



**Report**  
**on identified best practices and tourist packages**  
**in the cross-border region Bulgaria-Turkey**

**2017**

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## Foreword

Main target of the research were top best practices and tourist packages that have the potential to be replicated in other locations in the cross-border region in Bulgaria as well as in Turkey. The focus of the research was also on tourist attractions, tangible and intangible heritage of the area, with historic, architectural or cultural value. The research focused on the following destinations in Bulgaria: Nesebar, Sozopol, Burgas and the village of Brqashlian, since these are major tourist destinations in the region, mainly in the summer season. In Turkey the research focused mainly on destinations in Edirne and one destination in the city of Luleburgaz, Kirklareli vilayet.

The Turkey cross-border region (Districts of Edirne and District of Kirklarely) in general falls short in long-term tourist visits for two main reasons: (i) there is neither a sea or a mountain to attract holiday tourists during the summer or winter periods; (ii) the proximity of Istanbul, the major Turkish tourist destination, is the reason for the tourist to prefer visiting it instead of Edirne and other tourist sites in the cross-border region. The same shortfalls apply for the other two districts of the Bulgarian border region – Yambol and Haskovo. Both of them lack access to sea or mountains and the proximity of other major tourist locations leave them aside from the tourist flow. Considering the more developed tourist industry in the Burgas and Edirne region, the research tried to find out best practices and tourist packages from these region, information about which can help the other regions – Kirklarely, Haskovo and Yambol, to develop similar practices and products to foster their tourism potential.

## I. Old city of Nessebar – the jewel of the Black Sea Coast

The first best practice identified is the city of Nessebar. It is also the top tourist destination in the Bulgarian part of the cross-border region. The mediaeval city is the jewel of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. It is a successor of an ancient Thracian village Menebria and of a Greek colony and important trade center Mesembria. This is one of the oldest cities in Europe and one of the richest in architectural monuments from the middle ages of Bulgaria. It was founded as Messambria in the 6th century B.C. by Greek colonists and has been on the World Heritage List of the UNESCO since 1983.

Located on a small peninsula in the Black Sea the delightful tourist spot yearly attracts a million visitors. A small road, which connects the peninsula with the mainland, leads through the narrow gateway in the ancient fortress wall right to the quaint, tiny historic down town area with numerous well preserved buildings (mainly mediaeval churches) and narrow cobbled lanes, winding amongst wooden houses of the 18th and 19th century. Nessebar's typical houses have stone foundations and broad, overhanging wooden superstructures.

Today the spirit of the ancient market lives on with a multitude of sidewalk vendors, hawking all sorts of art work and tourist souvenirs, such as fine crochet works, knitwear, pottery, wood-carvings, paintings... Idyllic restaurants on the steep coast or in the middle of the old town invite the visitors to rest. The most appealing are located on the peninsula's scenic southern tip.

Alongside the vast number of architectural and archaeological monuments (about which more information is provided in Annex 1), the city had developed a very good infrastructure for visitors. There are a number of bus lines that connect the city with other major tourist destinations in the region: Sunny Beach (which is the biggest Bulgarian resort and only about five kilometers away from the old city of Nessebar, Burgas, Sozopol, St. Vlas and Pomorie. The busses have very convenient schedule, busses passing each 15 minutes during the summer season, and are served by on-the-spot controllers who sell you tickets in the buss and can give you directions on which bus stop to get to reach your desired destination. The bus service has convenient numerous stops throughout the Sunny Beach complex and St. Vlas village, which

makes the trip from the these top tourist complexes to the Nessebar site very comfortable for all tourist that want to visit it.

A regular attraction train transfers tourists from and to Sunny Beach while its rout goes alongside the see beach and across the new city of Nessebar. There is a convenient junction between the attraction trains circulating within the Sunny Beach and the trains going to Nessebar. At the peak hours the trains pass every 5 to 10 minutes and are convenient for tourists since the well developed routs make it possible for tourists to catch these trains anywhere on the main walking passages in the complex.

On top of the road means of transportation, the old city harbor provides opportunities for water transportation. There are regular shuttle boat transfer to Sunny Beach and St. Vlas. The harbor itself is a wonderful place to walk and have a relaxation passing the spectacular small fisher boats and the new powerful yachts and catamarans docked at the harbor.

There is no fee to enter the old city and the tourist can observe all monuments for free. There is a small ticket price for those who would like to see the monuments inside and this fee is provided to cover the costs for guarding the monuments (each monument has one or two service persons who monitor the heritage to be preserved) and for its maintenance and reconstruction. In the city there are tens of restaurants, coffee shops, fast food outlets and hundreds of shops for souvenirs, clothes, jewelry, crafts, and other products of interest to the tourists.

Just aside from the harbor, for those traveling by car or by excursion buses, is available a parking area with capacity of 500 vehicles. The parking is 5 minutes away from the old city and provides convenience for the tourists to reach the sightseeings with minimum walking. The preserved monuments from all stages of its long existence: remnants of fortress walls from Roman times and the Middle Ages, old Byzantine and Bulgarian churches, antique 18th and 19th century housesmake the destination unique for the toruists. Another great treasure of the town are the numerous churches. The city also has an archaeological museum where the tourists can learn more about the architecture of the city's monuments.

