

PLENARY SESSION
CULTURAL ROUTES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
8TH ANNUAL ADVISORY FORUM
Thursday 27 September 2018
Görlitz (Germany)

Council of Europe and European Union cooperation on Cultural Routes: Routes4U joint programme

Constanze Metzger, Senior Project Officer Routes4U, EPA on Cultural Routes

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We all see it. We all know it: Today, Europe faces new dynamics and challenges. These challenges do not respect national borders.

They ask for transborder solutions.

They ask for effective programmes.

They ask for tighter cooperation between us.

The Council of Europe and the European Union started a strong partnership more than 2 decades ago. A partnership built on shared values and complementary roles.

The Council of Europe is the benchmark for human rights, rule of law and democracy in Europe. But without the European Union as its main partner for technical assistance and co-operation projects, the Council of Europe would be much less effective.

Joint programmes between CoE and EU

26 years ago, the Council of Europe and the European Union developed a new cooperation tool to protect democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Values they both share and work for. The idea was simple: To benefit from the other's comparative advantages. To combine competences and expertise. And to avoid unnecessary overlap. The Joint programmes were born.

In 2006, the cooperation between these two European organisations reached a new stage. Jean-Claude Juncker, Prime Minister of Luxembourg at this time, wrote a report for the heads of state and government of the member states of the Council of Europe. In this report, he stated "There is no room for rivalry on essentials between these two organisations. In what they do, and in what they have done, they complement each other closely".

One year later, the Council of Europe and the European Union signed a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure this complementarity and coherence of their joint programmes. Since then, the Joint programmes increased significantly. In 2017, the Budgetary Envelope for them reached 146.5 million Euros.

In times of growing Eurosceptic, these programmes promote a strong and united Europe.

Routes4U Project

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Implemented
by the Council of Europe

They are concrete examples how to strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe and addressing the tendencies of nationalism and xenophobia across Europe.

They are concrete examples of a culturally rich Europe without divide.

Joint Programme Routes4U

One of these Joint Programmes is Routes4U.

This programme aims to foster macro-regional development in the Adriatic and Ionian, the Alpine, the Baltic Sea and the Danube Macro-region through the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme.

On one side, we have the macro-regional strategies of the European Union: Since 2009, the European Union has developed these macro-regional strategies to work together on the areas of common interest and in view of the economic and social prosperity of each country and the whole region.

On the other side, we have the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe that promote and protect the European heritage under different themes. These themes are not only very diverse, they are also a bridge through the time – linking the past with the present. As such, they provide a comprehensive picture about European's rich heritage.

How do the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and the macro-regional strategies of the European Union fit together? How can the Cultural Routes contribute to the macro-regional development? How can they develop synergies?

There are three answers to these questions.

First

Cultural Routes are truly transnational. They cross at least three countries. They protect and promote the transnational heritage in Europe, not the national heritage that is characteristic feature of only one country. And they prove that the protection of heritage in Europe is not the task of one country, but that it is the task of the European community.

There is another point that makes Cultural Routes transnational best practices: They create a sense of belonging to a European identity. As such, they can improve cohesion in the four Macro-region. 70% of the participants of a Euobarometer study last year considered that cultural heritage strengthens the feeling of belonging to Europe. Culture is not a secondary effect. It is the key to unite people across borders and to contribute to cohesion in Europe.

Second

Cultural Routes are grass-root networks: The activities are implemented by the people on the ground and for the people on the ground. Cultural Routes are participatory structures. They involve communities in cultural life. We all know that projects are the most effective and most sustainable if they use a bottom-up approach.

Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe reach the people and prove – in a very practical and concrete way – the importance and value of Europe. This is nowadays, when the voices get louder that question European values and European cooperation, of outmost importance.

Third

Cultural Routes promote tourism. Europe is the world's No 1 tourist destination with 50% of the world's total of international tourists' arrivals. Cultural sites, offers and activities are the main area of interest of these travellers. And this tourism has a clear impact on the economic development. In Europe, tourism is the third largest economic activity. The direct impact of tourism accounts to 10 % of gross domestic product in Europe. 12 % of total employment is linked to tourism services. The World Tourism Organisation predicts an increase of tourism in Europe by an average of 3,3 % per year. In this regard, Cultural Routes offer distinctive cultural experiences, generally at remote rural areas. They contribute to the regional development in these rural areas.

It is not really a question if Cultural Routes can contribute to the regional development in the Macro-regions but rather how they can do so.

Routes4U gives a concrete answer to this question. It links the macro-regional strategies and the Cultural Routes in different field of actions:

- We launched a grant-system for Cultural Routes to foster regional development in the four Macro-regions.
- We support the extension of Cultural Routes and the certification of new Cultural Routes in the Macro-regions.
- We carry out workshops on cultural tourism, social participation and promotion of heritage to strengthen the capacities in the Macro-regions.
- We launch studies and research on how to improve the regional development in the Macro-regions and through the Cultural Routes.
- We develop a trip-planner for travellers to discover the Cultural Routes and their offers in the Macro-regions.
- We create a Cultural Routes card, together with the European Youth Card, with cultural and touristic offers of the Cultural Routes in the Macro-region.
- We develop an e-learning course on the macroregional strategies and the Cultural Routes to enhance expertise and knowledge in this field.

These activities are carried out with partners from the macro-regional strategies of the European Union and the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

The expertise of both partners is needed to effectively implement Routes4U.

This partnership is the key to success of Routes4U.

Routes4U is a concrete example of the strengths of joint programmes: Each partner benefits from the other's strengths, competences and expertise.

We are here today to discuss how we can strengthen cooperation and create new synergies-partnerships like the Routes4U joint programme of the Council of Europe and the European Union.

And we have an obligation to discuss how strengthen our cooperation to avoid overlap.

This is not only a necessity in times of growing challenges in Europe.

This is also a question of our credibility as European partners.

In German, you say “ueber den Tellerrand schauen”. We need to “look outside the box” to develop new partnerships. This is why we meet today.

Thank you.