

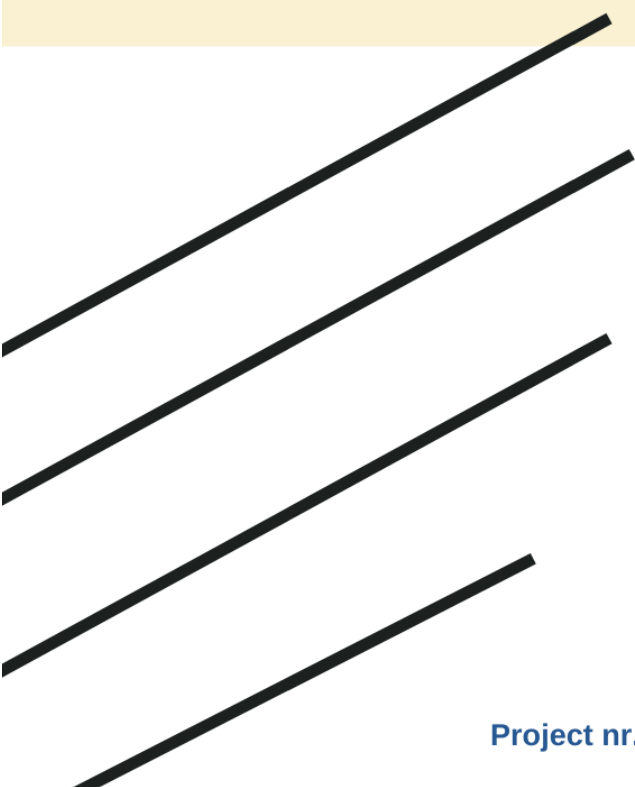
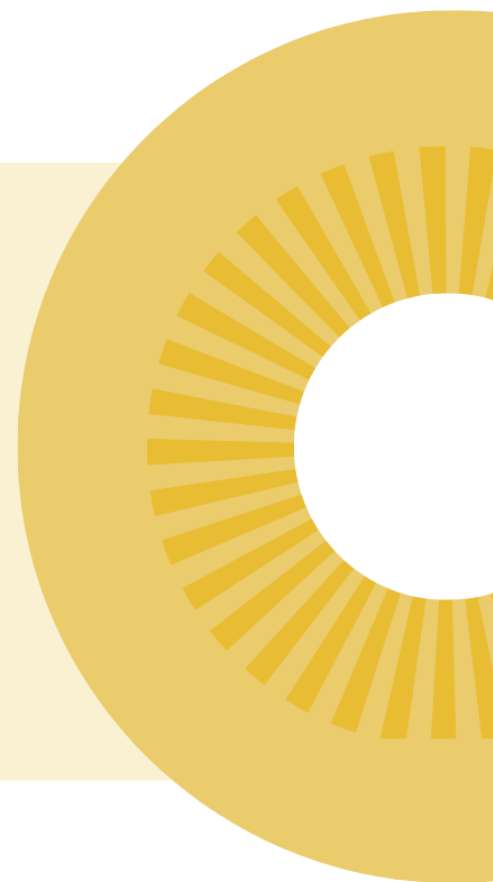
ReligiTour

Enhancement of the competences and possibilities for religious tourism development and for better integration and management of religious sites in the urban environment

RELIGITOUR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Fundacja Rozwoju Aktywnosci Miedzynarodowej i Edukacyjnej
- FRAME

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Project nr. 2023-1-PL01-KA220-HED-000156074



Co-funded by
the European Union

THE ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE RELIGITOUR RESEARCH PROCESS IN EACH PARTNER COUNTRY:

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PAX RHODOPICA FOUNDATION, BULGARIA

FONDAZIONE DI PARTECIPAZIONE PARCO CULTURALE ECCLESIALE "TERRE DEL CAPO DI LEUCA DE FINIBUS TERRAE", ITALY

THE AUTHORS WOULD LIKE TO THANK TO ALL RELIGITOUR PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS MATERIAL.

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission or the National Agency cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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1. Objective of the task

The aim of the Conceptual Framework is development of a conceptual pathway for the development of holistic approach for promotion of religious tourism as well as for the better integration of the religious heritage & sites in urban and sub-urban environments with opportunities for their fuller & better preservation, conservation and exhibition in a way that will create added value (both culturally, socially and economically) for the entire community. The main aim of the Framework is to emphasize strong enough the importance & way of application of various approaches to engage civil society in the local communities & region-wide (wishfully – also nation-wide) in the processes of preservation, conservation and display of religious sites, objects and other remnants of the religious heritage.

The Framework provides guidelines for the structure, and the main points of the training process that will lead to achievement of the project goals. It will provide the basis for the development of the ReligiTour training materials & all necessary e-collaboration tools.

2. Research methodology for the framework

Purpose of the study was to develop an appropriate set of guidelines to easily identify existing deficits and approaches in the existing education process in the field of religious tourism and management of religious sites & heritage. The target audience for the course are university professors, junior and senior assistants, university researches, postdoctoral scholars, PhD students working in the field of Religion Tour topics. This group was therefore the target of the study.

Qualitative research methodology was used. Each partner of the ReligiTour project conducted 2 types of research:

- one Focus group interviews (FGI) - a qualitative study that was used both as an independent research technique (to collect opinions and generate new solutions) and in combination with expert interviews;
- three interviews with experts In-depth expert interview (IDI) - it allows to supplement the results of the focus discussion.

The selection of the focus group (respondents) was purposeful. The FGI was attended by respondents representing all categories identified in the target group (University professors, Junior and senior assistants, University researches, Postdoctoral scholars, PhD students

working in the field of Religion Tour topics). Proportions between the different categories of respondents were kept relatively.

Focus participants also represented 3 categories:

- teachers who have contact with (teach) issues of religious tourism (people called TRT Teachers Religious Tourism)
- teachers who have contact with (teach) issues related to culture or tourism, but not strictly religious tourism (people called TTC Tourism Culture Teachers),
- teachers who teach completely different topics (so-called TOS Teachers Other Subject).

Such a set of respondents allowed for discussion in order to prepare a comprehensive and objective manual in line with general needs.

The IDI (In-depth expert interview) method was used by each of the project partners for interviews conducted with 3 experts who also represented these categories, i.e. one TOS expert, one - TTC and one TRT expert.

In order to systematize the conclusions of the study, each partner was given a uniform scenario for the study (for FGI and IDI) and a results format (for FGI and IDI) in which to post the results obtained. The uniform format of the results obtained from the FGI and IDI allowed for the compilation of guidelines for the Conceptual Framework. Helping to provide detailed information during both types of survey (FGI and IDI) was the use of specially prepared work cards that allowed experts to write down insights and guidelines.

The following results are supplemented with quotes from experts, noting the country the expert came from and his profile: TRT (Teachers Religious Tourism), TTC (Tourism Culture Teachers), TOS Teachers Other Subject.

3. ReligiTour – General assumptions

3.1. Introduction

Religious tourism, in particular pilgrimage, is one of the oldest forms of tourism in the world and is considered to be a kind of 'axis' of cultural tourism in its broadest sense. Over time, fixed destinations have developed as religious destinations that have marked the course of the most popular pilgrimage routes. These routes have led to the development of tourism which, starting from pilgrimage tourism, takes the form of religious tourism as well as cultural

tourism. This phenomenon can be observed in many places in Europe and throughout the world, regardless of religion, culture or continent.

The role of religious tourism in this sense is the subject of a ReligiTour course aimed at various audiences in European countries.

The particular importance of religious tourism can be seen in Europe, where there is a tradition of undertaking trips to places of worship (Ancient Greece, Rome, Santiago di Compostela, Mount Athos, Sergiev, Lourdes, Fatima, etc.). At the same time, tourism is growing at a rapid pace in the world and in Europe, which is linked to the popularity of trips of a leisure and cognitive nature, including those associated with the development of cultural tourism. Places of pilgrimage have started to play the role of tourist destinations hosting people coming to explore. Today, these processes reinforce the multicultural society of modern Europe. Supporting religious tourism, to which the ReligiTour course aims to contribute, is becoming increasingly important in a situation of progressive secularisation in Europe on the one hand and accelerated individualisation of religious attitudes on the other.

The ReligiTour responds to the needs of growing ecumenism and dialogue between religions and can thus foster a process of cultural rapprochement. Simply getting to know people from different cultural backgrounds and different religions, their lives and religious customs is the first step towards breaking down barriers and mutual understanding.

Tourist trips reflect the worldview of those who participate in them, but can also foster the spiritual and cultural development of those who have undertaken religious travel. Religious tourism thus leads to an encounter with human creations, often reflected in well-known cultural monuments (temples, museums, building complexes). Tourists thus learn about the customs and culture of the communities visited. Religious tourism supports and enriches the encounter with the other and can support the 'virtue of hospitality'. ReligiTour should support such understanding, because an educated tourist who understands the culture and religion of other communities will discover the reason for the differences, evaluate other people correctly and accept the richness of their religion and culture. From an individual point of view, ReligiTour can enrich the individual and the personality. From a global point of view, ReligiTour is part of the way of developing peaceful coexistence.

The ReligiTour course is therefore becoming an important tool for imparting knowledge on the importance of religious tourism for the development of specific places, local

communities, European integration and intercultural dialogue in the broader sense. To fulfil this task, the course should cover the following topics:

- defining religious tourism and establishing the scope of the concept in relation to other forms of tourism,
- identification of the motives for undertaking religious tourism (demand side) and the development of religious tourism in the region (supply side), (religious tourism market),
- shaping an integrated religious tourism product with a local marketing system to support this product,
- understanding the importance of sacred sites for local sustainable development,
- identifying problem areas in the future of religious tourism taking into account cultural integration processes in Europe.