The old city of Nessebar has its share for the development of the tourism in the border region of Bulgaria. It has successfully combined the ancient monuments with modern transport

infrastructure. The old type houses are well transformed into hotels, restaurants, craft shops and other places of tourist attraction. Millions of tourists choose destinations as Sunny Beach, St. Vlas, Pomorie, Aheloy, Ravda, Burgas, Sarafovo, to enjoy the Sea coast during the day and have amazing experience at afternoon walks or having a dinner in the ancient surrounding of old city of Nessebar. Thus, because of its unique combination of values provided to the tourists, the city of Nessebar takes the first place as a best practice for tourist attraction. Millions of tourist packages are sold each year for this destination, combined with different means of transportation – line buses, organized bus trips, rent-a-car, boats, and attraction trains.

The developed by the local administration strategy for the development of the city's tourism potential can be considered by other cities in the cross-border region to foster their tourism potential. Elements like transport infrastructure, utilizing nearby large tourists complexes, proximity of large tourist city destinations, etc. can be considered by the administrators and tourist providers in the city of Vize (TR), Edirne (TR), Tsarevo (BG) and Malko Tarnovo (BG).

Charachteristics of the municipality of Nesebar: Size: 420 sq.km.; Population: 25 000 persons; Type: small city/tourist city.

## II. City of Edirne and its markets

This beautiful city is famous with its plenty of mosques with elegant towers and minarets, which reveal views to the whole province. Edirne is located on a very strategic location near the borders of Turkey with Bulgaria and Greece. In 1363 it became the third capital of the Ottoman Empire and remained as such till 1453 when capital became the city of Istanbul (then called Constantinople). Today the city inherits the spirit of the past and is a vibrant commerce center.

Visitors interested in the historical and cultural sights have the possibility to walk around the center of the city and enjoy the beautiful architecture of the mosques, buildings, markets and houses in the typical for the Ottoman empire style. In addition to the Syuleime Mosque, the Archeological and Architecture Museum, the Sultan Beyazit Complex, the Museum of Health, which are major tourist attractions, the tourist can enjoy stunning architecture and paintings in the: Uch Seleferi Mosque, the Old Mosque/Eski Cami, the Bulgarian Church St. Georgi, the Grand Sinagogue, Dar-ul Hadis Mosque, Ismail Aga Mosque, San Melek Pasha Mosque, Hasan Sezai Turbesi. Most of these historical and religious monuments are located within ten-to-twenty minutes walk from the center of the city, which allows for the tourists to visit these monuments while in the same time relax in the center of the city and the numerous small restaurants and tee houses located in the center of the city.

The city is also famous with its gastronomy. It is known as the place where the traditional Turkish meal, fried liver, is best made in the north part of Turkey. Not surprisingly, there are tens of small restaurants in the center and around the city, which offer this meal to local people as well to tourists. The visitors can also taste the Turkish delight – lokum and the halva and other sweet products, which are traditional for the Turkish cuisine and are popular on the European cuisine as well. These products can also be bought from the small shops located on the main pedestrian streets and within the several city markets and in many cases are home made and with very good tastes.

In the center of the city are located several tourists markets, which offer garments, shoes, textile for the home, souvenirs, traditional musical instruments, and gold and silver jewelry. Other popular shopping locations are the Margi Outlet and the newly opened Mall Erasta, both

providing official and casual clothes with popular European and Turkish trade marks. The KIPPA supermarket and the Friday opened air market are also very popular destinations for the tourists from nearby countries – Bulgaria and Greece.

The location of the city near the Bulgarian and the Greek border makes it easier for tourists to visit it. Most of the tourists are short-term visitors who, in many cases, come for a day or two and then return to their countries. Major challenge for Edirne is to develop such tourist products and implement best practices that can make the tourists stay for longer periods in the city. Such products and best practices can include establishment of tourist attractions, better promotion of the historical and architectural treasures of the region, more and better tourist information materials, in English, Bulgarian and Greek languages, distributed to the tourist agents in Bulgaria and Greece and more specifically to Bulgarian and Greek destinations where foreign tourists are concentrated.

Although the city is easy to reach by car, it is not easy to reach it by public bus or train. There is no direct train that goes to Edirne from Bulgaria or Greece. There are not also regular public buses that connect major Bulgarian and Greek cities (Burgas, Sofia, Haskovo, Komothini, Xanthi, Komothini) with Edirne. All transnational bus lines go to Istanbul and the passengers need to leave their buses on the high way near Edirne and change it with smaller busses that go from the high way to the center of Edirne. This makes the travel by public buses inconvenient since foreigners who do not often go to Edirne feel unsecure changing buses on the highway and the transfer of luggage from bus to bus also provides additional difficulties.

