

European Institute of Cultural Routes (1998-2018)
20th Anniversary – Neumunster Abbey, Luxembourg
Opening Ceremony
31 May 2018

DIRECTOR GENERAL
SNEZANA SAMARDZIC-MARKOVIC

Excellences, Secretary of State, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear guests,

A year after the 30th Anniversary of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme, it is for me a great pleasure to welcome you to the official celebrations of the 20th Anniversary of the European Institute of Cultural Routes, in partnership with the Government of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg.

I should like to thank the Luxembourg authorities, the Secretary of State for Culture, Mr. Guy ARENDT for the support the Ministry of Culture has provided to the European Institute of Cultural Routes since its beginnings.

I am grateful to Ambassador Stephan MULLER, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the Council of Europe, for

his excellent initiative to celebrate this anniversary together with the Permanent Representatives of the member States of the Council of Europe and Observers.

You being here today is a testimony of the importance the Council of Europe attaches to its Cultural Routes programme launched in 1987, as well as to the partnership established since 1998 with the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg through the European Institute of Cultural Routes. Over the 20-years of its operations, the European Institute of Cultural Routes has provided advice, support and expertise to the Council of Europe programme, and to many cultural routes project and their promoters. Scientific conferences, expert meetings, dedicated trainings, as well as expert reports have been prepared thanks to the advice and support of the Institute's staff expertise.

To Mme Colette FLESCHE, Honorary President of the European Institute of Cultural Routes, a special thanks for her leadership and vision, as well as to all the Members of the Board of Directors of the EICR.

Our presence today is a clear indication of the importance the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme has acquired over the years through the support of Luxembourg and most recently with the direct involvement of the member States of the Council of Europe, through the establishment of a dedicated Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe since 2011. I am very pleased to welcome Mrs. Marianne BERGER MARJANOVIC from Norway, newly elected Chairperson of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, representing 32 member States in charge of the Cultural Routes programme and the certification of new Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

Starting with just 13 founding members, the EPA counts today 32 participating member States awarding the “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” certification and providing political support to initiatives promoting access to cultural heritage and cultural tourism through the cultural routes. Let me congratulate the Governments of Finland, Turkey, and the Holy See who became members of the Agreement this year. We hope that many more Council of

Europe member States will join our Agreement in the near future. I know that discussions are on-going between the EPA Secretariat and some of your respective Ministries of Culture and Tourism and I hope to be able to share with you some very good news in the upcoming months. I take this opportunity to congratulate Croatia and Finland for their decision to inscribe among their current and forthcoming Council of Europe CM Chairmanships the Cultural Routes Programme among their priority fields of action and for hosting dedicated international events on the theme.

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe are to be recognised as the building blocks, the true protagonists of the programme. As of 2018, we count 33 certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, covering the 47 member States of the Council of Europe and beyond, federating over 1,500 associated members representing municipalities, local and regional authorities, cultural institutions, foundations, and more. We are grateful to their Presidents and Managers, to their network members, staff and in particular to the routes representatives celebrating with us here today: The Santiago de Compostela Pilgrims Routes, The

Hansa, The Viking Routes, the Via Francigena, the European Mozart Ways, The European Routes of Jewish Heritage, Saint Martin of Tours Route, the Routes of the Olive Tree, Iter Vitis Route, Saint Olav Ways, the Via Habsburg and Destination Napoleon. You are at the core of the programme's success. From Santiago onwards, some of the cultural routes networks certified by the Council of Europe are as old as the programme.

My congratulations go this year to "The Impressionists' Routes" and to the "Via Charlemagne", our two newly certified "Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe". Each cultural route undergoes a rigorous process of evaluation, and their certification as "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe". The certification is awarded by the Governing Board of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes after a thorough examination on the basis of criteria established by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. This certification is the proof of their excellence and sustainability.

In the big CoE picture, apart from standard setting and monitoring, both the SG and CM emphasize implementation

of those standards. Over the decades, Cultural Routes have served as grass-root tools for the implementation on the ground of the principles and the values expressed in many of our Conventions. They clearly demonstrate the concept of “living heritage” encouraging and promoting active participation, engagement and access to culture for all citizens, in coherence with the European Cultural Convention (1954), the principles expressed in the “European Landscape Convention” (Florence, 2000), and in the “Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society” (Faro, 2005).

At one level what we are doing with the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe is nothing new. Routes and pathways for the purposes of trade, migration and pilgrimage have long criss-crossed the European continent. However, what we have been doing successfully for over thirty years now through our Cultural Routes programme is to provide a methodology and a legal framework through which communities of interest can link cultural destinations together in a meaningful way beyond national boundaries, and in doing so provide opportunities visitors to undertake

insightful cultural journeys across Europe and reciprocally benefit both travellers and local communities alike.

Bearing in mind today's political challenges, deeper understanding of European past can strengthen our present and European future, so the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe therefore retain all their relevance in today's complex Europe, providing tools to bring people together through cultural and educational cooperation, artistic and creative production, cultural tourism, sustainable local development, mutual exchanges and intercultural dialogue. We are pleased to acknowledge that this role of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe was recognised last year by the Committee of Ministers with their "Declaration on the 30th Anniversary of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe" as well as by the European Parliament Resolution on "Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations".

The partnership with the European Union on cultural routes has been further strengthened since 2011 with several Joint

Programme with DG GROW and the most recent signature of a 1.1. Million Euro Joint Programme with DG REGIO. The cooperation has also taken a new impetus this year with joint activities in the framework of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage and the joint hosting of a stand at the *Salon International du Patrimoine Culturel* in Paris later this year. This year's Annual Advisory Forum, to be hosted by Germany in the city of Görlitz, will further strengthen international synergies with International Organisations, such as UNESCO and their World Heritage Sites, many of which are located along our Cultural Routes, but also ALESCO for the Southern Mediterranean as well as the Organisation of Ibero-American States. As a matter of fact, many of our Cultural Routes, from the Reseau Art Nouveau Network, to Charles V, to the European Route of Ceramics, stretch far beyond Europe's borders.

I could go on citing the many more achievements of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme, but I will stop here. This Opening Ceremony, the presence of all the member States of the Council of Europe and the wonderful hospitality of Luxembourg tonight but also

throughout the years through the European Institute of Cultural Routes and its dedicated staff, who I would like to personally thank, are the demonstration that the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme was, when conceived back in 1987, and still is today a wonderful, forward-looking tangible tool contributing to building European identity and a shared European heritage. At the same time, Cultural Routes are the opportunity to celebrate our wonderfully rich European cultural diversity and its many local manifestations, from our music, to our art, our built heritage, to our landscape and –of course—our gastronomy. Lets therefore celebrate the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, our member States and local stakeholders, and allow me to thank all of you for making this wonderful programme possible. Let us have a most enjoyable evening!

I thank you for your attention.