



## Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Evaluation Cycle 2017-2018

### St Olav Ways

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Cultural route  
of the Council of Europe  
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## 1.0 Executive Summary

The Cultural Route St Olav Ways (SOW) is a pilgrim based route that was designed to cover the three countries of Norway, Sweden and Denmark. It combines the experience of the long tradition of pilgrimage, a rich cultural heritage in tangible and intangible forms and the beauty of walking through scenic landscapes. The theme is of clear relevance to the European values that are at the basis of the Cultural Routes.

At ground level there are many examples of good practice in several of the fields of action, particularly in terms of cultural tourism. There is still greater potential to be harnessed in this area. Research cooperation is weak, engagement with cultural and artistic practice is present (though with room for development) and there are strengths relating to the enhancement of memory, history and European heritage and some success (though greater potential) in the field of cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans.

In communication terms, the platforms are well developed and active. The websites are good with rooms to develop more content. On the ground communication through signposting and interpretation is excellent.

The core issues for the SOW relate to governance and finance. There is no legally recognised structure overseeing the management of the whole route. What exists is not fully representative of the countries involved or of the sectors that should be engaged with a transnational cultural route in order to deliver on the fields of action and eligibility criteria of the Council of Europe. There is no shared and fully articulated vision for SOW and a clear strategy is required.

Finance is limited and over-dependent upon one 'hosting' organisation in one member country. The effect of this is that it conveys to the public that this is not a coherent transnational route but two or three national routes. The structure of governance that exists at present does not allow for the workings and development of a trans-national route that goes beyond its pilgrimage roots and extends to being a multi-dimensional **cultural** route.

There many issues to address for the SOW relating to the fields of action and meeting the visibility guidelines, but these are in effect only a symptom of the deeper problems of the governance and finance issues. It is important to realise that there are many positive actions relating to the route, many initiatives and projects in development and great enthusiasm and professionalism in wanting to see the SOW as a successful European Cultural Route. At present these are fragmented, partial, poorly communicated and not part of any coherent route vision and strategy.

### Summary of the conclusions

The theme only partially complies with the eligibility criteria for themes, CM/Res(2013)67, I. List of eligibility criteria for themes.

Generally, the Cultural Route complies with the criteria listed in CM/Res(2013)67, II. List of priority fields of action, CM/Res(2013)67, but only in terms of the assessment of **one** of the 3 partner countries.

The Cultural Route does not fully comply with the criteria for networks, as in CM/Res (2013)67, III. List of criteria for networks.

## 2.0 Introduction

The St Olav Ways Cultural Route (hereafter SOW) was incorporated as a Council of Europe European Cultural Route in May, 2010. The Route follows the ancient pilgrim paths to Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, Norway where St Olav is buried. The paths that constitute the Route cut through three countries Norway, Sweden and Denmark. These three countries formed the partners of the initial application.

The sub-theme of the Route – A network of historical, verified ways linking together the history, culture, tradition and religion of the Nordic countries for the benefit of present and future generations – is taken from the previous evaluation 2013 is the closest statement to being a ‘vision’ for the Cultural Route. This does not appear on the St Olav Ways website.

The following evaluation was based upon:

- A detailed analysis of the self-completion dossier and its appendices provided by the SOW Cultural Route;
- The checklist provided by the SOW;
- Extensive examination of the SOW website(s) and its links;
- Examination of associated / interested organisation websites;
- Fact finding and observational field visit to two sites included on the SOW (Gran and Hamar) and part following of the Route;
- Analysis of printed materials produced by the SOW;
- Interviews and discussions with the Manager of the SOW;
- Feedback provided from members of the Steering Committee and those involved with or interested in the Route from Norway, Sweden and Finland;
- Discussion with three independent cultural heritage experts who were previously not familiar with the SOW.

The evaluation has focused upon the past three years of performance of the SOW. However this report is given some context by virtue of the earlier evaluation conducted in 2013. It also takes into account any overlaps in projects between evaluation periods and future projected activities that would extend beyond 2018.

It has not been possible to wholly evaluate the success or otherwise of the various projects that are associated with the SOW but where these can be said to have impacted upon the operation of the Route they have been noted.

Attention is drawn to problems of evaluating the whole of the route due to structural communication issues and the absence of comprehensive information.

### 3.0 Evaluation

#### 3.1 Cultural Route Theme

Saint Olav, his life and travels and the insights this provides into the medieval world of North Western Europe, is a strong theme for a cultural route. It draws upon common values relating to European religious heritage and the Christian tradition and associated hospitality. While there are clear specificities relating to the Nordic countries it also speaks to a wider histories of pilgrimage and their interlinkages across Europe. Beyond the religious theme, the route speaks to the shared culture of engaging with the landscape, outdoor recreation and opportunities for cultural exchange across boundaries.

