



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

European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys

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Cultural route
of the Council of Europe
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The opinions expressed in this independent expert report are those of the author, and do not engage the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes nor the European Institute of Cultural Routes.

1. Executive Summary

The theme of the Route is undoubtedly of great relevance in the construction of Europe in the Middle Ages, because the Cistercian 'Order' influenced some of its fundamental aspects and was one of the main protagonists of the European scene in the twelfth century. All the inspiring criteria of the Council of Europe's "European Cultural Routes" initiative are potentially involved and have been effectively developed by the Charter. The Cistercian Abbeys Route deserves to be recognized as one of the most interesting and effective. As underlined in the report, the actions that should be undertaken for the increase and the development of the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys can be structured in some points:

- Collaboration with other Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe;
- Coordination of the managers of the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys;
- Increase the visibility of European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys and of CoE logo
- Collaboration and cooperation with other Cistercian abbeys and sites in Europe;
- Define a Scientific Committee for the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys;
- Boost activities between the Cistercian sites and the Contemporary art;
- Grow cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans;
- Increase Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.

In conclusion, the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys has improved its performance along the criteria of the Resolution of the CoE during the last three years, so the Cultural Route of the Council of Europe Certification should be maintained, based on the progress achieved and the good general check of conformity for the routes.

However, some of the above observations and recommendations revoke and re-propose similar topics of the previous evaluation (2013). Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys works actively to improve and resolve in the next year the critical issues still present.

The activities of the Cultural Route during the next year should be monitored, in order to provide help to solve some of the critical issues still present.

Summary of the conclusions

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

The Cultural Route still complies with the criteria listed in CM/Res(2013)67, II. List of priority fields of action, CM/Res(2013)67.

The CR should work to improve some criteria. In particular:

1. Co-operation in research and development
3. Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans
5. Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development

The Cultural Route still complies with the criteria for networks, as in CM/Res (2013)67, III. List of criteria for networks.

2. Introduction

The "European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys" entered the program of cultural routes of the Council of Europe in May 2010 (the mention was officially given on 10/12/2010 at the Abbey of Escaladieu).

The main objective of this itinerary is to highlight the Cistercian heritage by updating the paths of European monastic influence in the Middle Ages. Since its foundation in 1098 in Citeaux, the Order, which follows the Rule of St. Benedict, has had an extraordinary diffusion throughout Europe, starting from the four 'mother-abbeys': La Ferté, Pontigny, Clairvaux, Morimond. No other religious Order increased so greatly in such a short time. Thus, Cistercian heritage transcends local particularities to contribute *de facto* to the European cultural identity; it represents an inestimable common cultural heritage, a still current example of "sustainable management" of the territory, a contribution to education and knowledge.

The association "European Charter of Cistercian Abbeys and Sites" was founded in 1993 with the aim of joining a large number of sites with a common heritage in Europe¹ and is a non-profit volunteer-based organisation. The European Charter aims at establishing a structural link between the owners and (or) managers of Cistercian Abbeys open to the public, with the purpose of organizing common cultural or tourist actions and promoting them among the local, regional, national and international administrations.

The association brings together 190 Cistercian Abbeys or Sites of different nature (government bodies, religious communities, public authorities, institutions, private owners and local associations) from 11 European countries. The network comprises some sites of particular importance, well known and visited, including 3 World Heritage Sites (UNESCO), but also little known sites, public or private.

The program of activities carried out by the members of the Charter in these years is divided into three priorities:

1. sustainable development of the territory and landscapes;
2. cultural and educational exchanges (discovery of Europe's monastic heritage);
3. cultural tourism (heritage, local products, cultural and artistic activities, cooperation with other cultural routes).

This report represents a three year evaluation of the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys (2014-2017). It reviews its background and current status, and gives recommendations for the future of the Cultural Route of the Council of Europe (CR).

The methodology of the evaluation is based on the following elements:

- A literature review of the documents concerning the CR;
- A desk review of the CR using information provided by the network association and the European Institute for Cultural Routes, along with a journey through the presence in the internet of the various members;
- Interviews with the key stakeholders of the CR, also through specifically crafted questionnaires administered to thirty members of the Charter, which provided an useful overview of the management, key activities and future plans;
- Analysis of some special cultural and tourism indicators. It is important indeed to evaluate the promotion and visibility of the route (checking the information available on the web), how the route improved the touristic trends in terms of flows and if the route facilitates the growth of new touristic projects involving different stakeholders;
- Expert site visit on some Cistercian Abbeys of the network.

¹ "La Charte européenne des Abbayes et Sites cisterciens est une association régie par la loi française du 1er juillet 1901".

3. Main Body Evaluation

3.1 Cultural Route Theme

The "European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys" is based on a network of regions united by historical heritage of Cistercian abbeys from different periods (Medieval and Modern Age). Unlike the pilgrimage routes, the network of Cistercian Abbeys in Europe represents a system - stable and territorially rooted - of life inspired by an ideal of religious renewal, but also targeted on a new relationship between men and landscape. At the time of St. Bernard's death (1153), the total number of Cistercian abbeys was 338 (68 were direct foundations from Clairvaux), and the Order had spread from Sweden to Portugal and from Scotland to the countries of the eastern Mediterranean. By the end of the 13th century, the Cistercian houses numbered 500. In the 15th century, at the maximum of its extension, the Order counted nearly 750 houses.

Since its foundation, the Cistercian Order was distinguished for its willingness to return to the original vocation of monasticism, while implementing major innovations. The new regulations demanded severe asceticism; they rejected all feudal revenues and reintroduced manual labour for monks, making it a principal feature of their life. The originality of the monasteries was reflected both in their intellectual and spiritual dimensions and in their technical ingenuity and remarkable talent for organisation, planning and construction.

