



Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

COUNTRY MAPPING DOCUMENT FOR CROATIA



2025

Commissioned by the
Enlarged Partial Agreement
on Cultural Routes of the
Council of Europe (EPA)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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DOCUMENT
FOR CROATIA**

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2025

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. OPENING REMARKS | 7 |
| 2. INTRODUCTION | 8 |
| 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 10 |
| 4. FRAMING AND CONTEXT OF THE REPORT | 19 |
| 5. NATIONAL HERITAGE POLICIES AND LEGISLATIONS | 21 |
| 6. SWOT ANALYSIS | 28 |
| 7. INVENTORY OF CULTURAL ROUTES' RELATED ACTIVITIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL | 37 |
| 8. POTENTIAL FOR NEW CULTURAL ROUTES INITIATIVES EMERGING AT NATIONAL LEVEL | 65 |
| 9. REVIEW OF NATIONAL FINANCING INSTRUMENTS | 72 |
| 10. FIELD MISSION REPORT, INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSIS | 76 |
| 11. RECOMMENDATIONS | 86 |
| 12. CONCLUSIONS | 92 |
| 13. ABBREVIATIONS | 96 |
| 14. ANNEXES | 97 |
| 15. REFERENCES | 98 |



Diocletian's Palace Split, Diocletian's Palace ©V.Klarić

1. OPENING REMARKS

Since 2016, when the Republic of Croatia acceded to the Expanded Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, it has shown significant results in a very short period in implementing projects in the field of cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development, among which the Council of Europe Cultural Routes program is considered one of the most innovative and of the highest quality.

The Council of Europe launched the programme in 1987 with the aim of discovering and presenting our shared rich and diverse cultural heritage, better understanding of European cultural identity and connecting people and places into a common cultural space, while supporting the Council of Europe's fundamental principles: human rights, democracy, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

Of the forty-nine cultural routes that have received the Council of Europe certificate so far, twenty routes pass through Croatia, and such a significant number clearly demonstrates that we are aware of our common cultural heritage, that we invest in it and that we manage it in appropriate ways. The Council of Europe Cultural Route certificate is proof of excellence, and among the many benefits of the certificate is international recognition and promotion, so it is not surprising that the number of routes in Croatia has grown significantly in recent years, as well as the interest in further expanding the program.

One of the main objectives of the program is to promote and discover the tangible and intangible heritage of European regions that are less known and less included in popular tourist offers, and still have the potential to improve social cohesion, quality of life and local development in these areas. The distribution of twenty routes in Croatia shows their commitment to this postulate, since a large number of routes pass through areas that are not part of the itineraries exposed to tourism, such as the Danube Iron Age Route, the European Industrial Heritage Route, the ATRIUM Cultural Route - Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the

20th Century, and Transromanica - the Route of Romanesque European Heritage.

The Republic of Croatia has a thousand-year-old history, a rich cultural and natural heritage that is at the centre of its cultural policy and strategy, which will continue to be aimed at strengthening cultural, social and economic development, and responsible management of cultural heritage.

The Ministry of Culture and Media initiated the creation of the Country mapping document in order to present the current activities of the routes members, explore the potential for expanding and improving the program in Croatia, encourage new memberships and, in one place, in one document, present relevant information on legislation and policies related to cultural heritage and tourism, and highlight sources and funding opportunities.

We believe that this document will serve as a landmark and incentive in this sense, and that existing and future members of the program from Croatia will continue to successfully represent the identity and significance of local and regional heritage in the broader European context, as well as convey all the benefits of this program to their communities.

Since the Republic of Croatia has a thousand-year history, its rich cultural and natural heritage has deservedly found itself at the very focus of the national cultural policy and a series of strategies increasingly aimed at strengthening cultural, social and economic development and responsible management of cultural heritage.

Tatjana Horvatić,

***Ministry of Culture and Media
of the Republic of Croatia,
Head of Movable, Ethnographic and
Intangible Cultural Heritage Office***



Roman art in Croatia, © V.Klarić

2. INTRODUCTION

The “Country Mapping Report for Croatia” has been prepared by an independent expert in accordance with the structure, content and implementation guidelines defined by the Council of Europe Cultural Routes, Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA) Secretariat.

The report aims to assess the state of play of the Council of Europe Cultural Routes in Croatia, offering a detailed overview of the current status of Cultural Routes in Croatia, including achievements, ongoing projects, and key stakeholders. Its purpose is to identify potential for extension, highlight the opportunities for expanding existing Cultural Routes, by ensuring broader coverage and increased engagement.

The goal is also to discover emerging and fresh heritage themes that could lead to the creation of new Cultural Routes, enriching Croatia’s cultural landscape, in line with corresponding efforts by the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA) Secretariat.

The report also prepares a framework and provides a strategic outline for the growth and development of cultural routes activities in Croatia. It gives an overview of strategic national tourism and cultural policies, harmonized with sustainable tourism development and preservation of cultural heritage, exploring the potential of the various funding instruments available.

Finally, the report deals with the strategic recommendations, offering actionable recommendations for policymakers, cultural managers, and other stakeholders to support the growth and sustainability of Cultural Routes in Croatia. By using these elements, Croatia wants to improve its cultural routes, promoting sustainable tourism and the preservation of cultural heritage.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

In full respect of the EPA guidelines, the report has been developed on the initiative and in close consultation with the Ministry of Culture and Media of Croatia and with the support of the Ministry of Tourism and Sport of Croatia. Since becoming an EPA member in 2016, Croatia has been represented by both ministries, sharing responsibilities and participation in this effort.

The report covers several key areas including the background of cultural routes in Croatia, national heritage policies and international initiatives, SWOT analyses, inventory of activities on cultural routes, potential for new initiatives, available financing instruments and recommendations.

Framing and Context of the Report: This part of the document aims to assess and develop the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme in Croatia. It provides a comprehensive overview of Croatia's current involvement and potential for further engagement in the Cultural Routes programme.

National Heritage Policies and Legislations: Provides an examination of Croatia's national cultural heritage policies and legislations and reveals an overview of the framework supporting the protection and conservation of cultural heritage. Key laws and policies are mentioned that support the integration and management of cultural routes, with a potential of enhancing their preservation and promotion.

International/European Heritage Labels and Initiatives in Croatia: Describes Croatia's engagement in international and European heritage labels, such as UNESCO World Tangible and Intangible Heritage properties and the European Heritage Label, that support the visibility and protection of its cultural heritage. These initiatives intersect effectively with the Cultural Routes programme, enriching the heritage landscape.

SWOT Analysis: SWOT analysis identifies strengths such as rich cultural heritage and strong legal frameworks and bottom up approach. Weaknesses, like fragile management structures, limited staff and funding and threats including environmental challenges. It also defines opportunities in tourism and coordinated actions. Enhanced by the CAME analyses this strategic assessment opens up an approach to optimizing cultural routes.

Inventory of Cultural Routes Related Activities: An inventory documents Croatia's existing cultural routes, key stakeholders, and ongoing projects.

This exhaustive record establishes a baseline for current engagement and future developments in the Cultural Routes programme.

Potential for New Cultural Routes Initiatives: The potential for new cultural routes is explored, identifying emerging heritage themes and assessing feasibility. Recommendations for new routes are based on cultural significance, community involvement, and tourism potential.

Review of National Financing Instruments: A review of national financing instruments outlines available funding sources and financial mechanisms. This guidance supports the sustainable expansion of the Cultural Routes programme.

Field Mission Report and Analysis: The field mission report provides insights from on-site visits, describing existing conditions, infrastructure, and future perspectives. These findings inform the overall assessment and recommendations.

Recommendations: The document concludes with recommendations for enhancing the Cultural Routes programme in Croatia. These include policy improvements, strategic initiatives, new route proposals, and financial strategies to strengthen cultural tourism and heritage conservation.



Nin, St. Nikolas church © B. Kačan

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of this Executive Summary is to provide a concise overview for certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and candidate networks, detailing the context and findings of the Country Mapping Document for Croatia.

Concise overview for certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and candidate networks

Throughout European history, countless movements of people have shaped this continent: migrations of all kinds, voyages driven by the pursuit of wealth and wellbeing, conquering armies and defensive retreats, migrations in search of refuge or lately migrations in search of recovery and rest. Yet, among these diverse patterns of human movement, none was marked by such a specific motivation as those today recognized as the cultural routes of the Council of Europe. Some of these itineraries, which trace back more than 1,000 years, were originally pilgrimages—journeys embarked upon not for conquest or fortune, but for a deeper understanding of existence. They arose in times of profound historical and spiritual crises,

offering individuals a way to deal with questions of life, death, existence, faith, and the divine.

What makes these routes so attractive is their ongoing relevance. Even today, they serve as more than just reminders of the past—they are living symbols of the human journey towards self-awareness, creativity and collective identity. They reveal the fragility of the world, the vulnerability of human existence, and the complexity of our relationships with one another. Moreover, these routes stand as a testament to ingenuity, resilience, and the shared creativity that binds Europe together. They continue to foster spiritual growth, personal transformation, and cultural exchange, reminding us of the connectedness of our histories and the enduring quest for meaning.

Cultural routes serve as bridges between past and present identities, linking present and forgotten

cultures, and presenting a mix of both, tangible and intangible heritage. Their significance was officially recognized by the Council of Europe when it established the Cultural Routes Programme to implement the principles of the 1954 European Cultural Convention. This convention introduced the concept of cultural routes as a way of presenting the «common cultural heritage of Europe», obliging the member states to preserve this shared legacy.

The program's certification began in 1987 with the Camino de Santiago Declaration, symbolizing a commitment to promoting and safeguarding Europe's diverse cultural identities. Since then, the initiative has grown to include numerous routes, each contributing uniquely to the preservation of European heritage.

Managed since 1998 by the European Institute of Cultural Routes in Luxembourg, the program reached new heights in 2010 when the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers established the Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA). The EPA's mission is to strengthen cooperation among states interested in cultural routes, transforming them into instruments of international collaboration and cultural diplomacy.

Reframing the Landscape of Tourism

By 2024, more than 40 cultural routes had earned the prestigious European EPA label, with each route varying in size, focus, and character, and with some twenty of them passing through Croatia. Some emphasize religious aspects and pilgrimage, while others explore cultural or natural heritage through lenses of art, history or geography. However, all of them are dealing with the delicate fabric of heritage, composing cultural and natural elements into a cohesive, dynamic organism.



NP Brijuni, St. Mary's Basilica, M.Skljarov

These routes, designed as **transnational destinations** themselves, offer travellers a deeper understanding of historical movements and connections over time, moving away from the superficial notion of tourism.

Today's travellers, increasingly in search of purposeful, immersive experiences, are drawn to the hidden power of the cultural routes, where movement fosters a unique interaction between people and places. Cultural routes offer authentic experiences, defined by their specific cultural, historical, and environmental profiles as opposed to destinations standardized into «non-places»¹. In example, routes like Santiago de Compostela and Via Francigena, appealing dominantly to spiritual and religious travellers, provide additionally to spiritual context, a rich context of culture, environmental appreciation, tranquillity and wellbeing.

Beyond Fragmented Thinking

Cultural routes possess two key characteristics: they facilitate intercultural dialogue by connecting different regions and nations, and they combine both tangible and intangible heritage along their paths. As Martorell Carreño² (2003) explains, these routes encourage engagement between travellers and the territory, but even more to that between travellers and the communities they encounter. *This connection sparks communication between visitors and local residents, creating spaces of shared experience and understanding.* Cultural routes passing through Croatia, such as the Camino de Santiago or St. Martin of Tours, embody distinct identities shaped by their geographical scope, historical significance, and cultural importance. *Through them, values transcend borders, promoting a pan-European heritage that unites diverse histories under shared narratives.*

Cultural routes such as the Women Writers' Route, Fairytale Routes or Impressionists Route are not just about preserving relics of the Croatian past. Visitors and residents actively participate in redefining the symbolic heritage of these routes, each contributing to their cultural, social, and spiritual uniqueness.³ As visitors experience the routes, they take part in an ongoing dialogue about the complex **layers of meanings** embedded in their heritage, enriching the journey for everyone involved.

Thus, cultural routes act **beyond the fragmented thinking**, becoming tools for exchanging thoughts, experiences, knowledge, and values, highlighting

common European experiences that exceed national or regional identities. Finally, these routes offer collective meaning for both the travellers and the local inhabitants, making them a rich field for exploration and a valuable resource for cultural exchange and preservation.⁴

Tools for Understanding Complexities

Well-known cultural routes in Europe and Croatia, such as the Phoenicians Route, the Iron Age Danube Route or the Roman Emperors' Route, play a critical role in promoting transnational understanding and respect for shared European values. They are vital not just for tourism but even more for research, as they reflect complex social circumstances and represent significant cultural values. Researchers and cultural experts view these routes as rich resources for studying the ways in which heritage is experienced, interpreted, and preserved across borders. This is the reason why cultural routes are a part of numerous international projects. The dynamic nature of cultural routes—where travellers and locals contribute to an evolving understanding of shared heritage, its preservation and sustainability of environment—adds to their significance as vehicles for cross-cultural dialogue.

Routes - a Living Drama in Time

Beyond their role as travel destinations, cultural routes also serve as powerful instruments for preserving both the physical and intangible elements of heritage in Croatia. The stories, traditions, and historical narratives connected to these routes present a living drama in time, such as the ATRIUM Route, the Destination Napoleon, the Cemeteries Routes or the Euro Vello Iron Curtain Route. They offer visitors the chance to engage deeply with European history, while also promoting the regeneration of local communities along the way. The routes, such as the Ceramics Route, or the Industrial Heritage Route, often equally support the continuity of local traditions, crafts, and customs that might otherwise fade into obscurity, and now provide means for survival.

In essence, cultural routes may function as living museums, where heritage is not confined to objects behind glass but lived, experienced, and shared in its full context. By offering an extensive narrative that spans centuries, cultural routes have a potential to rescue heritage from the banal commercialization that often accompanies mass

tourism. They can provide a space for reflection, encouraging travellers to view history and culture holistically, where every site and story along the route contributes to a broader, shared European identity, with Croatia finding its place within it.

Meaning in Travel and Tourism: A Special Role for Cultural Routes

Contemporary trends in tourism that point to seeking more than just leisure, are in line with cultural routes, which provide travellers with transformative experiences that resonate on a personal level. Routes could be the right response to the growing desire for holistic travel, where spirituality, self-reflection, and personal growth are integral to the journey. Pilgrimage routes in Croatia like the Camino de Santiago exemplify this, as they offer not just a religious experience but also an opportunity for self-discovery, contemplation, and connection with nature.

Routes like St. Martin of Tours similarly combines historical significance of more than 30 small towns in Croatia with a spiritual narrative, which finally makes them appealing to those in search of meaningful and active travel. These routes can help travellers reconnect with core European values such as solidarity, hospitality, and respect for the environment, making the journey not just a physical one but a spiritual and cultural exploration.



The Tradition of Lipizzaner Breeding in Slavonija, Baranja i Srijem
© S. Butković, State stud Đakovo and Lipik

Accordingly, in promoting cultural routes, the Council of Europe has preserved important historical pathways and redefined the role of travel and tourism in Europe. No longer limited to

sightseeing, travel becomes a means of fostering understanding, solidarity, and dialogue between cultures. As Stefano Dominioni, former Director at European Institute of Cultural Routes, Luxembourg, has said walking Via Francigena, what is interesting for travellers is *“the enhancement of the local cultural heritage and the socio-economic development of the territory where local communities with their identities network, the development of intelligent slow tourism, cultural tourism. Along the way there is an exchange of experience fundamental even for small villages, an experience of openness to Europe”*.⁵

Cultural routes, such as TRANSROMANICA create a space where heritage is celebrated, not as a relic of the past, but as a vibrant, living part of our shared European future. Routes demonstrate how history and culture of small entities, such as Čazma in Croatia, can intersect with modern aspirations to create experiences that are transformative, educational, and deeply relevant for all who embark on them.

A Short History of Croatia’s Membership in the EPA Cultural Routes Programme

Croatia’s journey with the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe began officially in 2016 when it joined the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA), although it started much earlier in 2007 through joint preparation of the then Croatian Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Tourism and Croatian Chamber of Economy. This marked a significant step for the country in aligning with European efforts to promote cultural heritage, sustainable tourism, and intercultural dialogue. The EPA membership provided Croatia with a framework to develop and enhance its cultural routes, integrating them into a broader European environment.

