First Routes4U meeting for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)

"Strengthening regional development through the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe"

2017-2020 European Union – Council of Europe Joint Programme

2-3 April 2019. Bard, Italy.

Fort of Bard
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WORKSHOP 1 | Regional cooperation and sustainable development through cultural tourism in the Alpine Region

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INTRODUCTION

With the highest mountain range on European continent, the Alps offer an impressive landscape of picks and valleys. Since the dawn of times, the Alps were considered the water castle of Europe but today they are shaken by global warming.

As an important historical crossroad, the Alpine EU macro-region stretches around **7 countries** inhabited by **80 million people** (16 % of the EU) and **includes 48 regions** in seven countries, five of which are EU Member States and two non-EU countries: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

In the Alps, with the lack of snow and a very dependent snow-tourism activity that can represent up to 95% of the resorts' economic activity, tourism seasons can be compromised. Global warming is a reality. Agriculture (farming and forestry) as well as tourism are highly concerned, mainly for most visited resorts and the increasing use of resources and energy during high tourism season. As well, most local inhabitants have several seasonal jobs and **lack of stable or sufficient work conditions**, especially young people.

As one of the most visited mountain ranges in the world attracting around 120 million tourists every year, the challenges are to develop tourism sustainably and find ways of combining the amazing natural beauty of the Alpine region with an outstanding environmental and cultural heritage, with the needs of local communities that keeps the villages alive.

"Rather than making the mountain "a giant playground", it would be better to allow the acquisition of a culture of it in a less consumerist spirit. Living an experience and knowledge of an unfamiliar environment can also be a source of enrichment for visitors." (Villette Philippe, March 11, 2019, "La saison de ski sauvée par les vacances de février », ladepeche.fr)

With an important demographic and linguistic diversity and great variety of governance systems and traditions, the Alpine region can highly benefit from cooperation policies and actions.

Thanks to the European Commission (DG REGIO) and Council of Europe joint programme, transnational policies and practices through the Council of Europe Cultural Routes are being shaped through the **Routes4U Project**.

The 2017-2020 programme aims at fostering regional sustainable development in the field of tangible and intangible Cultural heritage in the 4 EU macro-regions, including the Alpine EU macro-region.

"The project aims at very concrete tools to foster regional sustainable development through cultural heritage policies. Among the highlighted activities, the support for the certification of new Cultural Routes in the EU macro-regions, the identification and drafting of guidelines for transnational regional policies on Cultural Routes for local authorities and operators, the development of new competencies and skills through e-learning modules and development of tourism tools and products such as a Cultural Routes card and a trip planner."

MAIN OBJECTIVES

Routes4U overall objectives are:

- **Regional development**: Strengthening sustainable social, cultural and economic development in the 4 EU macro-regions through the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.
- **Cultural cooperation**: Promote the cultural cooperation between (local, national, and international stakeholders of the 4 EU macro-regions.
- **Social cohesion**: Contribute to the participation of the civil society, ensuring the potential of cultural heritage as a resource for sustainable development.

EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) main objectives are:

- Fair access to job opportunities/ building on the region's high competitiveness;
- Sustainable internal and external/ accessibility for all;
- A more inclusive environmental framework for all/ renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future.

The Cultural itineraries Alpine EU macro-regional approach touches upon all three objectives of the EUSALP strategy, as cultural heritage and tourism are transversal sectors (which rely a lot on environment and heritage protection, sustainable approaches, access to remote areas and digital connectivity).

Therefore, this workshop will address, thanks to the exchange of experiences among participants, the main challenges of the Alpine EU macro-region regarding cultural tourism as a driver for growth, jobs and sustainable economic development based on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe as well as the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) best practices, opportunities and innovative actions.

Practical cases and examples will be presented or shared by the participants and discussed in order to formulate insightful recommendations.

KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

Question 1: How Alpine EU macro-regional strategies are reaching governments, regions, local stakeholders and local communities?

- Regional cultural tourism development organisations? (are there macro-regional organisations existing?)
- What are the advantages of development models of EU macro-regional cultural routes? What are the best practices in terms of management and results?

Question 2: Regional, national cultural routes TO transnational and EU macro-regional certified Cultural Routes: best practices and successes.

- Case study on the existing Council of Europe Cultural Routes in the Alpine EU macro-region, on new proposals asking for a certification, on national routes wishing to extend at a transnational level.

Question 3: Foster economic development through Cultural Routes creation...where do we start?

- Transnational itineraries and benefit for economic development;
- What does it ask to build a cultural itinerary… stakeholders, tourism and cultural managers, regions and governments involvement, local population involvement;
- Local and regional promotion to foster itineraries creation;
- Macro-regional itineraries creation?

Question 4: Sustainable approach and management, marketing/branding and products creation.

- Cultural and natural heritage/ environment preservation, tourism flows management, local communities involvement;
- Sustainable tourism implementation by states and regions. Which policies, which programmes. Best practices in terms of sustainable management within the Cultural Routes framework (sustainable tourism management plans, ETIS);
- Marketing and regional brands in tourism and Cultural Routes;
- Transformational tourism: more than an experience;
- On the way to success: the creation of tourism products, having stakeholders work together for a mutual aim.

Question 5: Alpine approach- What are the strengths of the Alpine EU macro-region in terms of culture and tourism, and in relation with cultural itineraries development.

- Heritage;
- Skills and capacity building required;
- Regional innovation and SME's.

Question 6: Competitiveness and innovation through Cultural itineraries.

- Adaptation, development and Innovation regarding the Cultural routes;
- Cross sector collaboration and innovative products development – Tourism and CCI's.