

NATURE-BASED AND CULTURAL TOURISM AS A MEANS FOR RURAL REGENERATION: MYSIA WAYS NATURE, HISTORY AND CULTURE ROUTES



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
4. CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
5. CULTURE AND ECONOMY
6. CULTURE, EQUALITY, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

SUSTAINABLE, ENVIRONMENT, CULTURAL, EMPOWERMENT,
REGENERATION, LANDSCAPE, HERITAGE, WOMAN/WOMEN, GENDER,
ACCESS, DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC, INCLUSION, GROWTH

1. Context

Nilüfer Municipality, with almost 450.000 inhabitants, is one of the newest and rapidly developing districts of the city of Bursa, in Turkey. Nilüfer is a highly urbanized region with flourishing automobile, metal, masonry, leather and chemical dyeing industrial areas. Residential and industrial areas are very close to the rural hinterland of Bursa, a historical city with distinguished natural and geographical features. Nilüfer district also has important historical settlements and monuments, such as the ancient Greek town of Apollonia, Kite, a Byzantine castle, the first Ottoman administrative centre in Bithynia, and the early Ottoman period village of Misi.

2. Nilüfer and culture

Nilüfer Municipality includes smart growth and participatory planning principles under its Strategic Aim No. 2: "Urban and Rural Development" of Nilüfer Municipality Strategic Plan 2020-2024, also including the principles of "protection and valorisation of natural, historical and cultural heritage, strengthening of the local identity through design and shaping of public spaces via citizens participation", and the target of providing safe road networks for walkers and cyclists. Moreover, according to the Strategic Aim No. 3: "Social Development", the Nilüfer Municipality aims at ensuring equal access to artistic and cultural activities and equal opportunities for living culture and expression for all.

THE PROJECT IS IMPLEMENTED IN LINKAGE WITH NILÜFER MUNICIPALITY'S RURAL CULTURAL POLICY CONCERNING THE FOUNDATION AND FUNCTIONING OF MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL SPACES IN RURAL SETTLEMENTS.

Mysia Ways Nature, History and Culture Routes project was implemented by the Directorate of Culture and Social Affairs of Nilüfer Municipality to provide an alternative path for local sustainable development in rural regions based on nature-based and cultural tourism. Mysia Ways project is implemented in linkage with Nilüfer Municipality's rural cultural policy concerning the foundation and functioning of museums and cultural spaces in rural settlements. The project aims to protect and value cultural heritage and provide equal access to cultural activities for all, and is also relevant for urban planning, citizens' participation in local governance, and local identity.

3. Project goals and implementation

3.1. Main and specific objectives

The project aims at supporting cultural and nature-based tourism activities in the rural areas of Nilüfer, located in the surroundings of a rapidly urbanized and industrialized region, which possess an abundant natural wealth and historical and cultural significance.

The project provides a framework for cultural expression, constitutes an alternative path for sustainable economic development based on nature-based and cultural tourism, and protects the environment, cultural landscape and natural and cultural heritage, cultural diversity and expression.

IN THE FRAMEWORK OF MYSIA WAYS PROJECT, THE NILÜFER MUNICIPALITY, IN COOPERATION CIVIL SOCIETY ASSOCIATIONS IN NILÜFER RURAL SETTLEMENTS, ORGANIZES LOCAL FOOD TASTINGS AND BAZAARS IN CONNECTION TO MONTHLY ORGANIZED MYSIA WAYS CULTURAL ROUTES.

3.2. Project development

Main actions developed

Mysia Ways consists of approximately 300 kilometres-long trekking, cycling and horse-riding routes, indicated on printed and digital maps. The project is presented and disseminated via Mysia Ways Booklet and website, formed within the framework of "Innovation for Rural Development (IRD)" project Gateway implementation. IRD project is coordinated by Nilüfer Municipality, financed by the EU, and supported by other partners.

In the framework of the IRD project, the Nilüfer Municipality established in the village of Misi, as part of Nilüfer Municipality Culture and Social Affairs Directorate History and Tourism Office, "Nilüfer Municipality Rural Tourism Hub", which is a unit focused on updating, monitoring and developing the project's actions. Monitoring Mysia Ways routes includes posting and controlling direction signs and paint-markings, and weekly control walks and reports on forest road conditions, illegal garbage dumping and marble quarries foundations.

Mysia Ways project implementation and development is based on cooperation with rural settlements elected representatives (village "muhtars" and councils), rural settlements, and civil society organizations, involving village citizens and women's associations.