It is clear that the theme of the Route was well-researched and was developed with considerable expertise and enthusiasm. This is apparent in the earlier material associated with the SOW. At present it is hard to evaluate the extent to which 'experts from different regions of Europe' (Denmark and Sweden) are engaged with the research appertaining to the whole Route. In the context of Norway alone, research and development of the Norwegian pathways is evident. There is research on a Danish part of the route with a view to linking this to the South of Norway and also research relating to a Finnish part of the route (within Finland which is not yet represented as part of SOW) but there is no obvious strategy or forum for bringing research together for the benefit of the whole route.

The theme is illustrative of European history and heritage through the common traditions of pilgrimage but as it stands this is implicit and not explicit in the communication of the SOW. There is no doubt that the route is open to the full range of diverse cultures and traditions of Europe and though in small relative number, this is evident by the profiles of pilgrims. However, the narrative presented could be much stronger in pointing out the traditions and continuities of diversity in pilgrimage that cut across denominations and cultures across Europe.

The SOW has great potential for youth exchanges and educational links not only in the Nordic countries but across the whole of Europe. There is activity in Norway; for instance through the European Voluntary Service and the Erasmus Plus programme, Nidaros Pilgrim Centre hosted students from Hungary, Poland, Spain, Croatia and Italy. But while educational exchanges are operative within Norway their extent in Denmark and Sweden is unknown.

The theme most definitely lends itself to the development of initiatives and innovative projects in the fields of cultural tourism and sustainable development. There good models at work in this field of action but in the main these are Norwegian based. A 'joined-up' approach to the route would allow cultural tourism to grow and present the whole of Europe with an excellent pilgrimage package. Several operators are already engaged with SOW but almost exclusively as a Norwegian or Swedish/Norwegian product.

In summary, it is clear that the SOW is a strong and pervasive theme for a European Cultural Route and with considerable potential. However, while it meets a majority of the eligibility criteria, it is, in effect, operating and is perceived as, a single state based route. This was clearly not the intention as enshrined in the Foundation Document but this is a serious concern and a reality that impinges upon all aspects of the SOW, including attempts to evaluate the whole route.

## **3.2 Fields of Action**

### **3.2.1 Co-operation in Research and Development**

It is clear that from its inception the concept of the SOW is based upon solid research relating to the life and the travels of St Olav. There is a Scientific Committee for the SOW though it is unclear how it is constituted. It is not elected and it does not appear to relate to the Steering Committee. It meets frequently when the St Olav Conference is being organised.

The St Olav Conference is the main focus of the Scientific Committee. It is held each year on themes related to St Olav. It is held in Norway but attracts scholars from the other Nordic countries and beyond. There is a website <https://www.stolavconference.com/home> but this has very little content. It is difficult to evaluate the full extent and impact of the research but given that it does not seem to link to the Steering Committee it exists separately from the SOW and any research agenda it may have. There are also lectures, seminars and exhibitions relating to St Olav, but these seem to be arranged without coordination and there is no one place to find records of these. A number of individual academics from several universities from the Nordic countries undertake their own research on St Olav with books and papers produced. Again, there does not appear to be much in the way of coordination of what is undoubtedly good scholarly work and which could feed into the interpretation and communication of the route and so increase and enhance interest and enjoyment for the visitor. A single repository for research outputs or, at the very least a clear overview of what is available would be valuable. If the other paths and routes are to be developed with the context of SOW, understanding the research base would be most helpful.

In a similar vein there have been books / publications produced about St Olav but not really engaged with the Route itself. A notable exception is a guide published in English by Alison Raju on 'The Pilgrim Road to Trondheim'. It is well researched, detailed and helpful. While only briefly mentioning the context of the SOW, the book does bear the Council of Europe logo. In terms of publications and research, while inevitably wide ranging it is important that the shared values of the route and which link the participant countries together are able to surface.

There has been press coverage relating to St Olav and some of this has been captured but the capacity to monitor this is limited through the National Pilgrim Centre. Whether this coverage relates to the actual Cultural Route is not known.

Though there statistics relating to aspects of the route, there seems to be limited diagnostic analysis of these and no real assessment of the whole route. Again this is a matter of lack of resources and coordination. It would be extremely valuable for the SOW to undertake research as to its impact in both economic and experiential terms as this would strengthen its hand in securing funding and political support across all countries concerned. If the route is to develop and expand then research is vital and assistance could be found through the links that exist with the Nordic universities and at some point with the University Network of the CoE's EICR.

### **3.2.2 Enhancement of the Memory, History and European Heritage**

The cultural legacy of St Olav, embodied in the built environment, the landscape, archives and the pilgrim routes themselves is an important aspect of the European heritage, particularly in the North Western countries of Europe but with also with wider geographic resonance. As with other pilgrim-based cultural routes SOW demonstrates an important continuity – a link between past and present. The journeys that SOW offers have appeal to

the visitor/pilgrim on many different levels – a spiritual experience, expressions of localised hospitality, insights into different cultures, enjoyment of natural landscape and engagement with the rich Christian history and heritage that is a hallmark of Europe. This cultural heritage of St Olav is embedded in the SOW and enhanced and promoted through the SOW website and associated communication materials and through the various activities that are able to be experienced by the pilgrims en-route.