Since joining the EPA, Croatia has actively participated in various initiatives aimed at promoting and protecting its cultural heritage. The country recognized the potential of the Cultural Routes Programme to enhance its national identity, attract responsible tourism, and foster cultural exchange. Croatian sites and themes have been successfully integrated into 20 certified cultural routes so far, contributing to the European narrative while highlighting the unique aspects of Croatian cultural legacy.

Croatia has also been involved in the development of new cultural routes, using its rich history and diverse cultural assets. The country has explored themes such as the ancient Roman

heritage, medieval architecture, and traditional crafts, proposing new routes that connect Croatian heritage with broader European stories. These efforts were and still are supported by interdisciplinary research, collaboration with international experts, and active participation in EPA meetings and forums.

Both The Ministry of Tourism and Sport and the Ministry of Culture and Media have played a crucial role in coordinating Croatia’s activities within the EPA framework. Both Ministries jointly facilitated the integration of Croatian sites into existing routes, supported the development of new routes, and ensured compliance with the standards set by the Council of Europe. The ministries’ efforts have been instrumental in promoting Croatia’s cultural heritage on the European stage and enhancing the country’s reputation as a destination rich in history and culture.

Croatia’s membership in the EPA Cultural Routes Programme has been a journey of active engagement and significant achievements. By integrating its cultural inheritance into the European framework, Croatia has not only preserved its historical treasures but also contributed to the shared cultural narrative of Europe.

The Cultural Routes Programme continues to offer opportunities for Croatia to develop innovative tourism projects, foster cultural exchanges, and promote its rich heritage to global audiences.



Novigrad, RdF, Museum Lapidarium, © V.Klarić

A step out of framework to European regional initiatives

Croatia has for long been actively participating, through the Ministry of Tourism and Sport, in the two European regional initiatives, the EU Strategy

for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). Both initiatives were aiming to promote economic and social prosperity by harmonizing cultural heritage and tourism.

EUSAIR was focused on enhancing sustainable tourism and protecting cultural heritage in the Adriatic-Ionian region. Croatia's rich maritime history and cultural sites are integral to this strategy. By developing cultural routes under the EUSAIR, Croatia has been fostering regional cooperation, promoting lesser-known destinations, and enhancing tourism infrastructure especially initiating cooperation with the Council of Europe.

Through EUSDR, covering the Danube region, Croatia was engaged emphasizing cultural exchange and sustainable tourism. Croatia's involvement in EUSDR cultural routes highlighted two specific cultural routes "Iron Age Danube Route" and "Cyril and Methodius Route" increasing the visibility of valuable diverse inland cultural heritage, including prehistoric sites, as well as early Christianity its influences and traditions. These routes celebrate the shared history and cultural diversity of the Danube countries and also stimulate local economies and promote regional cohesion.

Both EUSAIR and EUSDR cultural routes provided frameworks for Croatia to collaborate networking with numerous countries, enhancing visibility of the routes, cultural tourism potentials, and preserving its heritage. These initiatives have enabled both regions to extend cultural narratives beyond national borders, contributing to a richer and more interconnected European cultural landscape.

Through these regional strategies, Croatia was privileged to have a vital role in promoting cultural heritage and fostering sustainable tourism in Europe.

Visibility and promotional activities at the national level

Visibility actions are skilfully strengthened through the activities of the Ministry of Culture and Media of Croatia. In terms of publications, the Ministry of Culture and Media has produced several key documents to promote these routes and enhance public awareness. One such publication that comes out on an annual basis is the brochure

"**Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in Croatia**"⁶, which provides an overview of the routes that pass through the country, detailing their historical significance, modern relevance, and contribution to cultural tourism. This publication serves as a guide for tourists, educators, and cultural institutions, illustrating the importance of these routes in preserving and promoting Croatia's rich cultural heritage.

The publication serves as key promotional tool for Croatia's heritage sites, attracting **tourists, researchers, and cultural professionals** to explore Croatia's contributions to Europe's shared heritage. It also has a strong **educational purpose**, the brochure helps educating both locals and visitors on the historical importance of Croatian heritage within the European cultural development, emphasizing **shared European values**.

By creating printed and digital publication, the Ministry ensures that Croatia's assets are more visible on the international stage, enhancing their status as destinations for **responsible cultural tourism**.

The Cultural Routes program of the Council of Europe and the routes of the Council passing through Croatia have been presented in the organization of the Ministry of Culture and Media at the **International Tourism Fair PLACE2GO**.⁷

National coordinators and members presented routes in the exhibition area, exhibiting their promotional material and offer, made valuable contacts and cooperation with other stakeholders and introduced visitors to the programs they implement. This exhibition proved to be a good opportunity to present Cultural Routes in Croatia within the European framework in one place, at a fair of international character.

We should also add the exhibitions of posters about the cultural routes passing through Croatia, which were organized on various occasions by the Ministry of Culture and Media from 2021 to 2024: Gallery of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, Archibau-fair of architecture and construction, Poreč-annual assembly of the Phoenician route, Hungarian Cultural Centre, Galženica Library in Velika Gorica. Not to be neglected is the promotion through lectures, seminars and conferences.

In the period from 2016 until today, a series of professional lectures were held on the Cultural Routes program of the Council of Europe and their implementation in the Republic of Croatia at numerous domestic and international meetings and conferences by Croatian experts, representatives of the Ministry of Culture and

Media and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the representatives of the EPA.

Sustainability, responsibility and regeneration

Sustainability concerning cultural routes goes beyond environmental concerns. It refers to the long-term preservation of cultural practices, local traditions, and historical narratives that might otherwise be forgotten or overshadowed by more dominant global cultures. Importantly, it is about the responsibility towards communities, and their regeneration. Cultural Routes are not just about presenting isolated artifacts or locations, but about linking together the people, the stories, the area, and traditions that give those objects and sites their meaning. In this way, they support the sustainability of communities including their tangible and intangible characteristics.

Good example for that is the *Phoenicians' Route* which celebrates the ancient maritime and trade connections established by the Phoenicians along Mediterranean, bringing together seafaring traditions, trade and local crafts in a millennial civilizational dialogue, proven by the money circulation in pre-imperial period witnessed in Croatia through one of the largest collections of Carthaginian coins⁸, 505 of which are kept in the Archaeological Museum of Zagreb. This route preserves the historical significance of the Phoenician civilization and also supports local communities, ensuring that the memories and traditions related to the sea and trade continue to thrive.

Heritage as a Living Experience

Croatia, a country rich in heritage and art, boasts over 6,528 immovable cultural properties, including more than 1,137 archaeological sites, as well as 2285 movable cultural properties⁹ and 239 intangible cultural properties. Yet its heritage remains still relatively undiscovered on the global stage. In a world increasingly marked by isolation, loneliness, and uncertainty, culture and art have emerged as powerful tools to address and heal the ongoing crises. Cultural and natural heritage, particularly as part of cultural routes, offers an essential balance to the unpredictable and rapidly changing realities that dominate modern life.



Veliki Tabor castle © Ministry of Culture and Media

As the world becomes more fluid, with viral threats, wars and other global challenges, heritage stands as a solid, reliable platform for societal transformation and renewal. Cultural routes, strengthening unique heritage identity layers, safeguard the past; and provide a stable foundation in uncertain times, acting as a transmitter between history and the future. It is not merely a static collection of artifacts or monuments but a living, breathing force that opens up the views, connects people to their roots and, through this connection, enables them to face new realities with a sense of purpose and continuity.

In this sense, heritage takes on an essential role in the regeneration of societies. It fosters a sense of identities' recognition, belonging, and continuity, which are crucial in times of crisis. By preserving and promoting variety of past treasures, Croatia can play an important role in cultivating resilience, for its people and equally for visitors who seek a deeper, more meaningful connection to culture. Patrimony must therefore be protected and celebrated, as it provides an enduring platform for change, renewal, and the reinforcement of shared human values. Through its integration into cultural routes, Croatia's assets become more than a mere relic of the past—they transform into a dynamic force that contributes to regeneration of neglected communities, societal well-being and global understanding.

One of the most profound ways that the Cultural Routes help preserve heritage is by allowing it to be lived and experienced rather than merely observed. Heritage has a power to be revitalized turning it into an active experience, where visitors engage with the history, culture, and traditions in a way that is immersive and profound. The Cultural Routes exemplify this approach by offering more than just places to visit—they offer experiences that engage all the senses, encouraging deeper understanding of the past.

A good example is in Croatia provided by the *Iron Age Danube Route*, which focuses on the

rich archaeological heritage of the Iron Age in the Danube region. Instead of simply showcasing artifacts in museums, this route allows visitors to explore archaeological sites, such as Kaptol Požeški participating in reconstructions of Iron Age life, especially eating habits, and engaging with the living history of the region. This immersive experience, which includes interaction with the land where these ancient communities once thrived, enables visitors to appreciate the connection between the past and present, offering thoughtful immersion into the historical significance of the Iron Age.

Rescuing Heritage from Trivialization

One of the key dangers that heritage faces, particularly in a globalized world, is trivialization¹⁰. When cultural elements are stripped of their context and presented as mere curiosities or tourist attractions, they risk losing their meaning and significance. The Council of Europe's Cultural Routes work against this trend by ensuring that heritage is presented in a full, thematic context that respects its origins and its connection to the communities that maintain it.

For example, the *Cyril and Methodius Route* highlights the lives and missions of Saints Cyril and Methodius, who were instrumental in spreading Christianity and literacy among the Slavic peoples. More than just showcasing churches or religious sites, this route places the story of Cyril and Methodius in the broader perspective of linguistic, cultural, and religious development in Europe. By highlighting their contributions to the creation of the Glagolitic alphabet and their role in shaping the spiritual and cultural landscape of Europe, the route ensures that this heritage is not reduced to isolated countries, monuments or figures but is understood as part of a larger, ongoing narrative. Cultural Routes provide the means for heritage to be conserved and rescued from superficial interpretation. They allow visitors to see heritage not as a collection of relics but as part of a living, evolving story that continues to shape European identity.

A Second Life for Heritage

"Only those who know their past will have a future" – Wilhelm von Humboldt¹¹

One of the most valuable aspects of the Cultural Routes is the way they give a "second life"¹² to heritage. This concept aligns with the idea that heritage is not something fixed in the past but something that can be reactivated in the present. The Cultural Routes achieve this by reintroducing heritage into the contemporary lives of both locals and visitors, allowing it to serve as a source of identity, pride, and even economic opportunity.

The Phoenicians' Route, for example, does more than just highlight ancient Mediterranean trade networks. By promoting modern maritime culture and traditions along the Mediterranean, this route allows local communities to capitalize on their historical connections to the sea while introducing visitors to the wide range of Phoenician influence that has shaped the region for millennia. Whether through the network of museums, festivals, workshops, or guided tours of ancient harbours, the route creates opportunities for locals and tourists to engage with history in ways that are both economically beneficial and culturally enriching.

Similarly, the Iron Age Danube Route offers a second life to the ancient heritage of the Iron Age by integrating modern research with public outreach, this route allows visitors to actively participate in the discovery and interpretation of Iron Age culture. Excavations, and community events ensure that this heritage is not left in the past but is continually reinterpreted and kept alive in contemporary settings.

The Panoptic Mode

Rather than isolating artifacts or monuments, the routes allow visitors to see heritage in its full cultural and geographical background, providing a 360-degree view of its significance, what can be called a «panoptic» approach to heritage¹³. The routes bring together different elements—sceneries, architecture, traditions, and tales—into a cohesive narrative that reflects the complexity of cultural heritage.

For example, the Cyril and Methodius Route connects sites across multiple countries, illustrating the wide-reaching influence of the two saints across Europe. By linking together the places where Cyril and Methodius lived, taught, and spread their message, the route offers an expansive view of their legacy. Visitors are not just presented with individual locations but are invited to trace the broader cultural, linguistic,

and religious impact of the saints, creating a more substantial connection with their heritage. This holistic approach prevents heritage from being fragmented or misinterpreted, offering instead a rich, multifaceted experience. By presenting heritage in its full meaning, the Cultural Routes invite visitors to explore the interconnectedness of European history and culture, fostering a sense of shared identity and continuity.



Oprtalj, Istria, © V.Klarić

Taking all that into account, the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes serve as a powerful tool for the preservation and revitalization of Europe's tangible and intangible heritage. By focusing on thematic coherence, immersive experiences, and community involvement, the routes offer a sustainable way to keep heritage alive, relevant, and purposeful. They prevent heritage from becoming decreased to a mere spectacle by placing it in its full cultural and historical situation, allowing visitors to engage with it in a way that is both educational and transformative.

Cultural Routes offer a way of living heritage, giving it a second life that resonates with contemporary audiences. Whether through the revival of ancient maritime trade routes, the reinterpretation of Iron

Age cultural practices, or the celebration of religious and linguistic heritage, the Cultural Routes provide a model for how heritage can be both preserved and reimagined for future generations. By doing so, they contribute to the protection of cultural heritage and to the cultural and economic vitality of the communities that steward it.

KEY FINDINGS

The Council of Europe Cultural Routes play a critical role in safeguarding and revitalizing both tangible and intangible heritage across Europe. Through their thematic focus, these routes are preserving important historical elements and offering a means of recontextualizing and re-experiencing heritage in a way that moves beyond mere exhibition.¹⁴ Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe can provide sustainability of social environments, employability, revitalization of communities and the second life to heritage, emphasizing the importance of community involvement, thematic relevance, and contextualized storytelling, avoiding that heritage is trivialized or separated from its original setting. However, to succeed in all this more visibility is needed, that could be even more achieved through the involvement in European and international projects. Such projects provide a very much needed management and coherence of all stakeholders on the routes.



Trogir Cathedral, Radovan's Portal © V.Klarić

The key findings point to four main issues related to cultural routes:

1. Council of Europe cultural routes are widely distributed on the territory of Croatia and are already established as an important bottom-

up instrument of responsible sustainability on the ground which is recognized by the engagement of numerous local stakeholders especially tourism boards, and which is confirmed by the Camino and the St. Martin's route, involving actively more than 60 tourism boards in Croatia.

2. Cultural routes are still not sufficiently visible in Croatia, as proved by the fact that although more than 60 local tourism boards have supported activities of cultural routes, substantial visibility would be achieved through the inclusion of cultural routes in the overall national structured promotion provided by National tourism board on their web pages as expressed by one third of the routes in the survey

3. Cultural routes involved in the EU, national or local projects have proved more dynamism in activities, more structure in management, and better coordination and communication with involved stakeholders, as proved by some 60% of cultural routes (passing Croatia) involved in projects.

4. Cultural routes would function in a more organized, resilient, structured and proactive way if they were supported by a "technical managing body" (organization or institute) at national level, serving as an excellence point for project management, education and promotion.



Dubrovnik, Franciscan Monastery Cloister © V.Klarić

4. FRAMING AND CONTEXT OF THE REPORT

The cultural heritage of Croatia, encompassing both tangible and intangible aspects, is a living and rich potential that significantly contributes to the collective wealth of humanity.

The origin of Croatian cultural heritage extends to its prehistoric beginnings 130,000 years ago, as witnessed by the Neanderthal site in Krapina, and has permanently been enriched by a diverse layers of cultural identities that continue to evolve to this day.

The Roman era brought urbanization and architecture, visible in landmarks like the Diocletian's Palace in Split. The medieval period saw the rise of early Romanesque's churches and coastal cities like Dubrovnik, renowned for its well-preserved Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque buildings. Croatian culture continued to thrive, contributing significantly to European modernism.

Today, Croatia's diverse cultural heritage, from ancient ruins to vibrant contemporary arts, remains a living testament to its enduring contribution to the collective wealth of humanity as a source for

innovative inspiring connectivity through new cultural routes.

Recognizing, defining, and affirming cultural identity through the protection of this heritage is crucial. Croatia takes immense pride in its heritage and is committed to preserving it, enhancing its meaning within the community, and presenting it distinctively to domestic and international audiences. The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (COE) serve as a vital tool in this endeavour, opening Croatia's heritage to a wider public highlighting all rich diverse layers of its cultural identity.

Integrating Croatia's rich cultural heritage with the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe treasures and promotes the nation's cultural identity on a broader European stage and fosters cultural tourism, supports economic competitiveness,

and enhances the quality of life within Croatia, maintained through processes of social and cultural recreation.

The inclusion of Croatian sites in the Cultural Routes Programme allows for the celebration of themes that resonate with European values, fostering a sense of shared history and identity. Cultural routes facilitate exchanges and dialogue, promoting mutual understanding and appreciation among micro cultures. By employing 'bottom-up' approaches, these routes capture everyday attitudes toward heritage, preserving the 'sense of place' and recognizing unofficial forms of heritage, such as regional or minority traditions, often forgotten in tourism narratives. The program also provides opportunities for Croatia to develop and present innovative cultural tourism projects, attracting diverse tourist groups and generating economic benefits.

