

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

Via Habsburg

Mrs. Katalin NAGY
tourism expert, master lecturer, University of Miskolc, Hungary
nagy.katalin@uni-miskolc.hu
+36-30-2286540

Cultural route
of the Council of Europe
Itinéraire culturel
du Conseil de l'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.

Evaluation Report

1. Executive Summary

It is no doubt that the Habsburg dynasty has played a significant role in Europe's history, influencing the development of societies, arts, identity – forming nowadays a unifying idea for all those influenced throughout Europe. Their heritage cannot be reduced to old towns, former governance and political centres, monuments, churches and pieces of art; it has become an everyday feeling for those who live in these places and work for the protection: to belong to the same.

The personal meeting with the president of the association and the present route manager convinced me that they are committed to their cultural route project. They were completely aware of all their strengths, results and deficiencies as well. It is a young network, getting their certification in 2014, and there are certain points where they still have a long way to go, but they wanted to be completely honest when we have talked about these points.

The route and the value it represents is really acknowledged and recognized, the members feel proudness to be part of such a common heritage. All the people I have met during the evaluation visit talked about it with enthusiasm, and showed active participation in the life of the network. There are really great persons with huge knowledge about history among the leaders. On the other hand, they have to “learn” to be more conscious in using the Via Habsburg brand, title and logos.

The network is very active in certain types of activities, like events, exhibitions and promotions, and a bit poor in others. The scientific research is mainly carried out in practical level, so they should more focus on scientific aspects. Similarly, they should pay much more attention to youth exchange programs, and youth in general as a target group, in the future. These deficiencies can be counted on the “youngness” of being a European Cultural Route. More attention could be paid to the work if the network would have a paid employee, bearing responsibilities – but this is not the speciality of this association, but also a common phenomenon for almost all the others.

The network now covers four countries: France, Germany, Switzerland and Austria. They have serious plans to expand the route to other countries, especially in Central-Eastern Europe, with Habsburg history and heritage, like Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland and Romania. This would give more “power” to the route.

They also have to pay much more attention to the visibility expectations and be more conscious in its usage.

There are a lot of positive initiations, and a lot of work has been done so far, so if we put everything on the scales, it shows a favourable situation for the final conclusions:

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 – **with some recommendations and expectations** related to certain types of activities and visibility.

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 **Habsburg dynasty** is one of the world's longest lasting dynasties: from 996 to 1815 the house of Habsburg wrote key chapters in history, and contributed to the form of present-day Europe. The website invites the visitors with the following introduction: *“Journeying on the trail of the Habsburgs means discovering five totally unique regions between the Rhine and the Danube! This transnational route takes you through timeless landscapes and extraordinary places and into an unsurpassed cultural heritage. But that’s not all! Meet the residents of the former Further Austria and experience their hospitality and cheerful nature! Your hosts will be delighted to share their region and lifestyle with you. Experience authenticity and peacefulness in one package!”*

The route has been developed in its present state in the former territory of Further Austria, so we can talk about a **geographical order**. It includes four countries (France, Germany, Switzerland and Austria), in fact five well distinguishable regions:



1. Figure : The areas of Habsburgs

Switzerland and Austria), in fact five well distinguishable regions:

- Voralberg/Tyrol: “A region of contrasts” – major European roads meet here, in the valley of the rivers Inn and Rhine, with rich history and present culture.
- Aargau/Upper Rhine: “The rediscovered age” - River landscapes between the Alps and the Rhine, with old bridge cities.
- Lake Constance/Jura Upper Swabia: “An authentic paradise” - Ancient land of culture before the Alps.
- Black Forest/Briesgau: “Simply beautiful” - The Black Forest and the Rhine plain, wine, forests, Gothic monuments.
- Alsace: “A lifestyle envied by the world” - A region of self-assured beauty with good wine, good food, plenty of history, culture and art.

The **association** “In the traces of the Habsburgs” was established in 2001, after a successful exhibition “The Habsburgs between Rhine and Danube” in 1996. The association decided to work on an application for European cultural route in 2011, connecting 25 major sites, 70 cities and 150 points of tourist interest, both in rural and urban areas. They have got the certification “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” in 2014.

The **network** now works in the form of an international association, with French president, German and Austrian vice presidents, in the city of Colmar (France), according to the French law, in compliance with the regulations of the other three member countries, managed by the Alsace Destination Tourisme, a regional destination management organisation of Alsace.

During the evaluation, the following places have been **visited**:

- Freiburg (Germany): capital of the Black Forest, with a cathedral founded in the early 13th century. The town sought the protection of the Habsburgs in 1368. Its university was founded by Duke Albert VI in 1457. It was the seat of the Further Austrian government from 1754.
- Ottmarsheim: an important port and chemical industry centre along the river Rhine, where tourism is the other priority in the economy. Its main attraction is the octagonal church which was part of a Benedictine abbey founded in the 11th century by Rudolf of Habsburg.
- Hohlandsbourg Castle: represents one of the Habsburg territorial defence footholds in Alsace, built under King Rudolf of Habsburg in 1279, to monitor the free imperial city of Colmar. It was modernised under the rule of Emperor Maximilian II from 1563, and completely restored in 2013.

- Ferrette: the city was passed to the House of Habsburg after the marriage of Jeanne of Ferrette with Duke Albert II. The City Hall dates from 1572. The counts stayed in the fortified castle next to the town.

