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The “Via Francigena del Sud”: the value of pilgrimage routes in the development of inland areas. The state of the art of two emblematic cases

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“Via Francigena del Sud”

On October 18th, 2019 the European Vie Francigene Association approved the “Via Francigena del Sud”, from Rome to Santa Maria di Leuca.

The new route enriches the historical cultural itinerary approved by the Council of Europe in 1994.

Encompassing about 900 km of history, traditions and locations, the “Via Francigena del Sud” crosses some regions of Southern Italy, following the ancient *Itinerarium Brudigalense* (333 AD).



Itinerarium Burdigalense (333 AD)

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The anonymous pilgrim of Bordeaux followed the **Via Domitia** from **Toulouse** to **Arles**, crossed the Alps and travelled from Turin to Aquileia. He took the valley of the Danube, following the **Via Diagonalis** towards **Constantinople** and **Jerusalem**.

For the return journey the pilgrim reached **Constantinople**, then took the **Via Egnatia**, travelling through Thrace, Macedonia and Epirus, finally arriving in **Vlorë** where he crossed the straits by ship to Otranto. He took the **Via Traiana**, passing through Brindisi and Bari up to Benevento, the **Via Appia** from Benevento to Rome, the **Via Flaminia** to Rimini and lastly the **Via Emilia** to Milan.

Strategies for the promotion and management of the “Via Francigena del Sud”

The role of the Via Francigena for supporting the promotion and development of the regional and national economy was envisaged by **CIPE Deliberation 3/2016** (*Piano Stralcio “Cultura e Turismo” del Fondo per lo sviluppo e la coesione, scheda intervento n. 33 “Via Francigena”*), which **allocated 20 million euros to the Via Francigena (including Southern Francigena route).**

Among the project’s general objectives, as well as ensuring the safety and usability of the section of the route from Valle d’Aosta to Lazio, **was the intention to trace and geo reference a single path, with possible variations for the section of the route from Rome to Puglia.**

The operation is at the heart of the **operational agreement stipulated between all the bodies involved in the process - MiBACT and the relevant Regional Administrations-** and was ratified on December 20, 2019 following approval of the route by the **European Vie Francigene Association** .

Strategies for the promotion and management of the "Via Francigena del Sud"



Route associations	Ancient roads	Alternative routes
Via Francigena del Sud (hiking)	Antiche Vie	I Percorsi alternativi
Itinerari Associazioni	Cammino di Leuca	Via Sallentina
Regional boundaries		

In order to optimize these results, the "Via Francigena del Sud" has been enriched by the regional authorities with numerous "variants" with respect to the original historical route.

These are political responses that are partly aimed at promoting inland and rural areas, and also to remedy an undeniable limitation of the route.

An attempt at multilevel governance by building a network within a network project.