Moreover, the educational aspect of the Cultural Routes Programme is significant. By supporting

cultural and educational exchanges, the program enriches the experiences of young people, encouraging a meaningful appreciation of European heritage and its contemporary relevance. These exchanges encourage the younger generation to appreciate and engage with cultural diversity, promoting values of inclusivity and shared cultural heritage.

In conclusion, the Country Mapping Document for Croatia provides an overall assessment of the country's involvement in the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme. It highlights the robust legislative framework for heritage protection, the extensive register of cultural goods, and the dynamic role of the Ministry of Culture and Media. Through this initiative Croatia contributes to the broader narrative of European heritage. The Cultural Routes Programme offers a platform for Croatia to engage with European partners, develop innovative tourism projects, and foster cultural exchanges, ultimately enriching the cultural landscape of both Croatia and Europe.



Zagreb, Croatian State Archives © Ministry of Culture and Media

5. NATIONAL HERITAGE POLICIES AND LEGISLATIONS

Croatia's national heritage policies and legislation are structured to preserve, protect, and promote its rich cultural heritage. These policies are governed primarily by the Ministry of Culture and Media, which oversees the implementation and enforcement of heritage protection legislative framework.

THE ROLE OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND MEDIA

The Ministry of Culture and Media in Croatia plays an essential role in preserving this extensive heritage, ensuring its longevity, and harnessing its potential for further development. The Ministry is responsible for a range of activities related to cultural heritage, including research, examination, monitoring, recording, filing, and promotion. It also manages the central information and documentation system, sets measures for defining public needs programs in the cultural sector, supervises the financing of cultural heritage protection programs, and oversees institutions

engaged in restoration, conservation, and related tasks. Additionally, the Ministry implements the procedure for promotion in the conservation-restoration profession and establishes regulations for the use and management of cultural property. The cultural policy system in Croatia is defined by the Ministry of Culture and Media as the h implementer of the funding system. Cultural councils are consultative bodies to the Minister, and the Ministry is in charge of distributing the grants.¹⁵

Key legislative frameworks include:

National Law for the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Property (2024)¹⁶ : This

ongoing program aims to enhance the protection measures, ensure sustainable use of heritage sites, and foster cultural tourism.

The National Law for the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Assets aligns closely with the key principles of the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes, promoting cooperation, cultural promotion, and sustainable management. The law establishes the framework for the safeguarding of cultural heritage, which inherently supports the objectives of cultural routes, emphasizing the enhancement of memory, history, and European heritage.

The law mandates active cooperation in research and development, crucial for documenting, studying, and preserving cultural assets. By requiring systematic documentation and interdisciplinary research, it lays the foundation for informed and dynamic cultural route initiatives, aligning with the Council of Europe's focus on research-driven cultural networks.

The enhancement of memory and history is at the core of the law, which designates significant historical sites and practices as protected assets. This preservation supports the Council of Europe's aim to highlight shared European heritage, ensuring that Croatia's cultural routes contribute to a collective European memory.

In terms of contemporary cultural and artistic practices, the law fosters conditions for artistic innovation while preserving traditional values. It supports cultural activities that connect Croatia's heritage with broader European narratives, ensuring that local traditions are integrated into transnational cultural routes.

Overall, Croatia's cultural protection laws provide a robust framework that directly supports the objectives of the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes, promoting a sustainable, inclusive, and research-oriented approach to cultural heritage management.

Croatia is also a signatory to several international conventions on heritage protection, fundamental law provides the basis for heritage protection in Croatia. It defines cultural properties, the responsibilities of owners, and the role of the government in safeguarding these assets ensuring thorough protection.. It also establishes guidelines for the restoration, conservation, and promotion of cultural heritage.¹⁷

RATIFIED INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

- Act on the Ratification of the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage (OG International Conventions 10/04).

- Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, Granada, 1985 (OG International Conventions 6/94)

Convention on the protection of cultural goods in the event of armed conflict and its Protocol relating to the prohibition on exports of cultural goods from occupied territories (OG, International Conventions, 12/93, 6/02 promulgation).

- Act on the Ratification of the UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects, drawn up in Rome, 24 June 1995 (OG, International Conventions, 5/00, 6/02 promulgation).

- Act on the Ratification of the European Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (revised), 1992, drawn up in Valetta, 16 January 1992 (OG International Conventions, 4/04 and 9/04 promulgation).

- Act on the Ratification of the Convention on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage (OG International Conventions 5/05, 5/07 promulgation).

- UNESCO Convention on Measures to Protect and Prevent Unauthorised Imports, Exports and Transfer of Cultural Goods (OG International Conventions, 12/93).

- Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (OG International Conventions, 12/93: adopted in Paris, 1972). The Republic of Croatia became a party to the Convention pursuant to the notification of succession of 8 October 1991 (Entered into force on 8 October 1991).

- Regulation on the promulgation of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of the United States of America on the protection and preservation of certain cultural goods (OG International Conventions, 9/06, 2/07 promulgation)

- Act on the Ratification of the Second Protocol to the Convention on the Protection of Cultural Goods in the Event of Armed Conflict (OG International Conventions 11/05)

- Act on the Ratification of the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe on the value of cultural heritage to society (OG International Conventions 5/07)
- Regulation on the Ratification of the Treaty between UNESCO and the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the Establishment of the Regional Centre for Underwater Archaeology in Zadar, Croatia, as a Category II Centre under the auspices of UNESCO (OG 1/09)
- Act on the Ratification of the Convention on European Landscapes (OG International Conventions 12/02)
- Regulation on the promulgation of the Treaty between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and UNESCO regarding the continuation of activity of the Regional Centre for Underwater Archaeology in Zadar, Croatia, as a Category II Centre under the auspices of UNESCO (OG International Conventions 5/16)

The Register of Cultural Property of the Republic of Croatia, is a public record that includes three primary lists: the List of Cultural Goods, the List of Cultural Goods under temporarily protection and Records of assets of local importance. This register is actively managed and regularly updated to reflect new procedures for establishing the status of cultural properties, audits of protection decisions, deletions due to termination of status, and amendments of other significant information about the properties.

Today this register includes 6,528 immovable cultural goods, such as individual properties, underwater and above-ground archaeological sites, cultural-historical areas, and cultural landscapes. These sites and structures stand as testaments to human presence and creativity throughout history.

The register also encompasses 2,285 movable cultural goods, including individual items, collections, inventory books of public museums, and catalogues of public libraries. These items reflect artistic, historic, palaeontological, archaeological, anthropological, and scientific significance.

Additionally, 239 intangible cultural goods are documented. The intangible cultural goods represent the spiritual and creative legacy of the past, comprising performing arts, customs, rituals and ceremonies, traditional crafts, oral traditions, expressions and languages, and various forms of knowledge and skills.

The Museums Law¹⁸: *Governing the operation of museums, this act sets standards for the management and preservation of museum collections, many of which include significant cultural heritage items.*

The Croatian Museum Law supports the key postulates of the Council of Europe Cultural Routes by emphasizing the role of museums in heritage enhancement, research, and cultural exchange. Croatian museums are legally mandated to preserve, document, and present the nation's cultural heritage, aligning directly with the objectives of Cultural Routes in enhancing European memory, history, and heritage. The law encourages museums to engage in research activities in collaboration with international institutions, thereby supporting co-operation in research and development.

The law also promotes contemporary cultural and artistic practices through exhibitions, workshops, and events that reflect both historical heritage and modern artistic expressions. This aligns with the Cultural Routes' aim of connecting historical memory with contemporary culture, enhancing cultural tourism and sustainable development.

The Museum Law also recognizes educational programs as outreach activities, crucial for cultural and educational exchanges among youth. Croatian museums engage with schools, universities, and youth organizations, promoting learning experiences that connect students to both national and European heritage. This contributes to raising awareness of European and Croatian culture while encouraging citizens to reflect on their heritage.

In this way, Croatian museums play an active role in the sustainable development of cultural tourism. Such an approach supports integration of museums within local and regional development plans, emphasizing their importance in tourism strategies. This directly aligns with the enhancement of memory, history, and heritage through sustainable tourism and cultural development.

National Plan for the Development of Culture and Media (2023-2027)¹⁹ is the first major strategic document of the cultural and media sector in Croatia after the «Strategy of Cultural Development» published in 2003. years. This document is part of a wider system of strategic planning based on the System Act strategic planning and development management of the Republic of Croatia and the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030 as an umbrella act of strategic planning.

National Plan is supported by two Action Plans for the development of culture and media: the first lasting to the end of 2024, and the second from the beginning of 2025 to the end of 2027. This provides the groundwork for developing initiatives by identifying key heritage assets and outlining strategic goals for their protection and promotion of culture and heritage.²⁰

One of the important objectives of the National Plan is the promotion of Croatia's cultural heritage as a driver for sustainable tourism. The plan emphasizes integrating cultural assets into tourism strategies, encouraging responsible and heritage-driven tourism practices that contribute to both local communities and the national economy. This approach supports the Cultural Routes' aim to enhance memory, history, and European heritage by making culture accessible through tourism while safeguarding it from overexploitation.

The National Plan also highlights the importance of cross-border cooperation and regional partnerships. It promotes the development of cultural networks that connect Croatia with other European destinations, fostering collaboration in research, cultural preservation, and artistic exchanges. This initiative is directly linked to the Council of Europe's goal of encouraging co-operation in research and development, while simultaneously promoting contemporary cultural and artistic practices.

Furthermore, the Plan underlines the importance of educational programs and cultural exchanges for youth. It supports initiatives that engage young people in cultural heritage activities, enabling them to participate in cultural initiatives and exchange programs that are educational and socially enriching. This aligns with the Council of Europe's emphasis on cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans, aiming to build a sense of shared European identity.

National Tourism Policies and Legislations Concerning Cultural Routes

Croatia's tourism policies and legislations are designed to foster sustainable tourism development while leveraging its rich cultural heritage, including the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (COE). The strategic framework for tourism development in Croatia includes several key policies and legal instruments:

The Tourism Act (2023) The development of tourism in the direction of sustainability is

prescribed as a process of improving the tourism system, which is based on the recognition, encouragement and management of development potentials with the sustainable and responsible use of space, natural, social and economic resources, cultural heritage and the improvement of the living conditions of the local population and the stay of tourists in the destination.²¹

The National Plan for the Development of Sustainable Tourism until 2027 is a medium-term strategic planning act defining the implementation of the strategic goals of the **Strategy for the Development of Sustainable Tourism until 2030**.²²

The latest strategic documents aim to further develop cultural tourism by promoting lesser-known cultural sites and routes, improving infrastructure, and supporting sustainable tourism practices. Investments in thematic cultural routes will be encouraged. Digital transformation and smart tourism solutions to enhance visitor engagement with cultural routes are emphasized.²³

Strategic Marketing Plan of Croatian Tourism 2021-2027: This plan includes specific measures for the promotion of cultural tourism, highlighting the importance of cultural routes as key assets. It supports marketing campaigns and promotional activities that raise awareness of Croatia's cultural routes.

National Tourism Board Initiatives: Croatian National Tourist Board (hereinafter: CNTB) is a national tourism organization which, based on the Act on Tourist Boards and the Promotion of Croatian Tourism. It was founded with the aim of creating and promoting the identity and reputation of Croatian tourism in the country and the world. The activities of CNTB include planning and implementing a promotional strategy, proposing and implementing promotional activities that are of common interest to all entities in tourism, and raising the quality level of Croatia's entire tourist offer.

The Croatian National Tourist Board (CNTB) should play a significant role in promoting culture and cultural goods as indicated in the Law on tourism offices and promotion of Croatian tourism.²⁴ It should develop initiatives for creating promotional materials, organizing international marketing campaigns, and collaborating with local tourist boards to enhance the visibility of cultural routes.

Croatia's tourism and heritage policies and legislations are designed to foster sustainable tourism and promote its rich cultural heritage, including the Cultural Routes of the Council of

Europe (COE). Key strategic frameworks include the National Law for the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Assets and the Croatian Strategy for the Development of Sustainable Tourism until 2030.

These documents emphasize sustainable tourism, cultural heritage protection and promotion, and infrastructure improvement. The Tourism Act and the National Plan for the Development of Culture and Media support these initiatives, ensuring quality standards and balanced regional development. The Croatian National Tourist Board could be a more active actor to play a key role in promoting cultural routes.



Trogir Cathedral, Radovan's Portal © V. Klarić

INTERNATIONAL/EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABELS AND INITIATIVES IN CROATIA

Croatia participates in various international and European heritage programs implemented by the Ministry of Culture and Media, highlighting its commitment to preserving cultural heritage

and promoting it on a global stage. Some notable labels and initiatives include:

UNESCO World Heritage Sites:

World Heritage List

- Historical Complex of Split with the Palace of Diocletian (1979.)
- Old City of Dubrovnik (1979.)
- Plitvice Lakes National Park (1979.)
- Episcopal Complex of the Euphrasian Basilica in the Historic Centre of Poreč (1997.)
- Historic City of Trogir (1997.)
- The Cathedral of St James in Šibenik (2000.)
- Stari Grad Plain (2008.)
- Stećci Medieval Tombstone Graveyards (2016.)
- Venetian Works of Defence between the 16th and 17th Centuries: Stato da Terra – Western Stato da Mar *(2017.)
- Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe (2017.)

Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and of the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices

- Lacemaking in Croatia (2009.)
- Two-part Singing and Playing in the Istrian Scale (2009.)
- Festivity of St. Blaise, Patron Saint of Dubrovnik (2009.)
- Spring procession of Ljelje/Kraljice (Queens) from Gorjani (2009.)
- Annual Carnival Bell Ringers' Pageant from the Kastav Area (2009.)
- Procession Za Križen (Following the Cross) on the Island of Hvar (2009.)
- Traditional Manufacturing of Children's Wooden Toys in Hrvatsko Zagorje (2009.)

- The Sinjska Alka, a knights' tournament in Sinj (2010.)
- Gingerbread craft from Northern Croatia (2010.)
- Bećarac singing and playing from Eastern Croatia (2011.)
- Nijemo Kolo, silent circle dance of the Dalmatian hinterland (2011.)
- Klapa multipart singing of Dalmatia, southern Croatia (2012.)
- Mediterranean Diet (2013.)
- MEĐIMURSKA POPEVKA, folk songs from Međimurje (2018.)
- The art of dry-stone walling (2018.)
- Falconry, a living human heritage (2021.)
- St. Tryphon's Day Festivity and Kolo of St. Tryphon - Traditions of Boka Croats in Croatia (2022.)
- The Tradition of Lipizzaner Breeding (2022.)
- Transhumance, the seasonal droving of livestock (2023.)
- Ojkanje singing (2010.)
- Ecomuseum Batana (2016.)
- Tocati, a shared programme for the safeguarding of traditional games and sports - The traditional game pljočkanje (2022.)



Spring procession of Ljelje Kraljice (Queens) from Gorjani
© Marija Muškić

European Capital of Culture: In 2020, Rijeka was designated as the European Capital of Culture. This initiative provided a platform for the city to present its cultural heritage and engage in a wide range of cultural activities, strengthening its cultural profile within Europe despite the unfortunate period of COVID.

European Heritage Days: Croatia takes part in this annual event, which aims to raise awareness about the richness and diversity of European cultural heritage. It involves opening up heritage sites to the public and organizing various educational and cultural activities.



Vučedol Museum © Ministry of Culture and Media

European Heritage Label: This label highlights sites that have played a significant role in European history and culture. Notable examples in Croatia include the Neanderthal site of Krapina and the The Vučedol Culture Museum and Vučedol archaeological site.²⁵ These labels promote a sense of shared heritage among European citizens.



Vučedol, European Heritage Label, © V.Klarić

Council of Europe Cultural Routes: Croatia is an active participant in the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe program, which promotes transnational heritage themes. These routes listed below, include significant Croatian sites:

1. Santiago De Compostela Pilgrim Routes, 1987
2. Phoenicians Route, 2003
3. Saint Martin of Tours Route, 2005
4. Routes of the Olive Tree, 2005
5. TRANSROMANICA, 2007
6. Iter Vitis Route, 2009
7. European Cemeteries Route, 2010
8. European Route of Historic Thermal Towns, 2010
9. European Route of Ceramics, 2012
10. ATRIUM, 2013
11. Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route, 2015
12. Destination Napoleon, 2015
13. Impressionisms Routes, 2019
14. European Route of Industrial Heritage,
15. Iron Curtain Trail - Eurovelo 13, 2019
16. Iron Age Danube Route, 2021
17. Cyril and Methodius Route, 2021
18. European Fairy Tale Route, 2022
19. Women Writers Route, 2022
20. European Route of Historic Pharmacies , 2024

These initiatives enhance the visibility of Croatia's cultural heritage and promote cross-cultural dialogue and tourism, contributing to the preservation and appreciation of heritage on a broader scale.