During the meetings and interviews it was made clear that all the places and attractions feel really proud to be part of this network. They think it is important for their visibility on a wider tourism scale, especially during the events they organise. For instance, Hohlandsbourg Castle has just published their offer for tour operators, and in each and every guided tour in the castle they emphasize the importance of the Via Habsburg route, calling the attention to other places of interest. Or in case of Ottmarsheim, which main (and in fact the only important) attraction is the church of Habsburg origin, has a Via Habsburg corner in the tourist office, and the town with 2000 inhabitants accepts about 300 tourists and more than 2000 individual tourists per year.

The **meeting with** Mr Jean Klinkert, **president** of the association, was a clear statement about their mission and strategy – though they do not have it in written form. He started with the importance of the Habsburg exhibition in 1996, which was the first step in creating the network with four countries, on the basis of geographical base (see above), dealing with the period of 996-1850 of the Habsburg dynasty. Today there are three main pillars of activities: (1) European citizenship, (2) cultural tourism, and (3) research of history and scientific issues – especially when we consider that the latest was not really in focus in the previous years. The priority was to strengthen the links between members and lay down a solid base for cooperation in their first period.

From now on, they would like to open the network to other countries, mainly in Central Europe, like Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Italy, especially for the towns of Vienna, Praha and Budapest. Their vision for the future is not only nostalgic looking back to history, but utilizing the economic and cultural benefits of their history and heritage. They want to rediscover the roots with economic logic. Their members are mainly public institutions, municipalities, tourism professionals, who are proud of being part of the network, not only because of prestige, but it emphasizes European citizenship and sometimes gives diplomatic help, too (e.g. in case of the Ministry of Economy of Austria who gave a significant financial contribution to the network).

For some photos of the meetings, see [Appendix 1](#).

3. Main Body Evaluation

3.1. Cultural Route Theme

It is no doubt that the Habsburg dynasty has played a significant role in Europe's history, influencing the development of societies, arts, identity – forming nowadays a unifying idea for all those influenced throughout Europe. The association "In the traces of the Habsburgs" organised the route on geographical basis, regarding the former Further Austria, dealing with the period of 996-1850. The organising idea is thus really acceptable, as the route rolls over almost all Central European areas (France, Germany, Switzerland and Austria), in spite of that there are other areas, too, for instance regarding the Spanish branch of the dynasty.

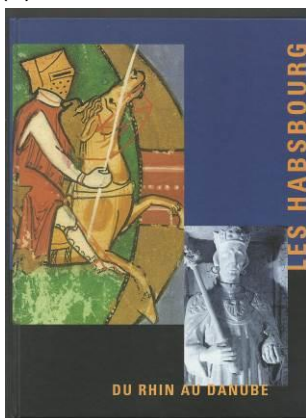
In this respect the route's theme represents real European values, being common in several present countries, of which four are the members of the network. It is illustrative of European memory, history and heritage, and contribute to an interpretation of the diversity of present-day Europe, with common roots. Thus it is in compliance with the eligibility criteria of CMRes(2013)67.

3.2. Fields of Action

3.1.1 Co-operation in research and development

What has been done so far?

(1) The network has a scientific committee with four members, most of them with historian background.



2. Figure : *The Habsburg book*

(2) A lot of scientific research has been done before the certification, the results were the previously mentioned, first exhibition in 1996, where all the initiation of the cultural route has started, and the Habsburg book (see picture).

(3) According to their standpoint, the research at present is carried out mainly on practical basis rather than scientifically. They had a project finished in 2014 with four local university students, who made a research for the possibilities of new tourism products. One of its results was the project of e-greeters (volunteer locals organising programs for tourists), which finally has not been implemented, because of different rules and laws of the participating countries and the questions of responsibility.

(4) There were smaller workshops for tourism offices in 2013-14. One was on 9th September 2013 in Innsbruck.

What is planned at the present and in the near future?

(1) One of the network's main projects for 2018 is the organisation of a scientific conference, together with the University of Freiburg, on the history of Lower Austria. It is planned for three days, at the end of September. It will be the jubilee of the 650th year of attachment to the Habsburg dynasty, in 1368. Renowned experts and historians will be involved to give lectures. It is expected that leaders from the travel industry (institutions, tour-operators, travel agencies), cultural bodies (such as museums), politicians, teachers and students, and the general public will attend the symposium. Indeed, this conference is aimed at bringing awareness of this shared history to a wide audience, and strengthen the promotion and communication of this new touristic and cultural itinerary. This action will be led by Mr Peter Kalchthaler, Vice President of the association and managing director of the Historical Museum of Freiburg.

- (2) They would like to continue the organisation of smaller workshops for tourism offices, who are interested in developing new tourism products.

3.1.2 Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage

What has been done so far?

- (1) "Ferdinand year" at the Ambras castle, Innsbruck. President Jean Klinkert met the head of the Ambras Castle in November 2016, to explore areas of cooperation with the Ambras Castle and the state Land of Tyrol during the Ferdinand year. The archduke Ferdinand II (major art collector and founder of the oldest world museum) became Lord 450 years ago, in 1567. A jubilee exhibit was held from 15 June to 8 October and is thereafter held in Prague from 3 November 2017 to 26 February 2018, at the winter equestrian school of the Waldstein Palace. The article "Ferdinand II: Anniversary exhibition at Ambras Castle" can be found in this link: <https://www.innsbruck.info/en/innsbruck-city/events/museums-exhibitions/ferdinand-ii-450-jahre-sonderausstellung.html>. The article about the exhibition in Prague can be found in this link: <http://www.praquemonitor.com/2017/11/03/prague-exhibition-presents-ferdinandii-renaissance-cavalier> with the title "Prague exhibition presents Ferdinand II as Renaissance cavalier".