The various heritage sites and monuments along SOW in Norway are well protected through state level conservation policies and it is assumed that this is replicated also in Sweden and Denmark.

St Olav Ways is a part of wider European heritage and recalls the widespread religious mobilities and trans-national, trans-cultural links that connected the major pilgrim sites of Rome, Jerusalem, Santiago, Canterbury and Trondheim. Though at present SOW primarily focuses upon the routes to Trondheim across Norway, Sweden and Denmark, sites connected with St Olav by way of churches, chapels, monasteries and places of association can be found in the United Kingdom, Finland, Estonia, France, Poland, Ireland, Italy, Iceland, Greenland, Russia and Turkey. While the extent of such sites varies considerably, collectively they indicate the extensive Europeaness of St Olav's heritage. They also indicate considerable potential to develop the narrative of the SOW and to strengthen its claim as a trans-European Cultural Route. However, at present SOW is heavily weighted as promoting Norwegian heritage. Whilst on the one hand this is understandable for very good reasons, on the other hand it weakens the claim of the cultural route to be representative of European values.

While still focusing upon the physical pathways which visitors can undertake, it is recommended that the SOW explore ways of using the widest possible European linkages to augment the existing narratives of the cultural route so that its representative value can be enhanced and the story of St Olav can be enjoyed in more European countries. This could also have the effect of encouraging a wider constituency to undertake the actual pilgrimage routes.

### **3.2.3 Cultural and Educational Exchanges of Young Europeans**

The SOW would seem to present an excellent vehicle for cultural and educational exchanges for the young people of Europe. As is demonstrated by other Cultural Routes, the opportunities for young people to engage with the act of pilgrimage, share experiences and build citizenship is valuable. Young people do undertake the SOW route and youth exchanges have previously been organised including multi-cultural and multi-faith tours. Nidaros Pilgrim Centre has received exchange students and workers and other Regional Pilgrim Centres in Norway have links with schools and colleges and have hosted young internships to assist with welcoming pilgrims and also more recently with marketing activities. Through the Erasmus + Programme a Spanish intern engaged in pilgrim reception work in Trondheim was possible in 2016. No information is available as to whether cultural and educational exchanges operate in Sweden and Denmark. There is no information provided on the SOW website as to opportunities that may exist for exchange and the mutual benefits that would be generated.

The Trans-European narrative, the experience of the outdoors, the offer of hospitality and the potential for cross-cultural exchange would all make for excellent opportunities for significant cultural and educational exchanges, at the very least between the three main countries involved with the Route. The potential is recognised by the manager of the SOW. However, there is no strategic approach to this action, no coordination and a limited degree of basic information, certainly in Denmark and Sweden. The 2013 evaluation recommended

developing a plan for educational exchange. This has not been taken up. This report recommends that a structured and monitored programme of SOW cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans is developed with partners in Denmark and Sweden and put into place as soon as possible.

### **3.2.4 Contemporary Cultural and Artistic Practice**

There are examples of this taking place, certainly in Norway and with some involvement with other countries. There is an annual music festival – Olavsdagene – held in Trondheim that attracts around 50,000 visitors. There is also an annual St Olof festival in Sweden and an Opera festival in St Olav's Castle in Savonlinna, Finland. There are other events that focus on various cultural expressions but none of these are organised directly through the SOW route and there appears little attempt to capitalise on, partner with or coordinate these events for the benefits of visitors. There is limited information for Denmark and Sweden.

There are other sites of artistic engagement along the St Olav route. For instance, the Granavollen Arts Centre at Gran on the early stages of the Gudbrandsdalen path close to Oslo, opened in 2016. This is clearly an opportunity for the pilgrims to enjoy local arts and crafts and learn more of the settlement and nearby folk museum, but as yet, no co-branding exists. SOW does not have to operate the various animations of cultural and artistic practice itself but it would benefit considerably from auditing / mapping what events and sites exist across the routes, so as to communicate this directly (and indirectly to tour operators) to visitors in order to enhance their experience and benefit local economies. At present there is no calendar of St Olav related no cultural events or mention of enhanced value to be brought through wider artistic and craft activity. There is nothing on the websites.

Cultural routes are important conduits for cultural and artistic activity, related directly to their theme but also a sense of the place and communities they pass through. It is recommended that SOW captures the activities that are already taking place and adopts a strategic view as to how these can be communicated to visitors and encourage more cross-border cultural activities to emphasise the Europeaness of the route. A question to be addressed is the extent to which the SOW can lead / initiate cultural projects or help coordinate those that are already active amongst the organisations that form part of the route? At the very least there should be a way of capturing all such activity on behalf of all stakeholders and beyond Norwegian boundaries.