The original emphasis of Cistercian life was on manual labour and self-sufficiency, and many abbeys traditionally supported themselves through activities such as agriculture and brewing ales. Cistercian architecture is considered one of the most interesting of the medieval period for the technical skills developed and for the grandiose solutions adopted in the buildings. Additionally, in relation to fields such as agriculture, hydraulic engineering and metallurgy, the Cistercians became the main force of technological diffusion in medieval Europe.

These religious houses belonged, at different times, to various congregations or groups. Today, the Cistercian Order are divided in two:

- The Common Observance, with about 30 monasteries and 800 choir monks, the large majority being in Austria, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Vietnam and Eritrea. They represent the main body of the order and follow a mitigated rule of life. In Asia they run farms, and in other parts of the world they work in schools and parishes.
- The Strict Observance, or Trappists, with nearly 100 monasteries, about 1,566 solemnly professed choir monks and 150 solemnly professed non-choir monks (lay brothers). Including those in monastic formation and oblates their number reaches 2,132.

The Cistercian heritage represents, even today, a common value - historical, cultural, or heritage - for several European countries and offers a solid basis of innovative activities and development of cultural tourism products.

The cultural theme has been researched and developed by many academics and experts from different regions of Europe, as confirmed by the numerous and extensive bibliography published on Cistercian world (of which a brief testimony is attached). Furthermore, the theme of the Cultural Route takes into account and explains the historical significance of tangible and intangible European heritage, identifies, preserves, and develops European heritage sites in rural destinations, and valorizes the heritage of small sites and buildings in addition to those of greater importance.

In conclusion and according to the Resolution CM/Res(2013)67, the cultural theme of the CR satisfies the criteria of the «List of eligibility criteria for themes» contained in the document.

3.2 Fields of Action

Although the European Cultural Route was activated in 2010, the Charter of Cistercian Abbeys existed in France from 1998 ; when it received the mention of the Council of Europe, it already had a European spread, comprising 11 countries. This is why the association can express a significant program of activities - by quantity and quality - in several fields of action. The analysis of these activities is facilitated by the publication of a quarterly bulletin - from 2012 both online and in paper form for the members - in which the announcements of initiatives and events programmed or realized by the associates are listed. All the news are published in the original language, so the newsletter is multilingual.

3.2.1 Co-operation in research and development

An analysis of the news and the activities posted online shows a great attention to the research and knowledge activated by the abbeys belonging to the Charter. Conferences, meetings and seminars followed by several publications were carried out during the three years, both at local and international levels. These activities are mostly addressed to local audience and are aimed at raising awareness of the heritage and identity of the Cistercian culture. The variety of topics, from music to spirituality, from landscape to the monastic life, constitutes an element of strength in the development and knowledge of the Cultural Route.

Despite the great efforts made by members of the Charter to promote research, development and knowledge of the Cistercian cultural heritage, it must be emphasized that the Cultural Route does not have its own Scientific Committee, as required by Resolution of the CoE (2013)67E (List of eligibility criteria for themes, Point 2).

Although many of the activities undertaken by individual members in the field of knowledge and research could count on the support of institutions and universities (Université de Paris 1 - Sorbonne, Université de Burgos (UBU), Universidad de la Experiencia, CERHIC, Université Reims Champagne-Ardenne, Université de Gembloux, Université de Tours), it does not exist up-to-date a structured and centralized collaboration between the Charter and the European universities.

The Scientific Committee should be multidisciplinary and the members should come from different European countries. They should be experts in different disciplines closely related to the theme of the cultural route, but also in economy, tourism and communication. The Scientific Committee should coordinate all the knowledge and research activities of the members of the Charter, propose projects involving scientific research, publication and documentation and/or implement such projects on its own; foster contacts with representatives of the relevant sciences in Europe.

The Charter intends to work in this direction for the next year, in order to constitute a Scientific Committee and establish collaborations with universities, that could present European projects.

3.2.2 Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage

The theme of the Route is a significant example of European memory, history and heritage and contribute to an interpretation of the diversity of present-day Europe. Many activities carried out by the members of the Route are aimed at enhancing and increasing the knowledge of the history and memory of the Cistercian world, in accordance with the provisions of the Resolution CM/Res(2013)67. In particular:

- explain the historical significance of tangible and intangible European heritage;
- identify, preserve, and develop European heritage sites in rural destinations, and enhance the heritage of ethnic or social minorities in Europe.

Different and numerous thematic visits have been carried out in the various abbeys on the themes of the monastic life, such as food, music, dress, prayer, sacred readings, monastic gardens, the work of the monks, metalcutting, etc.[Abondance (FR), 2016; Alcobaça (PT),

2016; Eberbach (DE), 2016; Grandselve (FR), 2016; Maulbronn (DE), 2016, Morimondo (IT) 2016; Noirlac (FR), 2015, 2016; Rioseco (ES); Salem (DE), 2016; Signy (FR), 2016; Koad Malouen (FR), 2016, Maubuisson (FR), 2016; Villers (BE), 2015, 2016].

Temporary exhibitions were set up on the sites of Ten Duinen (BE), 2016, and Villers (BE), 2015, 2016.

In some cases, new museum itineraries and exhibitions have been set up between 2015 and 2017, such as:

- Clairvaux (FR), in 2015, in the occasion of the celebrations for the 900 years from its foundation by Saint Bernard, with a new tour of the monastic complex, an exhibition about the monastic, political, economic, artistic and intellectual life of Clairvaux from the 12th to the 18th century, and others events such as conferences, seminars and exhibitions aimed at making the place known and promoting its development.
- Morimond (FR) *1117 (?) – 2017: neuf siècles d'histoire cistercienne*. The *Association des Amis de Morimond*, organized two events to commemorate the 900th anniversary in 2017, also involving the abbeys of Langres et Chaumont (daughters-abbeys).