What is planned at the present and in the near future?

- (1) New exhibition about the life of Kaiser Maximilian I within the Maximilian Year 2019 events. It is planned to be carried out with several museums being members of the network. It is still a concrete plan, but waiting for financial resources through a project application. There were some meetings concerning this event:
- 4th December 2017: Preliminary meeting on film production for the Maximilian Year 2019 and launch event, in Vienna, Hofburg, with Mr Reinhold Sahl, vice president of Via Habsburg, director of Burghauptmannschaft Österreich, Hofburg Innsbruck (a national institute being in charge of castles and exhibitions).
 - 6th December 2017: preparations of the exhibition.
- (2) Preparation of a Habsburg-Esterhazy exhibition, in this event there was a meeting on 1st December 2017 in Vienna, Hofburg

3.1.3 Cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans

In the first few years of the network as certified cultural route of CoE this kind of activity was not really in the focus. There were several plans, but they are still plans, like:

- learning package for school children, teachers and tourism professionals, in close cooperation with the scientific committee,
- holiday packages for children and students of higher education,
- other kind of interactive activities.

The network's main point in this respect is that children should study history, to enhance their knowledge about the local history, heritage, including the Habsburg dynasty. This theme will be discussed during the conference (see 3.1.1.) where they will invite teachers and lecturers, and prepare a new leaflet for them, including package possibilities, sight-seeing tours and the history of the Habsburgs.

3.1.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practice

What has been done so far?

- (1) October-November 2013: "Habsburg Week" in Laufenburg (Germany), a small town right at the Swiss border. It is a culinary and cultural event, with

gastronomical offers from the Habsburg era, too. They plan to continue this event, with the participation of members.

- (2) 2014: Stagecoach trip between Ensisheim (France) and Innsbruck (Austria).
- (3) 6th June – 1st October 2015: Reconstruction of the funeral ceremony of Francis Stephen of Lorraine, husband of Empress Maria Theresa, parallel with a 250th jubilee exhibition by the Burghauptmannschaft Österreich in Hofburg Innsbruck. Also reconstruction of the wedding ceremony, as he died during his son's, Leopold wedding. Articles about the event: <http://www.harukomaeda.com/2017/08/an-exhibition-das-letzte-im-leben-at-hofburg-innsbruck-2015/>; and also: <https://www.innsbruck.info/en/facilities/details/infrastruktur/imperial-palace-innsbruck.html>.
- (4) 2015: reproduction of historical coins related to the Habsburgs.
- (5) Music Festival in Ottmarsheim: several young people participates at this festival, which now has a tradition in this town (they have already applied for UNESCO world heritage label for their church).

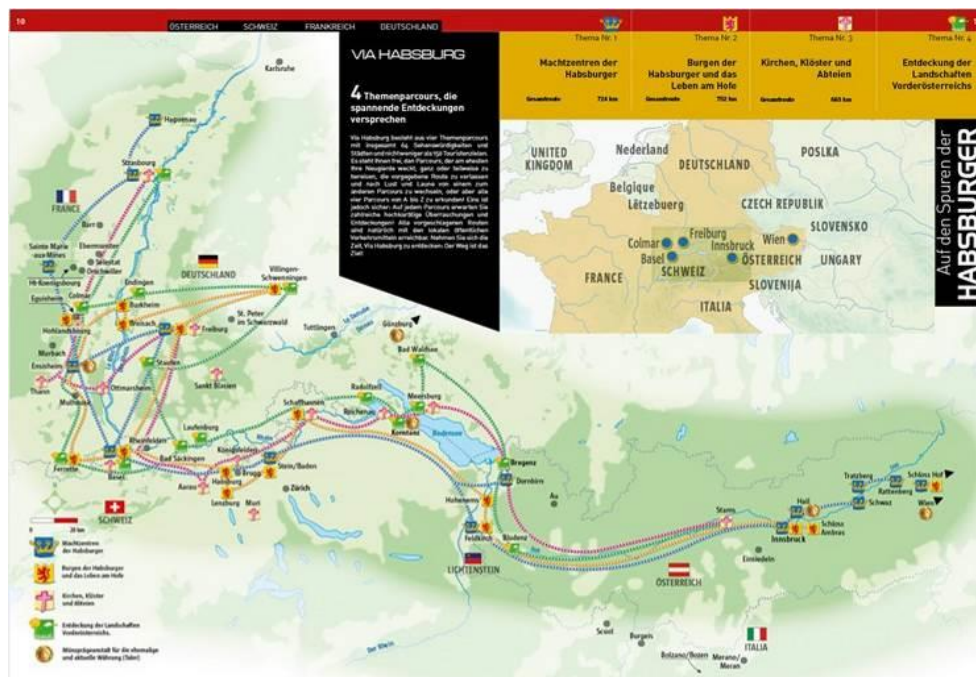
What is planned at the present and in the near future?

