

***CultMark* FINAL CONFERENCE 14-15/9/06**  
**“Place Marketing for Sustainable Development: Strategies  
and Prospects”**

The Final Conference of CultMark Operation was held successfully at 14-15 of September 2006 in Nea Ionia with the participation of the partner’s representatives (elected and officers), local authorities and stakeholders, as well as the public. During the Conference, there were presentations on the subject of cultural heritage and place marketing and several issues were discussed.

The first main issue, which constitutes a major deliverable of the Project, is the elaboration of the Place Marketing Plans for each partner region. These Plans are innovative and can act as a guide for other local authorities that want to implement a Place Marketing Plan in their area. The main conclusions of the Conference, regarding the Place Marketing Plans, were the following:

- a) the provision of a city/ place marketing plan guide aims at the effective promotion of the image of the city/ place
- b) the most significant key issues that were presented for the first time were the analysis of the Critical Path Model (CPM) and of the proposed marketing model of ‘8ps’ by Morrison
- c) The PMPP is based on the Strategic Planning process, always starting from the identification of the city’s/ place’s vision and the primary spatial development objectives that have to be satisfied
- d) the PMPP has to take place in a particular temporal horizon (410 ‘working’ days in most cases).

Another issue that is very important in the promotion of a place is the identification of the target markets and the way that these

could be “unlocked”, which means to be penetrated by the vision of the promoted place. The main conclusions on this issue were the following:

- a) the cultural identity of a place is regarded as the most important criterion people take into consideration when visiting a place
- b) The factor that is primarily responsible for the building of a robust image and the enhancement of a place’s position as a tourist destination is the development of sound local assets and specificities
- c) The fact that the Place Marketing Plan and Public Relations are generally not highly valued could also be interpreted by officials and policy makers as a need for improved information and marketing concerning the importance of the plans themselves

The next important issue is the elaboration of the Public Relations Plans, which were produced for each partner region and can be implemented jointly to the Place Marketing Plans. The main conclusions of the discussions for the Public Relations Plans were the following:

- a) The PRP should be separated in the internal PRP and the external PRP
- b) Trust and understanding are the two ‘key’ dimensions in order for a PRP to become effective for the place that implements it
- c) the role of local actors and decision makers, as in the case of the Place Marketing Pilot Plans, is crucial
- d) The PRP also used the Critical Path Methodology, with particular phases of analysis and steps of each action

One of the main components of CultMark Operation are the Demonstration Actions, which are pilot projects that have taken

place in each partner region, in order to promote cultural heritage and local identity. These vary from promotion of specialized museums, local cuisine, exhibitions and festivals to on-the-ground actions such as visitor information centres, signing of special cultural assets and targeted investments.

There exist various common elements in the demonstration actions: industrial heritage (Nea Ionia and Rostock), waterways and maritime heritage (Chester and Rostock), sport and event tourism (Nea Ionia as host of the 2004 Olympics football preliminaries, Rostock Hanesail 2005 event), festival tourism (Nea Ionia Blues and Rock festival 2004, and Pafos Aphrodite festival 2005), local cuisine (Nea Ionia and Kainuu), info kiosks (Nea Ionia for the 2004 Olympics, Pafos at the old harbour), industrial heritage-related museums (Silk museum in Nea Ionia, Boat Museum in Ellsemere Port & Neston Borough, Cheshire, State Technical Museum M-V in Wismar). There exist also various unique elements in the demonstration actions that can function as 'branding devices'.

The main conclusions of the Demonstration Actions and their impact on the places where they were implemented are the following:

- a) Cultural Heritage is an important factor in creating the local identity of a place
- b) There are elements that can function as "Branding Devices" for places and should be exploited
- c) The implementation and continuation of the pilot actions in each partner contributes to the enhancement of the image of the place and the attractiveness of the region
- d) The next steps should include a learning and feedback process, as well as consultation and cooperation with local authorities and authorities

- e) The promotion of local identity and cultural heritage in an interregional operation supported by the European Union has given the opportunities for less well-known Municipalities and Regions to implement pilot actions that would not otherwise be possible

Another issue that was discussed during the conference is the future of cultural heritage and place marketing. Several speakers presented their views and ideas for the future and some steps that could be followed were identified, such as the cultural industries, industrial heritage etc.

The main conclusions of the presentations and the discussions are the following:

- a) all case studies seem to share the same wider objective of achieving economic prosperity, social cohesion and a high quality of life, through the development of a strong cultural sector
- b) the city/ place vision has certain links to the existing identity and the wider image places strive to promote
- c) the cases have certain similarities and differences in terms of the overall image they seek to develop
- d) Small and medium cities cannot compete easily with other more popular tourist destinations, but they have the potential to win a place among alternative tourist destinations
- e) Small and medium sized cities can exploit, manage and market their cultural heritage by combining it with cultural industries
- f) Every project of industrial heritage is unique and needs to be planned by defining its distinctive characteristics

- g) The cultural value of industrial heritage is important, but it should not be marketed as the most significant feature of a place/ city when it is not the main tourist product.

The Conference was concluded with the Final Session, where a Round Table Discussion took place and each partner's representative made some final comments about the Project and the Legacy that it bequeaths to their regions.

During the closing session the partners' representatives signed the Declaration of CultMark on Place Marketing for Sustainable Development, which commits the CultMark partnership to continue the cooperation and encourage other local authorities throughout Europe to join the scheme.