### **3.2.5 Cultural Tourism Development**

The 2013 evaluation of the SOW commended its work in the field of cultural tourism development and it is clear that the route has indeed engaged well with the tourism sector. Several northern European travel companies include packages that offer guided tours of all or part of the seven routes in Norway, though mainly the Gudbrandsdalen path. None of the travel companies examined featured any part of the route that was trans-national, i.e. that involve crossing between Denmark or Sweden into Norway.

Travel companies – mainly ones that specialise in pilgrimage products – are domestic Norwegian companies but there are also companies in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands that currently feature a St Olav tour. Out of a small sample of websites, only two had links back to the SOW website and none of the products mentioned that the package was following a Council of Europe Cultural Route. While this is not surprising within the private sector it is nonetheless a missed opportunity that would help qualify/differentiate the route. The packages that are offered are for small groups in keeping with the ethos of cultural tourism. The extent of tourism on the SOW generated through the travel sector is not readily identifiable, but it is not likely to be significant. The origin profile of non-domestic



tourists walking the most popular parts of the Gudbrandsdalen path would seem to be dominated by Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark and illustrate some success at reaching these markets. The SOW are featured on the Visit Norway National Tourism Site (<https://www.visitnorway.com/things-to-do/great-outdoors/hiking/st-olav-ways/>) with a link to the SOW website and Facebook site. There is no mention of the CoE accreditation of route. The Visit Sweden site (<https://visitsweden.com/top-hiking-routes-sweden/>) has a feature link to the St Olavsleden Pilgrim Path and again no mention of accreditation. Notwithstanding success at linking with tour companies, SOW is geared up toward the independent traveller. The website and with links to Facebook, provide a very good level of information in order that visitors can tailor their own experience of the route – select their distance, select accommodation and choose what sites they want to see along the way.

Tourists/pilgrims are electronically counted (using eco-counters) but figures are not available for all parts of the routes. Looking at the indicative data from the eco-counters over the sections of the Gudbrandsdalen path between January and July 2017 shows a relatively small total volume of visitors, concentrated at weekends and of course mainly within the June to September season. The inherent limitations of this form of volume counting should be complemented by some sampled visitor profiling and experience surveying. Some useful data is held within the Annual Reports of those Pilgrim Centres that are on the SOW (including merchandise sales and accommodation figures), however this would seem to relate to a wider context of visitation of pilgrims not specifically to the cultural route. Even then this only relates to the route within Norway. No data relating to Sweden was available. Accommodation figures relating to SOW in Jutland, Denmark (4,200 overnight stays in 2016) was available but cannot be verified as relating to the route directly. There is no overall data in terms of volume, value and experience for the SOW. Indications and anecdotal evidence suggest that there is economic impact and suggest that there is considerable potential for further development based on well managed sustainable cultural tourism. SOW addresses three growing trends in European tourism combining cultural heritage, the experience of natural landscapes and the great outdoors with a reflective spiritual element.

The true extent of engagement with SME sector and any supply chain developments are difficult to gauge. There does seem to be good 'on-the-ground' collaborations with the hospitality sector – hotels, bed and breakfast establishments and restaurants. Visitors / pilgrims on the SOW would seem to have a very positive experience indeed. There are likely to be issues of carrying capacity on some sections of the busier pathways at peak times but these are difficult to assess without more data and further analysis.

The key issue with regard to cultural tourism and related development is that the SOW is not administered as whole. The assessment presented here is, with minor exceptions, drawn from data solely provided from Norway. Due to the structure / lack of structure for the SOW the managers of the route have no overview of the route as a whole and are not directly engaged with their counterparts for management information. There is no comprehension on the part of the tourist or indeed, it is suspected, on the part of some of the operators and providers, that this is a **European** Cultural Route with required trans-national engagement.

Developing the cultural tourism dimension of the SOW requires a strategic appraisal as to how best stimulate development so as to open up routes that truly link the partner countries. This should involve cooperation across the national tourist boards and at the regional and sub-regional level. Prime concerns would be the on-the-ground state of the routes themselves, supporting research for development and interpretation and options for tourist packages. There is an opportunity to 'cross-promote' the SOW with the existing Viking Route.

### 3.3 Cultural Route Network

#### 3.3.1 Operations and Finance

The SOW was founded as an association which was / is the Steering Committee of the Route. The Steering Committee is made up of six individuals including those from Denmark and Sweden. The Committee meets twice a year with occasional telephone conferences. There appear to be no publicly available records of the meetings. All members of the Committee were invited to input into the evaluation process regarding the management structure of the route. Two responses were received and have been taken into account. The self-evaluation document mentions a Governing Board which is the Nidaros Cathedral Restoration Workshop. This organisation does have legal status and oversees the department of the Norwegian National Pilgrim Centre but they are not familiar with the SOW, clearly have a national interest and are not considered here as part of the direct governing structure of the European Cultural Route. Operational issues and those of finance are connected with those of governance so there is overlap between this and the following section.