The European Heritage Days were celebrated on several sites including Collège des Bernardins (FR) in 2015 and 2016, and Epau (FR) in 2015.

Several actions were directed to the recovery and restoration of tangible heritage of the abbeys, as foreseen by the Resolution CoE (2013) 67E («take account of and promote the charters, conventions, recommendations and work of the Council of Europe, UNESCO and ICOMOS relating to heritage restoration, protection and enhancement, landscape and spatial planning»).

Among these, important restoration works were carried out at Herkenrode Abbey (BE), where the site, together with a new tour, was inaugurated in 2015 after the restoration of the buildings called the sharecropper, the former stables and the tithe barn.

In the future activities promoted by the Charter it would be necessary to invest more resources and activities, to develop projects related to «contribute through appropriate training, to raising awareness among decision makers, practitioners and the general public of the complex concept of heritage, the necessity to protect, interpret and communicate it as a means for sustainable development, and the challenges and opportunities it represents for the future of Europe» (Resolution CoE (2013) 67E). Furthermore, it would be advisable to make more visible and communicable what has been done in this direction.

3.2.3 Cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans

The European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys supports some kinds of exchanges for young Europeans. Creative workshops to discover the abbey were carried out in 2016 in Noirlac (FR), as well as in Rioseco (ES) in 2015 and 2016 . An educational program for schools was promoted by the abbey of Zdar (CZ). Miniature workshops for children were carried out by volunteers from the abbey of Morimondo (IT) in 2015, 2016, 2017. Some sites have formed specific staff to conduct guided tours for children about the different aspects of monastic life in Cistercian abbeys.

The main sites of European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys should have based many of their activities on cultural pedagogy for young people and students; pedagogical models focusing on tourism for the youth (especially scholastic tourism) and adults (cultural tourism in general) should have been used, based on inductive educational and teaching methods, such as communicative interpretation and mediation.

In the future activities promoted by the Charter it would be necessary to invest more resources to improve solutions for young people, perhaps with a common project supported by specially trained staff.

The Association should increase the activities aimed at the youth exchanges (cultural and educational), planned to:

- offer collaborative opportunities for educational institutions at various levels;
- give rise to co-operation activities which involve educational institutions at various levels;
- set up pilot schemes with several participating countries.

3.2.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practice

The main activities of the Route focus on the cultural heritage. Some single activities were carried out with the purpose of increasing the culture of contemporary art and dialogue among different artists. Numerous exhibitions of contemporary artists are housed in the exhibition spaces of the abbeys, especially in those that no longer house a community of monks.

Among the exhibitions documented in the newsletter are those of:

Epau (FR): various temporary exhibitions of photographs with different themes (2015); Fontfroide (FR) (2015); Koad Malouen (FR): a series of exhibitions by contemporary artists (2015, 2016, 2017); Maubuisson (FR) (2016, 2017); Noirlac (FR): some installations of contemporary art (2015, 2016); Villers (BE): temporary exhibition of sculptures (2017).

An international Festival of contemporary theater and dance takes place every year at the abbey of Zdar (CZ): International Festival *KoresponDance*.

Regarding this criterion, the Charter will have to concentrate in the future part of its efforts to propose new coherent and shared initiatives among members.

As an example, it could be of great interest to organize temporary exhibitions on common aspects of the Cistercian world interpreted by various artists. These shows should be shared with different abbeys belonging to the network, as travelling exhibitions.

3.2.5 Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.

Several projects are implemented in terms of sustainable development for all sites, but no common network-level initiatives were done.

Some abbeys have carried out a number of praiseworthy initiatives aimed at promoting and developing cultural and sustainable tourism from the point of view of the environment and the landscape. In 2015 at Chaalis abbey (FR), the American turbine made its first laps and the dynamo powered a battery of light bulbs, thanks to the work of some volunteers. At Corazzo (IT), the volunteers of the "Gedeone" project manage the 8 hectares of the abbey's land by taking up ancient cultivations of plants and aromatic herbs, employing workers with mental and/or social discomfort.

An ongoing project is aimed at proposing a route along the "I Sentieri di Giocchino da Fiore" in Calabria to rediscover the main places frequented by the Cistercian theologian abbot and make them accessible to tourists.

A project for the fruition of interactive and multimedia museum spaces was prepared in 2015 at the Abbey of Escaladieu (FR), while at Herkenrode (BE), in the so-called sharecropper's buildings, the "Experience Center", a museum about the history of the abbey, was established.

At Villers (BE) a new Visitor Centre was inaugurated at the end of the restorations completed on some buildings between 2010-2012, with a special tour that joins the two parts of the site, divided by the passage of a road and a railway.. The former mill of the abbey was converted in the Visitor Centre with reinstallation of a water wheel generating electricity. At Zdar (CZ) a new museum about the history of the abbey was opened August 1st, 2015. The new museum

will be part of the overall Cultural Exchange project, run by a non-profit cultural association, SE.S.TA. It is co-financed by its sponsors and the European Regional Development Plan.

Among the activities related to tourism, theme tours constitute the majority. The celebrations, however, represent the most significant events, as they are usually connected to important dates for the history of an abbey and resemble several initiatives at once. Still little represented - apart from the wines - the fairs and markets specialized in the typical productions of the Cistercian world, compared to their potentiality (a local product market was held in Morimond in 2017).

There are no statistics on the annual number of visitors per abbey².

The annual subscription to the Charter for each member is defined according to the number of visitors, and the 2018 budget estimates 11,000 euros, i.e. 61 euros per partner; from this we can deduce that the number of visitors per site is on average between 5,000 and 10,000 visitors per year. The higher value seems more acceptable, corresponding to a global tourist flow of almost 2 million visitors per year on the entire network. This is a significant value that is likely to grow by investing in communication and in the creation of specific tourism products.

