, explain their historical significance and highlight their similarities in the different regions of Europe;
- take account of and promote the charters, conventions, recommendations and work of the Council of Europe, UNESCO and ICOMOS relating to heritage restoration, protection and enhancement, landscape and spatial planning;
- identify and enhance European heritage sites and areas other than the monuments and sites generally exploited by tourism, in particular in rural areas, but also in industrial areas in the process of economic restructuring;
- take account of the physical and intangible heritage of ethnic or social minorities in Europe;
- contribute through appropriate training, to raising awareness among decision makers, practitioners and the general public of the complex concept of heritage, the necessity to protect, interpret and communicate it as a means for sustainable development, and the challenges and opportunities it represents for the future of Europe.

### 9. *Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans*

In this field of action, the projects must:

- include the organisation of activities with groups of young people in order to promote in-depth exchanges aimed at developing the concept of European citizenship, enriched by its diversity;
- place the emphasis on personal and real experiences through the use of places and contacts;
- encourage decompartmentalisation by organising exchanges of young people from different social backgrounds and regions of Europe;
- constitute pilot schemes with a limited number of participating countries and be provided with sufficient resources for meaningful assessment in order to generate prototypes that can serve as reference models;
- give rise to co-operation activities which involve educational institutions at various levels.

#### 10. *Contemporary cultural and artistic practice*

In this field of action, the projects must:

- give rise to debate and exchange, in a multidisciplinary and intercultural perspective, between the various cultural and artistic expressions and sensibilities of the different countries of Europe;
- encourage activities and artistic projects which explore the links between heritage and contemporary culture;
- highlight, in contemporary cultural and artistic practice, the most innovative practices in terms of creativity, and link them with the history of skills development, whether they belong to the field of the visual arts, the performing arts, creative crafts, architecture, music, literature or any other form of cultural expression;
- give rise to networks and activities which break down the barriers between professionals and non-professionals, particularly as regards instruction for young Europeans in the relevant fields.

#### 11. *Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development*

In this field of action, the projects must:

- take account of local, regional, national and European identities;
- actively involve print and broadcast media and make full use of the potential of electronic media in order to raise awareness of the cultural objectives of the projects;
- promote dialogue between urban and rural cultures, between regions in the south, north, east and west of Europe, and between developed and disadvantaged regions;
- promote dialogue and understanding between majority and minority, native and immigrant cultures;
- open up possibilities for co-operation between Europe and other continents through the special affinities between certain regions;
- concern themselves, in the field of cultural tourism, with raising public awareness, drawing decision makers' attention to the necessity of protecting heritage as part of sustainable development of the territory and seek to diversify both supply and demand, with a view to fostering the development of quality tourism with a European dimension;
- seek partnerships with public and private organisations active in the field of tourism in order to develop tourist products and tools targeting all potential publics.

#### **List of criteria for networks**

Project initiators shall form multidisciplinary networks located in several Council of Europe member States. Such networks must:

- present a conceptual framework based on research carried out into the theme chosen and accepted by the different network partners;
- involve several Council of Europe member States through all or part of their project(s), without excluding activities of a bilateral nature;
- plan to involve as large a number as possible of States Parties to the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18) as well as, where appropriate, other States;

- ensure that the projects proposed are financially and organisationally viable;
- have a legal status, either in the form of an association or a federation of associations;
- operate democratically.

In support of the presentation of their projects, networks must:

- offer a comprehensive programme and specify its objectives, methods, partners, participating countries (current and envisaged) and the overall development of the programme in the medium and long term;
- demonstrate how their activities relate to the five priority fields of action in Part II of the Appendix to Resolution CM/Res(2013)67 (research and development, enhancement of memory, history and heritage, cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans, contemporary cultural and artistic practice, cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development);
- identify, in the various member countries of the Council of Europe, the main initiators, participants and other potential partners likely to form a network; specify, where appropriate, at international level, other partner organisations;
- specify the regions concerned by the project;
- provide details of their financing and operational plan;
- append the basic text(s) relating to their legal status;
- define and implement indicators aimed to measure the impact of the activities of cultural routes.

## **Certification**

12. The certification “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” is awarded by the Governing Board of the EPA in consultation with the relevant intergovernmental committee. It can, if necessary, seek advice from one or more expert consultants. The Governing Board may consult, if considered necessary, other pertinent committees or bodies of the Council of Europe.

In case of a negative opinion by the intergovernmental committee concerned, the agreement of the Committee of Ministers will be required for the award of the certification.

Projects and themes which help to achieve the Council of Europe political priority objectives are particularly encouraged.

13. Following the award of the certification, the entire mention “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” and the logo of the Council of Europe must be placed on all communication material, including press releases.

A manual with recommendations (or vade mecum) will be provided to networks.

Whenever possible, the certification accompanied by the Council of Europe logo must appear on road signs and boards indicating the cultural route.

14. Evaluation of networks responsible for projects having received the certification “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe”.

In addition to an annual programme of activities and an annual report submitted to the European Institute of Cultural Routes, networks must submit every three years a report enabling the Governing Board of the EPA to evaluate their activities in order to ascertain whether they continue to satisfy the criteria in parts I, II, III and IV.2 above.

If the Governing Board of the EPA finds the compliance with parts I, II, III and IV.2 above unsatisfactory it will issue a recommendation in order to ensure this compliance. If the recommendation is not followed within a year, the Governing Board of the EPA may decide on the withdrawal of the certification after consultation of the relevant intergovernmental committee.

In case the intergovernmental committee concerned is of the opinion that the certification should not be withdrawn, the agreement of the Committee of Ministers will be required for the withdrawal of the certification.

The Governing Board of the EPA decides on the practical modalities of application of this resolution. It adopts rules of procedure to this effect.

## Annex 6

### List of Task Force Members from Countries on the Western Link of the Silk Road

Country	NTA/ NTO
<b>Albania</b>	Ministry of Economic Development, Tourism, Trade and Entrepreneurship
<b>Armenia</b>	Ministry of Economic Development and Investments
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Ministry of Tourism
<b>Croatia</b>	Croatian National Tourism Board
<b>Egypt</b>	Ministry of Tourism
<b>Georgia</b>	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
<b>Greece</b>	Ministry of Economy, Infrastructure, Maritime Affairs and Tourism
<b>Italy</b>	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
<b>Russian Federation</b>	Federal Agency for Tourism under the Ministry of Culture Visit Russia, National Marketing Tourism Centre, Federal Agency for Tourism
<b>Romania</b>	Ministry of Tourism
<b>San Marino</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tourism
<b>Spain</b>	Secretariat of State for Tourism
<b>Turkey</b>	The Ministry of Culture and Tourism
<b>Ukraine</b>	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
<b>UNWTO Affiliate Members</b>	
<b>Spain</b>	Spanish Institute for Quality Tourism
<b>Germany</b>	IPK International
<b>United Kingdom</b>	World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations Connecting Travel TripAdvisor – Global Partnership
<b>Russian Federation</b>	Hotel Business and Tourism Institute Peoples' Friendship University of Russia International Centre of wine and gastronomy

Note: The List as of March 2017

## Annex 7

### Extracted SWOT data from the online survey

#### POSITIVE

##### Access

- transport accessibility
- favourable geographical location of the region in the context of the Western Silk Road
- network of connection for the entire Silk Road
- More accessible
- accessibility
- Travel across several countries

##### Branding and Marketing

- very attractive for new markets
- Brand
- Facilitating the marketing activities in the micro-level
- take advantage of a label
- Development of a regional identity
- advertising
- Advertising the existence and excitement of the western silk road to tourists/travellers