Regardless of the shortfalls described above, Edirne is highly efficient by offering a bundle of tourist attractions – historical, cultural, religious and architectural achievements combined with high quality local food and meals. Because of this it managed to achieve remarkable results in attracting new tourists in the area. For the last fifteen years the number of tourists who visit the city for less than three days doubled in numbers due to improved promotion of the historical sites, the development of the local markets, and the increased and quality production of the agriculture sector.

The best practices of the businesses to promote local foods and meals can be articulated by the Bulgarian local authorities and the private business in cities like Tsarevo, Sozopol, Haskovo and Kardjali, namely, to stress on the local meals and foods that are produced locally



and have better taste and overall do not contain pesticides and are free of genom modifications. In particular, the local agriculture markets, the local restaurants and hotels in the Bulgarian cities should offer exclusively locally grown products, which are testier and healthier than the imported ones. This will help the cities attract more tourists who are paying more attention on the quality of the food.

Charachteristics of the municipality of Edirne: Size: 844 sq.km.; Population: 166 000 persons; Type: large city / administrative center / predominant economy: agriculture, trade, tourism.

### III. Brashlian – the jewel of the Strandja Mountain

The village of Brashlian has a long history, which starts from XVII century, when the population of three tiny neighbourhoods – Iurtet, Selishte and Jivak (with a trachian name of Kokon/Kikos from the Trachian language Jik – Mercury) moved to live in the down, the oldest part of the village and name the new village Sarmashik. According to an ancient legend here was born Orpheus. Since then till 1934 the today village of Brashlian is named Sarmashik and under this name is called in the Strandja Mountain anthem „Clear moon rising up”.

The village of Brashlian has a heroic historical being. The population of the village gave victims during the Hateria (Greek movement for national freedom) in 1821, as well as during the Preobrajensko rising in 1903. The village has been visited by Vasil Levski, whereas the house in which he stayed overnights is preserved till today. In Brashlian was organized the so called “Sarmashik affair” at which fallen the first victims of the Preobrajensko raising. Among the flourishing plants of Rosin and Ivy, growing on the century old beech and oak trees, are preserved about 80 houses in an authentic Strandja architecture from XVII – XIX century. The authentic look of the village, its heroic past, the well preserved houses and the amazing surrounding nature are the reasons the destination to be recognized by the Bulgarian Government as an architectural and historical reserve with national meaning in 1982. Some twenty years after this act of the government, and together with the sharp development of the tourism after 2000, the village became an important destination for tourists with interest in Bulgarian village architecture, national traditions and the beauty of the nature.

The village is located 60 km from Burgas and is only 2 km away from the main road Burgas – Malko Tarnovo – Edirne. The closeness to the main regional center and the big tourist destinations like Sunny Beach, Nessebar, Pomorie, Sozopol, Tsarevo, Chernomorets, Kiten and others, make it an easy to reach tourist site. Nine of the houses of the village are granted certificates for national importance, 22 are recognized as a part of the overall village architecture and the rest are with local meaning, but all of them have statute of architectural monuments. The oldest preserved house, which is inhabited till today, is built in XVII century. It is not by chance that Brashlian is called the pearl of the Strandja region.

But not only the houses and the nature make the village a preferred destination for the tourists. The people of Brashlian managed to preserve the traditions and rituals from the past and the visitors of the village can observe these old rituals. Such rituals include performance of wedding ceremonies, Christmass traditions, rituals for fruitfulness and other traditions. Most of the performers are people who moved to live in the city of Burgas but during the summer months stay in the houses in Brashlian where they were born.

In the village the visitors can see the church St. Dimitar, which was built in XVII century and its ceiling school built in 1871. In the center of the city the building of the former school is reconstructed and is now a beautiful hotel complex with nice restaurant and an area for the kids to play in the former backyard of the school.

An excursion to Brashlian can also be combined with visits to several other historically important sites in the area, namely the tracian cultural complex in Mishkova niva, the catholic church “St. Troitsa” and the church “Uspenie Bogorodicno” from 1745 in the city of Malko Tarnovo. For excursions lasting 2 to 3 days other places of interest can be the tracian svetilishte “Indipasha” (10 km away from the road Malko Tarnovo – Tsarevo), the tracian svetilishte “The stone” (15 min from the road Tsarevo-Primorsko), the village of Balgari (home of the fire walking Bulgarian tradition recognized by UNESCO as an intangible heritage with world meaning), the old church “St. St. Konstantin and Elena”, the most beautiful church in strandja region in the village of Kosti, visiting the churches “St. St. Kiril I Metodii” and “St. Georgi” in Sozopol, where can be seen the remains of St. Joan the Baptist.

The village had successfully used its heritage and natural resources to efficiently attract tourists in the region. For the last twenty years the tourist flow increased from almost zero to up to 5 thousand visitors during the summer months. The best practice can successfully be replicated in any small villages on the Bulgarian or Turkish territory that has similar characteristics as Brashlian – old style architecture of the houses, preserved nature, people opened to share their cultural habits and traditions with the rest of the world.