It must be emphasized that for several years this forecast on the number of visitors, calculated on the basis of the members and the cost paid by them, is constant and not increasing. It should also be noted that several abbeys do not issue a regular admission ticket that would guarantee a precise number of visitors per year.

A common strategy, aimed at presenting the network as a real host system and designing more targeted and innovative tourism products based on the specificity of the offer, would be auspicious to achieve this result. Given the total autonomy of the sites and especially their very articulated and differentiated proprietary and functional composition, this is rather a difficult goal, but there would be a common interest in pursuing it.

A project to develop tourism activities should include training and capacity building, development of multimedia interpretation and physical sign posting on the ground, promotional activities including press trips, and presentation at international travel events. These events were partly guided by the funding opportunities that occurred to the network.

An update of data and research on the economic impacts of the CR on the territories crossed would be appropriate. Tourism as an economic activity takes benefit from the input of the private sector – this could be done through SME engagement and a more enthusiastic approach to the use of the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys as a marketing opportunity by local tourism business. Some activities are conducted by member sites of the CR together with tourist operators, but these initiatives are not centralized at the network level.

Tourism development across the network has the greatest potential to bring benefits to the route and at the same time is the biggest area for future improvement.

² Only for some sites there are data available.

3.3 Cultural Route Network

The "European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys" is based on a network of regions united by the historical heritage of Cistercian abbeys from different periods of time. It covers more than 190 sites across eleven countries – including high value sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

The Charter was founded with the aim of bringing together the owners of different abbeys to exchange experiences and share guidelines on the management and conservation of assets. Its goals are fundamentally cultural, not excluding however the reality of the economic and environmental constraints, including those arising for some sites of intense tourist activity. Among the aims of the association: “the desire to preserve and enhance this heritage, to learn, and to promote the spirit of sharing and mutual support, with respect for the spirit of the place and the determination to pass these on to others”. These values are expressed in the Charter values (published on the website in several European languages).

The association is managed by a Board of Directors composed of at least 18 and max. 24 members, elected by the General Assembly for three years. Each year a third of them is renewable. The candidates for the Board are the Cistercian sites themselves, not a single person.

The Board of Directors:

- meets at least twice a year;
- examines and approves the activity report and the past and planned accounts to be submitted to the General Meeting of Participants;
- designates the Bureau responsible for applying the guidelines defined by this Assembly.

This Bureau is composed at least of 4 members: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. It may be occasionally supplemented by other members, including those responsible for commissions.

The President has the power to implement the decisions of the Board of Directors and the Bureau, including the signing of legal and financial documents.

In 2017, the Board of Directors comprised 21 members, including the President (Dominique Mangeot), two Vice-Presidents, an Honorary President (the Past President, Jean-François Leroux) and three Advisers to the President.

The General Assembly of the Charter is held every year in a member abbey, alternately in France or in another European country. It is not a formal event; it is organized around conferences (forums) and/or thematic workshops. Activity programs are discussed by all members and responsibility for their management is assigned.

On the occasion of each meeting, the Assembly approves a report on the activity of the Association. Financing of the network is ensured by membership fees and the sale of products (publications, maps, plaques and logos). Each member site presents its activities, underlining which forms of funding has obtained (state, public authorities, European projects).

No proposal for European projects has been presented together up-to-date by different members of the Charter.

The latest published budget of the association is the 2017 provisional budget, corresponding to 16,100 euros.

The financial statements presented by the Association for the past three years show a positive result with a significant budgetary asset (2014: €62,897; 2015: €54,901; 2016:

€63,303); however, many of the funds are owned goods (publications and maps) that would not allow the Association to promote joint projects and invest in the communication system.

The network seems capable of expressing a remarkable cultural presence and production, without having the capacity to exploit it completely at the economic, tourist and commercial levels. It probably depends on the heterogeneity of its composition, which should be overcome by acting on system projects, also by drawing community funds and not only in the cultural sector.

An important evaluation criterion concerns the representativeness of the route at European level, in relation to the cultural and religious heritage that it wants to interpret.

From the research carried out on this occasion, it is possible to elaborate some useful data to understand the theme. To this end, a preliminary research was carried out on the consistency (number) of Cistercian sites in Europe, also taking into account the abandoned ones.

The estimated number of Cistercian abbeys (among those still in use as monastic homes, abandoned ones and museums), including all the reforms implemented and the existing congregations, is around 2400 in the countries belonging to the Council of Europe.

It should be noted that most of these are still seats of religious communities that do not open their sites to the public, while for the membership of the Charter opening to the public is a fundamental and unavoidable criterion.

The analysis shows that some countries are not represented within the Association (Hungary, Austria, the Netherlands, Ireland, Croatia, Romania, Slovenia, etc.), while others have a greatly reduced presence (Italy, United Kingdom, Spain).

In every European Cultural Route, the Association that firstly promoted and manages the Route has the largest number of participants, but it is important to develop a membership plan in the forthcoming years with promotions and other actions aiming at increasing the number of Member States and the sites for each of them, in particular for those not, or less, represented.

Participation and satisfaction of the members

The questionnaires were a useful tool for understanding the active participation of the members and the level of satisfaction achieved by the sites belonging to the Charter.

From the replies received from the questionnaires, however limited, some data emerge and confirm the analyses carried out so far.

1. The members of the Charter seem not to have full knowledge of being part of an European Cultural Routes of the CoE. There is terminological confusion between the European Charter of Cistercian Abbeys and Sites and the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys. It is not clear what having this European Certification implies and the potential that can derive from it;
2. This low inner clarity reflects on the external communication; few members promote the European label and inform visitors about it;
3. Many members require greater involvement in the management and planning of the activities of the Charter, the creation of national coordination or thematic groups in order to be more active. The low budget and the absence of regional or national common activities considerably limit its capacity for action and recognition.