##### Culture

- Diverse culture
- heritage preservation
- Culture
- Cultural
- Share heritage
- culture
- history
- diverse cultural heritage
- History
- Memory
- ancient culture
- to meet the culture of not so known Central Asian countries
- culture
- Rediscover History of Western tourism destinations
- rich cultural heritage
- Rich history
- History
- western culture experience
- visitors will be eager to learn about former communist country as Albania and the silk production here (even though is part of other countries too)
- heritage
- Cultural Monuments
- History
- cultural proximity
- art, craft
- foster cultural exchanges
- Heritage
- diversity of cultures and nations
- learning about unknown and underdeveloped country and its history
- historical heritage
- identifying, meeting and knowing various culture
- East-West historical links
- Intangible heritage

- architectural interaction
- meet the arts and crafts of China

##### Development

- Emphasizing to local populations how they can benefit
- new enlarged partnerships
- It would contribute to the development of the economic potential on local, national and international level.
- Strengthening of relationships between countries in the area
- Creating links between businesses in silk road destinations to encourage cooperation
- revitalization of possible trading traces based on the traditional knowledge system of the Silk Road
- It would promote tourism sector as an opportunity for new investments and for overcoming unemployment rates.

##### Environment

- natural environment
- quality environment
- Natural Environment

##### Infrastructure

- good infrastructures
- developed infrastructure
- Save environment

##### Other

- Modernity
- creative
- Adventurous
- be part of a global programme
- Opportunities
- professional
- quality
- Comfort
- something new
- discovering
- open minded
- romantic
- innovative
- activity
- responsible
- exotic
- common products
- Beauty
- Quality
- complex
- Ease

##### Safety

- safety
- Improve travel security by extension of good practices

##### Silk Road

- the desire for knowledge of Classic Silk Road
- western silk
- unique and different from the classic silk road
- Discover the legendary road
- the scent of Western Silk Road

- awareness of Classic Silk Road
- different silk experience

### Tourism

- Increased awareness as a tourism destination
- It would offer new, attractive and easily recognizable tourist destinations.
- tourism
- Increase in tourist industry income
- environmental and recreational resources, cultural and historic heritage
- promotion of culture, tourism, architecture, heritage, etc. of the western Silk Road
- Consolidation of an intra-country tourism product
- new products

- recommended hotels
- added value for national tourism
- back in a romantic era with caravans, camels and horses
- food
- Improve status of existing tourism destinations
- well-trained human capital in hospitality and tourism sectors
- Unique experience
- off season
- Tourism
- recommended restaurants
- new tourist product

## NEGATIVE

### Access

- inaccessibility
- not easy accessible destinations
- travelling

### Branding and Marketing

- as a totally new brand is not very well known among people
- Misbalance of the contribution to the promotion of the brand by the countries participants in the project.
- Insufficient recognition of the nature of the brand and identity.
- It can affect the image of the traditional Silk Route
- It can confuse users, since the brand has been likely linked to "Far East".
- lack of advertising
- lack of branding
- lack of branding of the region on the international level
- lack of promotion
- law awareness of Western Silk Road
- Need coordination with the Classic ones (logo, etc.)
- Not a strong brand name
- Not being easily identified as such
- not enough publicity
- Tenuous link between the silk road and local activities
- there are other tourism brands that already exists and are known to visitors
- to make a brand to what you are famous for not for the opposite
- To miss key components in building the main identity of the brand.
- unproductive promotion campaign

### Culture

- Conflictual perception in terms of culture
- Culture
- different traditions
- not so exotic culture

### Development

- Difficulty to coordinate the stakeholders from different states
- Geopolitics issues
- poor involvement of stakeholders

- potential problems with central managing of the products
- problems in compatibility of tourism organisational models
- problems in cooperation understanding
- problems in overcoming nation-wide tourism planning

### Infrastructure

- lack of foreign and national investment in the tourism infrastructure
- probably infrastructural problems in Central Asia
- Affecting the authenticity of individual countries

### Other

- bad organization
- Confusion in the mind of the tourist
- Could be another thinly veiled marketing ploy?
- Difficulty in implementation
- economic crisis
- expensive
- forgotten
- Fragmentation of budgets
- high prices
- inadequate cooperation
- influence of politics
- insufficient knowledge
- Lack of coordination among members
- lack of information
- Less authentic than the Classic Silk Road
- No silk at Europe

- Not real connection
- not well known
- silk was never given importance before
- slim market share
- sometimes tiresome
- target
- To be dated

### safety

- insecurity
- migrations
- securing
- Security
- terrorism
- war and terrorist threats
- Division of Silk Road into "two" big parts

- Increase popularity of the destination
- lack of cooperation between tourism providers
- lack of real routes for tourists
- Limited number of attractions in any given area.
- low level of usage of the recreational and cultural potential of the region in tourism
- Mass tourism
- May cause mass tourism in some heritage sites

- standard tourist routes
- too much products without proper story behind
- WSR can promote easily mass tourism, which will affect the positive attributes of the brand

## OPPORTUNITIES

### Access

- connections
- modern and fast transport
- Removal of borders in tourism
- Schengen space: easy connections between Schengen countries

### Branding and Marketing

- Branding
- create a new brand
- Creative marketing
- joint marketing initiatives
- marketing activities
- new attractive side/story of an old "silk road"
- on line marketing
- promotion of tourism, heritage, culture
- promotion strategy
- The brand will offer innovative tourist product which will promote the intercultural dialogue and transnational cooperation in tourism.
- To give a new image of the Silk Road

### Culture

- Awareness rising on historical connections with distant lands
- connecting of different stakeholders
- Cultural exchange
- Encouraging local events/festivities based on silk traditions to stop them dying out
- Gastronomy
- handcrafts
- Heritage
- Increase in social relations
- long history and tradition
- meet great ancient cultural
- Meeting between travelers and local inhabitants
- Protection of tangible and intangible heritage
- reviving "Silk product" cultural heritage
- stronger interest in far journeys
- use of industrial heritage infrastructure
- Use of well known explorers or features: Marco Polo, for example
- utilization of cultural monuments

### Development

- building connection network among countries
- connection of the companies
- contribution to the economy
- could also be linked with other already regional products
- Creating a clearly defined route with well advertised points to encourage the visitor
- creation of a favorable investment climate in the tourism sector

- developing regions along the silk road
- Development of a regional identity
- Extension of good practice on how to manage destinations
- increase in economic growth
- It is a key opportunity to establish strong cooperation between European and Asian countries in the field of tourism.
- Linking Businesses to offer a better overall experience to the visitor
- Local benefits in economic terms
- new employment opportunities within the project
- regional cooperation
- Strengthening of relationships between countries in the area
- sustainable development
- used as a common platform between east and west
- utilization of local products
- will be an added value to other regional products

### Infrastructure

- developed tourist infrastructure
- improvement of the tourism infrastructure and its material and technical equipment

### Other

- citizen participation
- Economy
- education
- learning
- learning
- new possibility
- Peace
- technology influence
- training local communities
- training opportunities

### Safety

- safety of tourists

### Silk Road

- connecting diff. countries on the silk road
- Maritime route development: Croatia - Spain-Italy, for instance.
- To discover the Silk Road to people

### Tourism

- attracting new tourist segments
- Combining the various tourist aims in a complex program
- common products
- create new travel routes and make them accessible
- diversified tourism products
- Enrichment of tourism offer
- Expanding the market

- Increase in tourist industry income
- Increased tourist flow
- Increased travel motivation
- It needs more individual approach to different groups of tourists.
- It will popularize significant but unknown until now destinations and cultural and historical sights.
- new experience
- new markets
- new tourist product
- novel synergies tourism plans
- possibility to make sustainable tourism
- potential for development of various types of tourism (religious, ethnic, business, ecologic, rural, sport, extreme, medical, events)
- regional tourism products
- search for new touristic products
- the less known always attracts (Western Silk Road is new and unknown)
- Tourism