3.2. Religious tourism- definition and scope

Religious tourism includes not only traditionally understood pilgrimages undertaken across cultures, but also “journeys undertaken for religious or cognitive motives, the main purpose of which are places related to the history of religion, places of religious worship and religious events” (Mikos v. Rohrscheidt, 2016).

In the ReligiTour course, it is important to emphasise the close relationship between culture and religion, which also applies to travel that falls within the scope of cultural tourism in the broader sense. Experts point to components of religious tourism falling within the scope of cultural tourism, which include:

- values,
- rituals
- events,
- celebrations, - festivals
- re-enactments,
- places of worship: shrines, cemeteries, religious centres
- as well as generally understood: religiosity, spirituality, and the needs related to them as motives for undertaking the journey.

It should also be noted that, on the other hand, modern travel and tourism activity patterns cannot be fully understood if religion is not taken into account (Mattila 2001). From this combination arises the role and importance of ReligiTour for:

- learning about the history and culture of a region,
- the preservation of cultural heritage through the safeguarding of places of worship, shrines, ensembles of religious monuments,
- interest and development of lesser-known regions that can make use of existing religious sites,
- deepening knowledge of religions from one's own cultural circle, but also of religions of other cultures.

For many people, religious travel is not of a spiritual nature, but results from an interest in religion as one of the foundations of one's own cultural circle. After participating in a religious trip, a tourist can become interested in both religion and culture more broadly. ReligiTour can become an important factor in learning about other cultures or a key to understanding historical events or artistic creations. This interest provides the motivation for undertaking tourist trips to:

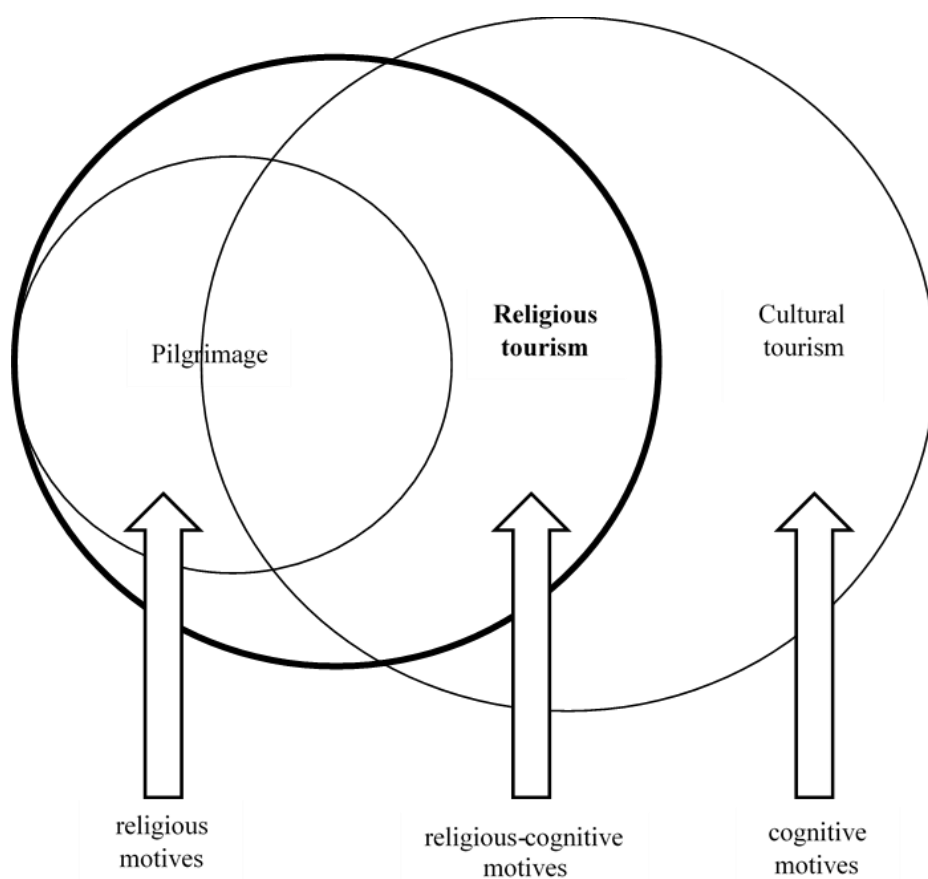
- places connected with the history of (different) religions,
- ancient or still functioning centres of spirituality,
- places considered to be the cradle of various religious cult figures,
- areas with concentrations of outstanding works of art and architecture created on the basis of religious beliefs or for religious purposes,
- to follow ancient pilgrimage routes.

Not all of these behaviours can be classified as traditional pilgrimage or travel motivated by a typical religious need, (e.g. search for meaning in life, asceticism and spiritual experiences participation in religious events). Religious tourism therefore also has a cognitive character, which can arise both from the traveller's interest in religions (religious studies), but also from more general interests - cultural or artistic.

Religious tourism therefore also includes travel to important religious centres undertaken by people from outside a particular religious tradition. In this case, interests and the desire to get to know another culture determined by the religious beliefs of its representatives also become an important element of the decision to stay in a particular place,

even if the tourists are non-religious people. Religious tourism is closely connected with holiday and cultural tourism. For the participation of organised pilgrimages, a free day is often planned in the program so that pilgrims can also make day trips into the surrounding area” (Rinschede, 1992).

Therefore, ReligiTour proposes a broader view of religious tourism that includes both traditional forms - pilgrimage - as well as forms related to a broad aspect of culture that takes into account the influence of religion (Figure 1).



Source: own elaboration (A. Niezgoda, FRAME)

3.3. Motives for religious travel (demand side) and religious tourism development in the region (supply side)

The ReligiTour course should cover issues that concern both tourism demand and supply. With this approach, ReligiTour fits into the market-based view of tourism and its various forms (Niezgoda, 2013). The demand side involves people undertaking a tourist trip who spend money at the destination. The result is the economic development of the destination. According to the principle of marketing, which is important in the modern approach of the tourism market, the supply side should adapt the offer in order to best meet the needs of tourists. The starting point is knowledge of these needs, which is why the ReligiTour course should include elements to assist future service providers and organisers of religious tourism to create an offer adequate to the needs of the audience.

In this view, the ReligiTour course takes on an important meaning, by training people who can be both tourists and employees of the tourism supply sphere. The latter group includes:

- tourism organisers,
- tourist guides,
- managers of catering and hotel facilities,
- persons managing places of worship and shrines,
- clergy persons with whom the tourist has contact.

It appears, therefore, that encouraging a tourist to come to a place of worship is not only due to an interest in religion. It becomes important to understand the broad processes of shaping promotional activities to encourage different segments of potential buyers to come. As tourists use a variety of services understanding the essence of religious tourism should involve all those groups of service providers who come into contact with tourists.

The needs of tourists arise from the motivations for undertaking tourist travel, which, according to section 3.2.(Figure1), can be divided into:

- religious - related to participation in religious rites resulting from the tourist's belonging to a given cultural circle,
- religious and cognitive - related to spiritual experiences, but also to the desire to learn about the history, culture, and nature of the places visited;

- cognitive - related more to learning about the history, traditions, culture associated with one's own or another religion; these motives also concern aspects of religious studies and multiculturalism.

The ReligiTour course should therefore take into account all three types of tourist motivation and thus educate organisers and service providers to convey content and meet the needs of different tourist segments.

Example of an expert statement:

“Despite the diversification of tourist destinations and offerings, healing experiences and vocational search remain essential components of modern religious tourism.

Pilgrimage, although distinct from religious tourism, remains a form of travel that merges faith and discovery, promoting a personal and direct connection with the sacred.”

(Italy)

This approach means that religious tourism encompasses different groups of needs and there is no need to separate, for example, traditional pilgrimage tourism and religious tourism in the broadest sense.

Example of an expert statement:

"For example, the hosts of the Cathedral of St James in Santiago de Compostela only consider as “pilgrims” those people who have reached this holy place on foot or using non-mechanical means of transport - bicycles, horses, etc. - to be pilgrims. All others are treated as ‘ordinary tourists’. At Jasna Góra in Częstochowa (Poland), on the other hand, all visitors are treated as pilgrims, even those just visiting the shrine’ (TRT Poland)

In order not to make the mistake that all visitors to a particular site are either just ‘tourists’ or just ‘pilgrims’, the ReligiTour course proposes the above approach resulting from the adoption of the indicated three types of motivation for visiting religious sites. It should also be borne in mind that pilgrimage should not be associated with one particular religion, as it is a multicultural phenomenon and has occurred in the history of religions of all faiths.

The basis for a broad approach to religious tourism is also the fact that during a tourist trip, including a religious one, the tourist is generally guided by several motives, i.e. in addition to spiritual issues, cognitive or social issues are important (Nieżgoda, 2013). It has been noted

that even during strictly pilgrimage trips, participants are keen to buy local and other products.

Example of an expert statement:

"During pilgrimages, participants, mainly women, are very fond of buying various products. These include souvenirs from holy places, often for family and friends, but also for their own memories. It also happens that purchases include completely different things. It is as if the participants have more joy during the spiritual journey' (TRT Poland).

This conclusion is evidence that different motives, for example social or shopping, can be present during a religious journey. It is also an important conclusion, indicating that religious tourism can support local producers, which is sustainable.

ReligiTour training will enable participants to understand these issues and be active in matters not only of tourism market development but also of local development. Participants can belong to different groups and represent both tourism supply and demand.