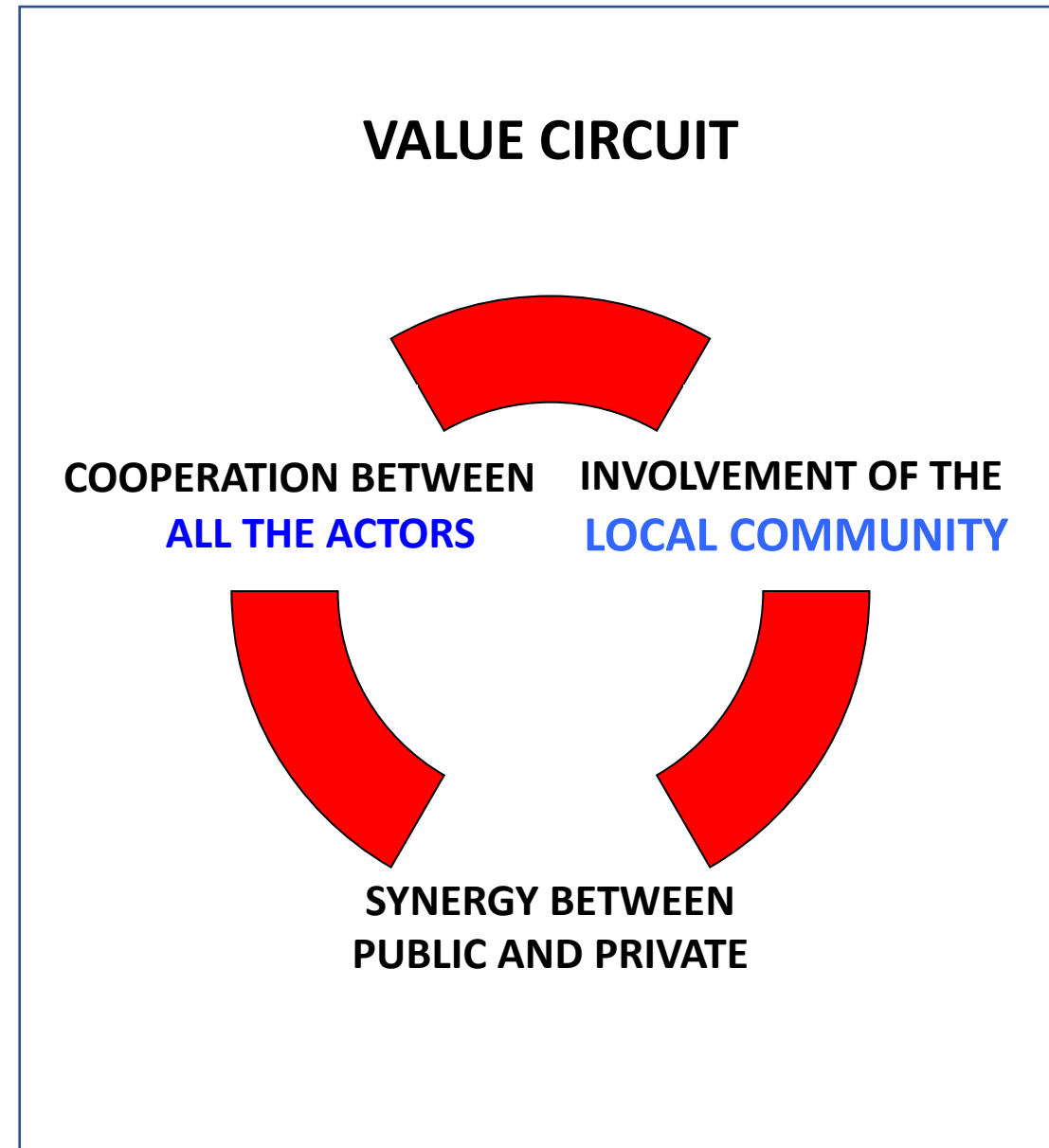
Expectations and visions for the future of the “Via Francigena del Sud”

“Via Francigena del Sud” should:

- encourage **sustainable development**
- be managed by formal **collaborative networks** consisting of national, regional and local authorities, and a wide range of stakeholders
- **provide a co-design processes between key stakeholders at local and joint levels.**

Consensus building and strategic partnerships are the foundations of a sound symbiosis between all actors for a **durable tourism and responsible tourism**, considering the need to **empower the local community**.

European Vie Francigene Association drew up the planning document for the period 2020-2022, identifying **seven macro strategies and nine operational step to expand the capacity of local authorities and the private sector** to offer innovative services for improving the “Via Francigena del Sud” at the global level.