## THREATS

### Access

- visa regulation
- Branding /Marketing
- Difficulty to position not one but two brands
- lack of advertising
- Lack of enough resources and capacity to develop and promote the brand on local level.
- Need of a logo to be used by private partners (controlled)
- Diversification of brand - Confusion to users and stakeholders
- Less prominence
- Need a good marketing campaign
- Not a strong enough identity in the average person's eyes

### Capacity

- Coordination of activities
- Difficult to maintain in terms of standards
- difficulty in coordinating a big number of countries with different cultures
- inadequate cooperation
- insufficient knowledge
- Insufficient inter-institutional cooperation at national level.
- lack of coordination
- Lack of coordinated infrastructure.
- lack of motivation for implementing totally new tourist product
- Local people might not catch right way the importance of silk road
- low interest for cooperation
- low support for the project
- Number of organisations involved
- Shortage of tourism infrastructures

### Culture

- different traditions
- Local population have to be respect
- negative image of travellers' behaviour for the local inhabitants
- need of raise awareness among communities of the importance of the Silk Road

### Economic

- slow development of certain areas
- economic stagnation

- expensiveness
- Financial difficulties
- financial instability
- investments have to me made to build upon what was existing before
- lack of financial and organizational structure for implementation of the project on the national base
- Too high price

### Other

- Competition / Coopetition
- Competition from other activities/destinations
- Culture
- disintegration
- ignorance
- Lack of recognizable
- lack of vision
- language barriers
- Lost of authenticity
- municipalities might have other priorities
- Need of involvement of schools and student trips
- numerous counties involved in
- strong Classic Silk Road brand
- too much academic ot historical aspect of the project
- Policy
- decision making
- different policies of tourism in different countries
- lack of communication and joint actions among the administrators

### Safety

- Declining relationships between countries in the area
- Establishment of new states
- geopolitic issues
- illegal migration
- insecurity
- natural disasters in the region and neighbouring regions
- Obstacles may be connected with unsolved transnational conflicts between partner countries in this project.
- politics
- problems of conflicts in the broader area

- problems of political instability
- problems of security / terrorism
- safety
- safety of the routes
- Security threats

- terrorism
- Terrorism and religion radicalisation
- The political situation of the world
- unknown political stability in some countries
- war and terrorist threats

## Annex 8

### Extracted country specific SWOT data from focus groups and other reports

#### STRENGTHS

##### Tunisia

- Silk Road heritage is present via maritime routes;
- The historic maritime routes were developed by Phoenicians, Romans and Arabs, who traveled for trade purposes;
- The historic maritime routes pass by Lebanon, which used to be a Silk Road trade center.

##### Romania

- Rich cultural heritage: mainly churches;
- Folklore and traditional music;
- Gastronomy.

##### Montenegro

- Rich gastronomy;
- Different historic layers of heritage and architecture;
- Diversity of people, traditions and cultures.

##### Valencia

- Rich silk road cultural heritage;
- Historic silk production in the region, artisanal crafts and silk production;
- Silk road heritage is a living heritage, the heritage of the present-day moment;
- Strong presence of the silk road heritage in everyday life in Valencia and the region;
- Silk is a part of intangible traditions of the region;
- Varied silk experience;
- Traditional clothes is made of silk; variety of clothing and clothes design, silk tissue and fabric;
- Various silk celebrations in Valencia;
- Traditional buildings and architecture connected to silk, especially in rural areas in the region;
- Presence of silk heritage in paintings;
- Strong connection with ceramics – practically identical pattern on ceramics and silk;
- Production of biscuits;
- Historical privilege of the Royal family to produce silk;
- Strong connection to France – silk patterns are very similar to silk production in Lyon, France;

##### Vikings and Russia

- Historical connection of Vikings and silk. Vikings were trading silk in 9-10<sup>th</sup> centuries and were mostly using Russian rivers;
- Vikings traveled in the Black Sea to Constantinople, which was a part of the Silk

Road and also a center of silk production; they would also continue the travel to the Caspian Sea and then to the Central Asian kingdoms making trade contacts with locals;

- Vikings stabled connections with Arabs, who exchanged them silver and steel;
- The Vikings silk trade with the Slavs was centered around the cities of Novgorod and the Staraja Ladoga in the area of present day Russia and Ukraine;
- Vikings were able to carry big quantities of silk in their ships on long distance very rapidly into Northern Europe and at the same time bringing Arabic silver and steel;
- Amazing Vikings' ships heritage;
- Examples of interaction between Vikings and various people they met.

##### Valencia

- Very positive and interesting concept;
- The concept which connects people, human activities and heritage together;
- The concept has many values;
- Possibility to connect with arts and crafts, including jewelry, gastronomy
- The Region of Valencia has prepared a publication for children explaining the Silk Road heritage in the region.

##### Pakistan

- Presence of varied Silk Road heritage in Pakistan;
- Inns and caravanserais;
- Rich folklore;
- Diversity of different cultures and ethnicities, co-existing together;
- Gastronomy;
- Variety of spices.

##### European Thermal Towns and the Via Francigena

- Reinforcing cultural routes' impact at the local and regional level;
- international visibility;
- building new thematic transnational tourism packages

## WEAKNESS

### Tunisia

- Diverse geographic zones, hard to find a clear identity for the brand;
- No physical evidence of the Silk Road heritage in the region;
- Not much historic research on the topic of the Silk Road heritage in the region.

### Romania

- Lack of tangible evidence

### Montenegro

- Small country;
- Lack of interest of local and national tourists who prefer to go abroad for tourism.

### Valencia

- Forgotten history;
- No social memory of this heritage;
- Many buildings are still to be restored and opened to the public;
- Lack of interpretation.

### Vikings and Russia

- Weak Western silk road tourism products present on the market;
- Lack of interpretation of the heritage;
- Not much academic research on the topic

### Valencia

- Lack of promotion and visibility;
- Valencia is not as famous as Madrid and Barcelona;
- Silk Road is not a concrete product;
- Many heritage sites are not open for public and are not ready to be shown;
- Many objects still need to be archived and exhibit.

### Pakistan

- No direct connection with the Western Silk Road
- ### European Thermal Towns and the Via Francigena
- clear distinction of the Western Silk Road and the Classic Silk Road

## OPPORTUNITY

### Tunisia

- Diversification of tourism offer in the region;
- Valorization of cultural elements of the region.

### Romania

- Hospitality and warm welcome
- Historic train network called Small Switzerland next to the natural protected area
- Eu projects with Serbia and Hungary
- Eu project on traditional water mill
- Strong Political willingness to develop intern tourism and the western silk road

### Montenegro

- Results of the research on motivations of Chinese tourists in Slovenia and Montenegro, proving that Chinese tourists are interested in cultural and historic heritage, as well as in heritage from the Social period;
- Tourism products developed for international tourists: hiking and biking; about 600 km of routes for hiking and biking developed in Montenegro;
- As the country is small, all destinations and sites are easily accessible;
- Recognized summer destinations, which also has many natural sites, lakes and rivers
- Increased hospitality services;
- Efforts done in promotion of Montenegro for low season tourism;

- Strategic position of Montenegro next to Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Albania, thereby the country provides a chance to discover neighboring countries in a short time while being based in Montenegro;
- Regional cooperation with neighboring counties, joint European projects;
- Membership in the OBOR coordination center in Budapest.