Example of an expert statement:

"Indeed, it is not excluded that after a ReligiTour course intended for potential service providers, it will turn out that a participant of the course will become a religious tourist, because he or she will become interested in a sacred place and its history" (TOS Poland).

In summary, the ReligiTour course should take as a basis that religious tourism includes travel to sacred sites and places of worship, and that the motivation of tourists to undertake this journey need not be strictly religious. With its broad approach to motivation, the ReligiTour course targets a variety of audiences related to tourism demand and supply.

3.4. Integrated religious tourism product

In response to the needs of new religious tourists, the ReligiTour course should prepare potential service providers and decision-makers in the region to shape the tourism product.

The dominant tourist destination, tourism assets, form the core of the tourism product. In religious tourism, this core consists of:

- sacred sites,
- places of religious events,
- places where rituals, processions, religious festivals and mysteries take place.

However, it is important to remember that the shrines of different religions are also linked to the history and culture of a specific country and region. The ReligiTour course develops a broader approach to communicating culture and history.

A prerequisite for the development of tourism is that sites and collections can be made available for visiting. An essential element in shaping the product is the relationship with other elements of marketing, including in particular promotion. The ReligiTour course should therefore impart knowledge on how to shape a religious tourism product together with the concept of its promotion.

A religious tourism product should include components related to the place of worship or trail as a unique element, but also secure the tourist's stay and transport to the place visited.

Therefore, the ReligiTour course should indicate the principles for the design of places of worship and religious routes secured with an appropriate tourist infrastructure, strictly characteristic for participants of this type of travel, e.g. accommodation in a pilgrim's house or souvenir shops for pilgrim tourists. Infrastructure related to visiting other attractions should not be forgotten. It becomes important to pay attention to the cooperation of all entities shaping the tourism product (Nieżgoda, 2011).

The role of cooperation with the hosts of places of worship, who should cooperate with tourism organisers, is very important. As tourists, including religious tourists, use many elements of infrastructure it becomes essential to educate in the spirit of achieving cooperation between different actors and service providers. This cooperation allows for the integration of activities and sustainability.

The ReligiTour course should therefore cover current issues related to the factors of religious tourism development, which include:

- the maintenance of pilgrimage traditions and the enrichment of the pastoral programme at the shrines,

- entrepreneurial attitude and activities (custodian, groups, associations, religious congregations) caring for a particular shrine - both in terms of pastoral care and non-pastoral activities,
- developing tourist infrastructure,
- searching for and introducing new ideas, solutions and projects - innovativeness and expansiveness,
- cooperation of shrine managers with local authorities and centres of
- culture,
- adequately prepared staff to handle pilgrimage and tourism traffic,
- 'winning' a group of friends to support the development of the shrine,
- promotion of sanctuaries in the mass media - in the press (local, regional and national), on the radio, on television, on Internet portals (website in several language versions and a mobile version) and in social networks (Facebook, Twitter),
- promotion of shrines during tourism fairs, religious tourism fairs, as well as during religious tourism congresses and conferences.

It should also be noted that the services offered to tourists can equally benefit both residents and visitors. That is to say, the development of religious tourism (improving service infrastructure, transport, catering, etc.), can benefit local residents and improve the quality of life where they live.

3.5. Importance of religious sites for local sustainable development

According to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted at the New York Summit in 2015, various economic areas, including tourism, should be in line with the goals set out in the document. (UNWTO, 2023). Religious tourism, understood in line with ReligiTour, can specifically correspond to the following goals of the 2030 Agenda:

- Goal 10: Less inequality
- Goal 11. sustainable cities and communities
- Objective. 16. peace, justice and strong institutions
- Objective. 17. partnerships for the goals.

The role of any religious centre in a country or region has been and is currently determined by factors such as, the history of the place, its location, transport accessibility,

accommodation and food facilities, as well as the degree of development of the economy of the locality related to the religious function. These elements determine the scale of popularity of a destination, making it known on a regional, local, national, European or even global scale. ReligiTour should educate towards understanding the role of a centre and the impact on its development. It can contribute to the improvement of smaller centres through the development of tourism, where proper promotion and information about the place is essential.

Important for sustainable development, is religious tourism to places where there are no other assets other than religious ones. In this situation, the tourist traffic associated with visiting these values contributes to the creation of jobs, the development of the local economy, handicrafts and culture, and promotes an increase in the income and living standards of the population in areas that are often economically deprived. The ReligiTour course should point the way towards transforming the socio-economic structure to improve the quality of life of communities in the places visited by tourists. In particular, the improvement of the standard of living comes from the development of the supply of tourism services (hotel, catering, route and attraction operation).

The origins of pilgrimage and religious tourism confirm that it is usually this type of tourism that initiates the development of the tourism industry in a given area contributing to the development of local entrepreneurship, including trade and services. Tourist infrastructure and cultural offerings develop around places of worship. Hotels, restaurants, service establishments, market places, galleries, exhibitions, festivals, fair venues, etc. are created. Social and road infrastructure is also expanding (Jaremen, 2017).

But the sense of pilgrimage and the authenticity of the pilgrim experience must not be lost. Religious tourism should also foster the preservation of cultural heritage, which should be an important part of the content of the ReligiTour course.

It should also be remembered that ReligiTour, in line with the idea of sustainable development, should be based on ecological values, which should stem from an understanding of human respect for nature (Niezgoda, 2011).

ReligiTour can therefore foster the economic, social and cultural revitalisation of marginalised areas, commonly perceived as unattractive, forgotten and poorly known.

3.6. Main issues in the future of religious tourism taking into account cultural integration processes in Europe

The main issues for the future of religious tourism that the ReligiTour course should address include:

- A. The obligation not only morally but also legally of the present generations to pass on the cultural legacy to future generations in the best possible condition.** An excessive influx of tourists, so-called 'overtourism', can also be caused by religious tourism and pose a threat to monuments, including religious sites. The most important thing, therefore, is to find a compromise, i.e. a 'golden mean' between the protection of monuments and their contemporary, purposeful use, also as tourist attractions. On the one hand, it is absolutely necessary to make monuments accessible to the public, but on the other hand, this should be done in such a way that they are exposed to degradation as little as possible. This approach is in line with the idea of sustainable development.
- B. The need to develop appropriate marketing (promotional) activities to encourage tourist arrivals to lesser known and thus less developed sites, and to limit arrivals to sites struggling with overtourism.** The popularity of heritage sites with tourists now largely depends on efficient 'heritage marketing'. However, some sacred sites are struggling with overtourism and visitor expectations. Managers of sacred sites should see their primary role in the protection and preservation of the site and the accompanying religious tradition, which usually stands in opposition to satisfying visitor expectations.
- C. Finding a balance between preserving the spiritual and religious values of the site and designing and implementing tools to enable sustainable tourism development at these sites.** Tourism in sacred sites represents the coexistence and interpenetration of the sacred and the profane.
- D. Transmission of knowledge about the values associated with the norms of different cultures and religions, and the development of knowledge to promote respect for multiculturalism and diverse social norms in order to prevent conflicts.** Conflicts arise not so much from the mere combination of religious and other sites that are a source of tourist motivation, but from tourists' attitudes towards these values. These conflicts

most often arise against the background of tourists' lack of respect for the rules and norms adopted by a community; tourists may be unaware of these norms or deliberately ignore them.

E. Realizing the value of intermingling and religious diversity in a particular area, which can be attractive to tourists. This is a conclusion that stems from the problem of so-called unwanted heritage. This problem occurs when religious objects, monuments, beliefs are associated with a religion other than the dominant one in a particular circle or region, e.g. when a particular object was erected by dissenters. Examples include trails exposing cultural diversity, such as the Three Cultures Trail in Lodz (Poland).

F. To promote the process of intercultural integration and research on terrorism and security of the future of Europe. This conclusion is based on the fact that the problem of terrorism, often affects places of worship. Terrorist activities can affect visitors to the place as well as be related to the destruction of cultural and religious heritage sites.

In response to these problems, the ReligiTour course should teach adepts in the following activities:

- 1) Recognizing the value of the potential and uses of religious heritage for various religious groups in the region, and promoting this heritage for the development of sustainable tourism in the region.
- 2) Using religious tourism to bridge existing tensions between tourism experiences and religious experiences, and the importance of religious tourism in changing or perpetuating social attitudes. Related to this may also be the identification of motivations for travel in the perspective of ecumenical and interreligious relations, and the study of forms and specific cases of discrimination at religious sites and on religious grounds.
- 3) To identify the profiles of religious tourists, the alternative forms of spirituality practiced by them, the participation in this form of tourism of specific social groups of young people, children, women, sexual minorities, people with disabilities.
- 4) Preparing a religious tourism product that takes into account the specific needs of different tourists, by recognizing the perceptions and experiences of authenticity in places of worship of both believers and non-believing visitors.
- 5) Consideration of new forms of travel arrangements, transportation, and the use of new modes and platforms of communication in the organization of religious tourism.

- 6) To analyze the heritage and cultural policies of religious associations and organizations toward tourism, to support the cooperation of various entities in creating an integrated tourism product.
- 7) Designing and supporting activities that contribute to sustainable development in the area of religious tourism, including analysis of the status and prospects for the development of specific religious and pilgrimage centers.

UNWTO activities confirm the growing interest of the tourism industry in religious tourism (Jaremen, 2017). Religious tourism makes an important contribution to sustainable development and the preservation of cultural heritage. Often there are small centers that can thrive thanks to this type of tourism. An influx of tourists from different religions and cultures interested in a particular place can promote multiculturalism in Europe and European integration. Through this conciliatory and integrative role, religious tourism is called an agent of peace. As stated by T. Rifai - Secretary - General of UNWTO:

„Religious tourism is a key agent of peace. It is a transformative force that breaks down cultural barriers and builds Bridges between people, communities and nations. Leveraging the growing interests in religious tourism is a crucial in building a cultural dialogue, mutual understanding and peace” (A Network of Religious Tourism, UNWTO 2014, Project Brief, p. 1).