Cathedral of St. James, Šibenik © Ministry of Culture and Media

6. SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis of the potential of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme in Croatia. A SWOT analysis provides a strategic framework to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the potential of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe program in Croatia.

STARTING POINTS: general level

Croatia's participation in the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (CoE) programme highlights the country's exceptional cultural heritage and its strategic potential for sustainable tourism. The programme takes into account Croatia's strengths, identifies areas for improvement, and explores opportunities while addressing potential challenges.

Strengths

Croatia's rich cultural heritage forms the backbone of its potential in the CoE cultural routes programme. With well-preserved historical sites, ancient ruins, and medieval towns, the country is an attractive

destination for cultural tourism. Robust tourism infrastructure further enhances accessibility, offering reliable transport, accommodation, and interpretive services. Government commitment to heritage preservation, combined with international recognition through UNESCO World Heritage list and other European initiatives, highlights Croatia's strong foundation. Additionally, the enthusiasm of national coordinators and bottom-up approaches promote active stakeholder participation and grassroots initiatives.

Weaknesses

Despite these advantages, Croatia faces several obstacles. Limited public awareness about the cultural routes restricts their visibility and potential impact. Financial and human resource constraints

hinder the development and maintenance of routes, while coordination among diverse stakeholders, including local authorities and tourism operators, remains a challenge. These issues emphasize the need for increased resources and streamlined management.

Opportunities

The growing global interest in cultural and heritage tourism combined with responsible and regenerative efforts, presents significant opportunities. By targeting a focused audience through digital promotion and social media, Croatia can enhance the appeal of its cultural routes to seniors as well as to younger demographics. Transnational collaborations offer the chance to share best practices and engage in joint promotional campaigns with other member countries. Developing educational programs around cultural routes can foster greater appreciation for Croatia's heritage while contributing to the broader goals of the CoE program.

Threats

Economic instability poses a potential risk, potentially reducing funding for heritage initiatives. Environmental challenges, including climate change and natural disasters, threaten the preservation of sites, while over-tourism in coastal areas could degrade the heritage experience. Furthermore, shifts in political priorities might affect the allocation of resources and focus on cultural tourism.

Conclusion

By capitalizing on its strengths and addressing weaknesses, Croatia can maximize its participation in the CoE Cultural Routes program. Harnessing opportunities in digital outreach, transnational cooperation, and education, while mitigating threats through sustainable practices, can ensure that Croatia remains a model for cultural heritage preservation and sustainable tourism.



Golubić, Kude bridge © Ministry of Culture and Media

CONDUCTED RESEARCH

To develop an in depth SWOT analysis, a survey was conducted focusing on two main components: the current state and future outlook. The survey gathered insights from managers of the Council of Europe's cultural routes, as well as members and national coordinators of these routes in Croatia. The analysis considered the past three years, specifically looking at changes made within the routes' organizations to better adapt to evolving tourism and cultural promotion trends.

Additionally, it assessed the technical and financial support received from public schemes, the involvement of Croatian members in EU, national, or regional projects, and the identification of key partners that could enhance visibility through collaboration.

Looking towards the future, the survey explored opportunities for cultural tourism development that could positively impact these routes. Respondents also evaluated the anticipated benefits of cultural routes initiatives, the advantages of enhanced cooperation at the national level, and the types of financial support expected from public, national, or local governance structures to strengthen cultural routes. Finally, the survey examined the target visitor segments that route stakeholders expect to attract in the coming years.

The Survey was focused and of limited range sent to international Council of Europe cultural routes managers and to the national coordinators, or where they do not exist to selected routes' members. The aim was to gather at least one or two questionnaire per cultural route passing through Croatia.

This resulted in 28 questionnaires received back in time. 38% of all addressed COE CR managers filled the survey, one of them provided information that the route is not active in Croatia any more for the last two years.

Survey answers came back providing feedback from the national members or coordinators from all cultural routes passing through Croatia except for Iter Vitis, whose members did not provide any response. Jewish Heritage Route manager (Victor Sorensen) informed us also that this route is not active in Croatia any more.

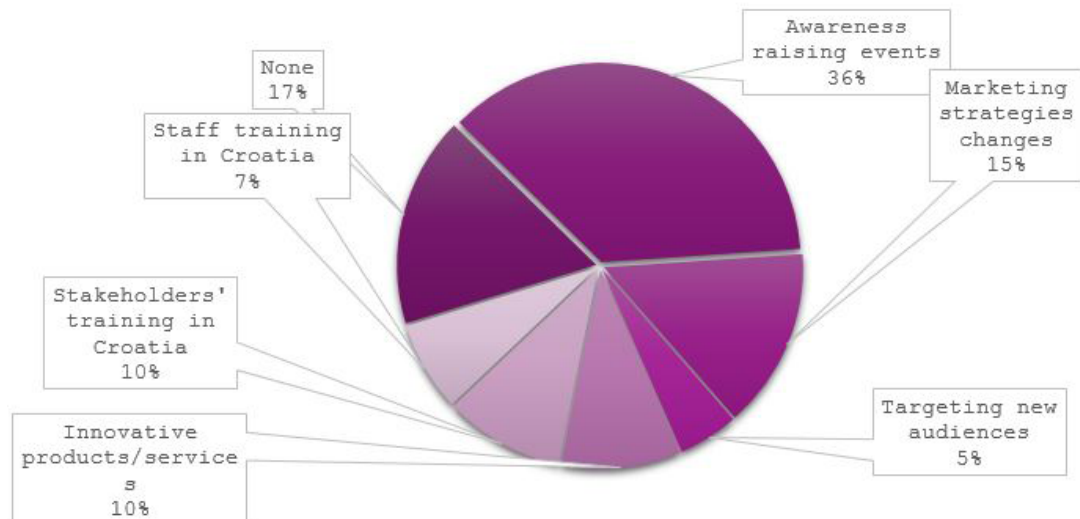
IMPACT RESULTS

Examining what organizational changes have the cultural routes in Croatia made to their Route organization in the last three years to better adapt to the new trends in tourism and culture promotion, results have shown that: 36% provided **awareness raising** events; 15% have changed their marketing strategy; 5% have targeted new audiences; 10% have introduced innovative products or services; 10% have organized **stakeholders trainings** on Croatian level; 7% have organized **staff training** on Croatian level and 17% provided no changes at all.

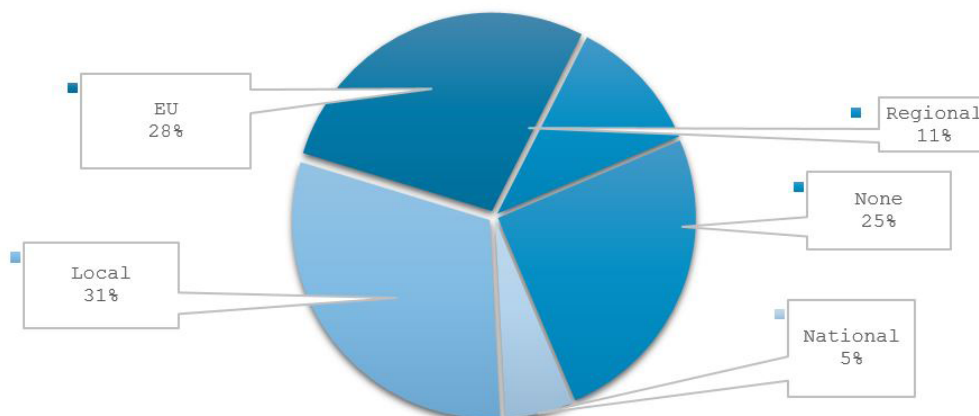
Research has also shown what technical or financial support was received from public schemes for the European cultural routes passing through Croatia in the last 3 years.

Routes on Croatian level were asked if they have received any technical or financial support from public schemes in the last 3 years: 28% of the routes received EU support and equally 31% local support, 25% answered that they have received none, 11% received regional, and only 5% national support.

ROUTE ORGANIZATION CHANGES IN THE LAST 3 YEARS



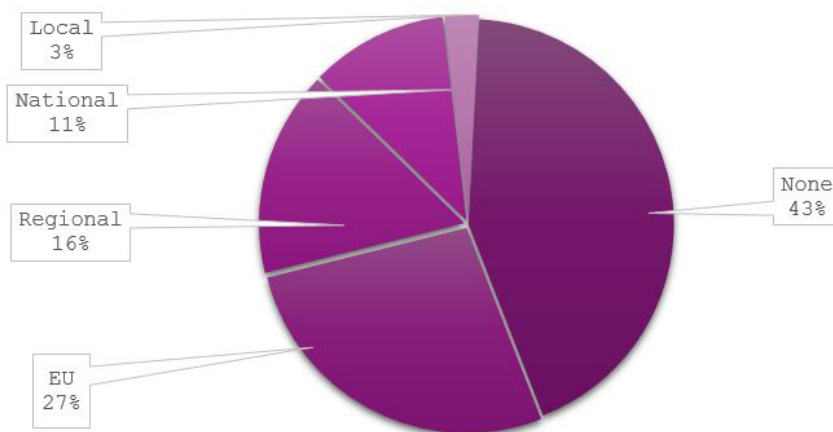
FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM PUBLIC SCHEMES LAST 3 YEARS



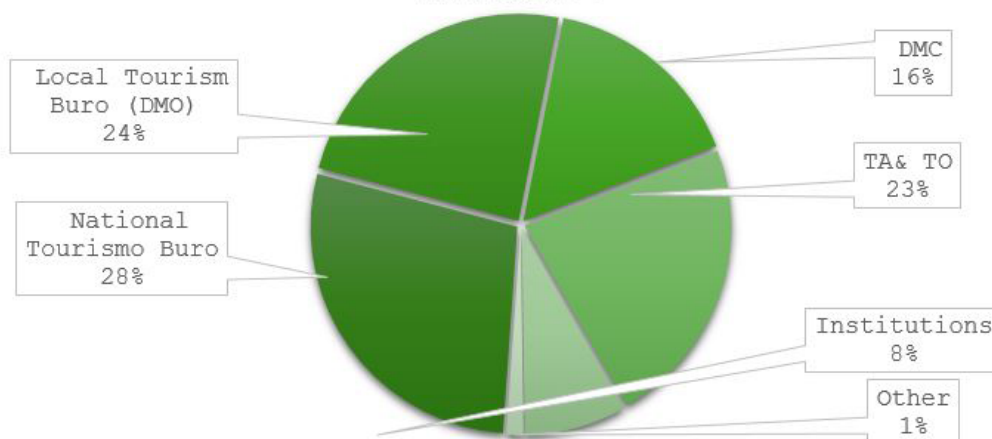
Examining how members of European cultural routes in Croatia participated in the EU/national/regional projects in the last three years, the following appeared: 43% did not participate in projects at all; 27% participated in EU projects; 16% in regional projects, 11% participated in national projects and 3% in local projects, some participated in several projects.

Researching which potential partners can ensure better visibility for the European cultural routes in Croatia through their cooperation, the following were chosen: in 28% cases National Tourism Board (NTB); in 24% cases local tourism boards (DMO); in 16% cases destination management companies (DMC); in 23% cases travel agents and tour operators and in 8% cases institutions.

CROATIAN MEMBERS PARTICIPATION IN EU CR PROJECTS



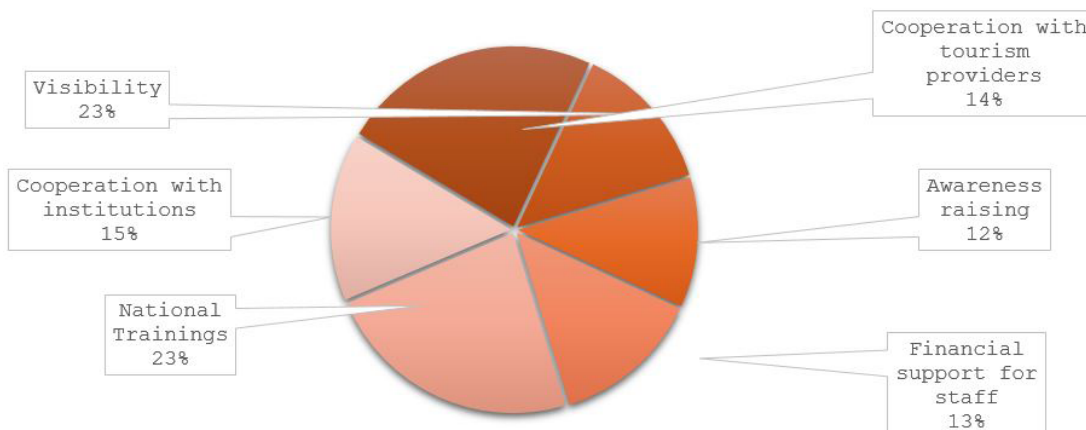
DESIRED POSSIBLE PARTNERSHIPS FOR BETTER VISIBILITY



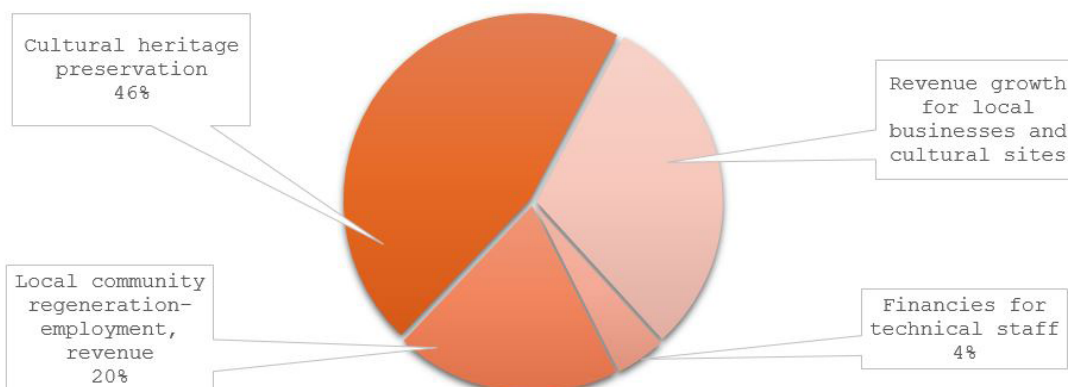
The following activities were chosen through which the development of cultural tourism may have an additional positive impact on cultural routes in Croatia in the future : 23% interviewees consider trainings on national level as most important, 23% better visibility actions; 14% look for stronger cooperation with tourism providers, travel agents, tour operators, 15% for stronger cooperation with institutions, and 12% for awareness raising campaigns, and equally 13% for financial support for staff.

Examining what positive impact the members in Croatia are expecting from cultural routes initiatives in the future: 46% are expecting enhanced preservation and celebration of cultural heritage; 30% expect increased financial revenue for local businesses and cultural sites; 20% are expecting local community regeneration through new employment and revenue; 4% expect increased finances for technical staff.

