



## CULTURAL ROUTES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

### DECLARATION OF THE 11TH ANNUAL ADVISORY FORUM<sup>1</sup>

## CULTURAL ROUTES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE “SAFEGUARDING EUROPEAN VALUES, HERITAGE, AND DIALOGUE”

### BACKGROUND

The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (EPA) was established in December 2010 and enables closer co-operation between member states interested in the development of Cultural Routes.

The Annual Advisory Forum is the most important and significant annual event of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme and it is the occasion to debate priorities, review progress of the implementation of the Cultural Routes and share experiences. Each Forum offers an occasion to discuss and provide guidelines on how to implement the EPA strategies, focusing each year on different topics.

According to the Resolution CM/Res(2013)66, a Cultural Route is “a cultural, educational heritage and tourism co-operation project aiming at the development and promotion of an itinerary or a series of itineraries based on a historic route, a cultural concept, figure or phenomenon with a transnational importance and significance for the understanding and respect of common European values”.

Their mission is to:

- raise “awareness of the shared European heritage as a cornerstone of European citizenship, a means of improving the quality of life and a source of social, economic and cultural development”
- be “tangible illustrations, through European trans-border itineraries, of the pluralism and diversity of European culture based on shared values, and as means for intercultural dialogue and understanding”

<sup>1</sup> This Declaration is not legally binding.



- promote European “identity and citizenship through knowledge and awareness of Europe’s common heritage, and the development of cultural links and dialogue within Europe as well as with other countries and regions”
- contribute to reinforcing “cultural co-operation, sustainable territorial development and social cohesion, with a particular focus on themes of symbolic importance for European unity, history, culture and values and the discovery of less well-known destinations”
- foster “cross-border cultural co-operation and the development of sustainable cultural tourism which builds upon local knowledge, skills and heritage assets, promoting Europe – including lesser-known regions – as a destination offering a unique cultural experience”

The Chania Forum 2022 “Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe: Safeguarding European Values, Heritage, and Dialogue” has focused on three main themes:

- I. Promoting European values and intercultural dialogue
- II. Safeguarding heritage in times of crisis
- III. Fostering creative industries, cultural tourism, innovative technologies for sustainable communities

The Chania Declaration takes into account the Chania Forum concept note, reflections and suggestions expressed during the Forum on those themes, and lists actions to be undertaken.

The participants to the Chania Forum 2022 “Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Safeguarding European Values, Heritage, and Dialogue” are

Aware of the unprecedented times in which the Forum has taken place: after two years of Covid19 pandemic, which has dramatically impacted the world population and all countries, and has made cultural activities and tourism very difficult if not impossible;

Deeply concerned and saddened by the ongoing violent military attack against Ukraine, one of its member States (since 2021), which is home to seven Cultural Routes;

Truly convinced of the importance of collaborating with all concerned parties, in particular with UNWTO and UNESCO, which celebrates this year the 50th anniversary of its 1972 “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage”; as well as with the OEI in the framework of a Euro-Ibero-American Cultural Cooperation programme in the field of Cultural Routes;



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Very grateful to Greece, which has generously hosted the Forum, demonstrating how hospitality contributes to mutual understanding and recognition, promotes open dialogue and intercultural communication, and shows how they could contribute to experience peace;

Honored by an exceptional presence of local, national and international authorities, signaling how fundamental it is to safeguard European Values, Heritage, and Dialogue, and how visionary it has been the establishment itself of the Cultural Routes program;

Heartfully greeting the new member states that have joined the EPA agreement in 2022: Albania, Lebanon and North Macedonia, with which an exciting collaboration experience will start;

Welcoming the newly certified Cultural Routes within the 2021-2022 Certification Cycle: European Fairy Tale Route, Women Writers Route, Historic Cafés Route, which further proof the fresh energy that keeps the program always young, a program that celebrates its 35th anniversary since 1987, when it was launched with the Declaration of Santiago de Compostela;

Inspired by the contributions of its University Network for Cultural Routes Studies Meeting, which has highlighted the importance of a constant collaboration with the academia through research, teaching, and contacts with young generations;

Aware of how Cultural Routes can contribute to sustainable development at all levels: economic, environmental, social and cultural ones;

Endorsing the following Declaration.