- (1) Organisation of "Habsburg Week" as a traditional cultural and gastronomical event, with stronger participation of individual members of the network. They plan to expand the event to other locations, too, besides Laufenburg, to e.g. Strasburg, Colmar and Austria.
- (2) 13-16th June 2018: 1st Festival of lights and choir ensembles under the artistic direction of Jacques Lacombe, conductor of Mulhouse Symphonic orchestra, in Ottmarsheim. It is a good opportunity to celebrate the end of Ottmarsheim Abbey church's restoration works, and to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Maximilien of Habsburg's death. It is planned as 4 days of festivities around the 11th century abbey church and its notable architecture. They wait 8 choir ensembles from Via Habsburg sites: more than 350 German, Austrian and French singers, 4 solo singers, 56 musicians from the Mulhouse Symphonic orchestra, there will be performances inside the church with its unique acoustic, and 4 night shows outdoors in the park of Abbey church with lightings on the church.
- (3) Ottmarsheim is also the location of a traditional music festival, with significant promotion possibilities for Via Habsburg (participants arrive from several towns and countries).
- (4) In Ferrette there is a medieval festival in every second year; in 2018 the main topic will be the Habsburgs and the knights.
- (5) Freiburg will celebrate its 650th anniversary of belonging to Austria (1368-2018), the events will be introduced to the press in Freiburg.

3.1.5 Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development

From the beginning, the route has been organised in four themed trails: (1) Centres of power: places which played a significant role for the expansion of the power of the Habsburgs; (2) Castles and life at court: the most important places in Further Austria and Tyrol; (3) Churches, monasteries and abbeys: architecture which supported the primary aim of the dynasty, i.e. to serve the church and strengthen its position; and (4) Landscapes of Further Austria: scenery with stops for culinary highlights (see: Figure 3.)

The network – through its members – has a good cooperation with some travel agencies and tour operators. One of them is Per Pedes, with whom the network developed a four-day package tour, in Innsbruck and surroundings, as Via Habsburg in Tirol. Its brochure and the package can be seen in [Appendix 2](#). They work together on different tourism products and cultural packages. Unfortunately there are no data on the number of tourists arrived by this package.



3. Figure : The four themed trails of Via Habsburg cultural route

They work together with other tour operators and travel agencies, too, and try to build a close cooperation with them. For instance, there was a Via Habsburg presentation in Bergheim, on 23rd September 2013, to Schweda, which is a bus company. Other possible partners are: Kunegel (bus company), Croisi Europe (cruise company), Kuoni, they are selling packages on history; and Studiosus, a German tour operator, working on niche markets of historical and themed routes.

They also plan to organise small packages of 2-3 days, combined with other products like culinary and wine programs (Alsace Wine Route crosses the area as well). They also work together with hiking clubs. Another good target group for organised tour is the elder people, who are still interested in history and visiting museums.

They also plan to work out trans-border packages, as it will be easy to travel from Paris to Innsbruck with the new TGV high speed train.

Also, next year they develop new hiking product, in close cooperation with the Black Forest Hiking Association; in about 400 km beautiful landscape there are several cycling trails, too.

Events and festivals are also good products, attracting thousands of visitors, where Via Habsburg can be well promoted, or organised under its brand. One of them if the "Habsburg Week" (see 3.1.4.) where offers will be proposed to the public such as free admission or special rates in a selection of cultural sites, and specific restaurants will serve dishes and gastronomy, linked to Lower Austria and the Habsburgs. Via Habsburg partners are able to work together on this concrete promotion project and bring exposure to the itinerary. Communication actions are planned such as printing a flyer, advertising in different medias (e.g.: Badische Zeitung, Zypresse, DNA/l'Alsace, Basler Zeitung).

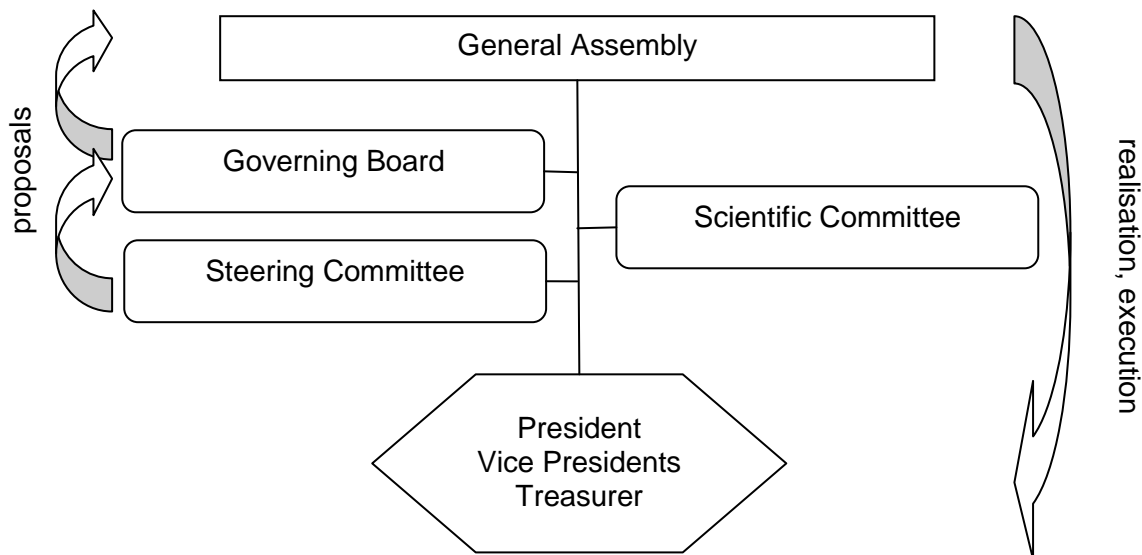
Altogether I can say that the activities of the network are still in compliance with the criteria listed in CMRes(2013)67, List of priority field of action – with certain further recommendations and expectations regarding certain activities, like scientific research and youth programs.

