

EPACR (2026) Forum1

Luxembourg, 11 June 2026

ROUTES THROUGH TIME AND CULTURES **EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE**

The 15th Advisory Forum on
Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

Yerevan, Armenia
23-25 September 2026

CONCEPT NOTE

Preliminary Information

The Forum: **CULTURAL HERITAGE AND EDUCATION**

The Cultural Routes Annual Advisory Forum, a flagship event of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme, is a vibrant platform for dialogue, innovation, and co-operation. Over the past fifteen years, spanning Europe and beyond, it has become a catalyst for partnership and exchange, embodying the spirit and values of the programme and all its Routes.

Bringing together representatives of member states, certified and candidate Cultural Routes networks, international heritage and tourism organisations, local authorities, foundations, and professional bodies, the Forum fosters meaningful exchange and forward-looking reflection. It addresses emerging trends, encourages new initiatives, strengthens cross-border and cross-sectoral collaboration, and contributes to the continued development of Europe's shared cultural heritage.

The 15th edition places education and heritage at the centre of its agenda. Culture and education are mutually reinforcing forces that enrich societies, promote inclusion, and ensure access to knowledge and heritage for all. Education not only safeguards our cultural legacy, but also inspires and empowers future generations, transmitting values and nurturing a shared European identity grounded in dialogue, creativity, and mutual respect. In this sense, education represents both a core value and a transformative force of the Cultural Routes programme. Through Cultural Routes, historic itineraries, figures, and cultural phenomena of transnational significance become living platforms for learning and intercultural exchange.

As the leading annual gathering dedicated to the development and promotion of the programme, the Forum celebrates Europe's rich cultural diversity while building lasting connections across borders and communities. A diverse programme of side events will complement the main sessions, offering immersive cultural and educational experiences and highlighting Armenia's remarkable capacity to inspire learning, creativity, and dialogue through its rich cultural heritage.

The Host City: **YEREVAN**

Yerevan, one of the world's oldest cities, combines a rich historical heritage with a vibrant contemporary culture. Its archaeological sites, traditional crafts, and dynamic cultural life provide practical opportunities for experiential learning, while its evolving urban environment fosters creativity and innovation. As the host city of the Forum, Yerevan offers participants a unique setting to experience education through culture and heritage firsthand, making it an ideal space for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaborative initiatives.

The Organisers: **COMMITTED PARTNERS**

The Forum is co-organised through a partnership between the [Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe](#), the [European Institute of Cultural Routes](#), the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia, the Tourism Committee of the Republic of Armenia, and the Foundation for the Development of Culture, with the support of the Municipality of Yerevan.

The Approach: Towards an Integrated Cultural and Educational Ecosystem

Education has become a cornerstone of the international cultural and heritage normative landscape, playing a pivotal role in shaping norms, policies, and practices. It is widely recognised as an essential source of knowledge, a driver of human development, and a key priority for global co-operation.

The UNESCO World Conference on Culture (MONDIAACULT) has identified education as a central thematic priority, calling for strong synergies between culture and education as a fundamental pathway toward sustainable development and inclusive societies. The UNESCO [Framework for Culture and Arts Education](#), adopted in 2024, further advances this vision by presenting *culture and arts education as a comprehensive ecosystem* encompassing learning opportunities for all, delivered across formal, non-formal, and informal contexts. Within this framework, culture is understood as a way of life that shapes identities, values, and modes of expression, while education is affirmed as a fundamental human right. The convergence of these two pillars empowers individuals not only to learn and create, but also to participate fully in cultural life and to experience the richness and diversity of heritage in all its forms.

Similarly, the Council of Europe [Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society](#) situates education within a broader understanding of cultural heritage, recognising it as a source of knowledge, a driver of the cultural economy, and a means of integrating heritage into learning processes at all levels.

The [Resolution](#) establishing the Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA) on Cultural Routes defines a *Cultural Route as a cultural, educational, heritage, and tourism co-operation project*, placing education at the heart of efforts to foster understanding, dialogue, and respect for shared European values. Within the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme, education is operationalised through transnational co-operation projects that connect heritage, communities, and institutions, transforming shared cultural themes into structured frameworks for sustainable collaboration.

Acknowledging the transformative role of education and culture in sustainable societal development, the 2026 Yerevan Forum places these themes at the heart of its discussions.

Bridging Heritage and Education: Armenia's Strategic Vision

The Forum's thematic focus is firmly rooted in Armenia's long-standing policy commitment to heritage preservation, as well as to strengthening the intersection between culture and education through integrated strategic frameworks and development priorities.

This commitment is reflected in the state *Strategy for the Preservation, Development and Promotion of Culture 2023–2027*, which defines heritage preservation and transmission as a key development direction with significant implications for social advancement and sustainable development, as well as its mutually reinforcing relationship with education as a fundamental pillar. The Strategy further emphasises the integration of cultural activities into both formal and non-formal education, while embedding educational objectives within broader cultural policies.