The day to day operations of the route are overseen by the designated Route Manager who is employed by the National Pilgrim Centre of Norway. However, there are further operational aspects and initiatives in Denmark, Sweden and Finland that relate to St Olav pilgrimage pathways and trails but are not always branded as or managed by the CoE designated SOW. There are plans to develop important seaway linkages between Denmark and Sweden and Norway and between Finland and Sweden and then into Norway. This demonstrates 'on-the-ground' initiatives and potential, but it does not appear to be well coordinated and strategic at present in the context of a single coherence European Cultural Route.

In its foundational document the Association declared its aim to become an independent legal body. This has not happened over the course of six years. It was flagged in the previous evaluation report as a problem and there is no doubt that this is a major issue on several levels. First, without legal status the Association is severely limited in its ability to apply for funding on behalf of the SOW. This includes EU funding opportunities. Being an Association and registered as a Business Enterprise would allow the development of commercial activity.

Second, the consequence of this means that funding comes from the Norwegian National Pilgrim Centre. In 2017 the operational budget for the SOW was approximately 22,000 Euros – this constituted by financial support of 150,000 NOK from the municipality of Trondheim and 60,000 NOK from the Swedish Pilgrim Organisation. Salary costs for the day to day management of the route are not included in this and are born by the Norwegian National Pilgrim Centre. For 20% of the Route Manager's time, and 10% of the work relating each to marketing, up-keep of the pathways and project advice along with associated travel, material costs and overheads, the SOW is receiving 440,000 NOK (approx. 46,000 Euros) from the National Pilgrim Centre (under the Norwegian Ministry of Culture). This would be a conservative estimate.

Effectively this is a significant subsidy and an over-dependency that exposes the route to risk should priorities change. It also symbolically weights the route almost entirely to Norway. To some extent this is inevitable as the SOW ends in Norway, is well developed and arguably Norway receives the greatest benefits from the route. However, it is prima facie unfair and discouraging to the existing interests of Denmark and Sweden and potentially Finland and other future route partners. Such a heavy dependency does not encourage development of the whole cultural route, arguably discourages cross-border engagement and places

excessive weight on the existing managers of the route who have other duties and responsibilities for the National Pilgrim Centre.

Moreover, even without hidden subsidy, the funding to operate a cultural route across three countries is inadequate. Without an appropriate legal structure and a strategic plan to develop the SOW and engage with the partner countries and promote a common, 'joined-up' route, there remains a risk to its sustainability. While in line with many cultural routes, there is a strong leaning to public funding, the structure as it stands does not accommodate opportunity for engaging with private sector funding. While this may be limited it could assist in encouraging wider engagement and investment in the route, in increasing raising quality standards, increasing the diversity and enjoyment of the experience for visitors and so further stimulate local economies.

A critical third issue relating to the SOW having no legal status is that it technically does not meet CoE criteria that seeks to ensure that projects "are financially and organisationally viable". It also, by virtue of its inability to raise funds, this impinges upon any plans to extend into other countries. However, there are two dimensions to this. The route has been operational / viable since its inception and is a reality for thousands of pilgrims and tourists each year. Further, the problem is not wholly one of finance but rather of an inability to raise further finance and an over-dependence on one country's support.

Project funding for various aspects of the SOW has been successful with investment in signposting, though this is for the route in Norway funded through the Norwegian Lottery. A project to develop a St Olav waterway route between Finland and Sweden is active at present (2016-2019), funded by the Interreg Central Baltic Programme and the ERDF.

### **3.3.2 Governance**

Aside from the key point regarding the absence of legal status, there are inter-related issues to consider in relation to representation. A first point, which has been alluded to, relates to representation of the European countries involved. The three countries of Norway, Sweden and Denmark are technically present through the Steering Committee but critically are not represented in terms of a joint/shared budget for the Route. On numbers alone, a Steering Committee of only six people would seem inadequate to represent what should be the multi-dimensional interests of an European Cultural Route – pilgrimage, research, tourism, business, marketing, finance/fund-raising etc. – across three and potentially more countries. At present the articles drafted by the Steering Committee does not allow for additional members to join – there can be no more than six members.

While it is clearly recognised that SOW is founded upon the medieval pilgrimage routes and the life of St Olav, it is so much more. This is demonstrated through its designation as a **European 'Cultural'** Route and it is demonstrated at the practical level where it engages with the tourism sector, the heritage sector, the business sector, the wider cultural and arts sector and the like. These sectors are not represented through the present governance of the site, nor does it appear that there are any plans to incorporate such interests.

The list of network members provided in the evaluation document reflects the dominant focus on Norway and the total dominance of the Pilgrim centres. There is no doubt that the Pilgrim Centres have been critical and remain critical, to the functioning of the route. The route has a strong spiritual focus given its origin and existence as a route of Pilgrimage and this continues irrespective of Council of Europe designation. The latter gives the route greater recognition as a cultural route and it is clear that there are other sectors and cultural organisations that are willing, able and necessary to work alongside the Centres so as to improve the impact of the SOW on local communities and economies, improve the visitor

experience, generate further and wider interest in St Olav. Inclusion of the widest variety of stakeholders across the member states within the governance structure will ensure the coherence of the route and its further development. Critically, it should also be a way of helping to diversify and increase income streams for the route. Consideration should be given to opening up the membership of the route to strengthen it. There are various possible models for this and these should be explored.

