

# COLOURS Hands-on Project - Promoting Tourism for the Municipalities of Ventspils (Latvia), Bitola and Prilep (North Macedonia) **Briefing n.4 October - December 2025**

WP3 Team

## **HOP Project: Communicate Your City to Tourists**

In October 2025, the COLOURS teams from Ventspils (Latvia) and Bitola (North Macedonia) collaborated with their local municipalities to organise a HOP. The challenge was to generate solutions for how the cities of Ventspils, Bitola and Prilep, communicate their identity and offerings to potential tourists.

## **Team set-up**

Forty-five students from two universities—the University of Ventspils and the University “St Kliment Ohridski” Bitola—worked in parallel under the guidance of two professors from their home institutions. Each university met on its own campus and collaborated virtually with the other. There were 10 teams at formed of members from both universities, and the three subjects (Communication theories VUAS, Change management and Business communications UKLO).

## Applied methods

Students reviewed municipal strategies and applied communication theory to a real case, strengthening intercultural skills and producing actionable recommendations. Through desk research, they analysed local tourism communications, compiling examples to assess strengths and gaps. The three municipalities provided their inputs through presentations and online materials for the intended purpose, so that students could explore and have a hands-on impression of the current situation. The students also attempted to create original solutions to the aspects they found in need of improvement.

The Professors, Renata Petrevska Nechkoska and Kristiana Balode, used a problem- and challenge-based multi-stakeholder facilitation approach (MultiCreation, incorporated in the novelties for teaching and learning in the Alliance proposal<sup>1</sup>) to frame the challenge, co-create solutions among the academia and local government stakeholders, and address practical realities. All the teams presented their findings–SWOT analyses and outputs from brainstorming with the Context-Interventions-Mechanisms-Outputs (CIMO) logic–and delivered recommendations to the municipalities. Each team addressed the challenge of providing original creation (map, postcard, 3-D printable souvenirs, workflow for tourists, municipal info-centre outlook, app for city treasure-hunt, etc.) and proposed managerial solutions on how COLOURS students can use internships to provide information at the municipal tourist info-centres, etc.

Throughout, students were provided with guiding questions and coaching on research and brainstorming methods. The project enabled them to tackle real local challenges in an international, virtual setting, fostering cultural exchange and

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<sup>1</sup> Petrevska Nechkoska, R., Angeloska Dichovska, M., Angeleski, M., Koltovska Nechoska, D., Bogdanoska Jovanovska, M. (2023). MultiCREATION: Multi-Stakeholder Problem-Driven Approach. In: Petrevska Nechkoska, R., Manceski, G., Poels, G. (eds) Facilitation in Complexity: From Creation to co-creation, from Dreaming to Co-dreaming, from Evolution to Co-evolution. Contributions to Management Science. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-11065-8\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-11065-8_8)

language development, and building teamwork, communication, and presentation skills for the labour market.

In terms of experiencing the multimodal communication tools and platforms, the students from UKLO and VUAS used: Moodle portal<sup>2</sup>, to be able to post the updates and align with the external stakeholders, cloud collaborative space, as well as teamwork in instant communication channels (Viber, WhatsApp, Instagram messaging, etc.). Communication with the municipalities has been carried out via emails, specifically designed as part of the learning process in the subjects. Both universities, the Alliance and the Municipalities, produced various posts on their websites and social media about the experience and benefits.

### **Result:**

Through the learning-by-doing process, students get applicable insights from theoretical concepts. They are faced with a problem or challenge, given instructions, and facilitated in navigating to reach the goals. They are challenged out of their comfort zone and build competences in terms of multicultural communication and collaboration, team work, hybrid work, external stakeholder collaboration and communication, business communication, change management in real life, communication in English, co-evolution and learning from each other, troubleshooting, technical aspects of multiple platforms, situational awareness, presentation skills, using AI as a tool, image and video editing, creating short reels and posts to promote the HOP and many other soft skills and competences.

In addition to diverse marketing strategies to promote local tourism, students designed materials based on their research insights to support the local government, including maps, souvenirs, foldable postcards, and gamification cards

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<sup>2</sup> <https://moodle.uklo.edu.mk/course/view.php?id=157>

for a treasure hunt. The two municipalities were pleased with the results and requested the complete work from both teams, beyond the summary presentation.

For their engagement in the HOP, the students receive validation with respect to the requirements of the respective student programme. For UKLO, at the Faculty of Economics, Prilep, the students receive points for their practical project (which is obligatory for each class), points for activity, and points for the exam on a question related to the specific topic and process of the HoP. Additionally, they will receive HOP internship certificates from the Municipalities of Bitola/Prilep, which serve them for reference and are obligatory within the study programme. All involved parties also received Certificates for completion for the students and Certificates of appreciation for the municipality representatives, as well as symbolic branded materials to signify they were direct carriers of #COLOURSalliance and #COLOURSstudents activities.

The initial event as well as the final event, was attended by relevant representatives from the municipalities. All the information already in place for tourists in Ventspils was shared, so that students could get insight into good practices. Many of those have been used to shape the solutions for the Macedonian partners. And vice-versa, as students tried to have a balanced approach of: 'what can we learn from the approaches N. Macedonia for Latvian cities?' and 'what can we improve in N. Macedonia as learning from Latvian cities?'

The municipality representatives on the final event, from Prilep and Bitola, addressed the participants and announced the possibility of applying the student solutions and the engagement of young people through paid practice at the tourist information centers. Mr. Goce Bumbaroski, head of the Department of Public Activities and Youth in the Municipality of Prilep, UKLO alumnus, pointed out that the project creates a direct link and actual content of work between the university and the local government, emphasizing that the next step is the concretization of the innovative student proposals and their conversion into real local initiatives. Ms Simona Jovevska from Municipality of Bitola, advisor for social services for vulnerable groups, also an alumnus of UKLO, emphasized the importance of

accessibility and inclusion in tourist solutions, emphasising the value of inter-municipal cooperation and learning between cities.

As the COLOURS alliance focuses on regional progress and collaboration, this project enabled European regions of Latvia and Macedonia to get closer together academically and with local governments, creating bonds as a foundation for mutual visits and cooperation.

### Quotes from Participants

*"It was an interesting experience and a great chance to work with students from Macedonia,"* said Samanta Klitaimnēstra Vīgante, a first-year Intercultural Communication student at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences.

*"The solutions we propose are not only good for tourists, but also for the locals,"* noted a student from North Macedonia.