Characteristics of the village of Brashlian: Size: 6 sq.km.; Population: 67 persons;  
Type: small village / predominant economy: tourism.

#### IV. Syuleime Mosque

Syuleime Mosque is the landmark tourist attraction of the city of Edirne. It was built between 1569 and 1575 and is the major architectural achievement of the famous architect Mimar Sinan. The building was one of the most unique works of the time when it was constructed and is still an example of the human creative genius. Its size, aesthetic proposition, the cut stones it was made, the wood and pearls decorations and original pen works, the beautiful marble elements and painted dome and minarets make the monument the most attractive place for tourists in the city. In 2012 UNESCO included the mosque in its World Heritage List to recognize its valuable and significant achievement for the world's architectural heritage.

The mosque complex includes other attractive for the tourists places, like a museum with archaeological, historical and ethnographical expositions, religion museum, bazaar and a bath. It is located just on the top of the main pedestrian street of the center of the city and is easily accessible by foot. Next to the mosque is provided a large tourist parking where the cars or buses can be left. Tourists can also use the numerous parking lots available alongside the main pedestrian area of the center of the city. Just two minutes away are the bus stops of the city bus transportation system, from where tourists can take rides to any destination of the city (shops, malls, suburbs, and to the highway to connect to the international bus lines).

There is a free access to the inside of the mosque and tourists can access it at any time during the day and in the time when prayer service is provided. There are visible and well placed signs that show the foreign visitors the manner of conduct to be followed in the religious buildings as is the mosque – women should wear scarves on the shoulders and all visitors should take off their shoes when entering the mosque. Visitors can also enjoy a walk in the garden alongside the mosque and have a rest in the court of the mosque. Thousands of pigeons surround the complex and tourist can feed them with seeds sold by traders alongside.

The valuable architecture, the stunning arts inside the mosque, its proximity to the city center and the available transport infrastructure make this location most preferable for the the tourists visiting Edirne.

The strategy of the city of Edirne to make the Syuleime Mosque its landmark attraction was very effective. In the summer months more than 100 000 tourists visit the site, including the other buildings in the mosque complex. Although it is difficult to replicate, the best practice can serve as an example for other municipalities on how to structure a complex of buildings in one place so that the one important structure and its surrounding buildings can add value to each other by showing different aspects of the local development – religious, historical, architectural and cultural.

Syuleime Mosque is located in the center of the municipality of Edirne with the following characteristics: Size: 844 sq.km.; Population: 166 000 persons; Type: large city / administrative center / predominant economy: agriculture, trade, tourism.

## V. City of Sozopol

Sozopol is located about 30 minutes drive from the main regional city of Burgas. It is the oldest city on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. Convenient intercity bus lines provide connection between Burgas and Sozopol every 30 minutes in the summer and every two hours in the winter months. Similar to the city of Nesebar, Sozopol offers spiritual experience with its traditional architecture houses, two small but very beautiful churches and plenty of cozy restaurants that offer nice traditional and sea food meals. Almost every house, most of them having traditional structure and interior, is transformed into a guest house in the summer. The tourists can enjoy the traditional surrounding, sunbathing on the nearby beaches, nice food in the numerous restaurants and cultural programme that includes visits to both churches as well as to the nearby two islands – St. Ivan and St. Petar.

The church St. Georgi is located in the heart of the old town of Sozopol. It was built in 1828 and nowadays exhibits the remains of St. Joan The Baptist, which were found in 2012 on the Island St. Ivan. The island itself used to be a holly place for the ancient Thracians, which made their own сандугаръ тхере in VII century before the Christ. At this time on the south coast of the island was built a large cathedral complex at the center of which was placed a 13,2 meters high bronze statue of god Apolon the Curer. As part of the complex also was built the monastery St. Joan the Baptist where in 2010 the Bulgarian archeologists found the remains of St. Joan the Baptist. Now these archeological treasure is placed in the church St. Georgi and attract hundreds of thousands of visitors to Sozopol each year.

The island of St. Ivan and the nearby island St. Peter, just a few hundred meters from each other, are home for habitats of more than 70 species of birds. They also are home of the largest population of Seagulls (*Ichthyaetus audouinii*) and Yellowtail Seagulls (*Larus cachinnans*) in Bulgaria. The Island of St. Joan is protected areas and is granted the statute of archeological and natural reserve with national meaning. The access to both islands is free and during the tourist season small boats and ships transfer the tourists from the port of Sozopol to the islands. Water transportation by boats and small ships is available for transfers to the cities of Burgas, Nesebar and Sunny Beach.

The cosy atmosphere of the old Sozopol, the nearby magnificent two islands, the possibility for the tourists to see the remains of St. Joan the Baptist and the good transport infrastructure make this place an attractive destination for tourists all over Europe. The well developed tourist accommodation and the numerous small traditional and fish restaurants provide additional value for tourists and help the city to become one of the most preferred holiday tourist destinations in the summer season.

The best practices developed by the administration of the city of Sozopol can be replicated in cities with similar characteristics in Turkey, for example the city of Enez, which is located near the coast of Aegian Sea, as well as other cities which have good road and/or sea transportation infrastructure to main Turkish cities like Istanbul, Edirne, Luleburgaz.

