

**ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING EXCHANGE INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE
HOSPITALITY SMEs IN THE BALKAN-MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

Subsidy Contract No. BMP1/1.3/2616/2017

Company name: International Festival of Folklore Costume in Zheravna

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Source: <http://www.nosia.bg/>

Country/region of operation: Zheravna, Bulgaria

Sustainability dimension: heritage-based tourist products, experiential tourism

Description of the enterprise/initiative:

The festival is held every year in August and lasts for three days. Anyone who want to attend the festival area must be dressed in folk costume -authentic or stylized stage- men can have a voivodeship or revolutionary clothing, as well as old military uniforms and weapons. Clothing from the beginning of the twentieth century and priestly garments are also allowed.

Social/ community impact sought:

The idea is for participants to make a leap back in time as close as possible to the National Revival, the atmosphere - such as lived in our great-grandfathers and great- grandmothers.

Stakeholders: Everyone who wants to make a jump a century and a half back in time and cherish the Bulgarian folklore traditions.

Approach applied:

After Hristo Yves. Dimitrov - producer, choreographer and director of the National Folklore Ensemble "Bulgare" organizes his wedding with the folk singer Albena Veskova in an ancient Bulgarian custom with 400 guests dressed in Bulgarian folk costumes, a wide positive echo is observed in the whole country. This motivated the founder of Bulgare, with the help of supporters, to organize a much larger event, allowing everybody for at least three days a year to put on a Bulgarian costume and make a jump a century and a half back in time. Thus, the idea of an international folklore costume festival is realized, which is a kind of defile of Bulgarian and foreign folk costumes, combined with entertainment in an authentic atmosphere and the obligatory personal participation of every visitor.

Innovation applied:

The festival is the largest event of this kind in Bulgaria and the only place with such rules, the most important one of which is that the visitors are allowed to wear only folklore costumes. The use of cameras and mobile phones is forbidden on the territory of the festival. Photographs are made by accredited professional photographers, and after the festival are available online. Modern watches and sunglasses, modern bags, suitcases, backpacks, hats, scarfs etc. are also prohibited. Pets are not allowed as well as the use of baby carts. The ban on items of modern life is management innovation that is necessary in order to give the fullest possible authenticity of the experience.

Social impact and business results achieved:

Since 2008 the festival welcomes more and more visitors each year. While in 2008 the participants were 800, since 2013 the event is attended by more than 15000 people each year. As a result the number of people willing to participate is bigger than the availability for accommodation in Zheravna and the villages around. The local people share that the interest for the destination has never been so high and people from around the world are now visiting the region. Therefore, the success of the festival contributes and results in increased capacity of the hospitality sector in the region.

Financial situation / sustainability of the business model:

The sustainability of the business model is ensured by the strict rules the visitors follow. With the help of donors and sponsors as well through the taxes paid by participants, the economic sustainability of the initiative is also secured.

Key success factors: Innovation, strict rules

Challenges and problems: Even though a lot of people camp in tents or use campers and since 2008 a lot of new guest houses were being opened in the village, still the biggest problem and challenge that deters even more people to participate is the insufficient number of places for accommodation around.

Year when the enterprise was created: 2008

References (web-site, intent links, video, etc.):

<http://www.nosia.bg/>