3.7. Conclusion- Identification of the need for the course

The survey confirmed that experts from all countries represented by the ReligiTour project partners indicate that the **ReligiTour course is relevant in 3 dimensions**.

Dimension	Example of an expert statement
For culture, cultural heritage in general	<p>Multicultural issues should be acknowledged (TTC, Greece)</p> <p>It is important to legitimize through the past. Young people are reluctant to learn about intangible cultural heritage (TOS, Romania)</p> <p>We should value our history; it is the backbone of the people (TRT, Romania)</p> <p>There is a need to define tools and products on religious tourism which tries to build bridges and links among different and common EU cultural roots and identities (TOS, Italy)</p> <p>A religious tourism course can highlight the diversity of religious traditions within the EU. Doing so promotes tolerance and understanding between different faiths (TTC, Romania)</p>

<p>For culture, cultural heritage in general</p>	<p>The study must emphasise that religious cultural heritage is often the result of the peaceful encounter of several cultures and religions, which have created examples of beauty through the enhancement of common elements (TOS, Italy)</p> <p>The course should highlight universal values that transcend beyond different religious and cultural values, extending knowledge beyond one's own beliefs (TRT, Romania)</p> <p>It is important to preserve and promote our cultural heritage for future generations (TOS, Bulgaria)</p> <p>Culture and cultural heritage are indispensable elements of human society, shaping our identities, fostering creativity, strengthening social cohesion, and contributing to economic development. By safeguarding and promoting our cultural heritage, we not only honour our past but also invest in a vibrant and sustainable future (TTC, Bulgaria)</p>
<p>For the learning process</p>	<p>Religious tourism in the teaching process is mainly pilgrimage tourism, the broader and true context of it is not presented, this should change (TRT, Poland)</p> <p>Religious tourism should be fundamental to the learning process, but learning objectives about different religions from around the world are important (TTC, Poland)</p> <p>I think a course on Religious Tourism could be useful especially to better understand the link between tangible heritage and architecture styles and cultural interactions between local communities in specific sacred places and religious sites. It would bring an added layer of specific knowledge in the field of cultural heritage and a better understanding of the historical context (TTC, Romania)</p> <p>It is important to recognize and validate it without a pejorative, light sense. What is religious tourism, spiritual tourism... it is necessary to qualify. In practice, people want to have information, but if you connect them with the "advanced, higher quality" experience of where and why each thing or each element comes from, the tourist appreciates it a lot, it adds a plus (Spain)</p> <p>There is a big need to include these contents and make justice to this type of tourism and its impact on employment, visitors and its contribution to local development (Spain)</p> <p>A combination, knowledge of students and application in the industry of updating processes and procedures. Also the local community and society should be open (TOS, Greece)</p> <p>A lack of professionally trained personnel, coupled with a limited and often one-dimensional cultural offering, hinders the sector's growth potential. Integrating religious cultural heritage into the educational sphere presents a compelling</p>

	<p>opportunity to expand students' knowledge of history, culture, and beliefs. By delving into this rich tapestry, educators can foster intercultural understanding and tolerance, cultivate critical thinking and analytical skills, and reinforce a sense of identity and belonging (TOS, Bulgaria)</p> <p>It enriches the travel experience by offering deeper insights into history, spirituality, and traditions, ensuring our clients gain a deep and meaningful journey. (TTC, Italy)</p>
<p>For local development process</p>	<p>There are several religious tourism destinations that are a clear example of a tourist destination. Currently, many cities are betting on events and exhibitions of a religious nature to achieve good occupancy rates (TRT, Spain)</p> <p>In Poland, many tours are based on sacred sites, this is a great opportunity for the development of the region, but it is important to raise awareness of the value of these places among those who manage them (such as the pastor of a particular parish) (TTC, Poland)</p> <p>Just thinking of how the industry has developed around certain places of worship, religious sites that are 'tourist hotspots' - these are catalysts for local industries, such as souvenirs, accommodation, local guides, catering. So, it has a significant role in promoting the local economy. They can also play an important role in community development (TTC, Romania)</p> <p>It should be shown that even in little-known localities there can be interesting attractions related to religion, these issues should be introduced, because in one country residents may not know these attractions (TRT, Greece)</p> <p>Religious tourism can be a significant economic driver for local communities. The course can equip participants with the knowledge to develop responsible tourism strategies that benefit both the sites and the surrounding areas (TRT, Romania)</p> <p>Development of various forms of religious tourism is one of the possibilities for the economic revival of some small or remote settlements. Not everywhere such tourism can become a main livelihood (e.g. El Tamino or Mecca), but it will certainly contribute to the development of local communities (TOS, Bulgaria)</p>

4. ReligiTour – specific guidelines

4.1. The need for the course- expert's opinions

Experts who represented three different groups in the research conducted by all partners:

- TRT (Teachers Religious Tourism) - teachers who have contact with (teach) issues of religious tourism,
- TTC (Tourism Culture Teachers) - teachers who have contact with (teach) issues related to culture or tourism, but not *strictly* religious tourism,
- TOS (Teachers Other Subject) - teachers who teach completely different topics.

The need for a ReligiTour course was emphasized more often by TRT and TTC experts, and slightly less need for such a course was noted by TOS, i.e. those who do not teach tourism or religion-related issues. This result means that if one has knowledge of tourism, especially religious tourism, one understands its importance. This is an obvious signal indicating the need for a course.

Experts pointed out that the different content that a ReligiTour course should cover can be found in the curricula of different universities. Different teachers encounter different issues, but the conclusion is one:

there is no generalized, structured ReligiTour course in any of the partner countries (9 partners, 7 countries).

Different content is encountered in different subjects, for example: Cultural Tourism (Poland - universities training in sports and recreation), Organization of tourist traffic - religious tourism as an example of routes (Economic universities - Poland), elements of religious studies (Sociology of religion - Romania, Pedagogy, Anthropology - Poland), History of art, tourism economy, master's degree in heritage management (Spain).

Thus, as the research showed, the existing education model in the partner countries covered very small parts of the proposed ReligiTour course subject matter, which were dispersed in different universities. If we take into account the current subjects, for example, experts from Italy indicated, that ReligiTour content could enrich the following subjects: Hagiography, History of the ancient Church, Christianity and European cultures, Places of worship and pilgrimages, Christian tradition and European cultures, Christianity and Mediterranean cultures.

Research in each partner's country showed that only students tended to be educated in the issues on ReligiTour, and these were very dispersed universities.

So ReligiTour will fill this gap by meeting the following conditions:

- 1) the course will be comprehensive in nature
- 2) the content is to be interconnected, dealing with various aspects, and not fragmented scattered at different levels of teaching,
- 3) the content of the course should relate to different disciplines of science, be interdisciplinary in nature and combine to create a ready platform for cooperation between representatives of different disciplines, as well as between science and practice (universities and the tourism market).
- 4) the course should be aimed not only at students, but at different groups.

Thus, the recipients of the course can be:

- A. Students of various universities and majors: majors related to tourism economics (economic universities), pedagogy, history and culture. Due to the fact that ReligiTour covers a variety of topics, for students of different majors there will always be content that expands a narrow specialization. The course will thus expand the general specialization in the educational process and broaden the horizons of the
- B. Lecturers - the content of ReligiTour will allow for interdisciplinary development, lecturers will expand their knowledge in other fields, which will allow them to understand the issues and educate towards European integration and sustainable development.
- C. Tour guides - will be able to impart knowledge extended to religious and cultural issues identified by ReligiTour
- D. Tour operators (tour operators, tourist offices)-will be able to skilfully incorporate religious tourism issues that will diversify and deepen the programme offered to clients-tourists in the field of cognitive and cultural tourism
- E. Service providers in the tourism region-including event management-will be able to create a comprehensive tourism product

Example of an expert statement:

"Facility managers don't know what they have, they need to be given that knowledge" (TRT, Poland).

- F. Managers of religious facilities and goods, church authorities - the course will allow them to assess the importance of religious tourism for economic, social, integrative and cultural purposes, not just the religious-spiritual role, it will also allow them to see religious tourism more broadly and not just narrowed down to pilgrimages.

Example of an expert statement:

"a particular religion to influence the behaviour and buying habits of those who are not followers of that religion as well (e.g., buying a Christmas tree)" (TTC, Poland)

- G. Local authorities - the ReliTour course will help to understand the importance of the needs of the course for the development of the region. Thanks to ReliTour, local authorities can offer services in order for tourists and residents to understand the cultural dialogue, as well as by properly securing the development of religious tourism by equipping the region with infrastructure.

Example of an expert statement:

"A course and textbook in religious tourism for the authorities is needed so that they can speak up as hosts" (TTC, Poland).

- H. Representatives of NGOs - the ReligiTour course will help to understand the transnational nature of religious tourism and can help promote religious values as elements to attract visitors from other countries to understand a different religion and culture.

Example of an expert statement:

"Would be required as part of the courses offered by Tourism Management Organizations that certify organizations and tour guides" (TRT, Romania).

4.2 Contents which the course should contain

Experts from partner countries indicated that the course should include the following content.

Evaluation: scale of 1-5 for each point, where 1 - little importance, 5 - great importance.