Thus, the Council of Europe understands the preservation of cultural and natural heritage not only as an end in itself, but as a means to promote intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding and democratic participation.



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## Promoting European values and intercultural dialogue

With respect to the first General Session, we strongly reaffirm that:

1. A major aim of the Council of Europe is “to achieve greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and fostering the ideals and principles, founded upon respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, which are their common heritage” (Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, Faro, 2005)
2. It is fundamental “to put people and human values at the center of an enlarged and cross-disciplinary concept of cultural heritage; emphasizing the value and potential of cultural heritage wisely used as a resource for sustainable development and quality of life in a constantly evolving society” (ibid.);
3. Intercultural dialogue is required in order to promote mutual understanding and enriching of all cultural communities. It starts from encouraging “the study by its own nationals of the languages, history and civilization of the other Contracting Parties and grant facilities to those Parties to promote such studies in its territory” (European Cultural Convention, Paris, 1954);
4. Such dialogue is not value-less, as in a purely relativistic approach, on the contrary: it is based on the above-indicated values, which are common to the European shared heritage;
5. The cultural routes are themselves designed to promote value-based (inter)cultural encounters: their themes have emerged from the rich European history, promote cohesion among the State parties as well as among all the involved bodies, and promote meaningful and enriching encounters between locals and visitors.

To safeguard such principles and reach such goals, the following actions are recommended:

1. Leverage on Cultural routes as enablers and facilitators of inter-cultural dialogues, encompassing all the themes represented by the 48 Cultural Routes;
2. Recognize, through the Routes, all the different dimensions of culture as relevant ones, ranging from the relationship between human communities and their natural environment and landscape, the rich ways every community cultivates itself along history and through architecture and arts, up to the level of religion and pilgrimage; all such layers can promote meaningful encounters, dialogue and mutual understanding;
3. See all Cultural Routes as pieces of a unique mosaic, a common good where tout se tient and through which the richness of European identity is mirrored and shines;
4. Manage Cultural Routes as opportunities themselves to embody European values, where all involved partners contribute in a democratic fashion, characterized by subsidiarity and solidarity;
5. Collaborate with all concerned public and private players in the field, including international, national, regional and local authorities, as well as private associations and companies;



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6. Leverage on the extension of Cultural Routes, which do not only connect European Countries, but reach out also regions beyond Europe, so to nurture also a fruitful dialogue with them;
7. Promote responsible and respectful travel practices along the Cultural Routes, with respect to the travelers as well as the hosting communities themselves, so that solidarity and empathy can stem from their encounters;
8. Include a focus on sustainability – economic, environmental, social and cultural – while developing the Cultural Routes, having in mind always next generations;
9. Understand Cultural Routes as places and experiences through which freedom and peace and their conditions can be better understood and promoted;
10. Develop and manage Cultural Routes not only as ways of memory, but also as powerful tools to promote creativity and innovation, places where tradition and innovation are not at all in contradiction.

### Safeguarding heritage in times of crisis

With respect to the second General Session, we strongly reaffirm:

1. That the Council of Europe has been always committed to this aim: in fact, the very first Council of Europe's treaty following the European Convention on Human Rights was the ground-breaking European Cultural Convention (Paris, 1954), committing its member States to the safeguard of Europe's common heritage and encouraging the development of European cooperation in the cultural sector and the appreciation of our cultural diversity;
2. The principles and goals of the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural heritage in Europe (Granada, 1985), strengthening and encouraging policies for the conservation and enhancement of Europe's heritage, while affirming the need for European solidarity with regard to heritage conservation;
3. The principles and goals of the Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe (Valletta, 1992), which makes the conservation and enhancement of archaeological heritage one of the goals of urban and regional planning policies;
4. The principles and goals of the European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000), promoting its protection, management and planning, and recognizing that a landscape, whether urban or rural, natural or human-made, reflects the culture, values and identity of communities, and places them at the heart of the landscape;
5. The principles and goals of the Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro, 2005), which recognizes the importance and value of heritage for society, its contribution to sustainable development and quality of life, highlighting that knowledge of heritage and participation in cultural life are part of the rights of every citizen;
6. The principles and goals of the Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property (Nicosia, 2017), providing a concrete criminal law instrument and fostering international cooperation to fight crimes against cultural heritage;



7. That crisis should be considered not only in terms of physical damages or illegal appropriations, but also within a wider framework, encompassing natural threats – which might be linked to natural hazards (also due to climate change) or to health-related crises (as in the case of Covid19) –, to economic as well as to social crises;
8. That all those crises challenge culture and its related activities (artifacts, events, professions), making it difficult for people or specific groups/minorities to access them and for professionals to work within the cultural sector;
9. That Cultural Routes are a very effective antidote against attacks or threats to heritage and its sustainability.