Characteristics of the municipality of Sozopol: Size: 480 sq.km.; Population: 13 000 persons; Type: small city / predominant economy: tourism.

## VI. Museum of Helath and Sultan Beyazit Mosque

The Sultan Beyazid complex is located about 10 minutes by car and 30 minutes by walk from the center of Edirne. In the past it was a typical Ottoman architecture achievement where around a centrally located mosque were located buildings with various charitable services for the community. As of today only six of the buildings of the complex are preserved - the mosque, the hospital, the medical school, two guesthouses and the bridge. The other structures of the complex, that have been destroyed throughout the years, included a Turkish bath, a watermill, a musical school, an elementary school and so-called *muvakkithane* that informed people about the date and the time. There were also two guesthouses and a soup kitchen.

The hospital and the medical school buildings have been renovated by the Turkish government at the beginning of the century and were transformed into the Museum of Health. The museum provides insights in the traditional methods for cure in the Ottoman empire and the Muslim medical practices. Also preserved are plenty of medical textbooks and papers from the middle ages developed and used by the doctors and students of the facility in the past. Not surprisingly in 2004 the Council of Europe prised the facility for the best European Museum of 2004.

For the visitors of the mosque will be interesting to know that it is placed between two other mosques of Edirne – Syuleime and Uc Serefeli. At its front one first enters a spacious courtyard that has three entrances. The courtyard is surrounded by domed porches, supported on marble and granite columns with capitals displaying honeycombs ornamentation. The arches between these columns are painted in red and white stripes. The insides of small domes covering the porches are beautifully painted in decorative patterns. The dome above the arch leading to the mosque is slightly bigger and elevated.

There are decorative niches with honeycombs pattern on both sides of the mosque entrance. The arch above the doors is made of black and white marble blocks. There is a massive honeycomb vault above the doors and three plates with gold calligraphic inscriptions on the black background. The door wings are made of wood, intricately carved in geometric patterns, resembling stars and flowers.



There are numerous windows with wooden shutters, providing the illumination of the porches, and the frames around these windows are also painted, to create an illusion of multiple doors. In the centre of the courtyard, there is an ablution fountain with a pool. A small well stands on the northern side of the yard. Two minarets rise above the mosque, to the north-east and south-west of the central dome. These minarets are of equal height of 38 meters and are decorated with a single balcony each.

Facilities for the visitors to the complex include parking area, souvenir shop, nearby small suburban restaurants. It is disadvantage of the place that it can not be easily reached by foreign tourists using public transportation, and although not very far from the center, it is difficult to reach by foot as well since the road passes land areas and long river crossings.

The plan of the Edirne authorities to establish the Museum of Helath as part of the Sultan Beyazit complex helped the city effectively attract more tourists. The well articulated combination of tourist attractions and the international recognition of the Museum of Helath helped the city and its sightseeings be visited not only by tourists from the neighborhood countries, but also from tourists from Europe, Asia and Americas.

Museum of Helath and Sultan Beyazit Mosque are located some twenty minutes from the center of the municipality of Edirne, which has the following characteristics: Size: 844 sq.km.; Population: 166 000 persons; Type: large city / administrative center / predominant economy: agriculture, trade, tourism.

## VII. A castle – jewel of architecture

This is a newly built private castle, which became the most visited private attractions in the Burgas region for the last several years. The construction of the castle started in 1996 and was completed in 2012 although new parts and additional attractions are being added each year. The attraction is placed on a territory of 20 hectares. Its structure is formed by 20 000 tons of marble varovik, taken from the Strandja mountain. The architecture of the castle is very interesting itself. The roof has the form of a orthodox cross and is covered with copper and brass. The walls of the castle are covered with Ivy, which makes it look spooky and ancient. Around the building there is a marvelous park with several thousand exotic trees, plants and flowers. In the parks are located several deep water lakes inhabited with different fishes and birds (white and black swans, pelicans and ducks). It is permitted for the visitors to fish if they bring fish rod and bate with themselves.

A small zoo can be enjoyed by the visitors and their kids. Amongst other attractins are the fountain for desires, the magic hut/pavilion, the kinetick sculpture, the enchanted fountain of the desires, bronze and marble sculptures, Horse base for horse riding, chapel, winery for degustation of wines and other local drinks (rakia, kvas, shara), art gallery, game zone (escape games, treasure hunters), restaurant and a coffee shop, shop for souvenirs, kids corner with games for the youngest visitors, retro photography kiosk, romantic photo selfy, free parking area. In addition to all these amenities, in 2016 justnext to the castle started operations the largets in Bulgaria aqua park, which increased the tourist potential of the area.