3.3. Cultural Route Network

The network has a legal status as an association, according to the French, more precisely to the Alsace regional law, close to the German and Swiss regulations. It has clear statutes and works democratically. The president holds the responsibility.

Structure:

The structure and the main bodies of the association can be seen in Figure 4:

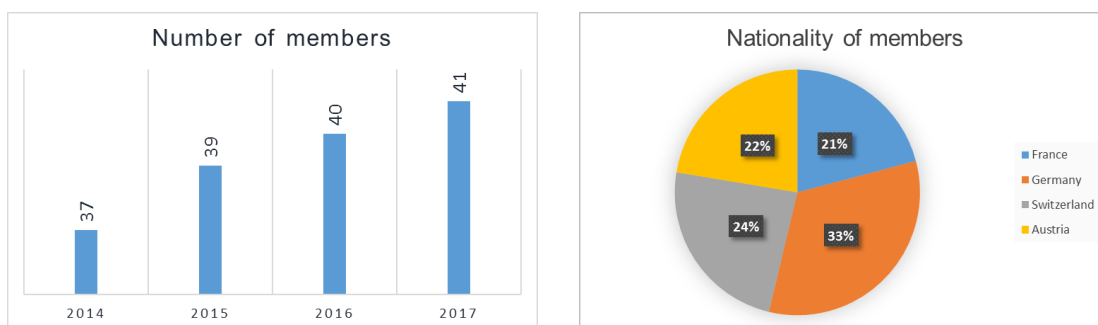


4. Figure : The structure of the bodies of the association

Members:

The association has more than 40 members from four countries (France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria). Compared to the situation in 2014, Nancy (France), Kaiservilla in Bad Ischl and Wiener Neustadt (Austria) are new members as towns with Habsburg heritage. Wiener Neustadt entered the network on 1st July 2015, Bad Ischl on 1st October 2015, while Nancy was accepted on 22nd June 2016.

It is not really easy to clearly see and draw a diagram about the members of the association: there were two different data provided; 40 partners were listed in the Evaluation form point 2.2., mainly municipalities, cultural and tourism institutions; and 81 names were listed in an Excel table sent by the coordinator, who are either the representatives of the partners, or individual members (?) like persons, companies, hotels or restaurants. This is a bit confusing, that is why we can see different data in the following two diagrams:



5. Figure : Number and nationality of the network members

The location of the association “On the traces of the Habsburgs”, and thus Via Habsburg, is the seat of Alsace Destination Tourisme, a regional destination management organisation. This address and contact details are used in all kinds of communication materials.

Official events of the association:

The following meetings have been taken place in the last period of time:

- 2-4th July 2013 – General Assembly and Board Meeting in Freiburg
- 9th August 2013 – Board meeting in Colmar
- 17th December 2013 – General Assembly in Colmar
- 29th April 2014 – Governing Board meeting in Rheinfeld
- 15th October 2014 – General Assembly and Board Meeting in Hohlandsbourg Castle
- 6th February 2015 – Governing Board and Steering Committee meeting in Mulhouse, during the “Festivitas” Trade Fair
- 4th May 2015 – Governing Board meeting in Freiburg
- 15th October 2015 – Governing Board meeting in Endingen am Kaiserstuhl
- 13th November 2015 – General Assembly in Innsbruck
- 22nd June 2016 – Governing Board meeting in Freiburg
- 29th November 2016 – General Assembly and Governing Board meeting in Innsbruck
- 22nd March 2017 – Governing Board meeting in Innsbruck
- 23rd May 2017 – Governing Board meeting in Colmar
- 13th October 2017 – General Assembly in Nancy (in accordance with the 300th year jubilee of Marie-Therese’s birth)
- 4th December 2017 – General Assembly in Vienna

The representatives of the network regularly attend the different events organised by the EICR for helping the certified routes with several kind of information. Via Habsburg has participated in

- 11th April 2014 – awarding ceremony of the certification in Luxembourg
- 1st November 2015 – Forum in Aranjuez
- 20-22nd June 2016 – Training Seminar in Strasbourg;
- 26-28th October 2016 – Forum in Vilnius (Route Charles V. showed interest in cooperation with Via Habsburg);
- 27-29th September 2017 – Forum in Lucca (Via Habsburg was introduced as the topic of a workshop during the forum. Direct contacts took place with other certified European Cultural routes during this conference which will perhaps lead to new areas of cooperation and common projects.)

The next General Assemblies are planned for May and October 2018. In May the president will give an overview of what have been done so far. They will also discuss the items recommended in this evaluation, especially of those related to the members of the boards of the association, some lacking types of activities and the visibility expectations. In October they will discuss a strategical plan till 2020, including the expansion of the network (with responsible person), annual financial plan and membership fees.