### Valencia

- Inscription of Las Fallas (traditional festivities of Valencia during the spring time with fireworks) on the UNESCO intangible heritage list;
- New ways of interpretation and storytelling to explain intangible heritage;
- Very different heritage to the rest of Spain;
- Asian tourists can identify themselves with Valencia thanks to the silk heritage, as well as French and Dutch as there are links to silk production in respected counties;
- Valencia was named a silk capital of Spain;
- Similarities in traditions and counties.

### Russia and the Vikings

- Culture, gastronomy, traditions;
- Silk gives a new layer of interaction to discover the Vikings heritage;
- Story-telling opportunities;

- Opportunity to discover Russia from a different angle : to travel by boat along the rivers, exploring old Russian towns, which were centers of culture and heritage – Novgorod, Staraja Ladoga, etc.;
- Integration of the silk road heritage into the Vikings story;
- Chinese are interested in Vikings (based on the results of the marketing research made by the Destination Vikings);
- It's an opportunity to break barriers between the countries with difficult political relations.

#### Valencia

- Input for economic activities;
- Opportunity to connect the Silk Road tourism with education;
- Silk as a link with Asian tourists.

#### Pakistan

- Pakistan has recently signed Memorandum of Understanding with Turkey and Turkey;
- Development of join projects with Turkey;
- Possibility to extend Silk Road routes from Turkey to Pakistan;
- Increase of tourism in Pakistan (most of them are interested in mount Everest).

## THREATS

#### Tunisia

- Target tourism in Tunisia is the sun and beach oriented, the tourists are primarily interested in cultural tourism.

#### Romania

- Current change of the government and unclear political situation;
- Bureaucracy;
- Problems with infrastructure;
- Corruption.

#### Montenegro

- Lack of Chinese restaurants in Montenegro despite preferences of Chinese tourists to eat their national food;
- Interest of most tourists in sun and beach vacations;
- Lack of air accessibility;
- Lack of hospitality capacity during the high season;
- Poor international train connection. At the moment there is only one - to Belgrade, Serbia, which takes very long time and lacks services aboard;

- Challenging car transportation due to the mountainous landscape;
- Tourists stay in Dubrovnik, Croatia, while visiting Montenegro for a day trip.

#### Valencia

- Funding;
- Risk of deterioration of the buildings and heritage;
- Lack of visibility of Valencia.

#### Russia and the Vikings

- Difficulties to obtain a Visa;
- Linguistic barriers;
- Lack of engagement among the stakeholders;
- Difficult political relationship between Ukraine and Russia, as Kiev should be a part of the Vikings Silk Road, however that is not possible in the contemporary climate;
- Low quality of hospitality services in Russia;
- Off-putting welcoming service in Russia.

#### Valencia

- Lack of coordination;
- Economic crisis

## Annex9

### Audit of potential Silk Road destinations extracted from across the online survey, National SWOTs and Focus groups

Online survey participants were asked to share their knowledge of potential Western Silk Road destinations:

#### Summarised Western Silk Road destinations (duplicates removed)

##### Albania

- Gjirokastra: UNESCO heritage site
- Shkodra: first capital of Albania and the center of culture in Albania

##### Armenia

- Yerevan-Artashat-Vayots Dzor-Tatev-Goris
- Yerevan-Ashtarak-Aruch-Tallin-Mastara-Gyumri
- Yerevan-Sevan-Noradus-Selim Vayots Dzor- Jermuk

##### Azerbaijan

- Baku

##### Bulgaria

- Burgas port
- In Belogradchik region in Bulgaria, there are very well preserved antique roads connecting and being a proof of the uninterrupted cultural, religious and political exchange between Via Diagonalis and the Silk Road.
- Pliska, the first Bulgarian capital between 681 and 893 AD
- Rila Monastery
- The Madara Horseman
- The Monastery of Chirpan "Saint Athanasius the Great" - it is considered as the oldest working Christian monastery in Europe. Its establishment in 344 AD was connected with the spread of Christianity through the Silk Road - a part of the influence the road had in cultural aspect.
- The region of Harmanli and most precisely the Roman road of Izvorovo village and the Roman station Castra Rubra, part of the network of the Silk Road through Via Diagonalis.
- The rock-hewn monasteries and churches of Ivanovo

##### France

- Lyon and his textile manufacture
- Museum (Lorient, Cernuschi Paris, Guimet Paris)
- Paris
- Toulouse

##### Croatia

- Adriatic - Dalmatia
- Dubrovnik
- Istra region
- Korčula
- Marco Polo Museum (investment in 2017/2018)
- Marco Polo tower
- Pula
- Slavonija (country side)
- Zagreb - the main town

##### Spain

- Civic Gothic in Sapain: Lonjas
- Colegio del Arte Mayor de la Seda (Valencia)
- Granada
- Just Valencia has been included in the Silk Road. Works just started, so I guess they are compiling the information: LONJA DE LA SEDA, PORT, DOWNTOWN VALENCIA
- Murcia
- Museo de la Seda de Moncada (Valencia)
- Valencia

##### Georgia

- Tbilisi - Old Town
- Akhaltsikhe
- Kutaisi - Old Town

##### Greece

- Carthage
- Givre monument in Soufli
- Hadrumetum (Sousse)
- KALAMATA
- Metaxourgeio district in Athens
- Northeastern Greece
- Perpericon, the Holy town of Thracians
- Region of Central Macedonia/Historical Silk Insudtry at Kilkis
- Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace/Silk Museum at Soufli
- Region of Thessaly/Historical silk production at Zagora
- Soufli (Greek: Σουφλί) is a town in the Evros regional unit
- Soufli-Silk Museum & Chrysalis Association
- Street of Egnatia

- taşköprü
- Town of Soufli
- Via Egnatia
- Xanthi

#### **Italy**

- Messina, Sciliy
- Sicily
- Venice

#### **Macedonia (FROY)**

- Ohrid

#### **Norway**

- Viking Ship Museum, Oslo

#### **Pakistan**

- Archaeological ruins at Moenjodaro near Karachi
- Fort & Shalamar gardens at Lahore
- Lake Saif ul Malook at Naran

#### **Romania**

- Carpathians Garden
- Danuble Delta
- Dracula's Castle, Bran

#### **Russian Federation**

- European regions of the Russian Federation
- Far East, Buryatia, Altai, the Volga region, the Caucasus
- Moscow
- Nizniy Novgorod
- Saint-Petersburg

#### **San Marino**

- San Marino republic

#### **Sweden**

- Birka
- Genova
- Gotland

#### **Slovenia**

- cities - Ljubljana, Maribor, Ptuj (Poetovio), Celje (Celeia)
- Hrastnik
- Ljubljana
- Slovenian craft and art

#### **Turkey**

- Berat: UNESCO heritage site
- Istanbul
- karasis castle
- ramazanoğlu konağı
- trabzon
- Turkey

#### **United Kingdom**

- Macclesfield
- Spitalfield in London
- The Silk Heritage Museum in Macclesfield

## **Annex 10**

### **Extracted and Summarised National SWOT tables**

#### **The Russian regions**

The Russian University of Peoples Friendship delivered a concise and clear SWOT exercise focused on four of the Russian Regions that have been identified as having the greatest links and potential in the context of the Silk Road. This is complimentary to the study undertaken in St Petersburg.

The Regions covered are : Dagestan, Ingushetia, Pryazovskyi and Stavropol. Whilst there are other regions – such as North Ossetia, the Caucasus, the lower Don region, Kalmykia these will be investigated in greater detail at a later point.

The results of the SWOT exercise highlight the potential for expanding Silk Road tourism in the Russian Regions has much greater strengths than weaknesses or threats. The greatest strengths are based on the tourism potential arising from the rich cultural and natural attractions these regions possess.