CULTURAL TOURISM EXPECTED POSITIVE IMPACTS ON CULTURAL ROUTES IN THE FUTURE



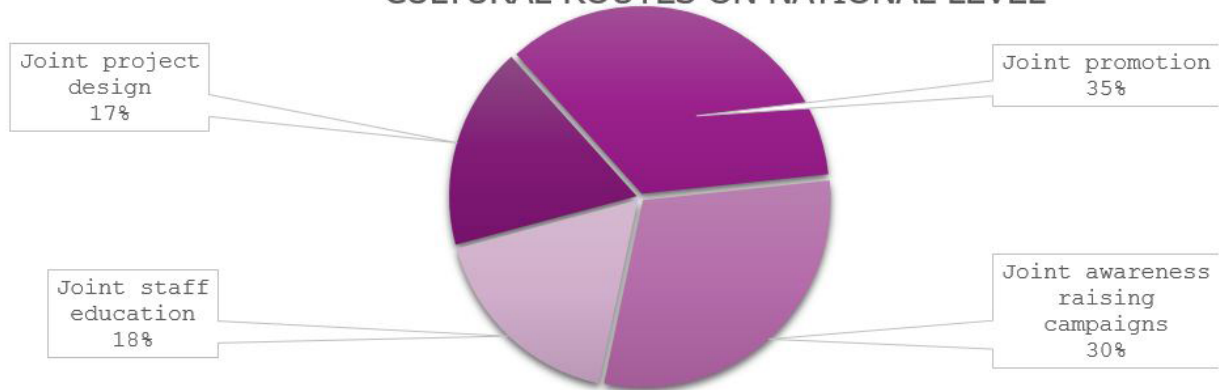
CULTURAL ROUTES POSITIVE IMPACTS



Trogir, Radovan's Portal fragment © V.Klarić

Examining the benefits that members expect through cooperation between cultural routes at the national level, further actions that can be beneficial for all have been selected: 35% look for joint promotion; 30% for joint awareness raising campaigns; 18% need joint staff education activities and 17% look towards the joint project design:

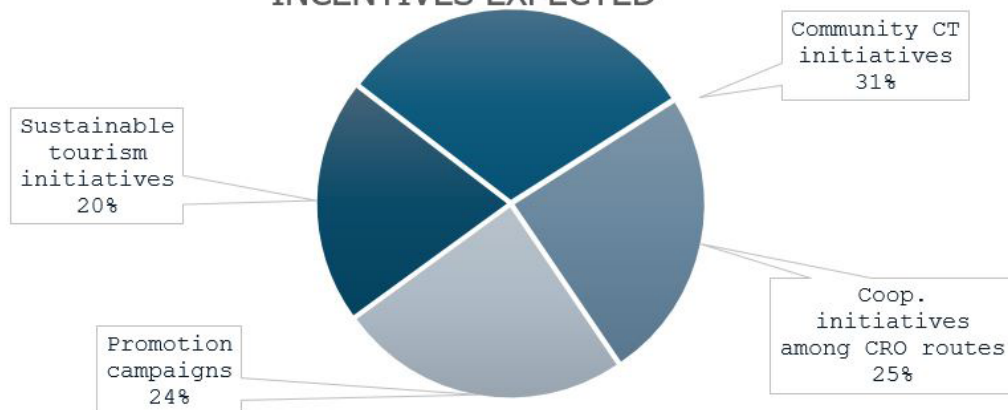
BENEFITS EXPECTED FROM THE COOPERATION AMONG CULTURAL ROUTES ON NATIONAL LEVEL



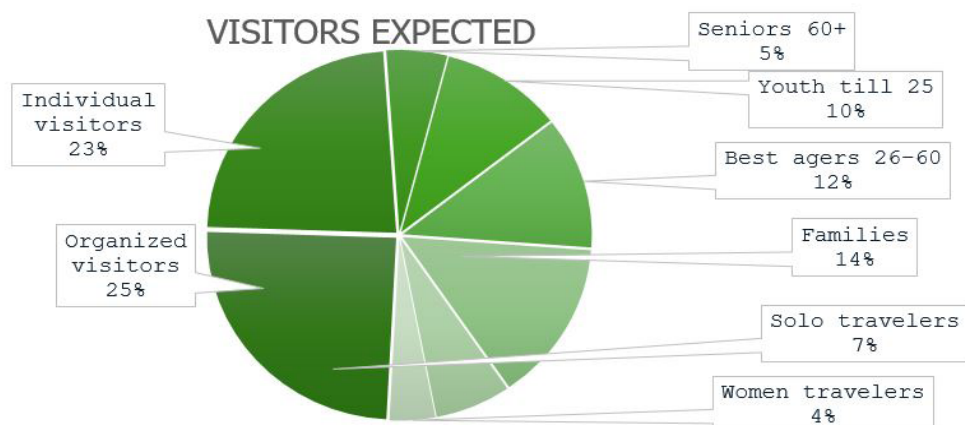
Researching what kind of incentives (financial support) cultural routes would expect from public/national/local governance structures to improve cultural routes provided further choices: 31% consider important incentives for community-driven cultural tourism initiatives, 25% have the need for incentives for cooperation initiatives among cultural routes covering a country, 24% believe that incentives for campaigns promoting hidden cultural assets on cultural routes are necessary, and 20% have chosen incentives for Routes adopting to sustainable tourism practices.

Speaking of the visitors they expected to be interested and involved on cultural Routes further categories emerged as most desirable in the future: in 25% of the cases they are hoping for organized visitors, in 23% of the cases for individual visitors, 10% hope for youth till 25, 12% for best agers 26-60, 14% wish to have families on cultural routes, 7% the solo travellers, only 5% Seniors 60+, and only 4% women travellers.

INCENTIVES EXPECTED



VISITORS EXPECTED



Based on provided data through the research, SWOT Analysis reveals:

Strengths

- Awareness Raising Initiatives:** 36% of routes have successfully implemented awareness-raising events, increasing visibility and local engagement.
- Diverse Support Channels:** Cultural routes in Croatia receive financial and technical support from various sources—31% from local schemes and 28% from EU programs.
- Collaborative Potential:** National and local tourism boards, travel agents, and institutions have been identified as key partners, indicating a well-defined ecosystem for collaboration.
- Emphasis on Heritage:** A significant portion of stakeholders (46%) value the enhancement and preservation of cultural heritage as a core benefit.
- Broad Target Audience:** Routes attract a diverse range of visitors, from families and organized groups to solo travellers, covering multiple market segments.

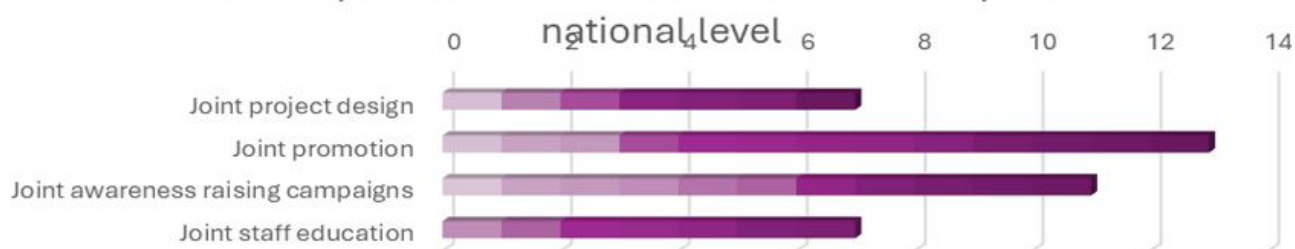


Nin, Biking tourists ©V.Klarić

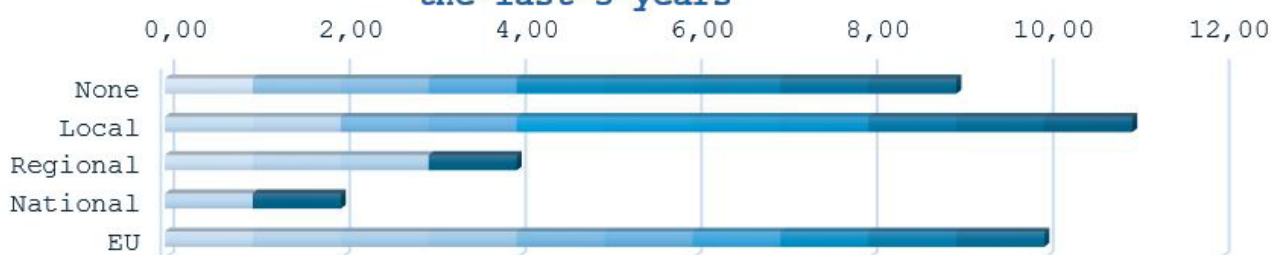
Weaknesses:

- Limited Organizational Changes:** 17% of cultural routes reported no changes to adapt to new trends, indicating stagnation and a lack of innovation in some cases.
- Low Engagement in Projects:** 43% of routes did not participate in any national, regional, or EU projects in the last three years, limiting opportunities for funding and development.
- Insufficient National Support:** Only 5% of the routes received national-level support, reflecting a gap in strategic alignment between cultural routes and national policies.
- Narrow Financial Support:** 25% of the routes reported receiving no financial support, highlighting a barrier to growth and sustainability.

Benefits expected from the cultural routes cooperation on



Technical or financial support from public schemes in the last 3 years



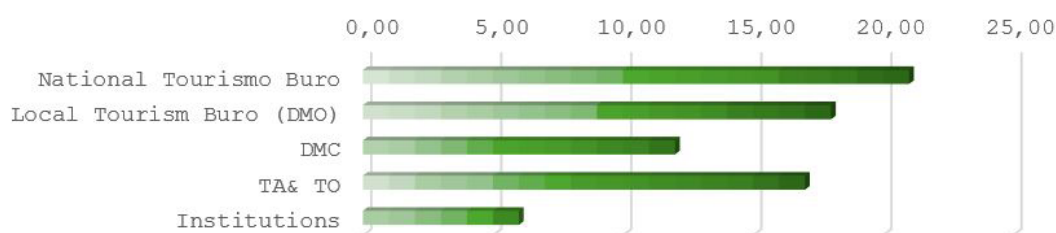
Opportunities:

- 1. Training and Capacity Building:** National-level training and stronger cooperation with tourism providers and institutions are identified as key future actions, offering growth potential.
- 2. Improved Marketing and Visibility:** Enhanced visibility actions (23%) and campaigns promoting hidden cultural assets are recognized as opportunities to attract new audiences.
- 3. Strategic Collaborations:** Joint promotions, awareness campaigns, and staff education initiatives could create synergy and lead to greater collective success among the routes.
- 4. Sustainable Tourism:** Routes have the chance to align with global trends by adopting sustainable tourism practices, which could be supported through targeted incentives.

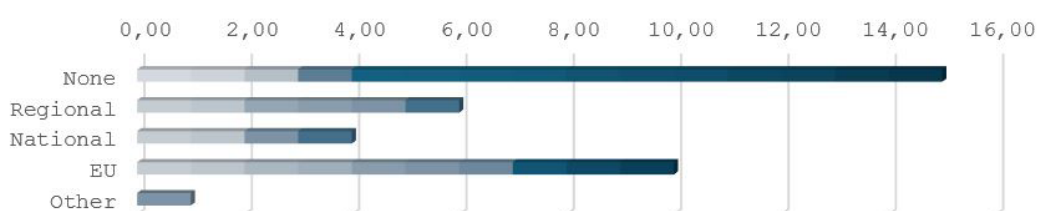
Threats:

- 1. Lack of Adaptation:** A significant portion (17%) of routes have not implemented any changes, risking obsolescence in an evolving tourism landscape.
- 2. Financial Uncertainty:** The reliance on local and EU funding is not fully complemented by national support, which may result in uneven development.
- 3. Fragmented Collaboration:** The lack of consistent cooperation at the national level could limit the overall impact and reach of cultural routes in Croatia.
- 4. Narrow Focus on Specific Visitor Types:** Some routes are highly focused on specific visitor categories, potentially missing out on other valuable segments like solo travellers and senior tourists.

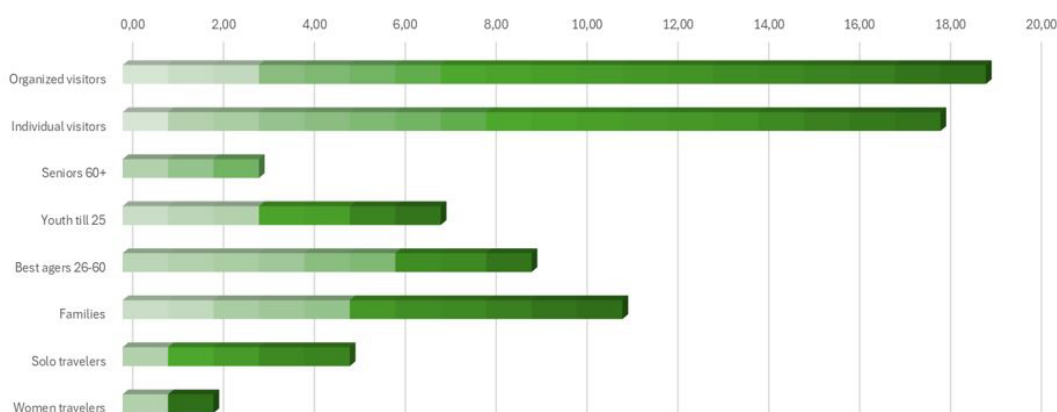
Desired partnerships for better visibility



Croatian cultural routes members project participation in the last 3 years



Visitors expected to be interested and involved on cultural routes



CAME Matrix for European Cultural Routes in Croatia proposes actions:

| Strategy | Action | Explanation |
|-----------|---|--|
| Correct | 1. Increase engagement in projects and strategic initiatives. | Since 43% of routes did not participate in any projects in the last three years, there is a need to correct this by encouraging greater involvement in national, regional, and EU initiatives. This can be achieved through capacity-building workshops and project management training. |
| | 2. Improve financial support mechanisms. | The fact that 25% of routes received no financial support and only 5% received national support indicates a need to correct the financial gaps by securing diversified and consistent funding from national, regional, and local bodies. |
| | 3. Establish a joint national coordination body. | To correct the fragmented approach currently evident across routes, a central technical coordinating body is needed to provide strategic direction, technical managing support and to ensure the seamless integration of cultural routes within national tourism and cultural policies. |
| Adapt | 1. Create or update, and diversify marketing strategies. | With only 15% of routes having changed their marketing strategies, adaptation is necessary to better align with new tourism trends and audiences, such as market research, digital marketing, targeting specific audiences, and offering customized experiences. |
| | 2. Tailor offerings for a specific range of visitor segments. | The low engagement from visitor segments like youth and seniors suggests the need to adapt product offerings to better cater to these groups through specialized tours, educational programs, and targeted promotions. |
| | 3. Develop structured and sustainable management guidelines. | Routes should adapt by establishing consistent national-level guidelines for technical management that emphasize sustainability and long-term growth. This includes capacity-building programs and a national framework for cultural route's technical managing body. |
| Maintain | 1. Continue awareness-raising initiatives and events. | Awareness-raising has been a key strength, with 36% of routes actively engaging in such efforts. Maintaining and expanding these initiatives will keep the routes relevant and visible. |
| | 2. Maintain & enhance collaborations with key partners such as tourism boards and institutions. | The partnerships with national and local tourism boards, identified by 52% of respondents as desirable, are essential and should be maintained to ensure consistent promotion and integration of cultural routes into broader tourism plans. |
| Eliminate | 1. Discontinue reliance on outdated organizational structures. | With almost 20% of routes having made no organizational changes in recent years, it's important to eliminate old practices that do not align with evolving cultural tourism trends. A shift toward more dynamic and adaptive management models is needed. |
| | 2. Reduce over-dependence on local-level funding. | While 31% of funding comes from local sources, over-reliance on this stream may be limiting. Encouraging more balanced funding sources from national, regional, and international levels will enhance stability and growth potential. |

This CAME matrix highlights key areas where corrective, adaptive, and maintenance actions should be taken, along with practices that should be phased out to ensure the continued success and sustainability of European cultural routes in Croatia.



Archaeological Museum Zagreb, Amber collection, ©V.Klarić

7. INVENTORY OF CULTURAL ROUTES' RELATED ACTIVITIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

THE PURPLE WAY – THE ROYAL WAY

1. The Phoenicians Route
2. Roman Emperors' Route And Danube Wine Route
3. Destination Napoleon

THE SECULAR WORLD

4. Iron Age Danube Route
5. ATRIUM
6. European Route Of Industrial Heritage
7. Euro Vello Iron Curtain Route
8. The Route Of Ceramics
9. Impressionism Routes
10. European Cemeteries Route

THE SPIRITUAL WORLD – THE SACRED WAYS

11. Camino De Santiago
12. The Cyril and Methodius Route, 2021
13. TRANSROMANICA
14. St. Martin Of Tours Route

THE HEALTHY WAYS

15. Olive Tree Route
16. Iter Vitis
17. The Historic Pharmacies Route
18. EHTTA

THE FANTASY WAYS

19. The Fairy Tail Routes
20. Women Writers Route

Cultural routes are at the core of the cultural tourism product. Their values satisfy the basic needs of our visitors: need for beauty, need for peace, need for knowledge, need for spiritual fulfilment, need for health, need for fantasy... These needs are met through the interaction of visitors with culture and heritage and the essential values they present.

For visitors, cultural routes satisfy their needs related to the values that connect heritage to the past, present, and future.

Visitors thus through routes satisfy their social curiosity, viewing how groups interact, recognizing societal ruling models, changes, and roles, including the influence of collective action and dynamics.

To visitors, secular heritage serves as a tangible link to the past, embodying the passage of time, human creativity, and artistic impulses. Artistic heritage on cultural routes satisfies visitors needs for sensory responses, expressions of beauty and harmony.