What makes the castle important for the development of the tourism in the region, and the reason to include it in this report, is that its establishment helped the area develop its tourism potential by utilizing the private investment made in a spot where 10 years ago was not of any interest to the tourists. The EUR 30 mln investment now adds to the attractiveness of the region and supports the overall tourist value of the cross-border region of Burgas. Tens of thousands of tourist from all near tourists resorts travel to visit the castle each year. On their way to the castle they visit the city of Sozopol and its historic treasures, the churches, St. Ivan and St. St. Kiril I Metodii, Burgas with its spectacular sea garden, huge shopping malls, the city restaurants, museums, and shops. The existence of the castle spreaded the information about

Bulgaria as a tourist destination around the world and supported the development of the sustainable tourism.

In 2013 a film company from Hollywood used the castle as a natural décor to shoot the movie the last version of the story “The beauty and the beast”. The castle has its international recognition proved by the following nominations:

- Gold and silver prize in a competition for architecture and design “A’ Design Award”;
- Fourth place in the ranking of European Best Destinations;
- First prize for “Innovation in the tourism” of VIP Business Awards;
- Since 2016 the castle is a member of the Skala International Tourism Award;
- It is nominated in two categories of the online ranking World Best Destinations – 2017 (“The best place for wedding” and “Mystic places”);
- Included in the ranking of EDEN for “Most beautiful castles in Europe”. With this nomination the castle supported the nearby city to be nominated for the best European destination for 2017 together with Milan, Paris, Brussels, Barcelona, Rome, San Sebastian and Athens;
- Announced for summer attraction #1 in the campaign “The miracles of Bulgaria” as part of the official activity of the Historic Museum of Bulgaria;
- The International Institute for Research on the Influence of the Slavish Culture on the World (SLAVORUM) made a publication about the castle as a cultural spot.

The site turned to be very effective in attracting tourists in the area. Since it was opened for visitors, the tourists in the area and the nearby municipality significantly increased, this leading to increased visits to the municipal historical and architectural sites and to the restaurants and hotels in the area.

Due to considerations regarding state support to private entities, the location of the site is not mentioned here.

## VIII. Justice Tower, Sarayıçi Kırkpınarır Square; Edirne New Palace and Balkan Wars Memorial

At the vicinity, north of the center of the city of Edirne, in a relatively small area are located several important sights with cultural, archeological and historical value: The Justice Tower, The Sarayıçi Kırkpınarır Square; the Edirne New Palace and the Balkan War Memorial. In addition the visitors to this area can also see three typical for the Ottoman architecture bridges: the Sarachane (the Sultan's) Bridge, the Canuni Bridge and the Fatih Bridge.

Each of the mentioned above landmarks has its own significant meaning. The Edirne New Palace was a place used by the Sultan when Edirne was capital of the Ottoman empire. The palace complex at this time consisted of 72 buildings with 117 rooms, which were occupied by thousands of people. A few structures survived by today, including the Justice Tower and the remains of the Fatih Sultan Mehmet's Natural Palace.

The Justice Tower was built in 1562 by the great architect Sinan, who was also the architect of the Syuleime mosque, at the request of Sultan Suleiman, the Magnificent. It reflects the Seljuk Architecture style. For some time in the past it was used for meetings of the Council of Ministers and as a High Court when Edirne was the capital of Turkey. The tower includes a serbethane on the first floor, sofa clerks on the second floor and a marble saloon on the third floor where the Council Committee used to meet. In the middle of the saloon is placed the sultan's throne and a marble pool. Two stone columns still stand in front of the tower: right one, called the "Respect Stone", was used to present the petitions of the people to the sultan, and the left one, named the "Warning Stone", to display capitated heads of criminals sued by the court.

At the Sarayıçi Kırkpınarır Square the tourists can see the oil wrestling stadium and statues of the famous Turkish oil wrestlers. The oil wrestling was recognized by UNESCO as a cultural heritage with World's importance. The statues are stunning and the atmosphere on the stadium is unreplicable when wrestling competitions are hold.

The Balkan Wars Memorial was opened for visitors in 1994. It is memorial burial ground for Ottoman military personnel, which died during the Balkan Wars 1912-1913. On more than 850 sq.m. are laid monuments and memorial blocks with the names of hundreds of officers and soldiers who lost their lives in this war.

In and just next to this area tourists can also see three bridges that reflect the Ottoman architecture style. The tiny Fatih Bridge connects the Fatih Sultan Mehmet's Natural Palace and the Balkan War Memorial with the Justice Tower and the Sarayıçi Kırkpınarır Square. After crossing the Sarayıçi Kırkpınarır Square the tourists approach the Canuni Bridge and several hundred meters south is located the Sarachane (the Sultan's) Bridge, which had the purpose to connect the center of Edirne to the saray's of the Sultan. The bridge impresses with it being 120 meters long, 5 meters wide and 12 arches of almost 3 meters high. This bridge has also historical meaning since it was an important war structure used by the military for supply of munitions and for defense of the city.

The area has the potential to attract tourists since it encompasses sites with cultural, historical, architectural, and sport value of national importance for Turkey. In a relatively small area visitors can see monuments from different ages of development of Turkey and learn not only about its history but also about its culture, architecture, politics, governance, military and the local most popular sport – the wrestling. The combination of elements with values for different types of tourist groups helps the area to be visited by tourists with different interests.