Financial issues:

The base of the incomes of the association is the membership fee. It varies between 50 – 300 EUR/year (50 € for individual members or associations, 250 € for smaller, 300 € for bigger cities). For some special projects (like e.g. now the guide book) can get more support, and also there are sponsors who pay more.

The main idea of the network is to share the knowledge and not carrying out commercial activities – though it may be important some time in the future. The network itself does not sell anything, this belongs to the decentralised activities by the members or partners.

The association does not have any paid employee.

Unfortunately, until the reporting deadline, no precise information was provided regarding the financial capacities of the association for the last years.¹

The association tries to get financial resources through project applications, too. Their present application is related to the Alps Cooperation Area Interreg Programme. This project, based on a Maximilian I International Exhibition, federates 7 countries. The State (Land) of Salzburg is the managing and coordinating authority on this programme. The institutional organization in charge for France is the General Secretary for Regional Affairs of Auvergne – Rhône-Alpes. Via Habsburg is considered as the French partner in the project, which has been submitted by the Burghauptmannschaft in June 2017.

In accordance with this Interreg project, the Via Habsburg executive board of 23 May 2017 decided to submit projects proposed by Alsace members of Via Habsburg. Thus cultural and digital projects, focused on the themes developed by Via Habsburg, are conducted by the towns of Ottmarsheim, Ensisheim and Ferrette.

According to the criteria for networks in CMRes(2013)67, the association is in compliance regarding multidisciplinary, internationalisation, viability and democratic operation.

3.4. Communication tools (logo use, etc. or ‘certification’ part of the check-list)

Visibility and logo use:

The network has worked out an own logo, using the traditional colours of the Habsburg dynasty, and use this consequently in every communication materials and platforms. This logo is more or less used by their members as well.

The situation is a bit different with the logo and title “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe”. The network has the visibility guide, and it was provided for all the members. The usage, however, is not consequent and seems that sometimes not conscious. The central publications, brochures have the logos and names on them, but there was not present on the website. – After the field visit, for instance, they corrected this, and now we can find CoE and CR logo on www.via-habsburg.at. The members are again in a different situation: all the members have got a unified signboard, but not everybody uses it because of different reasons. (Some good examples are in Appendix 6.) The real problem is that it is not compulsory for the members to use properly these logos – this have to be amended, as they plan to discuss it during the next General Assembly in May. This part of the visibility activities should get much more attention, as this is a common European brand to promote.

Promotion tools of the network:

- (1) *Website:* They consider this as the most important tool for marketing and spreading the information of Via Habsburg. The first site www.habsburg.net still exist in German language, but they do not use and update it, it was very expensive. Now they use the

¹ The association has an independent accountant, and asked the information from her. Unfortunately the lady had a serious accident recently and could not work, but the coordinator wrote that hopefully till the audition we will get some data on the financial situation of the network.

www.via-habsburg.at and want to use this as primary communication tool, by several planned improvements.

The site is now in German (the webmaster is Austrian) and partly English. They plan to make the French and Italian version as well. They also want to provide possibility for posting, collecting sources and scientific articles. Some shots of the website can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

- (2) *Smart phone application*: it was used in the first years, but now it is deactivated. They do not want to use applications at all, there is no return on investment, people do not really download and use apps like this, according to some research it is not really trendy any more. They want to improve the website instead, for mobile and tablets.
- (3) *Brochures*: they have a full colour, A4 size, 24-page brochure in German, French, English and Italian, which was first published in 2013. It contains very useful information for visitors, from a summary of the Habsburg dynasty's history, the area concerned, a simple map of the four themed trails and a lot of practical information about the sights and attractions.
In the future they want to renew the brochure, as there are new members, but in less copies, using this type of printed material mainly in tourism fairs. This year they will make a new leaflet, besides the improved website this will be the second most important communication tool. They think that brochures of this kind are not really effective any more. Also the new guidebook is very important among the communication tools (see later in details). For the brochure see [Appendix 4](#).
- (4) *Press relations*: there are several articles published about the route, some of them can be found in [Appendix 5](#); I have got a collection of the route manager in electronic format, the articles come from two major local newspapers: DNA (Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace) and l'Alsace. There were some press events as well:
 - 7th November 2013: press breakfast, Colmar
 - 28th April 2015: press conference, Paris, Galerie des Gobelins (certification)
 - 17-31st October 2015: press conference, Laufenburg (Habsburg Weeks)
- (5) *Newsletter*: the newsletter is technically ready, rarely used, they want to change the form and use it regularly.
- (6) *Trade fairs*: are traditional marketing tools, though their importance is declining, thematised fairs can survive. Via Habsburg has been promoted in the following fairs in the last few years:
 - 5-8th November 2015 – participation at International Cultural Fair in Paris.
 - 6-8th November 2015 – participation at International Tourism and Travel Show (SITV) in Colmar.
 - 5-7th February 2016 – participation at the “Festivitas” Travel and Food exhibition in Mulhouse, France, with a 90 m² stand for the promotion of Via Habsburg, with free booth for members, like Hall Wattens, Laufenburg, Ottmarsheim, Hohlandsburg, ADT de Haute-Alsace, Ferrette and “On the trails of the Habsburgs” Association.
 - 13th November 2016 – participation at SITV International Tourism and Travel Exhibition in Colmar, a major exhibition of Eastern France.
 - February 2017 – participation at the “Festivitas” tourism and food exhibition, but not with own stand; the promotion of Via Habsburg was made through partner cities which had a space at the exhibition.
- (7) *Signboards*: Implementation of road signs for motorists, cyclists and hikers, to make the itinerary visible and highlight its certification by the Council of Europe. The members have got a unified signboard to use in their settlements and at attractions; the first is free of charge, they have to pay a small amount for the second or more. The road signs of the visited places can be seen in [Appendix 6](#).