The Foundation Document for the Steering Committee of SOW (2011) has been the main framework for the route. It is not within the scope of this report to go into detail regarding the processes and structures set out in the Foundation Document but it is strongly recommended that for the reasons set out above and alluded to in other sections, this document is revised to ensure that deals directly with eligibility criteria set out in Section III of Resolution CM/Res(2013)67 and to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

### **3.3.3 Future Strategy**

A future strategy is required. It should be noted that in Norway, Sweden, Denmark but also in Finland and potentially in other countries too, there is a lot of good work being done in terms of development the route, improving access and interpretation and a lot of good will to further develop the cultural tourism potential, youth engagement and cultural development that SOW has. However, this fragmented, ad hoc and not part of any coherent strategy. Existing projects will be complete and will no doubt be successful but it is difficult to claim these projects as that of the SOW. Indeed, it is problematic to gain an overview of what is happening across the full extent of the route. At the 2018 Annual Meeting it is scheduled to amend the articles to allow more members to join beyond the present six.

## **3.4 Communication Tools**

### **3.4.1 Website**

There are two main websites. The websites - <http://pilegrimsleden.no/en/> and <http://www.stolavsleden.com/> - are the main access points for a European public and for any audience outside of Europe. These are of the same design and are easy to navigate with information, maps and accommodation links. For the independent traveller they offer a very useful tool. Arguably both could do with more content around the potential sites and activities to see and do along the routes though the Magazine / Stories sections are very good.

The Norwegian site is in three languages Norwegian, English and German reflecting the profiles of users. When St Olav is Googled (in English) the website comes up an excellent second. It is linked to Facebook which features useful video clips provided by users. It is more recently linked to Instagram. For 2017 the website received nearly 113,000 hits and a marked increase on Facebook activity from 2016. These are very positive figures. SOW does not use Twitter and this should be considered. There does not appear to be further analysis of the web data and this would be useful. Further analysis of the website usage will reveal what elements of the site are functioning and receiving traffic. Needless to say steady web-traffic and good visibility is important. The Swedish site is in two languages, Swedish and English. It is linked to Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, all of which feature good content and stories provided by users.

The problem with the websites is that although they have similar designs they not obviously connected. Unless searching for St Olav's Path which crosses into Sweden, SOW is viewed as Norwegian. Similarly, the Swedish site presents St Olav's route as Swedish, although clearly the end point is referenced as Trondheim, Norway. There is no easily visible, over-

arching concept of a contemporary pan-European Route. There is no single annotated map that links the present three countries together and also points to the European influence of St Olav. On the Norway website, though it is mentioned that this was designated a Council of Europe route in 2010, there is no explanation as to what this and what it means. It would provide a meaningful context to speak of the SOW in the context of historic and contemporary pilgrimage as a feature of the Christian tradition in Europe but this is not present. Links to the Cultural Routes Institute, the other European Routes and particularly the other Pilgrim based routes would seem to be an opportunity missed. At several times of accessing, clicking on the Council of Europe logo did not result in an active link.

There is an absence of an introductory narrative that speaks of the SOW as a designated European Route and the suggested paragraph given in the Visibility Guidelines issues in 2016 and which speaks to the values upon which the Council of Europe Routes are founded upon is also not present. On the Sweden site there is no reference to the route as being a CoE route. There is no CoE route logo and no link to the Norway Site. Both sites do not mention the route in Denmark.

To some extent this situation reflects the way these sites are managed and financed through national bodies. This reflects the lack of appropriate representation of the other countries on the Steering Committee, a lack of strategic direction and a lack of understanding as to the meaning of the Council of Europe designation.

#### **3.4.6 Printed Materials**

These consist of: a) a gatefold brochure with a map of the three countries and other routes marked in Sweden and Denmark; b) a Pilgrim Passport c) various fold out, practical maps for various sections of the Norwegian routes; d) a privately authored guidebook and; e) assorted literature produced at local level. There is also magazine that relates to the routes, though not exclusively to SOW. For the Swedish section of the route there are guidebooks in Swedish, English and Dutch. It is not known whether these refer to, or are branded as, European Cultural Routes.

#### **3.4.7 Press Releases/Press Coverage**

News stories are available for the Norway part of the route through the website and the Facebook site and similarly through the Swedish site. It appears as if there is a reasonable degree of press coverage relating to the SOW in destinations outside of Norway.

#### **3.4.8 Branding**

It is unknown whether all countries of the SOW have been informed and provided with Visibility Guide for the use of the logo Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. In the case of Norway, the website, signage, interpretation boards on the route, the Pilgrim Passport and various other printed materials all bear the correct logo. However, the branding of the SOW goes beyond the use of logos and is also about explaining the core brand values that make the Route distinct for its audiences. These are assumed rather than effectively communicated.