The sights described in this section are located in the vicinity of the municipality of Edirne with the following characteristics: Size: 844 sq.km.; Population: 166 000 persons; Type: large city / administrative center / predominant economy: agriculture, trade, tourism.

## IX. St. Anastasia Island

St. Anastasia Island is located in the aquatory of Burgas Bay (6,5 km from Port of Burgas) and is the only inhabited island on the Bulgarian Black Sea. On it was built and is still functioning the only island monastery in Bulgaria - „St. Anastasia Farmakolitriya”, which in Greek literally means “savior from suffering”. During the middle ages such holy retreats were located on the Sozopol’s islands St. Ivan, St. Kirik and Iulita and St. Toma, but nowadays there are only architectural ruins left from them.

On the island are also located a small church, which is part of the monastery complex, a museum, a lekarna, a lighthouse and a restaurant. The monastery offers some of its cells for tourists who want to spend the overnight on the island. In the lekarna are offered miracoulous herbs and potions associated with the traditional medicine. The restaurant surprises the visitors with authentic for Burgas meals cooked using old recipies and some meals with herbs that are offered in the lekarna. In the museum tourists can learn about the history of the island and the use of its buildings throughout the years. On the island and on the Sea Port of Burgas (where ships start to the island) tourists can find advertisement and information materials and buy souvenirs.

The island can be visited by tourist ships service contracted by the municipality of Burgas. Three times a day small ships start from the Port of Burgas to the island and return after three hours stay on the island. There is a dedicated web site, with information in Bulgarian and in English, about the island – its history, attractions, information about the means and times of transportation to it. Also available for the tourists is information on how to book tickets for the ships, prices and how to find the place on the port where the ships start their voyage to the island.

The renovation of the island and the establishment of good transport infrastructure to it was key for the municipality of Burgas to add to the city’s attractions this unusual tourist destination. Each year more than 15 000 persons visit the island, of which half are foreign tourists. The island heled the city of Burgas become more attractive for Bulgarian and foreign tourists and be a preferred destination for holiday seekers staying in Burgas and the other cities in the region.

The island is located in the aquatory of municipality of Burgas, which has the following characteristics: Size: 559 sq.km.; Population: 212 000 persons; Type: large city / administrative center / predominant economy: industry, tourism, transportation.

## X. Sokullu Mehmet Pasha Complex

The Sokullu Mehmet Pasha Complex is located in the center of Luleburgaz in the Kirklarely vilayet. It is built in 1569 by Sokullu Mehmet Pasha and its architecture is designed by the architect Sinan, who is also the designer of the Süleymaniye Mosque in Edirne, St. Sofia complex in Istanbul and other attractive for the tourists buildings across Turkey.

On the territory of the complex the tourists can visit the mosque, a medrese, a caravanserai, a tabhane, an imaret, an arasta, a prayer dome, a jugular, a bazaar, a double bath, a bridge, a fountain, waterways and other landmarks. The mosque has simple exterior architecture but the size of the building and its historical and religious importance make it attractive point for the visitors of the city. The mosque is constantly opened for visitors and for worships throughout the day. Around the Sokullu Mehmet Pasha Complex complex are located plenty of city's coffee/tea palaces and restaurants and hotels where tourists can relax and stay overnight in this beautiful city.

The city of Luleburgaz is located 60 km from Kirklarely and the two cities and their landmarks can be visited as part of one tourist excursion. Mainly the cities can be visited by transport organized by the tourists or tourist agency, because small number of people in the intercity transport of Turkey understand and speak English language. Luleburgaz, similar to Edirne, is also famous with its tasty national cousin and deserts like: baklava, revane, halva, lokum, etc. and these delicious foods can be found in the surrounding the complex shops and restaurants.

The complex has the potential to attract more tourists to the city of Luleburgaz. The visit of the complex effectively attracts more people from Turkey now, but if well promoted, and included in bundles with sites from Edirne, it can attract significant number of foreign tourists whose primary purpose is to visit Edirne or Istanbul.

Characteristics of the municipality of Luleburgaz: Size: 1 018 sq.km.; Population: 138 000 persons; Type: large city / administrative center / predominant economy: agriculture.



## Annex 1: Short description about the churches in the old city of Nesebar

St. Stefan Church, also known as the New Metropolia, dates back to the period 11th – 13th centuries. It has the design of a basilica with a nave and two aisles made of stone blocks and bricks. The church was decorated in 1599. More than 1000 figures in 258 compositions are painted therein. The church preserves an original-style painted iconostasis from the end of the 16th century and a fretted bishop's throne and pulpit from the end of the 18th century. The church is not a functioning one. It was converted into a museum. It was declared an architectural-construction monument by virtue of publication in State Gazette, issue No 41 of 1964. It is located near the amphitheatre in Nesebar.

The unfinished 14th century Church of St. John Aliturgetus is located in close proximity to it. In 1913 the temple was severely damaged by an earthquake and is now a free access site. In 1964 it was declared an architectural-construction monument of culture of national importance.