They have concrete plans for marking cycling and hiking trails as well, in 2018-2019.

- (8) *Social media*: The network do not use these platforms at the moment, but plans to do so. During the discussion with the route manager, he said that this task needs a communication manager, as it is a lot of work and time, and needs budget, too, as there are certain limits of volunteer work. They plan to find a person for both social media and website task together. The question will be discussed during the General Assembly in spring 2018.

A recent major project of the network is the publication of a new **guide book**, with the title "Via Habsburg – a guide through four countries". The texts are written by Mr Hubert Matt-Willmatt, who participated at the meeting in Freiburg during the field visit, and the photos are made by Mr Heinz Linke. Technical data of the book: 14,5 cm x 21 cm, softcover, 208 pages, publisher is Tyrolia Verlag, Innsbruck. About 800 photographs have been selected to be used.

The main steps were (1) a trip along Via Habsburg in 2016, veating a blog with descriptions and photos, its link is: www.pressebuero-mwk.de/ViaHabsburg; some screenshots can be seen in [Appendix 7.](#); (2) a trip along Via Habsburg visiting the entire route from France via Germany, Switzerland to Austria in 2017. The content is planned as follows: (1) Preface by Mr Jean Klinkert, president of Via Habsburg, Mr Reinhold Sahl vice president and Mr Peter Kalchthaler vice president; (2) Introduction, the history of the Habsburg family by Peter Kalchthaler; (3) Genealogical tree of the Habsburgs; (4) Register in alphabetical order of all members of the Via Habsburg route, from France, Nancy, Alsace to Ferrette, Switzerland from Bale to Muri, Germany from Endingen to the lake of Konstanz, and Austria from Hohenems to Vienna. Together with practical information of tourist offices, museums and attractions.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

My conclusion is that Via Habsburg, being a young cultural route of CoE, is basically fulfils the requirements and expectations, though there are still items missing or done not properly. The association should prepare more concrete plans, with responsible persons and related financial resources for their activity, and judge in a realistic way what they are able for. The recommendations are listed below, according to the paragraphs of the evaluation:

Recommendations for cooperation in research and development:

The network's first intention was to make people and public aware of the common history, to make the attractions, events and locations of the Habsburg heritage more well-known and popular. Now they want to go on step by step with other activities. The possibilities are:

- Workshops with university students and teachers;
- Focus on e.g. tourism marketing and certain tools like story-telling, which can be used successfully in different locations, too (e.g. this tool is presently used in Hohlandsbourg castle in a festival).
- Initiation of a scientific conference on history, located in different member states each year, maybe in cooperation of the participating universities.
- Try to attract more scientific institutions and universities into the work of the network. Collaborate with them in providing themes for thesis or dissertations for students. Point some scientific topic to be researched by students, and participate in the institutions scientific events or contests if there are such.

Recommendations for enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage:

The network has already done a lot in this respect, mainly with the several exhibitions and events promoting this common European heritage. Decision makers are also aware of its importance, as some direct funding from Austrian national institutes showed example. There are several sights in rural areas, and the network has good relations to other organisations, like castles, with whom they worked together on e.g. restoration programs.

- Continue the collaboration with organisations like “Living castles” and other cultural associations;
- continue the organisation of historic and cultural exhibitions, travelling exhibitions, especially targeting the possible new member states.

Recommendations for cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans:

The network should pay much more attention to this target group, as young people become the tourists of the future. They should utilize the theme's obvious possibilities with schools and universities, and find common points with teachers and lecturers, and also with researchers. Some possible actions are:

- Get in touch with different organisations of teachers and educational institutions, in all countries, and ask to be invited for their meetings to hold presentations about the Via Habsburg route and the possibilities of cooperation;
- Work out special learning material about the local history and disseminate it at schools, offering special lessons on the theme;
- Summer Camp or Academy for children and students on different levels, or organise a competition for them, which can be put on the network's website;
- Utilize the twin-town relations and partnerships of the member municipalities in this respect (this is one of the easiest way to build new themed relations e.g. with educational institutions).
- Develop certain actions through the website (e.g. posting travel experiences, selfie-contest, etc.).

Recommendations for contemporary cultural and artistic practice:

Connecting contemporary art and artists has never been the goal of such a very historic network. They would like to focus mainly on tourists and tourism developments, besides the obvious cultural targets, in the future, too. In spite of that, there are still some possibilities to try:

- Invite contemporary artists to create modern pieces of art related to Habsburgs for a special exhibition.
- Organise photo competition – for amateurs it can be also on the website.
- Develop a special call for artists for Habsburg souvenirs – to be sold at the members, attractions and interesting tourism points, as a tool for call the attention to the theme.