#### **3.4.8 Visibility of the Logo – Cultural Route of the Council of Europe**

Overall there is good visibility of the required logo on electronic and printed media. Again assessment was mainly be made in Norway. There is an absence of the standard suggested paragraph which highlights the values of the Council of Europe.

## **4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

The St Olav Ways is based upon the important strand of pilgrimage in the European Christian tradition. Its capacity to link the Nordic countries together conceptually through the historical narrative and physically, by the routes and pathways that connect Denmark, Sweden and lead to the Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim and moreover, to potentially make links to other parts of Europe, makes it an ideal cultural route. Since CoE recognition in 2010 much has been achieved at ground level and this needs to be recognised. However, in terms of working as a holistic, cohesive, branded cultural route it is not functioning well. As background to the conclusions and recommendations that follow two things are noteworthy. First, evaluating the route as a whole was problematic. This is in no way a reflection upon the Route Manager, nor the individuals contacted during the process, all of which were extremely helpful and committed. But the fact that there was no single strategic vision for the route across the three countries and any effective overall management and communication process was / is an issue. To all intents the route as it is managed, as it reads to the visitor and to an extent as it presented to the visitor, is a Norwegian Pilgrim Route and not a 'joined-up' trans-national cultural route. As a Norwegian Pilgrim Route it is excellent and works extremely well.

Second, this evaluation has taken into account the 2013 Evaluation Report and its observations and recommendations. Some of these have been taken up but others have not. Suggestions and reflections for the Route are embedded throughout this report but in line with CoE Resolution CM/Res (2013)67 regarding certification as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, the theme – St Olav Ways – while strong and in line with common European values only partially meets the criteria of eligibility in that it can only be effectively judged in terms of one country's actions and not as a cohesive functioning route that is managed and presented as such.

In terms of the fields of action and notwithstanding the problems of evaluation, the SOW continues to comply with the criteria listed in CM/Res(2013)67, II. In some fields the SOW is more advanced than others. Its cultural tourism provision and potential is very strong indeed. Beyond the Norwegian context it is clear that there are good initiatives being developed, particularly in Finland and in Denmark which points to a good base for future cooperation.

The Cultural Route does not fully comply with CM/Res (2013)67, III. List of criteria for networks. Specifically, while SOW set out to involve other member states and in some aspects of operations it clearly does it, this is not reflected in the management and the financing of the route. There are plans to involve other member states but at the time of writing this is not possible through the Articles of the route. The route has been generously supported, particularly through the National Pilgrimage Centre and Trondelag County Authority, however this almost Norway based funding model does not allow for a coherent and strategic approach to the route and the lack of legal status prevents further fundraising. The issue of having no legal status was identified in the Founding Document, it was highlighted as a point of action in the last evolution of the route but there has been no change in status.

### **4.1 Co-operation in Research and Development**

Undoubtedly there is valuable research taking place on St Olav and such research would add to the development and experience of the route. Research needs to be monitored and coordinated and made available in a central repository. It is recommended that the Scientific Committee for the whole of the Route be connected to the overall Steering Group so as to advise and respond to future development of the route. It also recommended that applied research is undertaken to assist in the development of new audiences, new modes of

presentation and interpretation and effective stakeholder management. Research to assess the impact of the route – not only in quantitative terms but also in a qualitative sense would be valuable for future advocacy. Widening the route's research partners and tapping into the EICR's University Research Network would be helpful.

#### **4.2 Enhancement of Memory, History and European Heritage**

The SOW deals with both the tangible and the intangible cultural heritage of St Olav. Communicating this at site level is done extremely well, certainly within Norway. Communicating the 'Europeaness' of the cultural route and how it links with wider European values and traditions needs further attention. It is recommended that stakeholders are brought together to discuss and develop communication and interpretation strategies that allow the trans-border European narrative to surface. Not only will this cement standing as a route of the CoE but it will also raise the profile of route as a pilgrimage / tourism destination.

#### **4.3 Cultural and Educational Exchanges for Young Europeans**

There has been some activity within Norway on this specific action with good success, but there is clear room for expansion and development involving all the partner countries and reaching out further to disadvantaged communities and from different ethnic minorities. This action needs resourcing and managing amongst the partner countries but it is a long term investment in the success of any route.

#### **4.4 Contemporary Cultural and Artistic Practice**

This field of action offers much potential along the route. It can bring a new and exciting dimension to the interpretation of St Olav. It is clear there are excellent examples in Norway and further potential. However, co-branding of the route will be beneficial to all parties and engagement with the cultural and artistic sector needs to be reflected in communication through the website. Cultural producers should be invited to be members of the SOW with attendant benefits explained and measured.

#### **4.5 Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Cultural Development**

The SOW has made important links with the public and commercial sides of the tourism sector. The route is made for packages and appeals to the cultural and outdoor markets. The route is given good exposure through Visit Norway. There is some coverage on the Visit Sweden Website but no reference found to St Olav on the Visit Denmark site. None of the National Tourist Board sites and only one of the commercial operators refer to the route as being a CoE designated route. It is this designation and validation that should distinguish the SOW and this should be addressed. It is recommended that in any re-structure that all the National Boards have at least periodic representation and that at the least a workshop is organised that brings the three national tourism interest groups together to discuss the route strategically in terms of its development, communications and marketing.