The main weaknesses are based on poor infrastructure and negative perception that some of the perceptions still suffer from security issues. Domestic tourism in the Russian Regions has in the past been a low priority for central Government, but the recent adoption of a policy of 'import substitution' has redirected support and a positive willingness to invest in the regions. A key will be raising awareness and standards on the ground – especially in human capacity where a common weakness is service standards and understanding around quality tourism.

The SWOT exercise in general identified positive energy for the development of the Silk Road in Russia and key actions that are needed but recognised that the primary limitations are linked to external influences in the form of sanctions and the need to built appropriate agreements with other countries in order to develop the transnational nature.

The potential of the destinations is explored in the later sections of this study.

## SWOT-analysis of Dagestan site of Silk Road

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a rich and diverse cultural heritage (about 100 communities with their authentic cultures)</li> <li>• There is a great amount of natural heritage, including mountain region.</li> <li>• Mild climate.</li> <li>• The site provides a marine coast.</li> <li>• There are resources to develop cultural tourism, sports tourism, ethnic tourism, eco-tourism and health tourism.</li> <li>• A unique multilingual folklore, highly artistic handicrafts, including an authentic Kubachinskaya silver repousse' work and tapestry.</li> <li>• A huge amount of geothermal hot water reservoirs.</li> <li>• The highway Rostov-Baku - the main overland road, connecting Russian Federation with Azerbaijan and Iran. Makhachkala sea track port is the only one ice-free port on the Caspian Sea.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor road conditions</li> <li>• Weak promotion of local cultural sights and handicrafts.</li> <li>• Experiencing periodic terrorists' attacks</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an opportunity to attract tourists from adjoining regions.</li> <li>• There is an opportunity to create a tourist route on Silk Road route.</li> <li>• To focus on the uniqueness of multinational region; popularization of local handicrafts.</li> <li>• To use the facilities of the region by climbers, rafting and kayaking lovers for trainings.</li> <li>• Merging with neighboring destinations for working out a complex tour product connected to Silk Road.</li> <li>• To use the Caspian site of the marina area of Silk Road.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrorism</li> <li>• Competition with the neighboring Caucasus regions.</li> <li>• Deterioration of the image of the destination.</li> </ul>

## SWOT-analysis of Ingushetia site of Silk Road

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>There are 92 federal, regional and local historical, cultural, architectural and town-planning monuments in the Republic of Ingushetia. It has a wide variety of cultural heritage presented in the form of ritual dances, folklore and crafts.</p> <p>Beneficial geographical position, good transport accessibility: an airport, rail links and a developed road network.</p> <p>The territory allows to allocate approximately 28,000 tourists simultaneously.</p> <p>There are about 100 catering enterprises on the territory of the Republic of Ingushetia. 55 % of them can provide seats up to 50 people; whereas 30 % of the same facilities can provide from 50 to 100 seats.</p> <p>Stable political, socio-economic situation in comparison with neighboring North Caucasian republics.</p> <p>Sufficiency of workplace and highly motivated local population in tourism entrepreneurship.</p> <p>There are several deposits of natural medical mineral waters with medical effectiveness. The most famous is Achaluskoe</p> <p>The availability of resources for the development of types of tourism: cultural, educational, medical and health, environmental, ethnic, rural, sports, conceptual (photographic, cinematographic, gastronomic, etc.)</p> <p>There is a range of unique natural and historical complexes, such as Agical, Targim, Vovnushki, Hamki, Tsori and so on.</p>	<p>Weak investment attractiveness of the region. Difficulties with foreign and domestic investments into the development of tourist sights and service facilities. Competition with the neighboring Caucasus regions.</p> <p>A lack of international and Russian airlines; shortage of comfortable vehicles to provide tourists with good services on their routes, roads and driveways to the most sights are in poor conditions.</p> <p>Relatively high price and poor level of catering. Acute shortage of collective accommodation that meets modern requirements and service level.</p> <p>Poor information promotion of the Republic of Ingushetia on the domestic and international markets of tourist service. Persistent public opinion about the Republic of Ingushetia as a troubled region with increased investment and tourist risks.</p> <p>A lack of local initial investment sources. A lack of economic conditions that could encourage entrepreneurship in tourism. A low level of qualified personnel.</p> <p>Deteriorated infrastructure in sanatoria.</p> <p>Architectural monuments are in a poor state (there is no road access to sights, car parking, observation decks, a security system).</p> <p>There are no equipped ecological camps, hiking trails, overnight accommodation. Additionally, there is no system to control anthropogenic pressure.</p> <p>Unsolved security issues, primarily evacuation of tourists; also, providing tourists with other services on the routes.</p> <p>Not enough information about local accommodation and food service, handicraft products and souvenir points of sell.</p> <p>Insufficient knowledge of foreign languages by service providers.</p>

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<p>The availability of resources for the development of types of tourism: cultural, educational, medical and health, environmental, ethnic, rural, sports, conceptual (photographic, cinematographic, gastronomic, etc.)</p> <p>Training local people work in the hospitality industry, and bringing them to activities, thereby providing a direct, indirect employment and employment in the construction of new accommodation facilities and the renovation of the old ones</p> <p>Improving foreign language knowledge level of the contact zone workers</p> <p>Creating marketplaces for the sale of products of handicrafts, teaching the younger generation traditional crafts</p> <p>Further research and study of the Ingush dances, reconstruction of suits, hats, jewelry, ornaments, weapons.</p> <p>Development of an integrated tourist product of cultural tourism in collaboration with partners from the Republic of North Ossetia</p> <p>Active promotion of the region in social networks, including English and Chinese. Creation of modern information portal</p> <p>The use of containers of natural healing mineral waters for advertising promotion of the area</p>	<p>Violation of political stability, including in adjacent territories</p> <p>The deterioration of the infrastructure, including the condition of access roads</p> <p>Deterioration of destination image</p> <p>Increased competition from neighboring destinations</p>

## SWOT-analysis of Pryazovskyi section of the Silk Road

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>The rich historical and cultural heritage</p> <p>Favorable climatic conditions</p> <p>Financial support in the framework of the State program of the Rostov region, "Culture and Tourism Development" until 2020</p> <p>Holding the World Cup in 2018 in the region</p> <p>The favorable geographical position, favoring the development of interregional and international economic relations</p> <p>Developed transport infrastructure provided by railways and highways of federal importance, sea and river ports, international airport in the city of Rostov-on-Don</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>The low level of use of innovation</p> <p>Insufficient opportunities of tourist and recreational potential of the region</p> <p>Low level of professionalism among the participants of the tourism industry</p> <p>Weak information support involvement in the Rostov region in the history of Silk Road (the need for R &amp; D)</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>The information field around the territory, a growing interest in the Rostov region because of the world championship - 2018</p> <p>Creating a single route through the Rostov region, Krasnodar region, the Caucasus</p> <p>Inclusion of the Azov region in already implemented tours of Silk Road in the North Caucasus region</p> <p>Development of sea cruise tours along the route Silk Road</p> <p>Development of the Azov region, as well as areas with a yield of mineral underground waters as a tourist and recreational areas of international fame</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>Competition from the North Caucasus</p> <p>The probability to lose time and do not receive benefits from the historical connection with Silk Road</p> <p>Difficulties of a political nature because of its proximity to Ukraine</p>