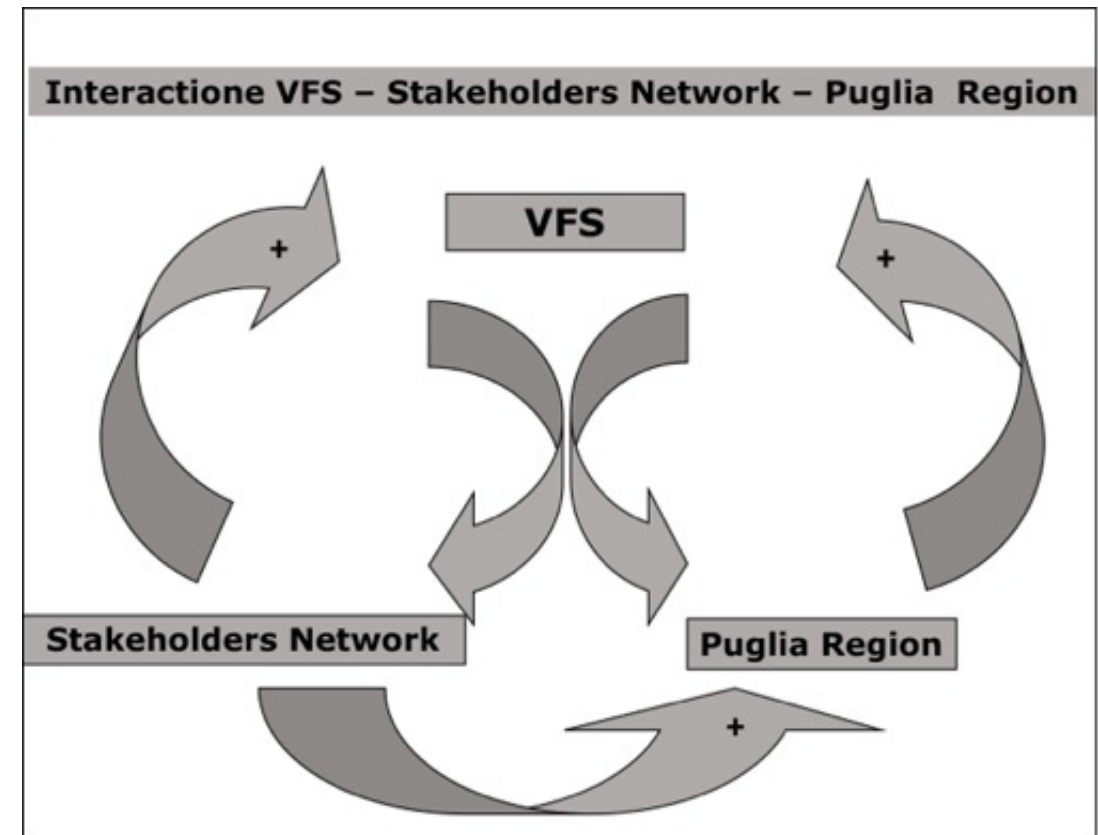


Strategies for the promotion and management of the “Via Francigena del Sud” in Puglia region

The strategy adopted in Puglia for the promotion and management of the Via Francigena is seen **in the creation of a network of public bodies and private citizens.**

Puglia Regional Administration considers the stakeholders to be beneficiaries of a range of initiatives and the means by which to ensure the success of the venture.

It therefore deliberately includes them in its strategy for promoting the Route by involving them in the management process.



Strategies for the promotion and management of the “Via Francigena del Sud” in Puglia region

- i. The Regional Administration’s engagement with stakeholders unfolds via public tenders **involving individual municipalities, cultural associations and individual citizens for promoting proximity tourism** that guarantees slow, widespread, seasonally balanced and high-quality tourism.
- ii. Benefiting from the many years of experience of the *Cammini d’Europa* programme (promoted by 16 Local Action Groups from four Italian Regions), as part of its Rural Development Plan for the 2014-2020 programming period, Puglia Regional Administration **has financed measures to promote the “Via Francigena del Sud” by Local Action Groups (Leader program)** offering citizens the chance to set up businesses and become key players in the provision of services and accommodation and catering facilities.
- iii. Puglia Regional Administration **is working in partnership or association with projects financed within the framework of European cooperation programs** that allow the creation of a regional system of routes, helping to define a common identity and a shared plan for quality sustainable tourism.

Stakeholder networks for the promotion of the “Via Francigena del Sud” in Puglia region

Another strand of the “Via Francigena del Sud” promotion strategy involves a group of key stakeholders: municipal administrations, companies, organisations representing specific sectors, scholars and cultural associations eager to promote the Route as an opportunity for development of economic sectors (agriculture, handicraft, tourism and commerce) and to create a network of interest that will be successful in the medium-to-long term.



Strategies for the promotion and management of the “Via Francigena del Sud” in Campania region

In Deliberation 17 of 22/01/2019, Campania Regional Administration approved the route of the main itinerary of the “Via Francigena” lying within its jurisdiction. In the spring **2019**, in collaboration with European Vie Francigene Association, **the regional section of the route was mapped, georeferenced and analyzed.**