While there are lot of tourism activities that are and can be instigated at regional and local level, there is a need for the route to be marketed as a whole with clear options for touring different parts, linked to other salient aspects of the cultural heritage. There are many recommendations that can be made but key ones would be: a) to ensure tourism interests are represented at route management level; b) examine innovative ways of working with partners and look at the nature and expectations of partnership agreements; c) focus on a stronger articulation of a pan-European Route that focuses upon select sites and would attract interest from further tourism operators in and outside of Europe; d) ensure that branding is strategic and consistent and there is coordination of all communication vehicles.

## **4.6 Cultural Route Network**

While parts of the SOW is working very well as a pilgrim route it is not functioning as a trans-national European Cultural Route. It is recommended that:

- a) the governance structure of the route is independently reviewed so as to ensure appropriate representation of all countries and major stakeholders with an interest in developing the route in line with COE criteria;
- b) that any such structure have legal status within the country it is based in and recognised as such for EU and national funding purposes and be able to act as in a commercial way;
- c) that the route look for a membership framework that would allow greater participation from across the fullest range of sectors and that a membership scheme could be a way of both raising funds for the management and operations of the route and ensuring participation based on mutual benefit;
- d) that a strategy document and an action plan be developed with buy-in from all stakeholders and which would deliver a clear and long terms vision for SOW.

The above would be considered as broad but essential actions. There is a need for much greater detail but these recommendations are a first step.

## **4.7 Communication Tools**

There are areas of non-compliance with regard to the visibility and use of the logo as set out in the June 2016 Guidelines. Some of this relates to the website/s and it is recommended that this is addressed swiftly. Non-compliance is less of an issue with regard to extant printed materials as they are already dated and any new ones would comply with the guidelines. The key recommendation is that SOW is to be recognised as a CoE European Cultural Route it needs to be communicated as such both to members and the general public. Responsibilities for communication need be worked out as part of the overall management of the route.

## **5.0 References**

All printed materials consulted were submitted by the named manager of the Cultural Route. Websites consulted are embedded in the text above.

## **6.0 Field Visit and Discussion**

I visited Norway two days In early January 2018. The purpose of the visit was to meet the route Manager and others involved in the operations of the route. But the visit also allowed me to gain some limited experience of a fraction of the route as it is developed in Norway. The Gudbrandsdalen path is the longest route in Norway and heavily visited, starting as it does in Oslo. Cultural heritage sites visited along the path included the stone Sister Churches at Granavollen / Gran and the impressive Tinglestad Church some 9km away. Also close by is the Hadeland Folk Museum. At Gran is the recently established Glasslaven Arts Centre which features local arts, crafts and exhibitions. As an example, the Arts Centre provides route pilgrims and visitors with an insight in the life and history of this small rural community. The SOW brand would benefit both the Arts Centre and add value to the route though there are no reciprocal arrangements in place. Also at Gran is a Pilgrim centre. These centres in Norway and in Sweden form an important network of stopping points for users of the route, they perform multi-functions, acting as meeting places, accommodation points (there is space for camping at Gran), information nodes, providing maps, guides etc. They



also sell route merchandise, walking staffs, sweat shirts and the like. Importantly they act as simple and welcome spaces of hospitality for pilgrims and are much appreciated as such.

At Hamar some 110kms north I visited the Cathedral that is adjacent to the pilgrim path that skirts Lake Mjosa. Again this is an impressive heritage site with very good interpretation. I also visited the Pilgrim Centre here which is well used and has a small amount of on-site accommodation. The Centres produce annual reports which can yield useful management information. The staff at these Centres interface directly with the pilgrims and tourists and provide a distinctive quality experience for users of the routes.

Signposting along the route is excellent showing signs of significant investment. It is frequent, clear and well branded with the logo of the route. At information boards along the route the CoE logo is present, though there were no signs of further explanation as to what this means.

Overall the route is notable for its combination of traditional pilgrimage, cultural heritage and stunning natural scenery.

The on-the-ground experience of the route is extremely positive and professional. I offer the following reflections:

There did seem to be room for closer involvement and engagement with nearby attractions and accommodation in co-branded relationships. This would further enhance the visitor experience, widen the network of route stakeholders and allow the local communities to showcase more of their produce, arts and culture.

The Pilgrim Centres are vitally important and since the National Pilgrim Centre has a major role to play in the route this is to be expected.

My experience, albeit very brief was undoubtedly a Norwegian experience. Of course this is to be expected but there was little to inform me that what I was experiencing was part of something bigger and with a European dimension. While not tested I would imagine that staff involved with pilgrims as well as those associated with neighbouring sites and attractions are also not familiar with the true status and extent of the European Cultural Route concept.