Nilüfer Municipality, in cooperation with civil society associations in Nilüfer rural settlements, organizes local food tastings and bazaars connected to the monthly Mysia Ways cultural routes. Local civil society associations also welcome cultural walks' participants and visitors to Mysia Ways settlements, creating an environment of hospitality, belonging and sharing of local culture. Local food tasting is often accompanied by the participation of visitors in local agricultural activities, while the sale of products of the revived traditional industry of sericulture -cocoons and silk artifacts- is one visitor's interests in the village of Misi. Moreover, through the project, Nilüfer Municipality works in close cooperation with women's associations on planning rural tourism accommodation facilities visitors, which will prolong the time of interaction between visitors and local communities, enhance rural tourism economy, provide larger incomes and ensure a multi-faceted cultural experience. In this context, women's education on touristic and cultural services has been planned with the support of the Nilüfer Municipality.

4. Impact

4.1. Direct impact

Impact on local government

The project has partly contributed to the redefinition of urban zoning plans and, therefore, it has had an impact on the understanding within the local government of the importance of the territory surrounding urban centres as far as cultural landscape, natural environment, cultural heritage, local identity formation and preservation are concerned.

It has also established a strong conceptual link in municipal strategic planning between culture and environment. Furthermore, Mysia Ways' recognition as a "Tourism-oriented Sports Activity Area" in 2016 and 2019 by the Culture and Tourism Directorate of Bursa Province Prefecture has contributed to implement stricter controls in the provision of permissions for marble quarries establishment in the region by state services.



Impact on culture and on local cultural actors

Mysia Ways has constituted an important factor to shape a coherent municipal rural cultural policy concerning museums and cultural spaces in the Nilüfer rural settlements. Moreover, outdoor activities of Mysia Photography and Nilüfer Literature Museum in Mysia Ways routes and settlements indicate further dissemination of culture to rural areas, making it more accessible for rural populations.

Impact on the territory and population

Mysia Ways project has also brought forward a different understanding of the potential for an alternative local sustainable development for citizens of Nilüfer rural settlements, who are currently mostly employed in agriculture, industry and marble quarries. The project has also contributed to women's empowerment in the rural areas, through their active involvement in Mysia Ways cultural activities, providing cultural/touristic services and production of cultural goods, as well as in the project's promotion and dissemination.

MYSIA WAYS IS THE PRODUCT OF THE INTERWEAVING OF THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE, AND THE PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY.

4.2. Evaluation

The project's activities are monitored by the Strategy Development Directorate of Nilüfer Municipality on frequency and citizens' participation. The activities are also entered in Nilüfer Municipality yearly and monthly plans, while settlement-based (district-based) citizens' satisfaction surveys are conducted on an annual basis by Nilüfer Municipality.



4.3. Key factors

Mysia Ways' success is based on the capacity to merge these two spheres: the protection of the environment and the cultural heritage in a historical rural region threatened by landscape degradation, and the preservation of the cultural identity lost due to the rapid urban expansion.

The project's success is also founded on serving as a medium of cultural expression for rural populations, who are actively involved in touristic and cultural services, as well as in the production of local cultural goods for the visitors. Furthermore, citizens receive education on touristic services and cultural heritage management, while they also share and add knowledge on the routes and local traditions and become familiar with the value of cultural diversity which is introduced to secluded communities via the development of tourism. That has granted high popular support for the project.

Overall, the project provides the framework for local sustainable development, ensuring economic growth based on protection and promotion of culture, protection of the environment, support of social welfare and women's emancipation.

4.4. Continuity

Functioning, updating, promoting and further developing Mysia Ways is one of the primary duties of History and Tourism Office, Directorate of Culture and Social Affairs of Nilüfer Municipality. Moreover, since the project was included in Nilüfer Municipality Strategic Plan 2020-2024, its viability is ensured at least until 2024.

Moreover, the partnership and the signing of a 5-year long cooperation protocol between Nilüfer Municipality and Culture Routes Society, also ensures the continuity and further development of the project until 2025. Mysia Ways are a constituent part of the Via Eurasia cultural route linking Turkey, Greece and Italy from Demre (Antalya) to Bari and Rome.

The project has been recognized as an area related to cultural and nature-based tourism activities by the state of the Republic of Turkey.

5. Further information

Nilüfer was a candidate for the fourth “UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award” (November 2019 – May 2020). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2020, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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