

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

Subsidy Contract No. BMP1/1.3/2616/2017

Company name: Kovachevitsa

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Source: <http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/316/kovachevica>

Country/region of operation: Kovachevitsa, Bulgaria

Sustainability dimension: environmental, social, economic, cultural

Description of the enterprise/initiative: The village of Kovachevitsa is situated in the western Rhodope mountain, at a distance of 23 km from the town of Gotse Delchev and 120 km from the town of Blagoevgrad.

The village was established after 1656 during the attempts of conversion to Mohammedanism of the Bulgarian population in the Rhodope mountain, which settled in the more unreachable parts of the mountain in search of salvation.

The local people were occupied in agriculture and stock-breeding. During the period of Revival (the 18th – 19th century) Kovachevitsa was an educational center. The village was one of the centers of the Internal Macedonian and Edirne Revolutionary Organization at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

Because of its typical architecture, in 1977 by issue 73 of the State Gazette the village was declared a historical and architectural reservation.

The village of Kovachevitsa is an appropriate destination for the admirers of country tourism and relaxation. Besides having the option to walk along the narrow cobblestone streets, and stay in a typical Kovachevitsa house, tourists can taste traditional Bulgarian dishes and enjoy the tranquility of the Rhodope mountain. A number of tourist routes start from the village

and lead to the Siniya Vir waterfall and the locality of Kozi Kamak. Another very popular destination for country tourism – the village of Leshten lies at a distance of 8 km from Kovachevitsa. The villages of Dolen and Ribnovo are also situated in the area.

Kovachevitsa was strongly affected by migration processes in the 50s of the 20th c. The mass migration towards Velingrad, Batak, Pazardjik and other regions of the country led to the devastation of many wonderful houses in the village that started slowly crumble away. The opportunity for the village to revive was its "discovery" by the Bulgarian film-makers. There is no other village in the country where so many movies have been made - over 20.

Social/ community impact sought: to preserve the cultural/historical heritage and to improve the environment in the land of the Kovachevitsa village as a historical and architectural reserve; to develop the regional infrastructure, to preserve the environment and the natural phenomena, to provide employment to the local residents through cultural tourism development.

Stakeholders: visitors, residents

Approach applied: cultural heritage and environment protection

Innovation applied: on the 17th of November 2002 Society "Historical and Architectural Reserve Village Kovachevitsa" was established. The society implemented an EU funded project and restored the unique school building in order to conduct activities connected to the training of the local hoteliers and restaurant personnel, guides, mountain guides; marking of the tourist trails, preservation and popularisation of the authentic folklore of the region.

Social impact and business results achieved: Achieved development of rural and cultural tourism in the architectural reserve Kovachevitsa and the region, increased employment rate

Financial situation / sustainability of the business model: The sustainability of the business model is ensured by the cultural and historical heritage preservation, the society active involvement, the awareness rising and trainings events conducted in relation to the cultural significance of the place and the opportunities for development, the environment protection measures, the utilization of the natural resources, the added, through the cinema industry, value to the region and the increased popularity of Kovachevitsa as tourist destination.

Key success factors: Society active participation, national legislation, environment protection measures

Challenges and problems: Kovatchevitsa was strongly affected by migration processes in the 50s of the 20th c which resulted in desertification of the village. As result, the houses of cultural and historical significance we slowly being destroyed under the influence of nature. The opportunity for the village to revive was its "discovery" by the Bulgarian film-makers which made the place famous again and made people invest in its tourism potential.

Year when the enterprise was created: 1977

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgNbw3uv0E>

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