

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

Subsidy Contract No. BMP1/1.3/2616/2017

Company name: "Stara Pliska" Complex

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Source: <http://starapliska.bg/>

Country/region of operation: Pliska, Bulgaria

Sustainability dimension: social, cultural, heritage- based tourist products

Description of the enterprise/initiative:

Stara Pliska Complex is located in the town Pliska /the capital of the First Bulgarian Country in the period from 681 to 893/. It is the only cultural and historical entertainment complex in the world where the Cyrillic alphabet is exposed in such manner.

There is an inn with 23 double rooms, a restaurant, summer garden and Boil Baths offering Finnish sauna, Himalayan sauna, Hot Jacuzzi, Heated pool and Massages, but the uniqueness and the value of the place are determined by the Cyrillic court.

The "Yard of the Cyrillic alphabet" is organized in two interconnected spaces: The entrance gate leads to the Letters - the place where the impressive sculptures (hand-carved) of Cyrillic letters are placed in front of the three emblematic figures - the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius and St. Boris I - Michael, the king of the Bulgarian people. To the left of the sculpture is a small chapel bearing his name. Next to the chapel stands a stone with a cross - the traditional Armenian "hacker", a gift from the first Christian people with a message to the Cyrillic Yard. Through the gallery, which by paintings tells the story of the creation of the Cyrillic alphabet, it goes to the fortress - a symbol of protection and preservation of Bulgarian's and the writing. This is an authentic stone building with a tower and battlements, and the two huge halls on the first and second floors have sheltered the most significant of the history of the Cyrillic alphabet and Bulgaria. A unique Writers' Alley is

situated in front of the fortress, featuring artists from different national cultures and religions, who have written and write in Cyrillic alphabet.

The Cyrillic yard is the place where Cyrillic letters return home after they have given light and knowledge to a significant part of humanity.

Social/ community impact sought:

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Eight Bulgarian saints had participated in the creation of the Cyrillic alphabet: Cyril and Methodius, Clement, Naum, Angelarius, Sava, Gorazd (St. Sedmochislenitsi) and King Boris. As being the alphabet with the most martyr historical destiny, the aim of creation the complex was to bring to life the place where the Cyrillic alphabet started its journey to the world, because the Cyrillic alphabet has appeared as a script for the Slavic Christian people, but today millions of Muslims, Buddhists and other religious communities also write on the alphabet created by the Bulgarians.

Stakeholders: Young and adult from all over the world

Approach applied:

Entering the hall on the first floor of the fortress, the visitor crosses the boundaries of time and finds himself in the medieval atmosphere of the letter creation. Here comes the history of writing. Wax sculptures convey the magic of the tale of the majesty of the Bulgarian word and its blessings. In front of the eastern wall, on a stone podium, there is a composition with the students of the Slavs' first teachers. On the southern and western walls, on wood-carved panels, the letters of the two alphabets are read - the Glagolitsa and the Cyrillic alphabet. With exquisite images of Cyrillic letters on the stone wall there are the words "God", "Faith", "Spirit", and „Clement". The warmth of the wood combined with the hardness of the stone exudes strength and longevity of spirituality left by the first Slavic alphabets. The historical story continues on the second floor of the fortress with the most glorious rulers, making the First Bulgarian Country an invincible European force - Kubrat, the founder of the Old Great Bulgaria, his son Asparuh, who established today's Bulgaria, his successor Tervel who stopped the Islamic invasion and was called "the savior of Europe", the first Bulgarian legislator - Krum, Omurtag - the builder and knyaz Boris I-Mihail- the Baptist.

Innovation applied:

"Stara Pliska" Complex is the only cultural and historical entertainment complex in the world created to perpetuate the feats of the creators of the Slavonic alphabet. The home of Cyrillic letters and their history is created not by a state institution or organization, but by an Armenian - Karen Aleksanian - who has settled in Bulgaria and learned a lot about the history. With personal funds, he purchases over 700 hectares of land, hired builders, architects, Bulgarian and foreign artists who fulfilled his ideas.

Social impact and business results achieved:

Nowadays the gratitude to the creators of the Slavic alphabet is increasingly fading, therefore the Cyrillic yard was founded to highlight Pliska's significance not only for the Bulgarian, but for the cultural history in general.

Financial situation / sustainability of the business model:

The complex is visited by thousands of people monthly. They pay an entrance fee, as many of them also contribute with donations in favor of the complex development.

Key success factors: The complex provides opportunity not only for observation of statues, artefacts and pictures but for complete entry into the epoch of the great rulers of the First Bulgarian Country, the path of creation the alphabet and the subsequent cultural development. The huge wood-carved letters are standing in an open space, there are no banners on the grass - everyone can get to the letters, touch them, take a picture and look at the beautiful images on them. The combination with a place for accommodation and relax makes the Complex attractive tourist destination for wide range of visitors.

Challenges and problems: The complex was begun in June 2014 with many difficulties and hard work. The stones of the chapel are ancient and local people were engaged in collecting and carrying them personally. Many efforts and resources were needed to turn the empty meadows into such a large complex. People from around the globe have participated in the creation of the site, as one of the most selfless contributors was Mr. Ashot Sergeyevich Agababian, a member of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, who organized the delivery of the letters and hacker from Armenia to Bulgaria.

Year when the enterprise was created: 2015

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

<http://starapliska.bg/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8VjsPXWfxA>

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

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