1. The essence and importance of religious tourism, including in the development of the region and preservation of heritage		
content	evaluation	example of an expert statement

<p>Overview of major religions.</p> <p>Main destinations of religious tourism in European countries, in Europe and in the world.</p> <p>Religious tourism and other form of tourism - scopes of concepts.</p> <p>Religious tourism profile.</p> <p>Religious space.</p> <p>Impact of religious tourism (social, cultural, economic).</p>	<p>5 – most often, experts gave the highest rating</p>	<p>It should be emphasized how religious tourism can contribute to regional and local sustainable development (TRT, Romania)</p> <p>Multicultural issues should be acknowledged (TTC, Greece)</p> <p>Study of the work to be taught and the truth of the places. Those responsible for the tutelary authority MUST have specific training in this field (Spain)</p> <p>Many religious sites in Europe represent turning points in European history. The course can highlight these connections, promoting a sense of shared heritage between the member states (TOS, Romania)</p> <p>The study of religious cultural heritage will contribute to local development processes, as each European region is endowed with its own religious cultural heritage (particularly Jewish and Christian, but also Islamic), both material and immaterial (Italy)</p> <p>It is very important to educate about one's own country, its religious heritage, which creates culture. As one understands these relationships it is easier to understand other cultures (TTR, Poland)</p> <p>A course on Religious Tourism could be useful especially to better understand the link between tangible heritage and architecture styles and cultural interactions between local communities in specific sacred places and religious sites. It would bring an added layer of specific knowledge in the field of cultural heritage and a better understanding of the historical context (TTC, Romania)</p>
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2. Legislation and regulations at local, national and EU level		
content	evaluation	example of an expert statement
<p>Heritage and tourism legislation.</p> <p>Cultural heritage of the church.</p> <p>Canon law (heritage).</p> <p>Each religion is linked to one/several states with its own legislation/agreements. Concordat, international agreements...</p> <p>Vatican organization chart and transformation of elements in the episcopal conferences.</p> <p>Relevant educational legislation (religion does not count for grade point average or honors for university entrance).</p> <p>Specific legislation in different countries.</p>	<p>3 -4</p> <p>This element received the lowest marks in the experts' opinion in terms of the importance of the problematic for the course content.</p>	<p>Respect of the rules that each religion aspires (TTC, Greece)</p> <p>These are important issues, but legal issues may not be of interest to students, for example (TTC, Poland)</p> <p>Legislation and regulations are important - although I don't think this practice is regulated at national level. I know there is legislation on religious cults and certainly a law on religious tourism would be very useful - especially for the protection of this heritage (TTC, Romania)</p> <p>The study of religious cultural heritage must highlight the strengths and weaknesses for preserving the value of this heritage and for religious tourism. This will formulate ideas and proposals that could be accommodated in relevant legislation and regulations at local, national and EU level (Italy)</p>

3. Creation, organization and management of a religious tourism product (package of attractions and services)		
content	evaluation	example of an expert statement
<p>Importance of cooperation between all actors involved in creating an integrated tourism product.</p> <p>Religious tourism linked to other tourist motivations:</p>	<p>5,4</p>	<p>Synergies should exist with local authorities (TOS, Greece)</p> <p>This content should be presented more broadly with a pragmatic view (case descriptions) (TOS, Poland)</p> <p>Experiential participation is very important, i.e. tourists participate in the monastic</p>

<p>Art and heritage, folklore, ethnography, traditions, etc.</p> <p>Experience tourism.</p> <p>Places of destination: religious buildings or complexes.</p> <p>Most visited religious manifestations: Holy Week, Jubilees, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most attractive routes. - Recommended dates (according to the Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, Buddhist, etc. liturgical calendar). <p>Immaterial products (pilgrimage, buildings, sacred places - ancient forts, pre-Christian elements...).</p> <p>Important to address the new generations with another concept, to connect with the experience of oneself, of people close to the environment and to base the product on "sensations" and extreme personalization to avoid the growing trend of atheism.</p> <p>Importance of creating a product; design all the necessary aspects so that the ambience supports the proposal and the experience.</p>		<p>activities, for example preparation of meals, holy bread, wine etc. (TRT, Greece)</p> <p>The shopping sphere needs to be organized, demand needs to be met, as religious tourists spend a lot of money on publications and souvenirs (TRT, Poland)</p> <p>We should have packages tailor-made for different types of religious tourism and different types of participants. Another issue is related to the activities carried out in these tourist facilities/attractions - tourists should not interfere with the rituals and activities carried out in these places, and tourist products should take into account these aspects (TRT, Romania)</p>
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4. Marketing and methods of displaying religious attractions and religious heritage		
content	evaluation	example of an expert statement

<p>Profile of the tourist interested in the religious tourism.</p> <p>The organization of a religious tourism trip.</p> <p>Attention to the client of the religious tourism: recommendations.</p> <p>Dealing with the different religious confessions.</p> <p>Coordination with the religious orders that organize pilgrimage trips.</p> <p>Advanced" sales methods but with attention to the sensitivity of each religion, attention to cultural diversity, especially for the practitioners of a religion.</p> <p>Learning to personalize and adapt the content strategy to the target audience.</p> <p>Quality experience design that allows for appropriateness, without losing the essence. The product has to be "sacred" and look complex, without doubts and be careful with technical innovations because they help, but it is the first thing that becomes obsolete, outdated, outdated quickly.</p>	<p>4, 5</p>	<p>Marketing aspects are important for the valorisation of religious heritage (TRT, Romania)</p> <p>It is necessary to give knowledge of what we can do to make, for example, sacred monuments a tourist attraction, important here are meetings with people who deal with this in practice (TRT, Poland)</p> <p>“The interviewee stresses the crucial nature of having a strong marketing strategy in the realm of new technologies. This approach enables tapping into tourists from remote areas, thereby capitalizing on significant opportunities”(TTC, Italy)</p> <p>Establishing connections and links between various anthropological studies, as well as interests in music, literature, and multiculturalism, enriches the interdisciplinary understanding of historical, artistic, cultural, and religious sites.</p> <p>Utilizing tools such as geo podcasting and geo storytelling to map the history and value of cultural-religious sites helps disseminate their significance and appeal in an innovative and accessible manner. (TRT, Italy)</p>
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5. Contemporary challenges for the development of religious tourism (multiculturalism, crises, etc.)		
content	evaluation	example of an expert statement
<p>Problems arising from multicultural and religious differences</p> <p>mutual and multicultural understanding of religious tourism, in the context of the diversity of cultural and religious values.</p> <p>Problems of sustainable development.</p> <p>The role of the local community, its religion in dealing with tourists</p> <p>intercultural integration</p> <p>prevention of religious conflicts through the establishment of local-tourist relations.</p> <p>Technology for the future (digitalization).</p> <p>Training of religious personnel (priests, monks...).</p>	4	<p>Religious experiences can be diluted when religious places become overly commercial, there should be a balance between generating income and preserving the spiritual significance (TOS Romania)</p> <p>Secularisation as well as declining religious adherence in some parts of the EU can lead to a decline in interest in religious tourism. (TRT Romania)</p> <p>Tourists from different backgrounds may not understand or respect local customs and traditions at religious sites. Educational initiatives and responsible marketing can help address this problem (TTC Romania)</p> <p>This aspect is very important because discrimination will be diminished, i.e. priests in my area accept only orthodox tourists (TRT, Greece)</p> <p>Contemporary challenges are crucial for the development of religious tourism within a sustainable approach” (Italy). Is an important topic, especially from the perspective of wars and population migration (TOS, Poland)</p> <p>Religion is part of a person’s identity Different approaches should exist in every target group (TTC, Greece)</p> <p>It is important to understand multiculturalism, it is necessary to introduce content about religious studies, i.e. knowledge of other religions (TOS, Italy)</p>

4.3. Organization of learning processes

According to the experts surveyed, the ReligiTour course should range from 30 to as many as 200 hours, with 60 hours being the dominant option. A larger hour range for the course was indicated primarily by TRT and TTC, a smaller range by TOS, which confirms that if one has knowledge of tourism, especially religious tourism one understands its importance more.

On the question of whether the course should function separately or be included in some thematic block, the experts' opinions were divided, additionally, the survey results showed no significant correlation between the type of expert (TOS, TRT, TTC) and the answer given (functioning separately/inclusion in a block). Experts indicating the need to operate the course separately pointed to the course's stature, scope and the different audiences that might be interested in such a course. In addition, they also emphasized the greater possibility of tailoring the content of the course to specific conditions (e.g., timeframe) without having to compete with other topics within a specific block of classes.

Example of an expert statement:

“The course should be self-contained with content for different audiences” (TRT Poland)

“The course should be self-contained, because different groups of not only students, but also other audiences can participate. It is worth considering the demarcation (TOS Poland)

“It should function separately, when clergy is highly active, they ask/need separate seminars/course” (TRT Greece)

“A block of religious tourism courses could create a specialized track within a program, catering to students particularly interested in this field. This could attract students seeking a focused curriculum that prepares them for careers in religious tourism. However, many programs have limited elective space. A separate course allows instructors to tailor the content to fit within a specific timeframe, without needing to compete with other topics within a block of classes. So, offering religious tourism as a separate course allows students from various majors to take it as an elective. This could benefit students in history, anthropology, or religious studies who want to learn more about the practical applications of their studies” (TTC Bulgaria)

All experts who indicated the need for the course to function within other thematic blocks pointed to the concept of cultural heritage and cultural tourism. For example, experts pointed to the following course blocks:

“Contemporary approaches for interpretation of cultural heritage” and “Cultural tourism” (TOS Bulgaria),

„Cultural heritage and tourism (TRT Poland),

“Cultural studies” (TOS Poland),

“Cultural and tourism studies” (TRT Romania).