These policy principles are effectively translated into practice through strong synergy between the education and culture sectors, led by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia. In 2025, 2,250 programmes were implemented by heritage sector institutions, engaging about 50,000 participants across the country. In addition, approximately 310,000 schoolchildren visited museums, theatres, and concert institutions through the School Subscription Scheme, which is designed to ensure meaningful engagement with culture and heritage through activities aligned with the school curriculum. Developed for diverse age groups and audiences, these programmes demonstrate how education through culture can foster creativity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning, while promoting inclusive access to Armenia's rich cultural heritage and cultural resources.

The strategic priorities and policy directions are further advanced through broader institutional reforms. The recent establishment of the Foundation for the Development of Culture, which introduces a centralised management model for heritage organisations, provides administrative and marketing support enabling museums to strengthen their conservation and research work, exhibitions, and educational programmes, thereby further enhancing their role as essential centres for learning, creative expression and public engagement.

By placing education and cultural heritage at the core of its agenda, in line with Armenia's strategic vision for culture and education, the 2026 Yerevan Forum creates a strong foundation for meaningful dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaborative action, while further encouraging innovative approaches to learning, inclusion, and the promotion of Europe's shared cultural values.

The Purpose: Aims, Objectives, Outputs

The Yerevan Forum aims to generate forward-looking and strategic insights into the role and potential of education and culture as essential public goods. It will explore their multidimensional contribution to societal development and emphasise their importance for sustainable development and shared values. By bringing together policymakers, practitioners, and experts, the Forum will outline concrete policy- and practice-oriented approaches and identify innovative pathways to strengthen the integration of education and cultural heritage across communities and institutions within the broader landscape of the Cultural Routes programme.

Main objectives

- To stimulate high-level policy dialogue on the deeper integration of the cultural and educational sectors, reinforcing their complementary roles in sustainable development.
- To strengthen recognition of education and heritage as essential drivers of inclusive, resilient, and culturally diverse societies.
- To enhance the role of cultural education in the philosophy of the Cultural Routes programme and connect it with the ongoing developments regarding, inter alia, the thematic representativeness and quality development of the programme around its 40th anniversary.
- To enhance institutional co-operation between Cultural Routes networks and educational and cultural institutions, and deepen the role of education for sustainable heritage in the Cultural Routes programme.

Thematic areas to address

- Integration of Cultural and Educational Policies – aligning cultural and educational frameworks to strengthen their mutual impact.
- Educational Practices through Culture – showcasing how cultural heritage, traditions, and artistic activities can serve as dynamic tools for teaching, learning, and skills development.
- Digital Technologies in Culture and Education – leveraging digital tools to expand access, enhance engagement, and foster innovative learning experiences.
- Lifelong Learning and Learning Spaces – creating dynamic environments where formal, non-formal, and informal education intersect with cultural experiences.
- Accessibility and Inclusion – ensuring that cultural and educational initiatives and learning spaces are open, inclusive, and accessible to all communities.

Main Output

The principal output of the Forum will be a **Recommendations Framework** providing guiding principles, strategic directions, and practical approaches for Cultural Routes. The Framework will support Routes in developing stronger and impactful educational activities, integrating cultural heritage into diverse learning practices, and fostering inclusive participation.

It will also serve as a valuable resource for a broad range of stakeholders within the programme, offering guidance to enhance collaboration, strengthen institutional capacities, and enhance the educational impact of Cultural Routes across Europe on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the programme.

ABOUT

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, as defined in the Council of Europe [Committee of Ministers Resolution CM/Res\(2013\)66](#), are cultural and educational heritage and tourism co-operation projects aimed at the development and promotion of an itinerary or a series of itineraries based on a historic route, a cultural concept, figure or phenomenon with a transnational importance and foster understanding and respect for common European values. They demonstrate how heritage and cultures of different and distant regions of Europe contribute to a shared cultural heritage. The Routes can be described as transnational networks of sites or geographical areas that share a common theme, whereby community-based actions are linked by the values of the Council of Europe.

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme was launched in 1987, with the certification of the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes, connecting significant historical, cultural, and natural sites across the continent and further, and offering a way to explore their shared heritage. The programme promotes cultural diversity, intercultural exchange, sustainable tourism, and the protection and enhancement of cultural and natural heritage, as a foundation for cultural, social, and local development.

There are currently 52 certified 'Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe', illustrating different themes of European memory, history and heritage, and contributing to an interpretation of the diversity of present-day Europe. Together, the routes constitute a transnational network of more than 3,500 members in over 60 countries in Europe and beyond.

The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA)

In 2010, member states interested in developing Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe created the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe to enable closer co-operation between them and to provide greater political and financial support to the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme. To date, 43 states have become EPA members. Every year in May, the [Governing Board of the EPA](#) meets to grant the certification of 'Cultural Route of the Council of Europe' to Routes under regular evaluation as well as to networks seeking certification, based on criteria outlined in the Council of Europe [Committee of Ministers Resolution CM/Res\(2023\)2](#).

The European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR)

Since 1998, the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme is carried out by the European Institute of Cultural Routes, which serves as the technical agency of the programme. The EICR is based in Luxembourg and was established as part of a political agreement between the Council of Europe and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It organises training and seminar sessions for representatives of Cultural Routes and candidates for certification, assists the EPA with the evaluation and certification cycle, and provides advice and assistance to candidate networks and certified Routes.