Recommendations for cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development:

As there are already good initiations in this field, the network has to continue the cooperation with tour operators and other organisations in developing new tourism products. Some ideas:

- Try to combine different products into new ones (e.g. cycling, hiking, gastronomy, wine, castles, etc.);
- Realize the expansion of the network with new countries, thus the package tours can be further diversified and involve new attractions;
- Utilize the twin city possibilities to attract new target groups or in development of new offer for specialised interest;
- Use international travel fairs for finding new contacts and partners;
- Try to find a suitable formation for website + back office + packages + booking + tour operators to sell.

Recommendations for the network:

There are no real problems with the formation and the operation of the network, but there are certain points to be changed; like:

- Stop the practice of putting the same persons into the different bodies of the association (there are some, same persons in the governing board, steering committee and scientific committee), it was recommended even in the first evaluation report, too.
- Try to clear your documentation and have more precise register of members and financial documentation; use the table form I have sent (or similar) for financial overviews yearly, to give precise data on financial items.
- Prepare strategic and action plans in written form, for at least middle and short term periods.

Recommendations for communication tools:

First and foremost, be very precise in the requirements of the visibility guide of the CoE!

- Consequently use the logos of the route and the CoE CR, make it compulsory for the members as well;
- Activate newsletters;
- Start social media usage;
- Develop information board with maps of the whole route at main attractions – showing in more details the attractions and sights in the surroundings
- Besides the common, still used signboards, develop smaller signs, or stickers for indoor use or for monuments who has some restrictions on board placement
- New edition of the brochure, with information on new members and attractions;
- Translations (website, brochure, leaflet).

5. List of references

- Evaluation documents sent by EICR to the expert
This package of documents includes the following: some minutes of meetings (general assemblies and governing board meetings), budget items, evaluation dossier filled by the route, self-assessment grid filled by the route, member list (different of what is listed in the evaluation dossier), status of the network, 3-year activity plan, summary of a guide book
- Evaluation dossier sent by EICR, including the related CoE resolutions, visibility guide and checklist
- Previous evaluation report and checklist (sent by EICR to the expert)
- Documents sent by the route manager before and after the field visit
These include a collection of articles which have been published about the different activities of the network; activity list of the last years; charts for mapping the network (members and their external partners – not complete); etc.
- Official website of the route: www.via-habsburg.at
- Brochures of the route
- Personal meetings and interviews, according to the field visit programme (see chapter 6)

List of Appendixes:

1. Photos from the meetings included in the field visit program
2. Package tour by Per Pedes
3. Website
4. Brochure
5. Articles (a selection from the provided)
6. Road signs
7. Via Habsburg blog
8. Map of the field visit
9. Checklist

6. Field visit programme

The field visit has been carried out between 8-13th January 2018, in Colmar, France.

Monday 8th January

20:00 – Arrival at Strasbourg – Train from Strasbourg to Colmar: last train leaves at 22:21 p.m. Arrival at The Grand Hôtel Bristol - 7 Place de la Gare, Colmar, +33 (0)3 89 23 59 59

Tuesday 9th January

Colmar – Alsace Destination Tourisme – 1 rue Camille Schlumberger

10:00 a.m. - Meeting with Mr Yannis WISSINGER, current coordinator and secretary of the Via Habsburg cultural route, and Mr Guillaume MACIEL, thematic services staff member of Alsace Destination Tourisme.

12:00 - business lunch in Colmar

14:00 p.m. - Meeting with Mr Jean KLINKERT, chairman of the Via Habsburg cultural route

Wednesday 10th January

Field visit in Freiburg im Breisgau (Baden Württemberg - Germany) – Meeting with Mr Peter KALCHTHALER Vice-president of the Via Habsburg and manager of the historic museum of Freiburg, and Mr Hubert MATT-WILLMATT, journalist, editor of the new guidebook on Via Habsburg.

Field visit Ottmarsheim – Meeting with Bénédicte CLEMENCON, head of tourism city of Ottmarsheim, Marc MUNCK, Mayor of Ottmarsheim and Sylvie LEVEQUE GARCIA, Director of services city of Ottmarsheim.

Thursday 11th January

Field visit Hohlandsbourg castle – depending on the weather condition – in case of snowfall the road may be blocked. Meeting with Elisabeth CLOR, Director of the Hohlandsbourg castle.

Field visit Ferrette – Meeting with Monika MUNCH, head of tourism city of Ferrette and François COHENDET, mayor of Ferrette.

Friday 12th January

Meeting in the morning Colmar at the headquarter of Alsace Destination Tourisme – Meeting take place after the field visits.

12:00 - Business lunch in Colmar

Guided tour of the Unterlinden Museum in Colmar focused on the Habsburg cultural heritage (paintings and works of art linked to the Habsburg dynasty and era)

Saturday 13th January

Morning: departure from the hotel. Train from Colmar to Strasbourg, bus service to Frankfurt International Airport.

The map with the visited places can be found in [Appendix 8](#).

7. Checklist

During the evaluation, I have met different evaluation grids, as follows:

	YES	NO
Evaluation round 2012-2013	48	28
Evaluation round 2017-2018 – self-evaluation	61	18
Evaluation round 2017-2018 – evaluation by the expert	64	24

After the field visit, I changed some lines in the checklist according to the self-evaluation of the network, based on my personal experiences and opinion. Also, I marked in red colour the factors that got both “yes” and “no”, indicating that it is only partially fulfilled.

My checklist is attached in [Appendix 9](#).

The elaboration of the report is finished on 1st February 2018.
Miskolc, Hungary