Responses also included issues related to sustainable tourism, e.g. "Sustainable development of the cities through the cultural heritage" (TTC Bulgaria), and marketing, e.g. "Tourism Marketing", "Destination branding" and "Place branding" (TTC Greece), "Marketing and religious tourism" and "Branding Places" (TTC Bulgaria).

Example of an expert statement:

“Traditionally, religion is considered part of the cultural code of a society or community. This automatically relegates religious tourism to the field of cultural tourism and therefore the place of such course(s) is in programs developing knowledge, skills and competences in the field of cultural tourism“ (TOS Bulgaria).

The vast majority of experts pointed to the optional nature of the course, with those who favoured the mandatory option identifying students as its main audience. Experts also stressed that the form of the course (optional/compulsory) should depend on local conditions.

The vast majority of experts pointed to the 3rd and 4th years of study as those most suitable for implementing the course in question for students. This indicates the need to introduce the course for students who already have basic knowledge and show more maturity (including in terms of understanding the importance of the course topics).

With regard to the relationship of desktop and e-learning components, experts' opinions were divided. TOS indicated equal (50/50) or greater importance of e-learning components (average: 40/60), TRT and TOC indicated greater importance of stationary components (average: 70/30). The role of e-learning platforms in the learning process was described by experts as supportive, indicating an average of 25% participation.

The experts' opinions on the amount of content available for self-study were also divided, with an average of 40% indicated, but depending on the experts' country of origin,

the experts indicated values ranging from 10%-20% (Poland, Italy, Greece), up to 80%-100% (Spain, Romania, Bulgaria), indicating the great importance of local conditions in this regard.

Communication facilities and other services on the course's website that need to be provided are primarily social networking platforms (e.g. Facebook or Instagram) and mobile apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Messenger). Experts also indicated the importance of educational (e-learning) platforms, pointing most often to the Moodle platform and other online media such as YouTube or podcasts, dedicated to ReligiTour. Experts pointed to the need to use platforms to promote the course.

4.4. Identification of the needs of the textbook

Although content is sometimes introduced in general textbooks on sightseeing, but there the basics are usually discussed (e.g., about pilgrimages as the earliest form of tourism development or about the type of such tourism, which generally ends with a discussion of definitions. Textbooks currently found in several countries are either about religion or the geographic distribution of places of worship (geography) and there is no textbook on organizing religious tourism. Existing textbooks refer to theoretical and historic elements and not on management and marketing issues. Experts pointed to the need for a handbook that would cover all those mentioned in para. 4.3.

1. In the part concerning **the essence and importance of religious tourism, including in the development of the region and preservation of heritage** firstly, the manuals must provide the basic information for the historical contextualisation of religious cultural heritage. Then, they must propose case studies on religious cultural heritage, both material and immaterial, from which the essence and importance of religious tourism emerges, including for regional development and heritage conservation. The manual should include examples: of best practice: i.e. Santiago de Compostela (ES), which over the centuries has become Europe's leading destination for both pilgrimage and slow tourism, creating progressive job opportunities and wealth. The manuals should provide basic information for the creation and management of websites and social profiles, because these IT tools are indispensable for highlighting the essential elements of the tourism proposal. This section should be supplemented by Online platforms and materials, which should provide basic information for the creation and

management of websites and social profiles, because these IT tools are indispensable for highlighting the essential elements of the tourism proposal.

2. In the part concerning **forms and assumptions of religious tourism and features of tourists and service providers** The study of the history of religions (in particular the Abrahamic religions) is a necessary prerequisite for the valorisation of the religious cultural heritage in Europe, so that the subsequent development of tourism is fully conscious. Such training is indispensable first and foremost for service providers, who will thus be adequately prepared to welcome and inform tourists. Example of best practice are important, because over the years has contributed to the training of young scholars and future service providers (e.g. tour guides), making them aware of the historical value of a monuments and places. In the online platforms and materials The manuals in this part should provide basic information for the creation and management of websites for students and service providers, so that they are easily informed about both the religious history of the cultural heritage and the history, culture, religion and enogastronomy of the relevant European region and city.
3. In the part concerning **Legislation and regulations at local, national and EU level** the manual should provide the main tools that assist the development of a critical approach to the study of religious cultural heritage, so that ideas and proposals can be formulated for inclusion in legislation and regulations at local, national and EU level. In the practical part it should be supplemented with examples of activities from various European countries, in particular the countries that are partners of the ReligiTour.
4. In the part concerning **Categorization of religious heritage** manuals should provide the main tools for categorising religious heritage in order to understand and value its function. In the practical part there should be examples of different places (sacral objects, places of religious events, places where rituals, processions, religious festivals, mysteries place.
5. In the part concerning **Creation, organization and management of a religious tourism product** (package of attractions and services) the manuals should provide basic instructions on how to write a tourist guide, which can combine documented historical information with the needs of tourists (hotels, restaurants, etc.). The examples should demonstrate good practice in cooperation between the various stakeholders in

developing an integrated, modern product that meets tourists' contemporary motivations.

6. In the part concerning **Marketing and methods of displaying religious attractions and religious heritage** the manuals must include input from experts in marketing, design and graphics in order to provide the tools to publicise religious attractions and religious heritage. The practical part, including online, is very important in this subject, which will allow students to learn practical marketing techniques and tools.
7. In the part concerning **The importance of religious heritage and religious tourism for EU integration processes** the manuals must emphasise the importance of religious cultural heritage in the European context for real integration, for example through the network of sanctuaries and other religious places.
8. In the part concerning **Contemporary challenges for the development of religious tourism** (multiculturalism, crises, etc.) the manuals must emphasise that religious cultural heritage is often the result of the peaceful encounter of several. Here the theoretical part is particularly important and should include all the possible problems identified in section 4.2. (table 5)

Regarding the size of the textbook, experts' opinions were divided. TOS indicated that it was enough for the textbook to be within a hundred pages, TRT and TTC, emphasizing the importance and scale of the course topics, marked the answer of 100-150 and above 150 pages, which once again confirms the thesis that if one has knowledge of tourism, especially religious tourism more understands its complexity and importance.

Theoretical content and case are, according to experts, the basic elements of a textbook at whether TRT and TTC indicated the need for the largest share of theoretical parts (50-60% on average). According to the TOC, theoretical parts should make up 20-30% on average, and the emphasis should be on the practical part (case and games). According to the TOC, increasing the share of the practical dimension of the textbook responds to modern trends in education and affects the increased motivation of the recipients of the course to which such a textbook is dedicated.

4.5. The importance of field exercises

All surveyed experts stressed the importance of direct participation in activities in which one can learn about the importance of religious tourism and the issues indicated above.

Example of an expert statement:

“It would be interesting to take a back in time approach - experiencing religious tourism for a few days” (TTC, Greece)

Experts' opinions on the length of field exercises were divided depending on the country of origin. A smaller dimension was more often suggested by experts from Spain, Romania and Greece (1-2 days), while a larger one was suggested by experts from other countries. Experts additionally stressed the need to adjust the length of field exercises to their spatial scope (domestic/foreign, region/city). In addition, according to the TOS, classes should be shorter (average: 1-2 days), and according to the TTC and TRT, longer (3-4 days or 5 days or more).

4.6. Problems during the course

Experts pointed out the following problems that may arise during the course:

Problems	Example of an expert statement
Recruitment of participants	<p>Conflict with work and study schedules (TRT, Spain)</p> <p>Potential participants may not understand the idea of religious tourism, only associating it with narrowly defined pilgrimages in a particular religion (TTR, Poland)</p> <p>Religious tourism is not known as a specialisation, does not have a clear finality on the labour market, does not provide guaranteed income. Those who follow the course would compete with travel agencies, which focus only on the tourist services side of the business. (TRT, Romania)</p>
Driving process	<p>There may be gaps in cultural and religious knowledge among participants (lack of foundation for specialized course) (TRT, Poland)</p> <p>Problems related to the ability to balance the proportions within the content taught about different religions” (TTC, Poland)</p> <p>The problem of student burnout (TOS, Poland)</p>

Religious differences of the participants	<p>Some students may be sensitive, regarding specific religions and visits to specific sites that are not related to their religion” (TRT, Greece)</p> <p>The course should not promote one perspective, one kind of service, one religion” (TOS, Greece)</p> <p>There may be problems of religious radicalization (ethical and cultural aspects) (TOS, Poland)</p>
Other	<p>Students prejudice about courses with religious content</p> <p>Low motivations,</p> <p>Student profile</p> <p>Student’s motivation</p>

4.7. The role and place of the trainer during training

As previously mentioned, the ReligiTour course is an important tool for transferring knowledge about the importance of religious tourism for the development of places and entities involved in the organization of religious tourism. It responds to the needs of different audiences, enables intercultural dialogue and is an important tool for integration (on a national and European scale). It should also respond to the challenges of the future of religious tourism identified in Section 3.6.

Proper implementation of the intended goals of the course requires, first of all, a good trainer, with 21st century education requiring a new type of teacher-mentor. A teacher for the modern age is a person with broad substantive, methodological, psychological and pedagogical competencies. The very subject matter of the ReligiTour course and the key content identified by experts that it should contain require a trainer to have a great deal of substantive knowledge. An important issue of education is how it is delivered. It is not enough to introduce relevant content on different religions and faiths in the curricula. An education consisting of the transmission of selected information about religious diversity, without its broader historical, cultural and social characteristics and justifications, without giving concrete positive examples of this diversity, can only be the acquisition of incomprehensible, hence uninteresting content for the listeners. It is important to mark cultural and religious differences carefully, to explain their meanings thoroughly and to translate them into cultural and social life, which prepares young people for difficult and conflict situations in a constructive way (Róžańska, 2012). However, it should be emphasized that today the teacher

is no longer the only source of knowledge, but becomes a guide to the world of knowledge and plays the role of a supportive tutor. The trainer has a fundamental role in the face-to-face learning process, but with self-directed learning, the vast majority of experts also pointed out the need for an additional supporting role for the trainer. The era of accumulating useless knowledge is coming to an end, and the student is expected to be able to use available means of information and solve problems effectively. Therefore, in response to the expectations of reality, teachers need to change their teaching style (from a subjunctive to an exploratory one), and the main goal of education should be to arouse a passion for knowledge, not just to impart it, to develop information-seeking and problem-solving skills, to train passionate lifelong learners. All of the experts surveyed pointed to the need for ReligiTour's method of learning by doing, which involves acquiring knowledge and skills through direct experience, action and reflection.