## SWOT-analysis of the Silk Road's Stavropol section

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>The presence of rich cultural and historical potential</p> <p>The presence of unique therapeutic factors in the region</p> <p>State's investing in the development of the region</p> <p>The creation of international transport corridors with Silk Road's countries</p> <p>Organization of research work in the Silk Road's tourist centers</p> <p>Favorable geographical location, diversity of natural and climate resources</p> <p>The presence of the international airport, railway, well-developed road network</p> <p>Proximity to a large number of Silk Road regions</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>The lack of high-quality service</p> <p>Lack of development of tourism infrastructure in the cultural and historical centers of Silk Road</p> <p>Lack of awareness of potential tourists</p> <p>The discrepancy of price and quality</p> <p>Uncertain position in competition with neighboring regions along the Silk Road</p> <p>Unclear legal status of the land within the boundaries of the CMS</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Attracting foreign investors for the development of the region</p> <p>Using the existing cultural and historical centers of the Silk Road potential for tourism development</p> <p>Creating a cultural dialogue between regions and countries of the Silk Road</p> <p>Using Silk Road brand to attract tourist flow</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>The absence of generally accepted rules to maintain the quality of service</p> <p>Difficulties of mutual relations in the world politics of countries</p>

## SWOT regarding possibility of development of a joint tourism product based on Vikings and Silk Road heritage in the Russian Federation

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical connection of Vikings and silk. Vikings were trading silk in 9-10<sup>th</sup> centuries and were mostly using Russian rivers;</li> <li>• Vikings traveled in the Black Sea to Constantinople, which was a part of the Silk Road and also a center of silk production; they would also continue the travel to the Caspian Sea and then to the Central Asian kingdoms making trade contacts with locals;</li> <li>• Vikings stabled connections with Arabs, who exchanged them silver and steel;</li> <li>• The Vikings silk trade with the Slavs was centered around the cities of Novgorod and the Staraja Ladoga in the area of present day Russia and Ukraine;</li> <li>• Vikings were able to carry big quantities of silk in their ships on long distance very rapidly into Northern Europe and at the same time bringing Arabic silver and steel;</li> <li>• Amazing Vikings' ships heritage;</li> <li>• Examples of interaction between Vikings and various people they met.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak Western silk road tourism products present on the market;</li> <li>• Lack of interpretation of the heritage;</li> <li>• Not much academic research on the topic</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture, gastronomy, traditions;</li> <li>• Silk gives a new layer of interaction to discover the Vikings heritage;</li> <li>• Story-telling opportunities;</li> <li>• Opportunity to discover Russia from a different angle : to travel by boat along the rivers, exploring old Russian towns, which were centers of culture and heritage – Novgorod, Staraja Ladoga, etc.;</li> <li>• Integration of the silk road heritage into the Vikings story;</li> <li>• Chinese are interested in Vikings (based on the results of the marketing research made by the Destination Vikings);</li> <li>• It's an opportunity to break barriers between the countries with difficult political relations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties to obtain a Visa;</li> <li>• Linguistic barriers;</li> <li>• Lack of engagement among the stakeholders;</li> <li>• Difficult political relationship between Ukraine and Russia, as Kiev should be a part of the Vikings Silk Road, however that is not possible in the contemporary climate;</li> <li>• Low quality of hospitality services in Russia;</li> <li>• Off-putting welcoming service in Russia.</li> </ul>

James Moncrieff Chairman, Destination Viking Association; Manager of the Vikings Cultural Route of the Council of Europe (2017)

## Armenia

With regard to Armenia, the SWOT exercise was undertaken by two separate organisations. Whilst only the Russian Armenian University carried the SWOT strictly as per the guidance, the additional information provided by the Armenian Institute of Tourism contributed to the overall picture and gave a detailed inventory of Armenian heritage that could be considered in the context of the Silk Road.

Armenia is already actively engaging with the Silk Road within its tourism development and marketing to quite a high level. Its location and history have given it many excellent Silk Road connections and linkages in both tangible and intangible heritage sectors. There is a Black Sea Silk Road Route marked across the country from the Iramian border in the South to the Georgian Border in the North.

Armenian tourism is developing but still lacks infrastructure especially outside of Yerevan. The war with Azerbaijan has damaged key infrastructure such as rail connections. The ongoing conflict also creates a threat to expanding tourism into border areas.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• favorable location of the region in the context of the project of Western Silk Road</li> <li>• rich natural and recreational potential, as well as cultural and historical heritage, several sites of which are included in the list of world heritage of UNESCO</li> <li>• experience in organizing important international and regional cultural and sport events and entertainments</li> <li>• famous traditional Armenian hospitality</li> <li>• highly qualified specialists in the sphere of tourism and hospitality</li> <li>• comparatively cheaper prices of touristic goods and services</li> <li>• comparatively higher quality of services</li> <li>• availability of free economic zones</li> <li>• availability of international airport</li> <li>• policy of “open air”</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not enough level of development of railway infrastructure</li> <li>• not enough mobilization of local and foreign investment in tourism</li> <li>• not enough branding of the region at international levels</li> <li>• low level of usage of recreational and historical-cultural potential of the country in touristic activities</li> <li>• necessity of reconstruction of some touristic objects</li> <li>• lack of stimulating factors for the development of inner tourism</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• potential for development of different types of tourism (religious, ethnic, business, ecological, agronomical, sport, extreme, medical, event etc.)</li> <li>• improvement of tourism infrastructures and material-technological basis</li> <li>• acceleration of integration of Armenia in the project of Western Silk Road</li> <li>• creation of favourable investment conditions in the sphere of tourism</li> <li>• active involvement of Armenian diaspora in increase of recognisability and creation of the image of the country</li> <li>• collaboration with privileged conditions with the countries of EU within the framework of the system GPS+.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stagnation in economy</li> <li>• competition with neighbouring countries (Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran and Georgia)</li> <li>• reduction of profitability and competitiveness of regional tour-product in national and international markets as a result of decrease of touristic attractiveness of Armenia</li> <li>• unfavourable changes in the legislation</li> <li>• natural cataclysms in the region or in the neighbouring regions</li> <li>• outflow of qualified specialists from the country.</li> </ul>

## Italy

<p><b>Strenghts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Italian cultural heritage related to the Silk Road</li> <li>• Local artisans and experiential tourism</li> <li>• Opening of Italian industrial and manufacturing firms to tourism</li> <li>• Concentration of Places, Museums and Exhibition Diffusion of Silk Cycleway and active tourism</li> <li>• Marco Polo committee within Italian Cultural Routes Board</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of an integrated and coordinated knowledge about the Silk Road heritage all over Italy</li> <li>• Low awareness of Italy as a Silk Road destination Scarce formation of local tourism industry with reference to eastern markets</li> <li>• Implementation of Italian Silk Road sites network difficult to carry on</li> <li>• Scarce experience in developing extended cultural routes and using them as a promotional tool</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable management of tourism flows and tourism requalification in overcrowded area thanks to the Western Silk Road Brand</li> <li>• Develop new upward trending markets through the Brand Silk Road</li> <li>• Revitalization of silk industry</li> <li>• Cooperation with already existing initiatives promoted by associations and institutions</li> <li>• Coherence with Italian Strategic Tourism plan and Regional tourism strategies</li> <li>• Eastern languages and cultures degree programmes at Ca' Foscari University in Venice</li> <li>• Food tourism</li> <li>• Synergies with OBOR programme by Chinese government</li> <li>• Creation of a tourism online platform related to Western Silk Road in Italy</li> <li>• Use the appeal of most famous cities as gateways to marginal areas and favour dispersal</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The risk that the classic Italian destinations will stand out without valorising the less-known Italian heritage</li> <li>• Great level of coordination is required due to the absence of a material route</li> <li>• Italian political instability</li> <li>• Uncoordinated efforts in promoting Western Silk Road Brand</li> </ul>

## Greece

The most detailed and comprehensive input into the SWOT exercise was undertaken by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece. The research team of the Laboratory of Applied Economics and Development, led by Dr. Stella Kostopoulou, Associate Professor of the School of Economic Sciences coordinated a detailed research of the tourism potential across the whole of the 13 administrative regions of Greece

The historical background and location has ensured that Greece has played an important part of the Silk Road since the very first interactions of Alexander the Great with the East. In order to maintain balance in this study, the SWOT summary will reflect the analysis at national level, with the regional detail being available in the full report (Annex 3).