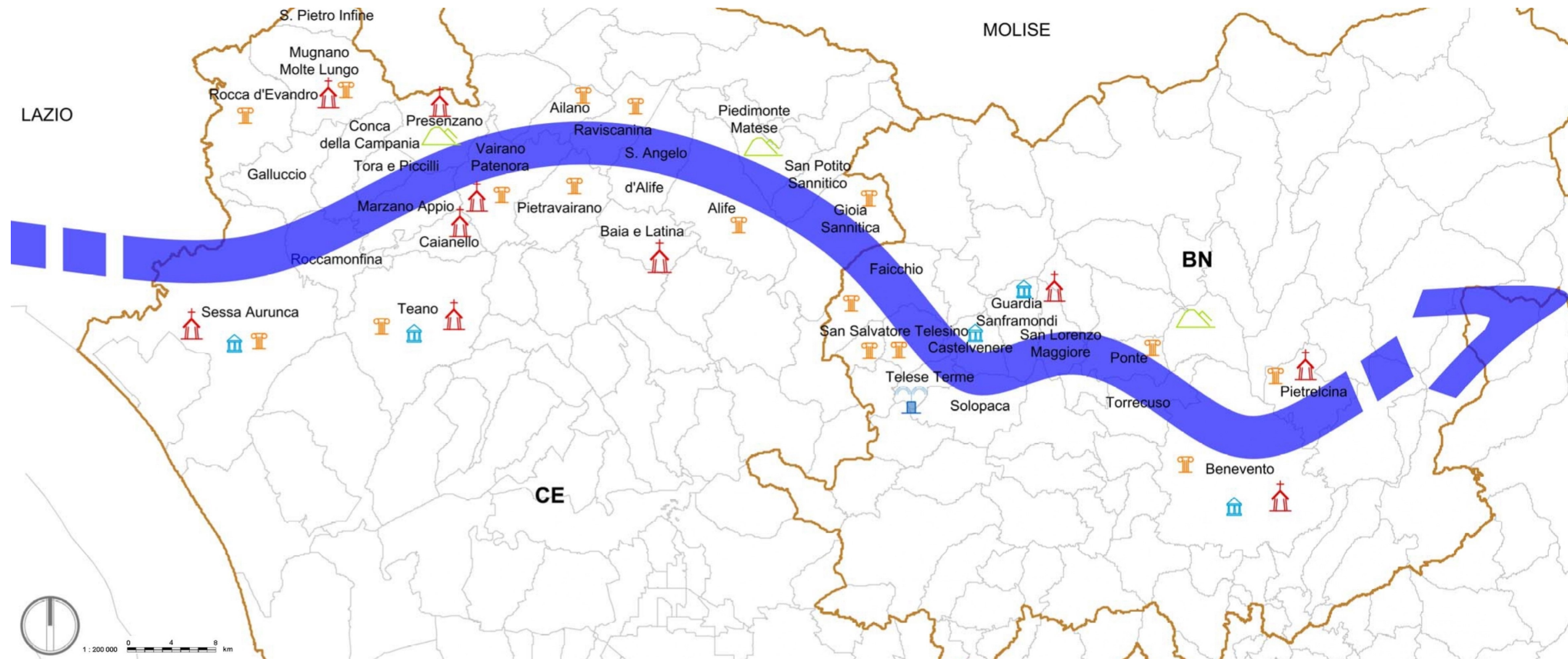
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Strategies for the promotion and management of the “Via Francigena del Sud” in Campania region

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170 km long, it passes through 26 municipalities and two provinces (Caserta and Benevento), while a further 200 km have been identified by the Regional Administration for future cycling and walking variants.



Strategies for the promotion and management of the “Via Francigena del Sud” in Campania region

“Il cammino dell’anima” (The soul's path)

The recognition of the Campania section confirms the work previously developed by the **Local Action Group Titerno** within the EU interregional cooperation project “I Cammini d’Europa: Rete Europea di storia, cultura e turismo” (was promoted by 16 Local Action Groups from four Italian Regions).

As part of this, the project “Il cammino dell’anima” prepared a system of four routes enhancing the “Samnite” section of Via Francigena from Faicchio to Benevento.

Among the activities developed:

- the creation of an information system to publicize the itinerary (paper maps and bilingual brochures) for promoting tourism products on offer in the region;
- the setting up training courses for public and private operators held by management bodies of cultural routes and the “Via Francigena del Sud”.



Conclusions

- The range of tourism goods and services on offer in connection with the “Via Francigena del Sud” is attracting a growing number of visitors, activating strong synergies between public bodies, cultural associations and the local population.
- The study showed how the range of tourism services offered by **the Southern Via Francigena is contributing to the increase in the number of users** – the number of requests for the “pilgrim's passport” made at the Sanctuary of Santa Maria di Leuca (Puglia), **revealed an average annual growth of 65.5% from 2015 to 2020.**
- The “Via Francigena del Sud” is also **raising awareness among visitors and the local inhabitants** concerning the need to respect the culture and regional qualities and promote sustainable mobility.
- **This study also indicated a significant expansion of the tourism products on offer in the regions**, as in the case of the “Cammino dell'anima” in the Benevento area (Campania).
- Despite this, **the “Via Francigena del Sud” still faces considerable challenges.**
- There are **numerous difficulties of a technical, organizational and managerial nature** (logistics, services, budgeting, reporting, financing, etc.), in addition to **marketing and communication issues** (lack of ad hoc plans, information management, promotion schemes, etc.).

Perspectives and visions

The cultural route “**VIA FRANCIGENA DEL SUD**”, as an interregional cooperation project, exemplifies an innovative approach and a new opportunity to manage the tourism potential of the areas involved.

It should be interpreted as:

- a ‘complex regional project closely connected to heritage and the landscape’
- a route of peace
- an opportunity for improving contacts between cultures, in order:
 - **to re-establish a new centrality of Mediterranean Sea**, not so much of the spaces as of the individuals, in a climate of reciprocal respect and understanding;
 - **to recover the memory and historic, cultural, environmental and economic values of Mediterranean regions**;
 - **to promote a process of lasting sustainable development** at social, environmental and economic level;
 - **to create ‘tourism-cultural products’** generating income in various sectors (gastronomy, crafts, transport, accommodation, retail), with the ultimate aim of setting up a solid and lasting “network of regions” for the development of inland areas.



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**Thank you very much
for your attention!**

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