Answering to visitors' needs for spirituality, heritage connects them deeply with belief systems, as seen in sacred sites, religious art, and architecture that reflect timeless human values. Symbolically, heritage satisfies their need for group identity and social bonds tied to specific locations, reinforcing cultural connections.

Furthermore, heritage answers the need for education, research, and future innovation.

Finally, visitors seek values that enrich understanding, inspire creativity, and emphasize the enduring significance of human action across generations.

THE PURPLE WAY – THE ROYAL WAY

1 - The Phoenicians Route

The Phoenicians' Route (RdF), established as a European Cultural Route in 2003, promotes intercultural dialogue across the Mediterranean, Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. It traces the historical paths of ancient civilizations, fostering cultural exchange and cooperation among regions that share a common heritage.



Archaeological Museum Zagreb, RdF, © V.Klarić

Traces which exist still today are witnessed by the heritage left after migrations, as are numismatic finds connected to their origin.²⁶

The route represents a model of integrated cultural tourism, working closely with public and private entities at local, national, and international levels. Recognized by the World Tourism Organization in 2016, it emphasizes the Mediterranean's rich cultural legacy and aims to enhance ties between its countries. Over its 20-year history, the Phoenicians' Route has grown into a significant network within the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes program. Croatia joined in 2018, hosting the route's General Assembly at Libertas International University, which also became a member of its academic network.



Nadin, Phoenicians pendant from, Photo M.Čelhar "Imported pendant from Nadin confirms once more long-term incorporation of the Liburnian culture in main exchange routes on the Adriatic, and even wider Mediterranean, with well-known role of the Phoenician world during the 1st millennium BC, as well as Liburnian creativity in accepting outer forms, including the glass ones into their own" Source: ČELHAR, Martina. KUKOČ, Sineva. 2014, Glass head pendant from Nadin: A contribution to the understanding of import in the Liburnian culture; <https://hrcak.srce.hr/en/file/191059>

Inventory of good practices:

- *Leading the Eyes of Visitors to Local Heritage*

Led by the Municipality of Novigrad/Cittanova in partnership with the Phoenicians' Route,

through the EU EMFF FLAG «Pinna nobilis» Project, the ancient fishing craft has been revived by constructing and exhibiting an authentic *batana* boat in a dedicated cultural heritage interpretation center. The center also functions as an educational space for future generations and an Interpretation Centre of the Phoenicians' Route, enhancing both cultural tourism and heritage education.²⁷

- Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Underwater Archaeology through the U-Mar Erasmus+ Project



Nin, Condura Croatica boat © V. Klarić

Project goals:

Development of an online platform and training course on underwater archaeology, along with establishing an Interpretation Centre in Zadar.

Key Achievements:

The ICUA Zadar, in partnership with the Phoenicians' Route, played a crucial role in integrating underwater archaeology with sustainable tourism. The online platform and Interpretation Centre offer valuable resources and training for cultural operators while promoting the tourist offerings related to underwater heritage in Croatia.²⁸

- Building Niche Cultural Tourism Markets: Phoenicians' Route - Tour Operators' Alliance

Goal: Establishing a network of European tour operators offering specialized cultural trips.

Interviewed at the RdF General Assembly in Spain 2024, Elena Tanou, the president of the RdF, when asked about the role of Croatia in the Route, stressed the role of women in the route projects development, promotion, expansion and scientific support!

Key Achievements:

Launched in collaboration with UNWTO, this alliance focuses on niche cultural tourism for high-spending travellers. The first Croatian trip along the Phoenicians' Route, planned for 2025, involves pre-trip online webinars, exemplifying how targeted cultural experiences can be designed for select tourist segments.²⁹



Novigrad, RdF city, © V.Klarić

- Interaction of landscapes: Cross-Route Cooperation

Partnership:

Signing a Cooperation Agreement with the Iron Age Danube Route to enhance Euro-Mediterranean heritage and promote joint cultural and tourism development.

Key Achievements:

This partnership promotes cross-cultural exchanges, joint planning, and collaborative marketing efforts between the Phoenicians' Route and the Iron Age Danube Route. By intertwining their themes and historical narratives, both routes emphasize shared European heritage and promote sustainable tourism initiatives.³⁰

- Sustainable and Slow Tourism Development: The MED-Routes Project

Goal:

Establishing a locally based model of sustainable «slow tourism» rooted in shared Mediterranean heritage.

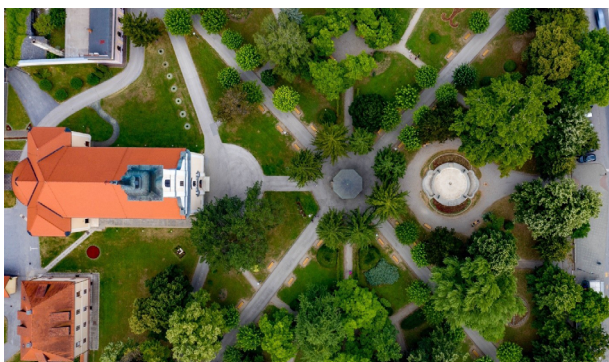
Key Achievements:

The MED-Routes project, in collaboration with partners like Libertas International University, focuses on designing eco-itineraries across four Council of Europe cultural routes: the Phoenicians' Route, Route of Ceramics, Route of the Olive Tree, and Federation of Napoleonic Cities. The ultimate goal of the project is to design ecological itineraries that will improve the local cultural and touristic offer while respecting the principles of sustainability and circular economy. The results will include the Transnational strategy for sustainable tourism and eco-itineraries in the MED area. It represents a forward-looking approach for enhancing local cultural and touristic offerings in the Mediterranean.³¹

These good practices highlight the innovative approaches taken by the Phoenicians' Route in Croatia, focusing on heritage preservation, educational initiatives, sustainable tourism, and collaborative cultural development.

2 - Destination Napoleon - Marked by construction works

Cultural Route Destination Napoleon, designed and managed by the European Federation of Napoleonic Cities. The Federation was founded in 2004 by Charles Bonaparte with the initiative of cities that wanted to enrich their Napoleonic heritage by interpreting its European dimension. Napoleon's life and activities had a strong influence on European nations, shaping the history and appearance of European cities and regions.



Petrinja © Tourist board Sisak - Moslavina County

The Republic of Croatia has joined the cultural route Destination Napoleon since its launch in 2015. The first member registered in Croatia was Orebić. Slunj was also marked by a brief period of French domination in the early 19th century,

during which roads, bridges, warehouses and similar military objects were built. It was during this period that Auguste Frédéric Vieesse de Marmont, Marshal of the Empire under Napoleon I, ordered the construction of fortified positions and sentries against the Turks.

The old bridge over Korana and the military warehouse also date from this period. There are also the towns of Mali Lošinj, Klis, Brela and Milna marked by the construction works from that period.

One of the last members from continental Croatia is the town of Petrinja, where French rule left a significant mark, especially by planting grandiose linden trees in one of the most beautiful and oldest parks in this region. The route's mission is to unite European areas around the Destination Napoleon label with the aim of greater visibility and legibility of the destination.

3 - The Roman Emperors Route & Danube Wine Route – Contextualizing past lives

The Roman Emperors' Route is a cultural route connecting key historical sites associated with the lives and reigns of Roman emperors. The creation of this route in Croatia is rooted in the country's rich Roman heritage, which spans from the 1st to the 4th centuries AD. This period was marked by the extensive Romanization of the region, which was then part of the Roman provinces of Dalmatia, Pannonia, and Istria. The route aims to highlight the profound cultural and historical influences of the Roman Empire in these territories. It offers a comprehensive and immersive journey through the ancient Roman world, highlighting Croatia's invaluable contributions to European cultural heritage. Ilok and Vinkovci are known through their rich Roman wine heritage. Ilok, known for its Roman wine cellars and vineyards, and Vinkovci, an ancient Roman settlement, showcase the region's enduring vinicultural traditions alongside archaeological sites, creating a compelling cultural and enological experience.



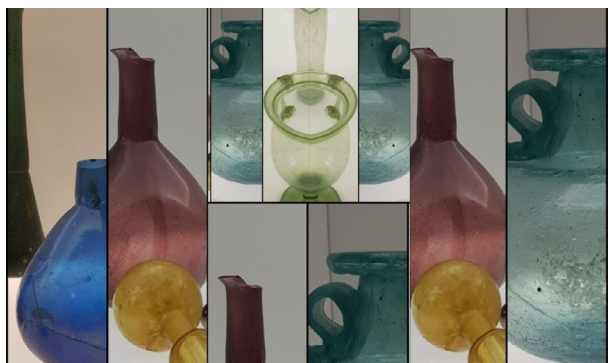
Pola, Arena Amphitheatre © V.Klarić

This route emphasizes the region's rich Roman heritage and puts Croatia into a broader European perspective. The creation and success of this route are rooted in the collaborative efforts of various Croatian institutions, such as the Croatian Ministry of Tourism and the Croatian Chamber of Economy, which played crucial roles in its creation and certification process.

Inventory of Actions and Good Practices:

- Institutional Involvement and Strategic Alignment:

The Route in Croatia was established through the collaborative efforts of Croatian institutions. Croatian Ministry of Tourism played an important role in this initiative, signing the Memorandum of Understanding among four countries (later joined by six more³²), as well as the Croatian Chamber of Economy - providing coordination and structural creation of the Route. Numerous relevant museums and sites were invited to join, and those most ready for visitors included. This collective effort aimed to enhance the visibility and accessibility of Croatia's rich Roman heritage, both domestically and internationally. Marketing strategy was prepared, Handbook on Managing Visitors on Thematic Cultural Routes³³, B2B guide of some 100 potential business stakeholders, all providing a step-by-step approach to route creation.



Archaeological Museum Zagreb © V.Klarić

- Careful Selection of Sites contextualizing past lives, Compatible and diversified:

Sites included in the route were chosen based on their historical significance, diversity, and compatibility. This careful curation resulted in a route that represents the rich Roman heritage in the same time offering varied and educational experiences. For example, Pula, with its well-

preserved Roman amphitheatre, and Salona, a former capital of the Roman province of Dalmatia, were chosen as lures for visitors due to their architectural and historical significance.

- Deeper Understanding and Promotion of Local and Regional Heritage:

The creation of the Roman Emperors' Route in Croatia serves multiple purposes. It promotes the conservation and appreciation of Roman-era sites, and encourages a greater appreciation of the historical and cultural narratives that shaped the region. The route includes significant continental lesser known sites like Ilok, known for its Roman military history and rich wine-growing tradition, and Andautonia (Ščitarjevo), major Roman military outpost and port, as well as Siscia (Sisak) one of the most important mints in the area during the period of Roman rule. These sites highlight the diversity of Roman influence across different geographical areas within Croatia, promoting both cultural and natural heritage.



Sisak castle © Ministry of Culture and Media

- Visibility actions:

Sisak, as one of the cities on the route, is working on the promotion of the route and highlights the advantages of the route itself. Introducing thematic maps, signage, signposting, interpretation panels on the site and other visibility tools for the Route. For the next year, a special souvenir is being prepared for all visitors to the city of Sisak.³⁴

- Route as a result of multiple collaborative European projects:

The Roman Emperors' Route was from the beginning designed as part of a broader European project,

supported by several EU-funded initiatives. New project, #RomanWineDanube, is also EU funded by the Interreg Danube program, aimed to further develop the route connecting Baranja, Erdut and Ilok wine areas, offering wine and local produce tasting, visits to the sites of natural and cultural heritage and other interactive experiences. Project Activities include development of a Common Transnational Strategy specifically targeting sub-destinations like Osijek-Baranja County in Croatia, introduction of Tourism Observatories for monitoring visitor satisfaction and establishment of product clubs within sub-destinations to foster collaboration among local stakeholders.

- Innovative and Sustainable Tourism Solutions:

The #RomanWineDanube project focuses on developing sustainable and eco-friendly travel solutions, such as Green Travel Products and itineraries, involving local communities in the process. New tourism products are planned, like 6 Roman Festivals (Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, MNE, Slovenia, Hungary) and 4 Wine Festivals (Slovakia, Croatia, BiH, Ukraine).³⁵

- Future Perspectives:

Future plans for the RER&DWR involve investing in digital marketing to increase visibility and developing product clubs at the sub-destination level to facilitate new product development. The expected outcomes include collaborative models innovative solutions for sub-destination management, and sustainable travel packages that align with eco-friendly tourism trends.



Zagreb, andautonia Roman site, RER&DWR © V.Klarić

The Roman Emperors' Route & Danube Wine Route in Croatia exemplifies how cultural heritage can be utilized to create meaningful and immersive

tourism experience. Including institutional support, careful site selection, and collaboration on European projects, this Route's creation in Croatia serves as a model for sustainable cultural tourism, combining historical preservation with modern tourism practices to enhance visitor experiences and promote regional development.



Nin, Roman Temple Column © V.Klarić

- The visitors' perspective:

The colour purple, historically associated with royalty, power, and wealth, serves as a symbolic thread connecting the routes linked to mighty spaces, rulers and explorers. By connecting these routes through the colour purple, contemporary visitors are invited to explore the symbols of empires, trades and power. This exploration could satisfy deep human curiosity about the mechanisms of authority, its persistence, the legacy of rulers, and the visual symbols that have represented power across different cultures and eras.

Visitors are invited to contemplate how the Phoenicians managed their pioneering trade networks, and produced the highly prized Tyrian purple dye, a luxury commodity that became synonymous with status and influence. This dye, derived from sea snails, was reserved for the elite, underlining the Phoenicians' control over wealth and commerce.

Similarly, they can explore how the Roman Emperors used the purple as a symbol of imperial

authority. The toga praetexta, a garment edged with purple, was worn by Roman magistrates and emperors, signifying their dominion over the vast Roman Empire. Purple, in this way, embodied the divine right and supreme power of the rulers who shaped the ancient world. Napoleon Bonaparte, who sought to revive the grandeur of Rome, also utilized the color purple in his regalia, reinforcing his self-image as a modern-day emperor.³⁶



Petrinja, European Route of Ceramics, FLIK

THE SECULAR WORLD

3 - Rooted in research – Reconstructing meanings. Iron Age Danube Route

The Iron Age Danube Route is a cultural route that “addresses one of the most fragile, but imposingly attractive prehistoric archaeological remains, the Iron Age landscapes, characterized by monumental constructions, e.g. fortified hilltop settlements, oppida, tumulus cemeteries, flat graveyards, and complex organization of space, from the the 9th century BC to the end of the 1st century BC (Hallstatt and La Tène periods). In *Kaptol Požeški* the archaeological finds document settlements in this area from Neolithic on, but culminating in the Iron Age, when important role that this area played on European level, was reflected in princely graves under burial mounds and large fortified settlement.”³⁷

The scientific background of the Iron Age Danube Route is rooted in extensive research and collaboration among experts from Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Germany. The route is managed by the Iron Age Danube Route Association, founded in 2020 in Croatia and certified by the Council of Europe as a Cultural Route in 2021. The Iron Age Danube Route is not merely a tourist attraction but also a platform for scientific research and educational exchanges. It is an example of the complex organization of space, movable heritage, and intangible heritage, which are presented in numerous museums and archaeological parks in the Danube region. It conveys important information about the past and the interactions between cultures during the Iron Age. It serves as a reminder of the historical and cultural connections that have shaped Europe over millennia. Still, as such, it continues to provide opportunities for scientific research, education, and cultural tourism.³⁸



AMZ, Zagreb, Iron Age Danube Route, Kaptol-Gradac, tumul 10, Urn, © AMZ

Inventory of good practices:

- *Reconstructing meanings:*

The route highlights the monumental archaeological structures from the Iron Age in the Danube region, reconstructing the significance of landscapes that indicate a complex organization of space during the period.³⁹

- *A Platform for Interdisciplinary Collaboration:*

The Iron Age Danube Route project involved an interdisciplinary and international network of

expert institutions from several European countries, collaborating in fields like archaeology, cultural heritage protection, and tourism. This allowed for a comprehensive study of the archaeological sites.⁴⁰

- Future perspectives: collaboration is continuing through EU ERASMUS+ project: NEXT ROUTES
– Upskilling of staff through digital, creative gamification and innovative strategies for the enhancement of EU Cultural Routes“

The project brings together 6 Cultural Routes certified by the Council of Europe (in addition to the Phoenicians' Route, European Route of Jewish Heritage, European Mozart Ways, Routes of the Olive Tree, ATRIUM – Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century In Europe's Urban Memory and Iron Age Danube Route). This project will implement innovative actions to further reinforce CRs staff's skills and knowledge in all aspects related to digital and creative competencies, to support CRs in the digital transition and to help them manage and disseminate CRs contents in an engaging and effective way by promoting their cultural heritage through innovative gamification approaches. The proposal represents a great opportunity for CRs staff upskill, providing them with an easy-to-use tool for the enhancement of their territories and heritage, making it accessible also to other members and interested stakeholders.⁴¹

- New Research Approaches:

The project introduced new research formats like «Archaeological Camps» that combined field research, heritage protection activities, and tourism promotion at selected sites in the Danube region. This allowed for the integration of various methodologies and expertise:

The «ArcheoGim» pilot project of the 2023/2024 school year was developed and realized in cooperation between the Požega High School and the Iron Age Danube Route. It targeted 2nd grade students (16 years old) who participate in this optional course in the frame of history lessons. The educational programme consisted of lectures, workshops and field trainings. Students learned about methods of archaeological research, basic information about the Kaptol archaeological site, ways of popularizing cultural and historical heritage through the activities of the Cultural Route «Iron Age Danube Route», basics of tourism marketing, organization of the Hallstatt days festival of revived history, **preparation of Hallstatt food, Iron Age weaving and restoration of ceramics**. Over the course of the 2023/2024 school year one lecture/training was given on a monthly

bases. Presentation of the results of the project took place in June as part of the Hallstatt Days. The goal was to raise-awareness and promote Iron Age heritage among young Europeans: to popularize archaeology as a science and the Kaptol Požeški archaeological site among high school students; to interest young people in their local heritage; to include them as volunteers working in IADR organized workshops and future events. In this way the IADR, as well as the local members and touristic stakeholders are building capacities in the region and creating a pool of volunteers for future events.⁴²

- Diverse Environments and Cultures:

The Iron Age landscapes in the Danube region were influenced by the diverse natural environments, which in turn impacted the different cultures present in these areas both historically and today. The route highlights this connection between the natural and cultural heritage.⁴³

Food Forever: Hallstatt Festival brings ancient food habits back to life making them relevant for the present day.