3.4 Communication tools

The European Cultural Route has realized in the last three years many tools for tourists, both traditional and digital.

The Charter had published an IGN map of Cistercian abbeys and sites in France several years ago, and a guide book entitled "Sites Cisterciens d'Europe", with an individual cards of the abbeys members of the Route (2012). In any case, a huge literature concerning the Cistercians is available, exploring all aspects of Cistercian history and life in the Middle Ages.

New tools for visitors, such as audio-guides in several languages, have been prepared for some sites, such as the Abbey of Saint-Maurice (FR) in 2016, while virtual tour of the abbeys are possible, for example at Maubuisson and Villers (BE), with IT tools allowing to reconstruct the historical phases and the ancient buildings no longer preserved.

Audio-guides are a valuable product, but they are available only in few sites of the network. It would be advisable to extend audio-guides to all sites, as well as prepare downloadable materials, so that the visitor can plan his/her visit at home.

Another possible option is the setting up of smartphone applications to support guided tours. Downloading of audio-guides should be made easier and more enticing through the tourism portal.

Web 2.0 (social networks, Flickr, Vimeo, YouTube etc.) potential should be maximised as a promotional tool. In the modern world internet promotion needs to be dynamic and interactive. To be successful, it needs the active engagement of the whole network to bring it alive, link with SMEs, feed contents and subjects and ensure the portal is promoted through their own promotion activities. Experience has shown that being part of a vibrant European network is a good way to promote local attractions.

Website

Following a 2011 survey on the use of internet among all members of the network, the new website www.cister.eu was launched in October 2012, with the aim to help members in their online communication. The abbey responsible for its management is Villers (BE). The website collects information from all the associates and publishes a newsletter 3 or 4 times a year. The website contains the records of all abbeys of the network. There is also a clickable map of Europe and references to all the sites of the network, which makes it easy to locate them. The site is now available in French, English and German, but not all the contents are translated in the three languages.

A website format suitable for mobile phones and smartphones is also available online.

A website is nowadays an essential tool: the cister.eu website presents a simple structure and subdivision in topics, easiness of utilization and good communication; however, it has a non-interactive and rather static website interface. Therefore, it serves the purpose of a project portal, but it is not an attractive tool for tourism promotion.

The contents on the pages are reduced and the potential of the instrument is not fully exploited. It would be important to include new contents, such as tourist products, specially prepared itineraries, a bibliographic and research section, etc. Brief information, only in French, is provided on the website about the programme of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe at the link <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/culture>, and no indication about EPA or the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR).

Logo

The logo of the Charter, used in every written communication, has been reproduced on a plate, sold to associates and placed at the entrance of the sites, while the logo CR CoE is not present alongside that of the Association. On the other hand, the logo CR CoE is present on the first page of the newsletter and on every page of the website. However, it is not located

next to the name and logo of the Charter, in the upper half of the homepage, but at the bottom of the page, so that it results to be not immediately visible on entering the website.

In the next period, the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys will work at the promotion and visibility according to the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes Resolution, through the standardization of the signalling of the sites and the identification of all the activities of the Charter partners, as a part of its general activity.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The theme of the Route is undoubtedly of great relevance in the construction of Europe in the Middle Ages, because the Cistercian 'Order' influenced some of its fundamental aspects and was one of the main protagonists of the European scene in the twelfth century. All the inspiring criteria of the Council of Europe's "European Cultural Routes" initiative are potentially involved and have been effectively developed by the Charter. The Cistercian Abbeys Route deserves to be recognized as one of the most interesting and effective.

As underlined in the report, the actions that should be undertaken for the increase and the development of the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys can be structured in some points:

Collaboration with other Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

During the last years, in occasion of the meetings of CR managers (EICR Advisory Forum and Summer Schools, from Brussels, 2013, to Lucca, 2017), some resolutions have been reached to maximize the cooperation between the CRs of CoE in different aspects, such as improving the CR management structures, preparing cooperation projects to enhance the visibility of CRs in the field of tourism, working for the development of communication tools (ICT solutions), etc.

In order to obtain a better position in the touristic market, the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys should work to create contacts and increase the existing ones with different CRs, especially with those with similar themes, to cooperate in order to reach the following goals:

- Definition of joint projects to apply to European financing.
- Improving the governance conditions of CRs, especially in the issue of the budget sustainability of technical and administrative units.
- Participation in joint events oriented to promote the cultural and touristic products of CRs, like fairs, technical meetings, local and regional events, etc.
- Exchange and share of experiences and joint technologies for the promotion of the CRs.

Coordination of the managers of the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys

Eight years after obtaining the label of European CR, a greater coordination in the development of actions and activities that arise inside the sites of European Route network (190 sites open to the public) is needed, thus favoring the exchange of experiences and initiatives.

It is also necessary to increase the visibility of the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys in all the sites and cooperate in the joint activity.

For these reasons, it is appropriate to organize periodical meetings of 'local delegates' (perhaps one for country) from the Cistercian abbeys members, with the goal of coordinating all the activities that the different sites organize and share them, as a joint work for the promotion of the European Route.

For a better management of sites belonging to the Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, the Charter could draft a Good Practice Handbook, that comprises a series of actions and measures aimed at modernising, with technical criteria, the integral management of the sites included in the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys.

Increase the visibility of European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys

This should be the main objective of European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys for the next years. The visibility and the social comprehension of this CR could be improved through the following actions:

- Implementation of this brand in all the activities and initiatives of the partnership.
- Edition of a new official downloadable map of the abbeys belonging to the Charter.
- Enhancement of the official website www.cister.net with new contents and applications in different European languages.
- Commitment to use the Charter brand in all the materials that partners develop at local and regional level.