To safeguard such principles and reach such goals, the following actions are recommended:

1. Promote the knowledge of the relevant Conventions and enforce their application in the field of protection of culture and cultural items;
2. Understand Heritage properties and practices as major symbols of cultures and identity building instruments, which should be protected and preserved against targeted attacks;
3. Support (3D) digitalization of cultural-relevant items, for archiving, preservation and restoration purposes, thinking in terms of long-term initiatives and considering open content licenses;
4. Do constant monitoring of Heritage, in order to early detect issues – including pandemics, natural hazards and climate-related crises – that might threaten its conservation status and accessibility;
5. Be ready and resilient to face present and future challenges;
6. Adopt multi-stakeholder processes to manage Heritage, so to include and involve all relevant stakeholders, including citizens;
7. Envision educational and animation activities to help young generations to know, feel, understand and eventually love their Heritage;
8. Promote especially rural areas, in order to support their communities in a sustainable way and to reduce their depopulation;
9. Design cultural routes in post-conflicts areas, to raise awareness about them and promote resilience and a lasting peace;
10. Avoid fueling over-tourism practices, which could become again – after the almost zero-tourism years of Covid19 – a major obstacle against sustainable development and authentic (inter)cultural encounters and experiences.



## Fostering creative industries, cultural tourism, innovative technologies for sustainable communities

With respect to the third General Session, we strongly reaffirm that:

1. Creative industries in Europe have a major role to play in the Continent's sustainable development, leveraging on its incredible cultural richness and roots – as celebrated by the Cultural Routes – while at the same time adding to such tradition in a creative way;
2. Cultural tourism can promote a sustainable development, both of urban as well as of rural places, avoiding negative impacts due to an unbalanced distribution of travelers in space (crowding) and in time (seasonality);
3. Cultural Routes can foster a better balance between tangible and intangible heritage: both support creative industry's practices and are equal attractors for cultural tourists;
4. Both cultural industry and tourism should wisely integrate the affordances of digital media and smart technologies;
5. The digital transformation should benefit everybody, including the elderly and persons with disability.

To safeguard such principles and reach such goals, the following actions are recommended:

1. Promote slow, sustainable and responsible tourism, while meeting and supporting local communities, including less visited places, especially rural ones;
2. Involve local communities, also through crowd sourcing tools, which enable them to better participate in policy decisions as well as in telling the story of their own Heritage and culture;
3. Plan activities in a way to reduce overcrowding and to limit seasonality effects;
4. Consider gastronomy as a relevant part of a community's culture and a major gateway for travelers to understand a culture;
5. Harness the digital transformation in order to support a wider access to high quality information and services about Cultural Routes; to enrich the experience of visitors; to support a responsible behavior and a sense of belonging through connecting locals, visitors and the heritage; to dis-intermediate some relationships ensuring higher economic benefits for local communities; to educate and upskill all involved stakeholders;
6. Explore all affordances offered by digital media, with a specific focus on social media, augmented/virtual reality and artificial intelligence, keeping at the center not technology per se, but how it can serve authentic (inter)cultural experiences and encounters;
7. Leverage on data availability in order to create smart Heritage and tourism ecosystems, benefitting in a sustainable way all involved stakeholders;
8. Learn the lessons from Covid19 period, which has demonstrated that bits and



objects can move even when humans are locked down, so to extend the possible experiences linked with the Cultural Routes, while at the same time highlighting the value of in-person visits and meetings;

9. Promote entrepreneurship in the field of culture and Heritage, so to support a sustainable local development – especially through resilient SMEs – and constant innovation in the field;
10. Support relevant start-ups, which can mobilize young energies and creativity in order to keep a fruitful dialogue and balance between tradition and innovation.

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme makes full reference to this Declaration and makes it available through its website and related social media so as to safeguard and promote European values, heritage, and dialogue among all its stakeholders.



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