The national SWOT-analysis is extracted below:

**The Western Silk Road SWOT-analysis of Greece**

	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<p><b>Greece Development and Tourism Profile</b> (<i>demographics, socio-economic structure, capacity building programmes, local empowerment etc.</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Broad range of economic activities providing growth opportunities</li> <li>●Established universities and research centers</li> <li>●Innovative entrepreneurship activities of R&amp;D organisations</li> <li>●Adequate transport infrastructure and network, mainly in Athens and major tourism destinations (i.e.low-cost carriers developments)</li> <li>●Richness, diversity of scenery/ Variety of tourism destinations (coastal/ rural/ protected areas, islands, mountain resorts, historical settlements and towns)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Economic crisis</li> <li>●Financial constraints</li> <li>●High unemployment rate</li> <li>●Intense regional disparities</li> <li>●Economy based on labor-intensive activities in low-tech sectors (agriculture)</li> <li>●Urban concentration – Depopulation of rural areas.</li> <li>●High cost of living in metropolitan urban centers</li> <li>●Low level of ICT diffusion</li> <li>●Large number of SMEs lacking R&amp;D potential</li> <li>●Non satisfactory ground transport infrastructure and accessibility</li> <li>●Low level of facilities and services in remote areas</li> <li>●Intense tourism seasonality</li> <li>●Tourism monoculture in specific areas e.g. islands</li> <li>●Lack of quality standards (i.e. quality management systems ISO 9001: 2000 / ISO 9001: 2008, environmental management EN ISO 14001, food safety ISO 22000: 2005 and HACCP, new quality signals Q (total quality), ecological quality label Greek key)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Funding opportunities, especially within European Union programmes (actions supporting SMEs and infrastructure development in peripheral regions)</li> <li>●Public / private funding opportunities for innovation</li> <li>●Information and communication technologies (ICTs)</li> <li>●Modernisation of transport infrastructures</li> <li>●Proximity with neighbor markets (i.e. Balkans) providing opportunities for further economic development and cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Debt crisis, economic recession</li> <li>●Growing unemployment, especially youth unemployment</li> <li>●Brain drain of highly qualified young people going abroad</li> <li>●Aging population</li> <li>●Development obstacles (i.e. delays in infrastructure)</li> <li>●Competitive tourism markets in neighboring countries</li> <li>●High cost in introducing new technologies and innovation</li> <li>●Urban concentration and globalization threatens the ability of SMTEs to survive Environmental degradation through inappropriate waste management methods and excessive usage of natural resources</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Natural resources of great ecological importance and Protected Areas/ Great Biodiversity</li> <li>● Plethora of cultural resources (registered and protected monuments, archaeological sites, numerous museums and traditional settlements)</li> <li>● SMTEs' flexibility and ability to tailor products to new tourists' needs</li> <li>● SMTEs' personalized relationships with suppliers, consumers and employees enhancing service quality</li> <li>● Family involvement in local entrepreneurial activity enhancing service quality and customer satisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of a comprehensive and rational national tourism policy and planning</li> <li>● Unsuccessful and inconsistent spatial plans, strategies and policies in tourism development and promotion</li> <li>● Inadequacy of tourism infrastructure to serve an ever- expanding tourism demand</li> <li>● Lack of efforts and resources toward environmental sustainability</li> <li>● Tourism infrastructure does not meet the needs of a market less sensitive to price and more concerned with quality and value for money</li> <li>● Promotional campaigns and activities lack long-term strategic marketing approach, including feedback and evaluation of effectiveness of plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cooperation activities between public and private sector</li> <li>● Continuous growth of global tourism demand and new trends</li> <li>● Increasing demand for cultural heritage tourism, religious tourism</li> <li>● New emerging markets: China and Russia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tourism oversupply and demand and lack of well-defined carrying capacity limits in several destinations</li> <li>● Lack of visibility in Global Distribution Systems</li> <li>● Globalized terrorism</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Continuous increase in tourism arrivals</li> <li>●Challenging tourism policy targets, such as increase in inbound tourism arrivals and receipts, in competitiveness of tourism product, extension of tourism season, attraction of high income and alternative types of tourism</li> <li>●Bodies and agencies intensely active in protecting and promoting the cultural heritage and environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Plethora of tourism SMTEs, targeting mainly short-term profitability, oversupply of tourism amenities inconsistent with tourism demand and fierce price competition</li> <li>●Lack of SMTEs clustering and cooperation on a destination basis, lack of professionalism in small family tourism units, lack of investment in long-term tourism projects, lack of partnerships among destination stakeholders</li> <li>●Lack of highly qualified personnel in the tourism sector.</li> <li>●Dependence upon tour operators</li> <li>●Inadequate training procedures in the tourism sector</li> <li>●Lack of tourism information mechanisms expertise (advanced tourism statistics on supply / demand)</li> <li>●Decrease of inbound tourism expenditure per capita</li> <li>●Uninsured labor in the tourism sector</li> <li>●Lack of adequate differentiation of the Greek tourism product</li> </ul>		

**Determining Factors of Tourism Development**

**Tourism Supply**  
*Silk Road's unique natural and cultural resources*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategic geographical location on east-west crossroads</li> <li>● Unique characteristics of cultural supply in Greek tourism destinations (diversity, dispersion)</li> <li>● New cultural resources: local gastronomy, cultural landscape, festivals, industrial heritage</li> <li>● Links with the history of Silk Road (e.g. Soufli, Edessa, Goumenissa, Messinia, Kos etc.)</li> <li>● Timeless experience in the maritime trade on the Silk Routes</li> <li>● Notable destination- based WSR experiences</li> <li>● In some regions young people turn towards silkworm sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Notable unexploited resources directly and/or indirectly related to the Silk Road</li> <li>● Undiscovered links with the history of Silk Road Routes (many regions with history in silk and textile production)</li> <li>● Low level in tourism investments related to Silk Road</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Untapped Silk Road heritage, ready to utilization</li> <li>● Unexploited potential for differentiation of tourism supply towards higher-value added and 365 days attractions, through WSR based experiences</li> <li>● Greece to be established as one of the most important WSR destinations</li> <li>● Contribution of the Information and communication technologies (ICTs) to sustainable tourism development UNWTO and EU Projects concerning Silk Road Tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● External obstacles to the exploitation and tourism development of the WSR cultural resources</li> <li>● Potential reduction in domestic tourism (due to economic crisis)</li> <li>● Potential economic crisis to countries of origin of WSR tourists</li> <li>● Absence of European and national funding sources</li> </ul>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Opportunities for funding from European, national and regional Programmes</li> <li>● The increase of organised and individual foreign tourists supplies cultural consumption and networking.</li> </ul>	
<b>Natural resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Natural resources of great ecological importance and Protected Areas by international agreements (e.g. Natura 2000, Ramsar Convention)</li> <li>● Rich Biodiversity</li> <li>● Mild weather conditions</li> <li>● Great energy resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● None relevant policy/plan between natural resources and Silk Roads</li> <li>● Limited development of natural resources as tourism products</li> <li>● Wrong development policies (economic development vs environmental protection) during the last decades</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● EU policies in favor of sustainable tourism development</li> <li>● Increasing awareness for environmental protection</li> <li>● Significant development prospects of special and alternative forms of tourism</li> <li>● Technology improved cultivations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Climate change, environmental pollution and degradation of natural resources</li> <li>● Low level of political long-term commitment safeguarding environmental protection</li> <li>● Low public /community participation in initiatives for environmental protection</li> </ul>