Kaptol, Iron Age Danube Route, Hallstatt days,
© Tourist Board Zlatni Papuk

- Visibility and Valorization:

The certification of the Iron Age Danube Route as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe has enhanced its visibility and allowed for better integration of this archaeological heritage into sustainable cultural tourism and educational initiatives in the region. The key findings revolve around the monumental Iron Age archaeological landscapes, the interdisciplinary and international collaboration that enabled thorough research, the innovative research approaches, and the route's role in increasing the visibility and valorisation of this cultural heritage.



Zagreb, Iron Age Danube Route, Kaptol-Čemernica, tumul XII, two tripods & askos ©AMZ

The key findings revolve around the monumental Iron Age archaeological landscapes, the interdisciplinary and international collaboration that enabled thorough research, the innovative research approaches, and the route's role in increasing the visibility and valorisation of this cultural heritage.

The route could be extended to other regions where prominent Iron Age monuments are situated: Jalžabet, Goričan...etc. Also, more has to be done in the regions where the route is already present: Kaptol region, Žumberak-Samoborsko Gorje region, Sv. Ivan Zelina region, Sv. Križ region order to develop more activities which would involve more local stakeholders and tourist operators. ⁴⁴

4 - ATRIUM – Repurposing Totalitarian Industrial Heritage

In 2013, the City of Labin (Croatian local self-government) was one of the founders of the ATRIUM Association – the association that manages the ATRIUM route. The establishment of this association is the result of the EU project ATRIUM, whose main topic was the valorization of the architecture of the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century in the local areas of the project members. This cultural heritage is still considered an important common European heritage worthy of research and economic valorization within a specific tourist itinerary. In 2014 the Route was certified by the Institute for Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. The city of Labin, as a founding member, has a very important urban and architectural heritage. After the closure of the mining industry, some abandoned places have been restored and given a new purpose with great potential for tourist visits. ⁴⁵

Inventory of good practices:

- Urban and Architectural Heritage Valorization:

Labin's significant urban and architectural heritage, particularly its «planned city» built between 1938-1942, represents a critical element of the ATRIUM route. The town's unique combination of rationalist architecture, mining memory, and industrial heritage forms an open museum site. Abandoned mining sites have been repurposed for new uses, such as a library and the Shoht mine tower, which now have substantial potential for tourism.



Istria Landscape ©V.Klarić

- Youth Engagement and Historical Research:

A major good practice in the ATRIUM route is the involvement of youth in preserving European memory. Labin was a partner in the «PEOPLE – Personal Stories of Discrimination and Persecution under the Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century» project, developed under the EU's Europe for Citizens program. This project targeted young people and involved them in historical research on topics such as deportation and migration in Istria. The students from Labin's High School Mate Blažina conducted research, created a video documentary, and participated in workshops and discussions on human rights. This approach highlights the importance of engaging youth in the process of historical preservation, ensuring that European memory and history lessons are kept alive.

- Award-Winning Educational Tourism Product:

The ATRIUM GO! product is another standout achievement. Developed under the ATRIUM PLUS project, funded by the EU's Interreg Italy-Croatia program, this initiative created an itinerary specifically designed for high school students. Labin organized a transnational dissemination event titled "Young Europeans: Future Ambassadors

of Sustainable Cultural Tourism,” which included a pilot visit by students from Labin to Forlì, Italy. The ATRIUM GO! product was recognized with a best practice award in 2019 for its contribution to cultural tourism and sustainable development.

Benefits Achieved:

The ATRIUM Cultural Route in Croatia presents several best practices that have significantly contributed to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. The valorisation of Labin’s architectural heritage demonstrates how local historical assets can effectively become part of European landscape. The involvement of youth in historical research and education ensures the continuity of cultural memory and promotes active citizenship among younger generations. Finally, the creation of specialized educational tourism products like ATRIUM GO! emphasizes the potential for cross-border collaboration and the development of sustainable tourism practices.

The ATRIUM route in Croatia may also stand as a model for other regions looking to use their historical and architectural heritage for cultural and educational tourism while fostering international collaboration and sustainable development.

5 - European Route of Industrial Heritage

Tourist Board of Ivanić-Grad is the only member of the ERIH route since 2023, even though Croatia has several sites of industrial heritage open for visitors in various locations across the country.⁴⁶ The European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH) in Croatia, particularly in Ivanić-Grad, offers several examples of good practices that highlight the potential of industrial heritage in fostering tourism, education, and cultural preservation.



Ivanić Grad, industrial heritage, © I. Jandrijević

Inventory of Good Practices :

- Revitalization of Industrial Sites - Ivanić-Grad Oil Industry Heritage:

Ivanić-Grad, historically known for its oil industry, is on its way to revitalizing its industrial heritage sites. The town’s oil industry, which dates back to the early 20th century, has been preserved and integrated into a broader cultural tourism framework. This includes the conservation of old oil wells and machinery, which serve as educational tools and tourist attractions. The revitalization efforts have turned these industrial relics into symbols of the town’s economic history and technological advancement.

- Educational Initiatives - Industrial Heritage Educational Programs:

Already in 2019 Ivanić-Grad has developed educational programs that focus on the town’s industrial past. These programs were designed for schools and universities and included workshops, and lectures on the history of the local industry (oil), its impact on the region’s development, and the technological innovations associated with it. These initiatives helped raising awareness among younger generations about the importance of industrial heritage.⁴⁷

- Collaboration and Networking: Cross-Border Collaboration with Other ERIH Sites:

Ivanić-Grad’s involvement in the European Route of Industrial Heritage opens up collaboration with other industrial heritage sites across Europe. This networking enables the exchange of best practices, joint marketing efforts, and collaborative projects that enhance the visibility and attractiveness of industrial heritage sites. Ivanić-Grad benefits from being part of a larger network, cooperating closely with the tourism board and the city museum, which can help attract international tourists and promote the town’s industrial heritage on a broader scale.⁴⁸

- Sustainable Tourism Development:

Integration of Industrial Heritage into Sustainable Tourism: Ivanić-Grad has integrated its industrial heritage into the town’s tourism perspective. The aim of the Ivanić Grad tourism board is to encourage responsible tourism practices that protect and sustain its industrial heritage for future generations.⁴⁹

- Use of Digital Technologies:

Digitalization of Industrial Heritage: Ivanić-Grad has embraced digital technologies to enhance the visitor experience. This includes virtual museum of industrial sites <https://industrijska-bastina.com>, and digital archives that document the town's industrial history. These digital tools make industrial heritage more accessible to a wider audience and provide innovative ways for visitors to engage with the town's past.

- Promotion of Industrial Heritage Tourism:

Future marketing and promotion strategies: Ivanić-Grad is developing plans to promote its industrial heritage tourism <https://www.tz-ig.com/doziviljaji-kulturna-i-prirodna/industrial-heritage>. This includes creating promotional materials that highlight the town's unique industrial sites, participating in regional and international tourism fairs, and collaborating with tourism agencies to offer specialized industrial heritage tours. These efforts will help position Ivanić-Grad as a key destination for industrial heritage tourism in Croatia.

Ivanić-Grad's approach to preserving and promoting its industrial heritage serves as a model for other towns and cities in Croatia. By revitalizing industrial sites, integrating education, hosting cultural events, collaborating with other ERIH sites, and embracing sustainable tourism and digital technologies, Ivanić-Grad has successfully transformed its industrial heritage into a valuable cultural and economic asset. The town's focus on community involvement and strategic promotion further stresses its commitment to preserving industrial history while fostering tourism development.

6 - Iron Curtain Trail - Eurovelo 13 - Merging Rural And Urban, Cultural And Food Landscapes

"For almost half a century, Europe was forcibly divided into East and West. EuroVelo 13 retraces this 'Iron Curtain', a border stretching from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. Following this route for more than 9,950 km is a living history lesson but also provides a welcome reminder of the peace and reconciliation that have followed the fall of the 'Curtain'. As one of the longest EuroVelo routes, the Iron Curtain Trail has something to offer every type of cycle tourist, from the vineyards in southern Czechia and northern Austria to the mountainous border of Bulgaria and Greece;

and from the bustling ports of the Baltic States to the stark beauty of Lapland.

Back in 2005, the European Parliament recognised the 'Iron Curtain Trail' as a model project for sustainable tourism and called upon the Member States for support. EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail is certified as Cultural Route of the Council of Europe since 2019."⁵⁰

Croatia has been involved in the EuroVelo project since 2017, when it joined the ECF (European Cycling Federation). Since then, the National EuroVelo Coordination Centre for Croatia (NECC) has been operating under the National Coordination Body for Development of Cycling Tourism within the Ministry of Tourism and Sport, and it finally joined EuroVelo 13 – Iron Curtain Trail as a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 2019. EuroVelo 13 in Croatia passes through preserved nature and picturesque places in Međimurje, Podravina and Slavonia along the river Drava all the way to the town of Donji Miholjec, where it briefly leaves Croatia, and re-enters Croatia at the Baranjsko Petrovo Selo border crossing, from where it passes through the northern part of Baranja and leaves Croatia in Batina on the Danube. The EV13 section through Croatia is about 288 km long. Croatia's northern border with Hungary is one of the lesser known corners of this fascinating country. The route takes cyclists through picturesque villages surrounded by pristine forests and nice cities, among which stands out Koprivnica.

The practices associated with the Iron Curtain Trail - EuroVelo 13 in Koprivnica-Križevci County reflect a holistic approach to cultural and sustainable tourism. By integrating local culture, history, and gastronomy with a strong emphasis on inclusivity and community engagement, the trail serves as a model for other regions. The focus on creating an innovative and sustainable tourism product, joined with transnational collaboration and the valorisation of natural and cultural assets, ensures that the Iron Curtain Trail remains a vibrant and educational route that honours its historical significance while promoting regional development.

Inventory of actions and good practices

- Innovative Tourism Product Development - Sustainable Business Model:

The Koprivnica-Križevci County's involvement in the Interreg Central Europe project for the Iron Curtain Trail (ICT) focuses on creating a sustainable

business model for the trail. This model merges cultural, historical, and natural elements into a cohesive tourism offer, emphasizing sustainability and local participation. It enables the long-term viability of the route while promoting regional heritage and helping the local economy.

- Integration of Cycling Culture - Bicycle Museum in Koprivnica:

The city of Koprivnica celebrates its cycling culture through the unique open-air Bicycle Museum. Located in the central Zrinski Square, the museum features replicas of historical bicycles, enhancing the cultural value of the trail. The museum serves as both an educational tool and a tourist attraction, promoting cycling as part of the region's identity and heritage. This integration of cycling history with modern tourism creates a distinctive visitor experience and deepens the connection between the trail and the local community.

- Promotion of Regional Gastronomy - Highlighting Local Cuisine:

The EuroVelo 13 route in Koprivnica-Križevci County presents the region's rich culinary heritage. Local foods, such as the traditional turkey with 'mlinci' and Bregovska pita, are promoted as part of the cycling experience. This approach enhances the cultural appeal of the trail and also supports local farmers and food producers by encouraging tourists to sample and purchase regional specialties. Incorporating gastronomy into the trail experience enriches the cultural narrative and provides cyclists with authentic, local dining options.



Eurovelo 13 © V.Klarić

- Cultural and Historical Engagement - Connecting with Cultural Routes:

The cultural dimension of EuroVelo 13 could be further explored and developed. Another idea is to

connect National EuroVelo Coordination Centres along EuroVelo 13 with National representatives of certified Cultural Routes.⁵¹ By integrating the trail with recognized cultural routes, such as those focusing on history, heritage, or cuisine, the trail becomes a far-reaching and educational journey. This practice encourages deeper engagement with the cultural and historical dimensions of the Iron Curtain legacy, transforming the cycling route into a vehicle for cultural education and preservation.

- Inclusive and Interactive Visitor Experiences - Inclusive Border Cycling Project (IBC):

The IBC project, which runs from 2024 to 2026, emphasizes making the EuroVelo 13 route more accessible to vulnerable groups, particularly in border areas. The focus on inclusivity extends to creating paths that accommodate older cyclists (silver age groups) and other disadvantaged communities. This initiative promotes social inclusivity in tourism, and it also enhances the trail's appeal by offering interactive and interpretative experiences that cater to diverse audiences.

- Local Community Involvement - Student and Local Initiatives:

Koprivnica-Križevci County encourages local initiatives such as student projects, events that promote the remembrance of the Iron Curtain's historical significance, and scientific research. By involving young people and local organizations, the project fosters a sense of ownership and pride in the region's heritage, ensuring the trail's legacy is carried forward by future generations.

- Cross-Border Collaboration - Transnational Cooperation:

The collaboration with other regions along the Iron Curtain Trail, enabled by projects like IBC⁵², exemplifies best practices in cross-border tourism development. By working together, regions can share knowledge, resources, and promotional efforts. It also helps in addressing common challenges, such as managing border areas and preserving shared cultural heritage.

- Environmental and Cultural Sustainability - Focus on Natural and Cultural Asset Valorisation:

The IBC project also places a strong emphasis on the valorisation and sustainability of natural and cultural assets, particularly in disadvantaged border areas. This helps protect the trail's integrity

and ensures that tourism development benefits local communities without compromising their heritage or natural surroundings.⁵³

6 - The European Route of Ceramics – Creative Spaces And Interactive Immersion

The European Route of Ceramics was initiated in 2008, in the frame of an EU Urbact UNIC (Urban Network for Innovation in Ceramics) project and certified in 2012. Petrinja Tourist Board became a member of the European Route of Ceramics in 2023 as the only Croatian representative on that Route so far. Petrinja has got a long tradition of making pottery and ceramics, and hosts a respectful Festival of Pottery and Ceramics, and by attracting more and more potters and ceramic artists, it has gained international character.⁵⁴

Inventory of Actions and good practices

- FLIK - Festival of Pottery and Ceramics - revived the centuries-old tradition of pottery:

Launched in August 2021 in Petrinja, the FLIK Festival has quickly become a cornerstone event for the city's cultural and tourism scene. This festival, organized by the Tourism Board of Petrinja, and private actors, highlights the traditional craft of pottery and serves as a platform for contemporary artistic ceramics. The inclusion of Petrinja in the European Route of Ceramics has expanded FLIK's reach, attracting international artists and ceramists, and fostering new partnerships across Europe.