Increase the visibility of CoE logo

All sites belonging to the Charter should display the logo of the CoE. This criterion can no longer be rejected.

The Charter recommends all its members to put up road signs at the entrance to their town bearing the Council of Europe logo. Three villages currently have already put their sign: Archigny, Aulps and Clairvaux (FR). Even if not all the participating sites can do the same, logo of the CoE should appear in a visible position at the entrance to the site. In the reception area it might be useful to leave illustrative material on European cultural itineraries.

Collaboration and cooperation with other Cistercian abbeys and sites in Europe

Despite being a vast reseau (191 members), a major weakness of the network is the lack of visibility amongst the partners outside of the EU funded projects. Effort needs to be put into convincing the network partner's organisational management of the value of the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys brand.

In several European countries there are many routes linked to the "Cistercian world"; it would be advisable that these cooperated with the European Cultural Route creating an effective and real European network. The European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys should work to include these local networks in the European Cultural Route.

Define a Scientific Committee for the European Route of the Cistercian abbeys

To improved adherence to the criterion of the Council of Europe "the theme must be researched and developed by groups of multidisciplinary experts from different regions of Europe so as to ensure that the activities and projects which illustrate it are based on consensus", it is necessary to appoint a scientific committee which must be composed of different members from different subject areas, a multidisciplinary group opening to experts from different European countries and different disciplines, including history, art history, history of architecture, tourism economy, tourism policy, communication, etc.

This criterion should not be difficult to implement due to the high number of consolidated collaborations with prestigious universities and research institutes that in these years many of the members have carried on.

This criterion can no longer be rejected

Boost activities between the Cistercian sites and the Contemporary art

In the forthcoming years the Route should invest resources and ideas to extend relations between the Cistercian sites and the contemporary art, to encourage activities and artistic projects which explore the links between heritage and contemporary culture.

This is a very interesting topic given the specificities of the route which focus on material, but above all, immaterial heritage. The organization of related events and contemporary art performances on a specific topic could encourage participation by other populations and European citizens captivated by transversal plays, literature and art. Cultural events and performances should be developed and extended to the entire network of participating countries.

An interesting project could develop a “travelling arts festival” on the network sites. In the framework of this project the organization could, starting from Cistercian history and spirituality, get inspiration to compose cultural events and shows. The aim is to have artists moving within the network, i.e. to invite artists from other project regions to perform at regional events in order to enhance their interregional dimension.

Grow cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans

The main sites of Cistercian Route should base many of their activities on cultural pedagogy for young people and students; pedagogical models focusing on tourism for the youth (especially scholastic tourism) and adults (cultural tourism in general) should be used, based on inductive educational and teaching methods, such as communicative interpretation and mediation.

Specific materials should be prepared for the schools approaching the sites and their art; it should be possible to download from the website brochures introducing to the Cistercian life and heritage, to be used to prepare a visit to the site or for specific class lessons.

It would be advisable the publication of didactic guides (one for each region), specific for any kind of students and some interactive games could be developed specifically to make the youngest approach the world of the Cistercian art, by recognizing some drawings of the most famous sites.

Increase Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development

One area in which investment is needed, depending on financial backing, is tourism.

A common programme for the sustainable tourism sector should be developed and extended to the entire network of participating countries in the next years, a program that is shared by a number of members of the network, experienced for some sites and later extended to other places. One further area of development is the establishment of high quality itineraries offering sustainable tourism that enhance the territories. This opening towards sustainable tourism requires the use of computerised and multimedia tools in order not only to involve the largest possible number of visitors but also to disseminate information about the topics of the routes.

In developing the tourism potential of the network and the participant regions, links need to be made to other thematic areas of tourism beyond the built heritage in order to strengthen the offer within the regions. Often the Cistercian sites act as short stops on longer ‘tours’, in place of being a destination – with very little income for the community. In order to build a stronger offer for tour operators, there is a need to develop an integrated sustainable tourism offer around the key sites.

The existing Cister.net website serves the purpose of a project portal, but it is not an attractive

tool for tourism promotion. Whilst it does endorse some tourism offers, it does not promote active engagement with the tourism sector. There is a need for the development of an attractive and interactive tourism-friendly portal that promotes each of the regions and the SMEs operating in each of those. It should be professionally-designed by a contractor with proven experience in this field.

In conclusion, the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys has improved its performance along the criteria of the Resolution of the CoE during the last three years, so the Cultural Route of the Council of Europe Certification should be maintained, based on the progress achieved and the good general check of conformity for the routes.

However, some of the above observations and recommendations revoke and re-propose similar topics of the previous evaluation (2013). Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the European Route of the Cistercian Abbeys works actively to improve and resolve in the next year the critical issues still present.

The activities of the Cultural Route during the next year should be monitored, in order to provide help to solve some of the critical issues still present.

5. List of references

Différents documents complétés en vue de l'évaluation triennale de la Route des Abbayes cisterciennes

1. Formulaire de l'évaluation triennale régulière complété (Document 1) ;
2. Grille d'auto-évaluation complétée (Document 2) ;
3. Déclaration sur l'honneur complétée et dûment signée (Document 3) –
4. Statut légal du réseau à jour ;
5. Liste des membres du réseau à jour ;
6. CR AG ordinaires des dernières trois années ;
7. CR AG extraordinaires des dernières trois années (s'il y a lieu) ; Il n'y en a pas eu de 2015 à 2017
8. Documents budgétaires du réseau (Budget de fonctionnement, plan de budget prévisionnel triennal, financement spécifiques pour la mise en œuvre d'actions précises, p. ex. financement Leader, Interreg, etc.
9. Plan triennal prévisionnel des activités.