<p><b>Cultural Heritage</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rich multicultural resources</li> <li>● Archaeological sites and monuments in UNESCO World Heritage List</li> <li>● Numerous industrial heritage buildings, linked to silk production (e.g. Metaxourgio, Chrysallis)</li> <li>● Rich tradition in creative sectors (Art, Crafts and Design)</li> <li>● Significant intangible cultural heritage linked to WSR (mythology, fairs, music/ dance/ theater festivals and cultural events – e.g. International Fair of Thessaloniki as a node of international cooperation)</li> <li>● Significant cultural tangible heritage linked to WSR (historical sites, architectural heritage and modern culture)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● None relevant policy/plan between cultural resources and Silk Roads</li> <li>● Weakness in creating new cultural tourism products.</li> <li>● Incoherence of innovative efforts</li> <li>● Local culture/ intangible cultural heritage is unnoticeable in the dominant tourism image</li> <li>● Delays and shortcomings in the development of complete tourism products and services for the cultural experience</li> <li>● Lack of long term policy initiatives towards integrated revitalization plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Many areas across the country have strong historical connection with Silk Road and can become nodes in a Greek Silk Road route (e.g. Soufl, Goumenissa, Thessaloniki, Edessa, Pelion, Athens etc.)</li> <li>● Activities related to gastronomy and local traditional cuisine are good opportunities for revitalizing local economy and employment</li> <li>● E.U. funds for cultural protection and development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Degradation of local identity in mass tourism destinations</li> <li>● Climate change/ environmental threats to cultural heritage monuments</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Significant poles of silk production with economic benefits of silk exports (i.e. Soufli)</li> <li>●Existence of infrastructure connected with silk road tourism still operating/ Modern silkworm units (e.g. Rizia Evros)</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Services – Infrastructure - Accessibility</b></p> <p><b>Tourism Demand</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Smooth accessibility of the Silk Road areas, through International airports, major harbors, railway network along with main road axes (i.e. Egnatia Motorway)</li> <li>●Modern communication and transport hubs</li> <li>●Reduced time travel</li> <li>●Most of the regions have not exhausted their infrastructure capacity</li> <li>●One of the most researched Silk Road countries by global travelers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Delays in completing infrastructure projects</li> <li>● Non-complete transportation facilities drain the exports</li> <li>● Low level of transport services (delays, cancelations)</li> <li>● Lack of accessibility in less developed regions</li> <li>● In some regions ports are degraded</li> <li>●Greece’s position in the Silk Road is vague</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Investments in quality tourism infrastructure</li> <li>●Numerous existing bilateral cooperation agreements</li> <li>● More diverse tourism demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Limited transportation options in remote areas</li> <li>●Need for an integrated national transportation system connecting all modes of transport</li> <li>●Changes in European-international</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● One of the highest rated Silk Road countries</li> <li>● One of the countries historically associated with the Silk Road</li> <li>● Attractive Silk Road destinations all over the country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Low level of familiarity with the new emerging markets (especially China)</li> <li>● Weak update of tourism products on new tourism trends</li> <li>● Mass tourism with high price elasticity of demand and low income elasticity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase of tourists looking for authentic tourism experiences to share the life style of local communities</li> <li>● Increase in demand for personalized and customized holidays and tailored tourism products and services according to the needs of highly competitive market</li> <li>● Increasingly sophisticated travelers, experienced, well-educated, becoming less destination- oriented and more experience- oriented</li> </ul>	<p>tourism demand for Greek tourism products due to geopolitical changes in the broader region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Refugees crisis</li> <li>● Globalised terrorism threats</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tourism Image</b> (focus on Marketing and Promoting the Silk Road)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Some areas have already well established brand name as Silk Road destinations (i.e. Soufli)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack in tourism promotion targeted in the WSR</li> <li>● Low awareness of local silk road roots</li> <li>● Existence of a blurry image of the relation between tourism – culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Differentiation of the tourism product, according to regional comparative advantages, by strengthening the Silk Road Tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Economic crisis may deprive of resources necessary for the operation and maintenance of cultural infrastructure.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some areas have already well established brand name as textile production destinations (i.e. Kastoria, Kozani)</li> <li>• Relatively high attractiveness (i.e. Soufli Silk Feast is important for silk cultural heritage promotion)</li> <li>• Some areas have developed strong local character related to their tourism image</li> <li>• Variety of quality local gastronomy products (e.g. olive oil, wine, etc.)</li> <li>• Name of origin local products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low usage of the existing Silk Road identity across the country</li> <li>• Tourism image of Greece mainly as a sun-sea destination</li> <li>• Many of the old silk build heritage is rather degraded (i.e. Edessa mills)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadening and adopting sustainable tourism and best WSR tourism practices More cohesive marketing and promotional campaigns to include territorial diversity</li> <li>• Human resources strategies to attract and retain qualified employees in the industry</li> </ul>	
<b>Tourism stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism stakeholders interested in cross- border partnerships, willing to explore new markets and engage new partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty of local authorities in their leading the development of best practices for cultural tourism and WSR initiatives</li> <li>• Difficulty by local authorities in adapting a tourism development model with differentiated structural characteristics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive research to better understand the expectations of travelers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing demographics, shifting travel patterns and volatile economic conditions are increasing the pressure on industry</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bodies and agencies intensely active in protecting and promoting cultural heritage and the environment.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradual activation of private sector initiatives</li> <li>• Strong public/ private partnerships</li> <li>• Further research analysis of niche markets and specific strategies to be undertaken by both public and private sector tourism stakeholders to upgrade the WSR position within these markets</li> </ul>	<p>stakeholders to develop effective campaigns and business strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fact that requirements of high level coordination and cooperation and innovative partnership arrangements are difficult to achieve between tourism stakeholders</li> <li>• Lack of the necessary know-how and the adequate coordination and networking of local public and private bodies may lead to ineffective initiatives for the conservation of cultural resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tourism Policy, Planning and Management</b> (at national, regional, local level)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The promotion and creation of a "silk land" network to be included in regional plans, as one of the main axes of regional strategic frameworks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Lack of a comprehensive and rational tourism policy and planning for Greek tourism towards WSR</li> <li>•Lack of a long-term regional strategic vision towards WSR tourism activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Upgrading tourism in the political agenda at the national, regional and local level</li> <li>•Tourism and cultural development as main national and regional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety issues such as global security concerns have increased the urgency for tourism industry actions</li> <li>• Difficulty in establishing the necessary linkages to</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ongoing restoration programmes of historical industrial heritage buildings (i.e. Chrysalis silk industry restoration in Central Macedonia)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsuccessful and inconsistent spatial plans, strategies and policies in tourism development and promotion</li> <li>• Lack of an integrated tourism planning</li> <li>• Deficiencies in tourism education</li> <li>• Bureaucracy obstacles in new entrepreneurial activities and start-ups</li> <li>• Lack of cooperation practices in culture and tourism management at the regional and local level.</li> <li>• Delays in national and regional planning for the realisation of projects on the revival of mature tourist destinations</li> <li>• Lack of institutional inclusion of the cultural product in the processes of tourism development</li> </ul>	<p>strategic planning objectives</p>	<p>ensure the development of collaborative strategies in conjunction with WSR initiatives may lead to critical weakening of a high development potential</p>
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