The Church of Christ Pantocrator, one of the best preserved medieval temples, is situated in the centre of Old Nesebar. The temple was built in the 13th – 14th centuries and has a rectangular shape. It was declared an architectural-construction monument of culture of national importance by virtue of publication in State Gazette, issue No 41 of 1964.

St. Spas Temple is another church which was transformed into a museum. It was constructed in 1609 with funding provided by a wealthy citizen of Nesebar. It was decorated by an unknown master in the 17th century. The tombstone of Byzantine Princess Mataisa Kantakouzene Palaiologina was kept in its floor for many years. The tombstone is now exhibited in the Archaeological Museum of Nesebar. The temple was declared an architectural-construction monument of culture of national importance by virtue of publication in State Gazette, issue No 41 of 1964.

If tourists take a walk around Nesebar, they can see the remains of thermal baths from the early Byzantine period. They were built in the 6th century and were used as baths until the end of the 8th century when they were reconstructed to become residential and farming buildings. The Church of St. Paraskevi is located nearby. It was built in the 13th – 14th centuries

and has extremely interesting architectural design. It was declared an architectural-construction monument of culture by virtue of publication in State Gazette, issue No 41 of 1964.

The main church of ancient Mesemvria was called St. Sofia, just like the main temple of Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. It is also called the Old Metropolia. The temple is 25.50 m long. It used to be mortared, its walls were painted, and its entire floor was covered with a mosaic made of small multicoloured rocks. The basilica was built at the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th centuries. It got its present shape at the beginning of the 9th century. It was declared an architectural-construction monument of culture of national importance by virtue of publication in State Gazette, issue No 41 of 1964.

The Church of St. Demetrius was discovered in 1968 during excavations which took place nearby St. Sofia Church. What survived from it are the columns that supported its dome. According to some legends there used to be around 40 churches in Nesebar. Today there is information about 23 of them. Apart from the churches that have been transformed into museums, several other restored and well preserved temples can be seen in the Old Town. The Church of St. John the Baptist was constructed in the 10th century. It keeps a portrait of the church-donor that dates back to the 14th century. It was declared an architectural-construction monument of culture of national importance by virtue of publication in State Gazette, issue No 41 of 1964. Archangels Michael and Gabriel Temple has richly decorated exterior. It was declared an architectural-construction monument of culture by virtue of publication in State Gazette, issue No 41 of 1964. The remains of the Basilica of Madonna Eleusa lie on the northern shore of the peninsula. It was built in the 6th century and according to historical sources was part of a monastery complex. Nowadays the church is restored and partially preserved. It was declared an architectural-construction monument of culture by virtue of publication in State Gazette, issue No 41 of 1964.

Apart from the Archaeological Museum, the Ethnographic Museum of Nesebar is also located on the peninsula. Its exhibition is displayed at Moskoyani House which was built during the Bulgarian Revival Period. The house is a typical representative of the Nesebar residential architecture. It was built in 1804 and was owned by a wealthy merchant from Nesebar. The museum shows objects and items used in the everyday life and crafts of the people of Nesebar, as well as traditional local costumes.

Source: <http://bulgariatravel.org>

## Annex 2: A restaurant fostering Bulgarian traditions

This restaurant is located on a top alongside the Black Sea coast. Its visitors can enjoy a stunning view on one of the Bulgarian tourist complexes as well as on the nearby city and the sea. The restaurant itself is located in the trees and is surrounded by a vast and well maintained green area with alpineums, flowers and decorative bushes. The building of the restaurant looks like a khan tent and the interior includes throne room with inscriptions describing the ancient Bulgarian life, culture and traditions. inscriptions that depict the traditions, the way of living and the history of the old Bulgarians. The service in the restaurant is top level. The waiters are all wearing beards aiming to look like old Bulgarian who looked the same way. In the lower part of the restaurant is established a piano bar.

The restaurant is one of the most visited places by tourists from the nearby tourist complex. Every night the guests can enjoy an artistic programme showing Bulgarian folk dances, folk songs, traditions and costumes. On the restaurant walls the visitors can learn main data about Bulgarian history and information about the Bulgarian khans and kings.

The restaurant is very attractive for the tourists because of combination of several issues:

- it is located in a forest with spectacular view to a tourist complex, to a city with plenty of historical buildings and to the Black Sea;
- its architecture copies the khan tents from the Bulgarian middle ages;
- its interior is made to provide information about the places where Bulgarian khan lived;
- on the walls of the main hall is provided information about the Bulgarian past and main events that happened in the surrounding region;
- there is a special artistic programme offered every night that shows to visitors the Bulgarian traditions, customs, as well as performance from Bulgarian folklore dances and songs;
- it is located only about 4 km from the center of a large tourist complex and some 10 km from the nearby tourist city. From other major cities in the region it can be accessed within 40 to 50 minutes.

The restaurant was ranked as No.1 restaurant for the nearby tourist complex.

Due to considerations regarding state support to private entities, the location of the site is not mentioned here.