6. Expert field visit

▪ Field visit

12 January 2018:

Field visit to the Villers Abbey (BE):

Morning: meeting with Michel Dubuisson (secretary of the Charter). Comparison on the themes of evaluation, critical issues and solutions; ongoing actions, projects.

Afternoon: tour of the abbey and the new visitor centre.

19 January 2018:

Field visit to the Valserena Abbey (IT), (member of the Charter):

Morning: meeting with the representatives of the Italian abbeys members of the Charter (Tiglieto, Morimondo, Chiaravalle della Colomba, Fontevivo, Valserena, Parabiago). discussion about the new Association (Associazione abbazie e siti cistercensi italiani) which is being formed between Italian abbeys.

Afternoon: tour of the abbey and the museum.

During the 2017: visit to the abbeys of Tiglieto (IT), Fontfroide (FR), Valmagne (FR)

In the past years I visited the abbeys (member of the Charter): Le Thoronet, Clairvaux, Citeaux, Pontigny, Fontenay, Loc Dieu, Vaucelles, Chiaravalle della Colomba, Fontevivo, Morimondo, Alcobaça, Léoncel, Poblet, Silvacane, Valsaintes, and many others not in the Charter.

▪ Interviews

Michel Dubuisson (General Secretary of the Charter)

Pierpaolo Franzese (Tiglieto abbey)

Pietro Grimoldi (Morimondo abbey)

Francesca Zanella (Presidente Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione | Università degli Studi di Parma, Valserena abbey)

▪ Questionnaires

Dominique Mangeot (President, Fontmorigny)

Jean-François Leroux (honorary President, Clairvaux)

Gérard Beureux (Treasurer, Clairvaux)

Camille Sauton (manager for the Route, Escaladieu)

Michel Dubuisson (General Secretary of the Charter, Villers)

Peter Braun, Muriel Lauersdorf, (Board of Directors, Maulbronn)

David Colling (Board of Directors, Clairefontaine)

Kinsky Tamar (Zdar abbey)

Helle Simonsen (Esrum abbey)

Ana Pagará (Alcobaça abbey)

Iren Bien (Herkenrode abbey)

Hélène Sire (Vauluisant abbey)
Christian Barbier (Les College des Bernadins)
Agnès Desjobert (La Prée abbey)
Jean Louis de Lagausie (Piedra abbey)
Micheline Galan Duran (Pontigny abbey)
Valmagne abbey
Antoine Fayet (Fonfroide abbey)
Amici abbazia Santa Maria di Tiglieto (Tiglieto abbey)
Mariapia Branchi (Valserena abbey)
Silvia Testa (Chiaravalle della Colomba abbey)
Fontevivo abbey
Fondazione Abbazia di Morimondo (Morimondo abbey)
Parabiago Abbey
Antonio Mangiafave (Corazzo abbey)
La Fabbrica di Sant'Ambrogio (Mormondo, Parabiago)

8. Checklist

COE CULTURAL ROUTES EVALUATION CHECK-LIST			
3.1 THEME	Does the theme of the Route	Yes	No
	- represent a common value - historical, cultural, or heritage -to several European countries?	1	
	- offer a solid basis for youth cultural and educational exchanges?	1	
	innovative activities?	1	
	cultural tourism products development?	1	
	Has the theme been researched/developed by academics/experts from different regions of Europe?	1	
3.2 FIELDS OF ACTION	3.2.1 Co-operation in research and development		
	Does the Route		
	- offer a platform for co-operation in research and development of European cultural themes/values?	1	
	- play a unifying role around major European themes, enabling dispersed knowledge to be brought together?	1	
	- show how these themes are representative of European values shared by several European countries?		0
	- illustrate the development of these values and the variety of forms they may take in Europe?		0
	- have a network of universities and research center working on its theme at the European level?	1	
	- have a multidisciplinary scientific committee?		0
	Does the scientific Committee		
	work on its theme at the European level?		0
	carry out research and analysis of the issues relevant to its theme and/or activities on:		0
	- theoretical level?		0
	- practical level?		0
	3.2.2 Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage		
	Do the Route activities (according with the theme)		
	- take into account and explain the historical significance of tangible and intangible European heritage ?	1	
	- promote the CoE values?	1	
- promote the CoE CRs brand?	1		
- work in conformity with international charters and conventions on cultural heritage preservation?	1		
- identify, preserve, and develop European heritage sites in rural destinations?	1		
- identify, preserve, and develop European heritage sites in	1		

industrial areas in the process of economic restructuring?		
- valorize the heritage of ethnic or social minorities in Europe?		0
- contribute to a better understanding of the concept of cultural heritage, the importance of its preservation and sustainable development?	1	
- enhance physical and intangible heritage, explain its historical significance and highlight its similarities in the different regions of Europe?	1	
- take account of and promote the charters, conventions, recommendations and work of the Council of Europe, UNESCO and ICOMOS relating to heritage restoration, protection and enhancement, landscape and spatial planning (European Cultural Convention, Faro convention, European Landscape Convention, World Heritage Convention, ...)?	1	
3.2.3 Cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans		
Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to		
- develop a better understanding of the concept of European citizenship?		0
- emphasize the value of new personal experience through visiting diverse places?		0
- encourage social integration and exchanges of young people from different social backgrounds and regions of Europe?		0
- offer collaborative opportunities for educational institutions at various levels?	1	
- place the emphasis on personal and real experiences through the use of places and contacts?		0
- set up pilot schemes with several participating countries?		0
- give rise to co-operation activities which involve educational institutions at various levels?	1	
3.2.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practice		
Do the Route's cultural activities (contemporary cultural and artistic practice related)		
- promote intercultural dialogue and multidisciplinary exchange between various artistic expressions in European countries?	1	
- encourage artistic projects that establish the links between cultural heritage and contemporary culture?	1	
- encourage innovative cultural and contemporary art practices* connecting them with the history of skills development?	1	
- encourage collaboration between culture amateurs and professionals via relevant activities and networks creation?**		0
-encourage debate and exchange - in a multidisciplinary and intercultural perspective - between various cultural and artistic expressions in different countries of Europe?		0
- encourage activities and artistic projects which explore the links between heritage and contemporary culture?		0
- highlight the most innovative and creative practices?		0
- link these innovative and creative practices with the history of		0