Example of an expert statement:

“Practical group work and tasks can be highly effective tools. Engaging in these activities allows participants to gain a deeper understanding of diverse religious practices, fostering empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect” (TOS, Bulgaria)

This also applies to forms of course credit. As the main form of course credit, the experts pointed to the form of a project and assignments performed in class (at the end, the sum of the partial grades). Within the project, experts were divided, with a slight preference for a group (versus individual) project, which should account for an average of 60%-70% of the final grade. Tasks performed in class should account for about 30%. Also worth considering according to the experts is the form of a practical exam or a project "in the field", which to the highest degree will allow verification of the acquired knowledge and practical skills of the trainees (which corresponds to modern trends in education). Experts also suggested as a form of course credit the organization of field classes, not just participation in them.

Example of an expert statement:

“The best exam is a trip where the students would have some of the material to learn, they would be shown in practice talking about it, demonstrating it.” (TTC, Poland)

“Practical exam during the trip, e.g. telling about a specific place.” (TRT, Poland).

“Students can organize the tour, instead of just participate” (TTC, Greece)

Teachers must not only be flexible, but also ready to adopt new teaching methods (including those based on digital tools). This affects increased motivation to learn. According to experts, the main tools in terms of motivating learners to actively participate in ReligiTour are educational, e-learning platforms (Moodle), platforms for creating communities (Facebook, Instagram) and mobile applications, used in the communication process (WhatsApp, Messenger). Experts also pointed to the need for a special phone application dedicated to the ReligiTour course. In addition, experts see the need for the use of gamification in education, including special gamification applications (allowing, for example, digital contests: treasure hunt, photo contest (Romania)). The use of gamification in education makes students begin to learn with pleasure, thus increasing their involvement and motivation in education, problem-solving, which ultimately increases the quality and productivity of work. Gamification in education is also a response to the competence requirements for graduates by future employers.

Knowledge and technology are constantly evolving, so teachers must also be ready to continuously learn and improve their skills. This is because self-improvement allows teachers to adapt teaching methods to the changing needs of students, to innovate in the teaching process. In this regard, it becomes important to become aware of network connections, especially external ones with other organizations and educational institutions, which provide opportunities for cooperation with other teachers. This allows for the exchange of experiences, sharing of knowledge and creation of innovative programs and teaching methods. In the case of ReligiTour, experts pointed to the need to create a platform for sharing the experiences of the trainers taking part in the course.

Among the competencies of the 21st century are mentioned not only creativity or critical thinking, but also: communication and cooperation (Lamri, 2021, pp. 128-137). Thus, especially in a technology-driven era, it becomes crucial to build bonds with and between students, to create an educational model of courtesy, communication, respect and cooperation. All the experts pointed out the need to use the ReligiTour course's dedicated platforms for creating communities (mainly Facebook and Instagram). Modernity also situates the teacher as a guide for students in their quest to create the right value system, which is particularly important for the ReligiTour course, which aims to shape attitudes of

understanding cultural differences, promote attitudes of tolerance and dialogue. At the same time, developing young people's ability to engage in religious dialogue must go hand in hand with developing an awareness of one's own religious identity and an openness to people with different world views, different religiosity. Experts stressed the great role of the ReligiTour educator in shaping attitudes, especially of young people, towards religious sites, mainly due to the lack of interest of young people in religious topics in the context of heritage. In their statements, the experts cited the experience of student trips, during which young people did not show the slightest interest in religious objects and could not maintain proper respect for them. According to the experts, religious tourism could be treated as a tourism of discovery, which can be realized through proper education that objectifies religious heritage. It should be emphasised that intercultural education is a form of response, a challenge to the existence of multiculturalism, to bring people together and to 'live together' - integration, and educational efforts should be made in accordance with the postulate "learning to live together" (Delors, 1998). In this regard, therefore, the teacher should be guided in his conduct by ethical values, and a key role in dealing with the challenges of the modern teacher is also his emotional competence.

In conclusion, it is necessary to point out the most important identified **problems in the work of the ReligiTour trainer**, which are consistent with the problems that, according to experts, may arise during the course:

Problems	Example of an expert statement
Cultural and religious differences of the participants.	<p>There may be problems understanding the purpose of the course for representatives of different countries (TOS, Poland)</p> <p>Managing differences of opinion between students belonging to different religious cults (TRT, TOS, Romania)</p> <p>Religious choices are fundamental, compromise solutions are not easily reached (TRT, Romania)</p> <p>Having a different religion may lead the student to deny practices and norms supported by other religions (TOS, Romania)</p> <p>Trainers may encounter students with preexisting biases towards certain religions. They need to create a learning environment that fosters open-mindedness and respect for all faiths (TTC, Bulgaria)</p> <p>Fanatics of one religion may not accept other religions (TTC, Greece)</p>
Student profile.	Problems may arise during the development of the course, I think the most important may be related to the student's profile (TRT, Spain)

	<p>Recipients may misunderstand the message of the course by focusing too much on the importance of religion in general for faith rather than for culture, heritage and development (TTR, Poland)</p>
<p>Wide range of course topics (trainer's competence and skills).</p>	<p>Lack of knowledge in Poland about other religions. This person could be further educated in religious studies (TTC, Poland)</p> <p>The course leader must have extensive knowledge and experience (TTC, Poland)</p> <p>The ever-evolving religious tourism industry requires trainers to stay current with industry developments, emerging markets, and evolving traveller preferences to ensure relevant and informative courses (TTC, Bulgaria)</p>
<p>Trainer's personal biases and sensitivity to religious dissent.</p>	<p>So as not to fall into the trap of thinking one idea, religion (TTC, Poland)</p> <p>I would have to treat my own leading religiosity with discretion (TTC, Poland)</p> <p>The course leader must be very knowledgeable and experienced, but may be too attached to one religion (TTC, Poland FRAME)</p> <p>The trainer may emphasize his cultural habits too much (TTC, Poland)</p> <p>Even in the case of trainers there may be unconscious biases and they may struggle to be objective (TTC, Romania)</p> <p>Different religious beliefs can lead to a variety of perspectives on practices and norms. A trainee's own religious beliefs may differ from the practices and norms of other religions, which could lead to difficulties in understanding. There may be sensitive issues that some topics touch on, and the trainer should be able to guide these discussions in a respectful and factual way (TTC, Romania)</p> <p>Trainers need to be incredibly sensitive to the diverse beliefs and practices of the religious sites and cultures their tourists will encounter. Disrespectful or inaccurate information can offend. Trainers should be well-versed in the specific religions and cultures on the itinerary and be prepared to answer questions in a respectful and informative way (TOS, Bulgaria)</p>
<p>Lack of skills of the trainer in modern educational tools, including digital learning tools required for the course.</p>	<p>The trainer must know how to interest the audience, use modern tools to make the course interesting for different audiences (TOS, Poland)</p> <p>The trainer is not fully familiar with digital tools (Spain)</p>

<p>Differences in the level of basic knowledge needed for the course (course prerequisites).</p>	<p>To take students coming from different studies to a good level of preparation, filling training gaps (TTC, Italy)</p> <p>Students may not know what a cultural heritage is and what the main historical and theological characteristics of the Abrahamic religions are (TOS, Italy)</p> <p>It should be noted that the selection of highly motivated, but also theoretically prepared students, with a broad interdisciplinary range of knowledge (architecture, history, art, theology, cultural and religious influences, population migrations, etc.), is of particular importance for the effectiveness of the training (TTC, Bulgaria)</p>
<p>Student's motivation.</p>	<p>Often students are interested only in subjects that are directly connected to their specialization (TOS, Romania)</p> <p>To grasp students' interest, it is the hardest task for academia these days because they are interested very much only about their specialization (TOS, Bulgaria)</p>

Identified problems that may arise in the work of the ReligiTour coach require the introduction of measures to minimize them. In this regard, the trainers indicated primarily:

Activities	Example of an expert statement
<p>Competent and experienced staff</p>	<p>The most important thing is that it should be an experienced teacher who has knowledge, experience, but also an open mind (TTC, Poland)</p> <p>One would have to consider how to select the teaching staff, just open,' he said (TTC, Poland)</p> <p>When I embark on such content in my classes, I always say, ladies and gentlemen we are going to deal with religion as a very important but part of cultural heritage and living culture. And our religiosity, my religiosity and your religiosity, we will try to hang it on a peg. We will try to talk about religion as a certain reality, a phenomenon and all things concerning it, including religious tourism. And we will neither promote any faith here nor fight against it. We will look at religion as a phenomenon (TTC, Poland)</p> <p>To have knowledge of the reality, work with groups. To have research experience (TRT, Spain)</p>
<p>Initial training for trainers</p>	<p>The trainer may not be an expert on every religion and religious site specificities covered in the course. It's crucial to rely on accurate and up-to-date information from credible sources representing diverse perspectives. The trainer is also expected to be able to encourage open discussion about different religions, as well as create a safe space for</p>

	<p>participants to feel comfortable expressing their own beliefs without fear of being judged - training in multicultural teaching and cultural sensitivity might be necessary (TTC, Romania)</p> <p>For dealing with the difficulties identified before, it is important to have thoroughgoing study regarding the specificity of different religions and how they can be taught to arouse interest (preliminary training) (TOS, Romania)</p> <p>A training in this subject (TOS, Bulgaria)</p>
<p>Educational materials (including a good textbook, access to resources such as digital)</p>	<p>Early delivery of materials for adequate class preparation (at least one month earlier) (Spain)</p> <p>Educational materials focused on religious tourism are extremely valuable. A handbook would be a valuable addition (TOS, Bulgaria)</p> <p>For religious tourism to develop successfully, it is necessary to train personnel who know the history, religion, culture, and architecture of religious sites; communication and work skills with tourists from different cultures and religions; the ability to develop and offer attractive tourist routes and products. Educational materials on religious tourism could fill this gap and create a team of competent professionals capable of meeting the needs of modern tourists (TOS, Bulgaria)</p> <p>The trainer must know how to interest the audience, use modern tools to make the course interesting for different audiences” (TOS, Poland)</p> <p>Propose as themes for individual study the viewing of films highlighting spiritual experiences and mentalities of different religious communities. This is a cheaper way, we can "visit" five or six different religions this way. The films must be well chosen, they must capture significant experiences (TRT, Romania)</p> <p>Lectures are informative, but religious tourism training thrives on engagement. Interactive tools like simulations, roleplaying exercises, and virtual tours of religious sites would allow trainees to practice their skills in a safe environment.“ (TOS, Bulgaria)</p> <p>IT tools Laptop, PPT, Videos, etc. (TOS, Italy)</p> <p>Access to online resources – video, apps, games, bibliography (TRT, TTC, TOS, Romania)</p> <p>A translator for foreign participants (Italy)</p>
<p>A platform for sharing the experiences of trainers</p>	<p>Nice to create a community around the course (TTR, Poland)</p> <p>Religious tourism is a nuanced field. Having a network of trainers from various backgrounds and specialists in different religions would allow me</p>

<p>participating in the course (course community)</p>	<p>to tap into their knowledge for specific situations or answer particularly challenging questions (TOS, Bulgaria)</p> <p>Creating a collaborative platform would allow instructors to exchange experiences related to the course and learn from each other (TTC, Bulgaria)</p> <p>It will be helpful to have a collaborative platform where trainers can exchange experiences related to the course" (TRT, Poland)</p> <p>If there was a platform to share information it would be easier for us to gather ideas for lessons (TRT, Poland)</p> <p>The more experienced ones could be coaches for other teachers (TRT, Poland)</p> <p>Expert visits (TOS, Greece)</p>
<p>Organization of field classes for trainers</p>	<p>By visiting the man in his home you get to know him, understand him better and can more easily accept that every religious approach has its own legitimacy (TRT, Romania)</p> <p>To visit places of culture and religion (TTC, Italy)</p>

5. Concluding remarks, summary

- A. The results of the studies in all countries **point to the enormous potential of religious tourism itself for the integration of European religious sites as an important part of the EU's common heritage.**

Example of an expert statement:

“This would be an amazing contribution to the EU cultural and religious integration process” (Italy)

“Like it or not, given our largely postmodern understanding of the world, religion has shaped our modern culture. Regardless of whether through direct influence or through counterculture (opposition), religiosity (especially Christian) carries within itself fundamental European values. The diversity of confessions on the European continent - regardless of whether they coexisted or opposed in the past - gives a huge opportunity precisely through this prism, the prism of faith, to gain knowledge about the Other, to touch the culture of the Others, to Their intimate world and this way we can be more understanding. Religious tourism, whether in the form of a pilgrimage or for the purpose of getting to know religious places, contains a huge potential for mutual acquaintance and understanding” (TOS, Bulgaria)

„Religious sites are an important part of European identity. They reflect the continent's rich history and diversity of cultures. By promoting religious tourism, we can help to ensure that these sites are valued and preserved for future generations. Religious tourism can be a powerful tool for intercultural dialogue. When people from different cultures visit religious sites, they can learn about each other's beliefs and traditions. This can help to break down barriers and promote understanding and respect“ (TTC, Bulgaria)

“Religious heritage can be a means for EU integration and understanding, raise awareness for different religions and cultures” (TTC, Greece)

B. In addition, experts stressed the importance of education and the legitimacy of introducing the ReligiTour course to achieve the goal of integration and intercultural dialogue while preserving the distinctiveness of each country.

Example of an expert statement:

“Religious sites hold a particularly significant place in this shared history, and their importance is further underscored by EU policies actively promoting intercultural dialogue. To fully leverage this potential, specialized training programs are needed with a focus on religious cultural heritage, marketing, management, cultural route development, and diverse cultural product creation. Such programs, recognized as a national necessity, would bridge the gap between national and regional efforts and the EU's vision of a unified cultural heritage. Ultimately, these initiatives promote understanding, appreciation, and responsible management of religious sites, solidifying their position as a vital pillar of Europe's shared cultural identity“ (TOS, Bulgaria)

“Such a course could be a good cultural intermediary. It can be of great importance for many generations. It can also increase awareness of understanding the contributions of other religions to ours” (TRT, Poland)

“Many religious sites in Europe represent turning points in EU history. A religious tourism course can highlight these connections, underlining a sense of a shared past and a common European identity. By learning about the history, traditions and significance of Europe's religious sites, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the EU's shared cultural heritage. This will encourage tolerance and understanding between people of different faiths” (TTC, Romania)

“It is extremely important to invest in the promotion of religious heritage, but not only for specific landscapes, but also to preserve and maintain a society rooted in specific values, traditions and culture, which in the end is what makes each tourist area different and unique of its kind” (Spain)

C. Another important aspect is the importance of the ReligiTour course **for better management of religious tourism, creating innovative strategies and business models in religious tourism. In this regard, experts stressed the role of this initiative for a sustainable future of religious tourism.**

Example of an expert statement:

“A course developed through collaboration between representatives of many cultures can be transformative. Sharing diverse experiences (successes & challenges) from across Europe can spark innovation in strategies, business models, and problem-solving. Imagine learning from pilgrimage experts and those managing diverse religious sites. This fosters a more respectful and inclusive approach, empowering local communities to benefit from tourism while preserving their heritage. It's a collaboration for a sustainable future in religious tourism.” (TOS, Bulgaria)

„Sharing diverse experiences, both successes and challenges, from across Europe will spark a rich exchange of ideas. This can lead to the development of innovative strategies, business models, and problem-solving approaches. Imagine learning from experts in pilgrimages and those managing a wide variety of religious sites! As the quote highlights, representatives from individual countries have a wealth of knowledge to exchange. This includes successful strategies, best practices, but also challenges and their solutions. Learning from diverse approaches to specific cases can lead to significant improvements in the field“ (TTC, Bulgaria)

“The course can increase awareness of various entities related to religious tourism” (TRT, Poland)

“The course can provide specific knowledge on how to manage religious buildings and may also have an impact on the protection of these places” (TTC, Poland)

“A culturally diverse team can ensure that the course content is culturally sensitive and respectful of different religious traditions. Furthermore, it combines a wealth of knowledge and experience in managing religious tourism in different contexts. This allows the

development of a course that addresses a wider range of challenges and opportunities and stimulates innovative ideas for cross-border collaboration between religious sites in different regions of the EU. This could involve developing joint marketing campaigns, creating cross-faith pilgrimage routes or establishing knowledge-sharing networks” (TTC, Romania)

“Religious tourism can be a significant economic driver for local communities. The course can equip participants with the knowledge to develop responsible tourism strategies that benefit both the sites and the surrounding areas” (TRT, Romania)

“There is an imperative need of this course, many stakeholders interested and demanding this course” (Spain).

D. The ReligiTour initiative has attracted a lot of interest in all countries. Experts approached **the topic with commitment and praised the idea of introducing a ReligiTour course, pointing out the lack of such initiatives in their countries.**

Example of an expert statement:

„This focus group has been an extraordinary opportunity to assess the dimension and importance of religious tourism in Spain and Europe” (Spain).

E. Great emotions were connected with the issue of the sacred and profane in religious tourism. **The complexity of the very concept of religious tourism and the misunderstanding of it in individual countries were emphasized, e.g. the attachment of the subject matter (also through inadequate education) to a particular religion, preferred in a given country.** According to experts, **this affects the declining market potential of those involved in religious tourism, especially young people.**

F. The experts also highlighted the **interconnectedness of religious tourism with other forms of tourism, not only pilgrimage tourism, but also dark tourism or culinary tourism, which further accentuates its complex nature.**

G. Challenges facing the industry and the development of religious tourism were also addressed. **Infrastructure constraints, language barriers and poor marketing, as well as the lack of targeted training programs dedicated to those involved in shaping and managing the religious tourism product, were identified as areas for improvement.**

H. A ReligiTour course that should take into account all tourists' motivations (religious, religious-cognitive, cognitive) and address the needs of all parties involved in organizing

religious tourism fits perfectly into this gap (see sections 3.3. and 4.1). It should also take into account all the issues mentioned in section 3.6. relating to the future of religious tourism, taking into account the processes of cultural integration in Europe.

The great importance and need for the ReligiTour course is also indicated by the experts' stated willingness to participate in the next stages of the project and the request to share the final results.

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ReligiTour

Enhancement of the competences and possibilities for religious tourism development and for better integration and management of religious sites in the urban environment



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