	skills development?***		
	3.2.5 Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development		
	Do the Route's activities (relevant to sustainable cultural tourism development)		
3.2 FIELDS OF ACTION	- assist in local, regional, national and/ or European identity formation?	1	
	- actively involve 3 major means to raise awareness of their cultural projects: print, broadcast and social media?	1	
	- promote dialogue between		
	urban and rural communities and cultures?	1	
	developed and disadvantaged regions?	1	
	different parts (south, north, east, west) of Europe?	1	
	majority and minority (or native and immigrant) cultures?		0
	- open possibilities for co-operation between Europe and other continents?	1	
	- draw decision makers' attention to the necessity of protecting heritage as part of sustainable development of the territory?	1	
	- aim to diversify of cultural product, service and activities offers?	1	
	- develop and offer quality cultural tourism products, services or activities transnationally?		0
	- develop partnerships with public and private organisations active in the field of tourism?		0
	Did the network prepare and use tools all along the route to raise the number of visitors and the economic impacts of the route on the territories crossed?		0
3.3 NETWORK	Does the Route represent a network involving at least three Council of Europe's member states?	1	
	Was the theme of the network chosen and accepted by its members?	1	
	Was the conceptual framework for this network founded on a scientific basis?	1	
	Does the network involve several Council of Europe member states in all or part of its project(s)?		0
	Is the network financially sustainable?	1	
	Does the network have a legal status (association, federation of associations, EEIG,...)?	1	
	Does the network operate democratically?	1	
	Does the network		
	- specify		
	its objectives and working methods?	1	
	the regions concerned by the project?	1	
its partners and participating countries?	1		

	the fields of action involved?	1	
	the overall strategy of the network in the short- and long term?	1	
	- identify potential participants and partners in CoE member states and/or other world countries?		0
	- provide details of its financing (financial reports and/or activity budgets)?	1	
	- provide details of its operational plan?		0
	- append the basic text(s) confirming its legal status?	1	
3.4 COMMUNICATION TOOLS	Does the Route have its own logo?	1	
	Do all partners of the network use the logo on their communication tools?	1	
	Does the Route have its own dedicated website ?	1	
	Is it the website translated into English and French?	1	
	Is it the website translated into other languages?	1	
	Does the network use effectively social networks and web 2.0?		0
	Does the network publish brochures on the Route?	1	
	if yes, are the brochures translated in English?	1	
	if yes, are the brochures translated in French?	1	
	<i>For Certified Cultural Routes only:</i>		
	Is the title of “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” present on all communication materials (including press releases, webpages, publications, etc.)?	1	
	Is the logo of the Council of Europe present on all communication materials ?	1	
	Is the CoE logo used in accordance to the guidelines for its use (size and position,...)?		0
	Are the logos (Cultural Route + CoE) provided for all the members of the Route?		0
Does the Council of Europe logo appears on road signs/ boards indicating the cultural route?		0	
	SCORE	53	29

Appendix A. Method

A specially designed questionnaire, divided into two parts, with closed and open questions, was given to members of the Charter.

QUESTIONS		ANSWERS
What kind of structure are you?	Abbey still in use with religious community	
	Private property	
	Public property	
Activities organized by your organization/association	Concerts	
	Expositions	
	Cinema, theater	
	Fairs, markets	
	Festivals	
With which frequency	1 - 2 per year	
	3 - 5 per year	
	6 - 10 per year	
	More than 10	
Others activities	Guided tours with specialists or themed	
	Publications or research	
	Sale of local products	
Do you receive public subsidies for your activities?	yes/ no	
Do you regularly receive informative materials from the leader?	yes/ no	
What is your level of active participation in network life?	high	
	medium	
	low	
Level of satisfaction with the operation of the network	good	
	good enough	
	bad	

OPEN QUESTIONS (Please complete in capitals letters)

1. Does the network create opportunities for comparison with other European Cultural Routes, incentive actions for cooperation with other networks? Which ones?

- 2. How does the network can stimulate the Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development (develop and offer quality cultural tourism products, services or activities transnationally or develop partnerships with public and private organisations active in the field of tourism?)**
- 3. Do the Route's activities (relevant to sustainable cultural tourism development) promote dialogue between the Cistercian sites and other CRoutes?**
- 4. Does the network promote Cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans? Through which actions?**
- 5. Does the most visitors are aware of the fact that the site belongs to European Cultural Routes?**

Appendix B. References

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Link

OCIST - Ordre Cistercien	www.ocist.org
OCSO - Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance	www.ocso.org
OSB – Ordre de Sain Benoît	www.osb.org
Cistercienser Chronik	www.cistercienserchronik.at
Biographia Cistercensis	www.zisterzienserlexikon.de
Encist News	http://cistercium.blogspot.it
I Cistercensi	www.cistercensi.info
AIM – Alliance InterMonastères	www.aimintl.org
Associazione Nuova Citeaux	www.vitanostra-nuovaciteaux.it
ARCCIS (Association pour le Rayonnement de la Culture CISTercienne)	www.arccis.org/index.html
Zisterzienser an Nord- und Ostsee	www.forumcist.eu/
The European Forum: Cistercians at the North Sea and the Baltic Sea	www.forumcist.eu/index.htm
Cathopedia	://it.cathopedia.org/wiki/Cistercensi
Cistopedia	www.cistopedia.org/index.php?id=english00

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