Petrinja, European Route of Ceramics ©FLIK

- Interactive workshop «From The Pottery Fireplaces»:

Complementing FLIK is the workshop "From The Pottery Fireplaces" in Petrinja, which offers an

immersive experience in traditional pottery. It is a hands-on workshop where visitors can observe and participate in the making of traditional pottery on a potter's wheel, with the demonstration of the production of *stucka* on the potter's wheel, familiarization with the types of pottery vessels and how they are used, and tasting of food prepared and preserved in these vessels according to traditional recipes. It also includes introduction to the making of traditional pottery musical instruments such as the «*okarina*» or popular «*tičica*» and «*prda*», interactive involvement of tour participants, guests receive a small *stucka* as a souvenir, visit other sites, and even create their own pottery musical instruments. The route educates visitors about the historical and cultural significance of pottery by actively engaging them in the craft, making it a unique and interactive cultural experience.

- MED Routes Project – minimizing environmental impact through eco-itineraries-

The Project aims to establish and spread a locally based model of sustainable tourism, with minimal harmful impact on the Mediterranean area, in order to establish a special model of Mediterranean «slow tourism» rooted in the common heritage of the four Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, the Phoenicians' Route, European Route of Ceramics, Route of the Olive Tree and Destination, Napoleon. Croatian partners, including Libertas International University and the Regional Development Agency Dubrovnik (DUNEA), play a crucial role in establishing this «slow tourism» model. The project's goal is to create and disseminate sustainable tourism practices that minimize environmental impact while promoting the cultural richness of the Mediterranean region.

- Youth4Culture, Erasmus+:

highlights the importance of involving youth in cultural heritage promotion, includes training sessions focused on civic participation and the management of cultural heritage.

7 - Impressionism Routes – Creativity revealed

The European Cultural Route of Impressionism, certified in 2018, highlights the rich heritage of Impressionist painters across Europe. This route connects various locations associated with 19th and 20th-century Impressionists, expanding from an initial 12 French routes to include sites across 16 European countries, such as Germany, Holland,

Spain, Slovenia, Italy, and Croatia. In 2019, Ozalj became the first Croatian city to join the route, honoring Slava Raškaj, Croatia's most prominent Impressionist painter. Ozalj presents her artwork and promotes thematic tourist routes that highlight the natural beauty of the scenery that inspired her. These locations continue to inspire artists today, attracting visitors who appreciate the region's preserved panoramas that were so integral to the Impressionist movement.⁵⁵



PLACE2GO tourism Fair ©Ministry of Culture and Media

Inventory of Actions and Good Practices

- **The «Month of Remembering Slava Raškaj»: Community Engagement and Historical Insight into the creativity of a painter**

An important feature of the route is its emphasis on community interaction. The «Month of Remembering Slava Raškaj,» held every March in the town of Ozalj, is the main example. This event includes free tourist walks with professional guides, exhibitions and concerts, all dedicated to celebrating Raškaj's impressionism legacy.

The specialty is the evening route so visitors can enjoy the evening views of Ozalj. On the route, expert guidance takes visitors to the authentic places where Slava Raškaj painted, and with the help of reproductions of her works, so the visions of Ozalj then and now are compared, and visitors learn about her creativity. The route also includes the cultural sights of Ozalj, such as the Ozalj Ethno Park, the Old Town of Ozalj, the Church of St. Vitus with a special focus on Munjar and the use of water energy.

The route lasts about 3 hours and includes a visit to the Ozalj Native Museum.⁵⁶

The event brings together local communities and international visitors, fostering a sense of pride and cultural continuity. Tourists have the opportunity to engage with locals, learn about their traditions, and participate in cultural events, creating a rich, interactive experience. It also provides a specific historical insight, an immersive historical experience entering into the life and times of Slava Raškaj. Tourists gain insights into the socio-cultural circumstances of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, learning about the challenges and triumphs faced by Raškaj as a female artist in a predominantly male-dominated field. This historical perspective enhances the appreciation of her work and contextualizes the broader European Impressionist movement within Croatia's own cultural history.

- **Participating at the «PLACE2GO» tourism Fair: Boosting Visibility and Sustainability of Cultural Routes**

The structured promotion of this and other European cultural routes in Croatia, as demonstrated at the 9th International Tourism Fair «PLACE2GO» in April 2022, has been instrumental in boosting routes' visibility. The participation of cultural routes, organized by the Ministry of Culture and Media, provided a platform to present the Cultural Routes program of the Council of Europe, including all the routes passing through Croatia, facilitating valuable connections with stakeholders and enhancing the international profile of Croatian cultural tourism.

This initiative promotes sustainable development by encouraging education, cultural exchange, and the discovery of lesser-known destinations. By promoting lesser-known cultural destinations, such as Ozalj, cultural routes help distribute tourist movements more evenly across the country, reducing pressure on more popular sites. This approach preserves the natural and cultural heritage and encourages the economic development of these areas.

- **Impressionism Routes' extension possibilities**

Croatia's rich tradition of Impressionism, though often overshadowed by its Western European counterparts, offers a unique cultural heritage that could significantly enrich the Impressionism cultural route. Several key artists and locations across Croatia could contribute to this route, showcasing the depth and diversity of Croatian Impressionism. **The Route** could be complemented

by the inclusion of the **Bukovac House (museum) in Cavtat**, exhibiting **Vlaho Bukovac** (1855-1922), a leading figure whose works such as «Gundulić's Dream» marked the transition from Realism to Impressionism. **The National Museum of Modern Art in Zagreb** could be the second important point exhibiting the works of **Bela Čikoš Sesija** (1864-1931) **Miroslav Kraljević** (1885-1913) **Menci Klement Crnčić** (1865-1930) and **Celestin Medović** (1857-1920) who also played crucial roles in the movement. The third potential location on the route is related to **Emanuel Vidović** (1870-1953) who uniquely blended Impressionism and Symbolism, with works exhibited at the **Emanuel Vidović Gallery in Split**.

7 - European Cemeteries Route

Croatia participates in the mission of the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE) from its very beginnings. Under the umbrella of the European institute of cultural routes, members of ASCE developed the European Cemeteries Route, raising awareness of the cemeteries as open-air museums, public spaces rich in history, architecture and works of art open to all visitors and tourists who wish to admire art, history, architecture, nature and heritage in a peaceful and truthful environment of a cemetery.

The ASCE organization is the largest and most important organization of this kind that preserves and represents cemeteries as an important part of the cultural heritage of Europe. Of the eight cemeteries in Rijeka managed by KD Kozala, the Cemetery Kozala and Cemetery Trsat are recognized as significant cemeteries in Europe.⁵⁷ In addition to the Rijeka cemetery, the Varaždin and Karlovac⁵⁸ cemeteries are also active members.

Inventory of Activities

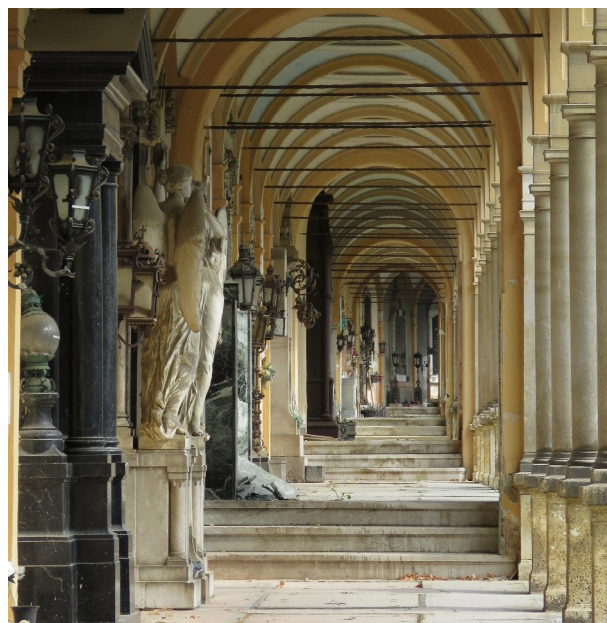
- **Week of Discovering European Cemeteries** together with other projects merged into an initiative of **emphasizing and promoting the European characteristics and values** of open-air museums is organized within the framework of the Association of Significant Cemeteries of Europe (ASCE).⁵⁹

Members work together on activities with a common mission of preserving and **promoting cultural heritage resting in cemeteries**, discovering the common symbols, stories, arts and architecture and confirming the European perspective and values shared beyond borders and cultural regions.

Throughout the stories of love, reconciliation, suffering and leadership, interest for cemeteries is growing. Among schools, cultural institutions and tourist professionals, cemeteries opened up to their new role. Guided tours, exhibitions, musical and theater events filled the space and started changing the cemetery's image.

- **Good practice: Participating at the «PLACE2GO» tourism Fair: Boosting Visibility**

The participation of cultural routes at the 9th International Tourism Fair «PLACE2GO» in April 2022, has been key to new visibility. Organized by the Ministry of Culture and Media, it provided structured promotion of European cultural routes in Croatia.



Zagreb, Mirogoj cemetery Arcades © Ministry of Culture and Media

The visitor's perspective:

The cultural routes of Europe, such as the Iron Age Danube Route, ATRIUM, the European Route of Industrial Heritage, EuroVelo Iron Curtain Route, the Route of Ceramics, and the Impressionism Routes, the Route of the Cemeteries serve as vital conduits for creativity and inspiration in contemporary travel. Rooted in research and dedicated to reconstructing historical and cultural meanings, these routes offer travellers unique experiences that satisfy the growing desire for creative exploration and deeper understanding.

The Iron Age Danube Route connects archaeological sites and museums that present the rich heritage of

the Iron Age with contemporary lives, reconstructing healthy cuisine related to millennial experiences. For visitors, this route is a journey into the distant past, where ancient craftsmanship, food, art, and cultural practices are brought to life. By engaging with these historical reconstructions, travellers can find inspiration in the ingenuity and creativity of early European civilizations, fuelling their own creative endeavours.

ATRIUM, which focuses on the architectural remnants of totalitarian regimes in Europe, offers a different kind of inspiration. This route challenges visitors to reflect on the complex narratives of 20th-century history, using architecture as a medium to explore themes of power, resistance, and human resilience. The creative potential here lies in the reinterpretation of these spaces, inviting contemporary visitors to witness how history and art intersect, often in unexpected ways.

The European Route of Industrial Heritage and the EuroVelo Iron Curtain Route both highlight the transformative power of human ingenuity. Whether it's the industrial innovations that shaped modern Europe or the geopolitical shifts symbolized by the Iron Curtain, these routes offer rich narratives that inspire creativity. They present how territories, technologies, and social changes can be reimaged and repurposed, sparking ideas for creative projects that blend the old with the new, the artistic and healthy ways.

The Route of Ceramics and Impressionism Routes are intensely rooted in artistic traditions, offering direct engagement with the creative processes of past masters. These routes allow visitors to explore the techniques, materials, and environments that shaped some of the artistic moments in history. By immersing themselves in these artistic legacies, travellers can draw inspiration for their own creative pursuits, whether in visual arts, design, or other creative fields.

In essence, these cultural routes provide more than just historical knowledge; they offer a rich mosaic of inspiration, demonstrating how creativity is woven into the very fabric of European heritage. By reconnecting with the past through these routes, contemporary visitors can find fresh perspectives and ideas that resonate in their own creative journeys.

Lastly, the **European Cemeteries Route** offers a unique form of inspirational travel. Cemeteries, often seen as places of mourning, are also places of remembrance, peace, and artistic expressions. This route allows visitors to explore the rich cultural and architectural heritage encapsulated in European cemeteries, where the stories of the past come alive

in tranquil surroundings. For many, these spaces provide a deep sense of connection to history, offering a fulfilling experience that can be both comforting and transformative.

THE SPIRITUAL WORLD – THE SACRED WAYS



Zadar, St Donatus church © V. Klarić



Dubrovnik, Franciscan Monastery Cloister © V.Klarić

SLOW LOOKING, SLOW WALKING

8 - Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes, 1987

Since 1203, Croatians have made organized pilgrimages to the shrine of St. James at Santiago de Compostela. Camino Croatia aims to restore these medieval pilgrimage routes. The complete route has 20 stages and stretches over 3,000 km. Currently 5 stages are active (waymarked and with pilgrim infrastructure), with others in development.⁶⁰

Croatia joined the European Federation of St. James Way in 2023. The Croatian Confraternity of St. James began restoring the Camino pilgrimage routes in 2019, in collaboration with local tourist boards. Working together with local tourism boards in Croatia, and with the support of the Croatian National Tourist Board, Confraternity of St. James – Croatia has managed to restore over 1,200 km of the Croatian Camino routes with signposts and pilgrim infrastructure.

Since then, over 30,000 pilgrims⁶¹ from around the world, including Australia, the USA, and South Africa, have walked these routes. As a member of the Archconfraternity of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, the Croatian Confraternity has integrated the trail from Dubrovnik to Medjugorje into the Camino Croatia project.

This route, known as Camino Dubrovnik, offers a blend of historical, cultural, and religious experiences, connecting Croatia with the broader Camino network leading to Santiago de Compostela. It is a cultural and pilgrimage trail that appeals to both classic pilgrims and those seeking to explore new cultures and traditions. It has something for everyone, from natural attractions to historical trails and cultural/religious activities,

which go back for thousand years, to a unique and traditional gastronomic and wine offer.

Inventory of actions and good practices: Cooperation With Tourism boards

- Croatian National Tourist Board Support

to Croatian Camino Route Development which is being developed in stages with a focus on building pilgrim infrastructure and promoting the route. Local tourism boards, including Dubrovnik, Pula and Šibenik, are involved in enhancing cultural tourism along the route and are active members of the Camino.

- Camino Dubrovnik Project:

Initiated in 2023, the City of Dubrovnik together with volunteers has cleaned and marked the route in Croatia. Marketing activities are also being prepared and all the campaign was to be launched by the end of 2024, alongside the launch of a mobile app and website.

- Šibenik Tourist Board Collaboration:

Has partnered with a UK tour operator to develop specialized Camino tour packages, enhancing the cultural and tourism appeal of the Croatian Camino route.

- Petrinja Tourist Board :

Takes care of the Camino Banovina, a 76 km long section of the Camino Croatia route, situated in the hidden corner of Croatia, at the historical frontier of empires, with charming towns and villages and spectacular forests.



Camino Banovina, Petrinja Tourist Board Collaboration

9 - St. Martin Of Tours Route

The Saint Martin of Tours Route, part of the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes program, has been a significant cultural itinerary with Croatia actively participating since 2006. Croatia's historical and religious ties to Saint Martin are evident in its extensive network of sites, which includes 44 county churches dedicated to the saint and nearly 200 related churches, chapels, ruins, and toponyms.

Croatia has marked more than 30 sites so far, establishing them as focal points for the route and showcasing the saint's historical and cultural impact. This network highlights the enduring influence of Saint Martin's cult in the country, both in tangible and intangible forms.⁶²

A key institution supporting these efforts is St. Martin's Cultural Centre, founded in 2006 in Zagreb. This Croatian cultural and scientific association is a member of the European Network of Cultural Centres of St. Martin. Its mission is to preserve, explore, and promote the Croatian heritage of Saint Martin within the context of the Council of Europe's European Cultural Itinerary entitled «St. Martin, European, symbol of sharing, shared value» (2005). The Centre encourages an interdisciplinary approach to Saint Martin's heritage, promoting intercultural dialogue, exchange of experiences, and interconnection of cultural initiatives.



Footprint of Saint Martin and placed by the Saint Martin Cultural Centre

Footprint of Saint Martin is regularly placed by the Saint Martin Cultural Centre – Croatia, in cooperation with the *European Federation Saint Martin Cultural Centres* and Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research from Zagreb and in cooperation with the locals. Municipality, the Tourist Board and the Parish. The ceremony gathers the local community and there is often a mass, some animations and socializing. The best is when all the local stakeholders cooperate (parish, municipality, tourist board, school, association).⁶³

Inventory of Activities

Martinje – keeping traditions alive : “From St. Martin's biography, composed by Sulpicius Severus⁶⁴, st. Martin's movements in current Croatian space are not fully traceable. But many of st. Martin's toponyms and diverse customs witness the ancient Croatian tradition of worshipping of this saint. That is why Croatia was included in the st. Martin's cultural route as the easternmost European area where the tradition of celebrating St. Martin survived and is still alive.”⁶⁵

Cultural and religious events play a vital role in promoting the route. The Feast of Saint Martin, known as Martinje, celebrated on November 11th, is a major event across Croatia. It should not be neglected that the traditions dedicated to St. Martin also bring a strong religious devotion to that saint in Croatia. This celebration includes religious ceremonies, processions, and local festivals, attracting pilgrims and tourists alike. Additionally, theatrical performances and historical reenactments related to Saint Martin's life are organized, particularly during Martinje, to engage and educate the public. Educational and outreach programs can be instrumental in spreading awareness about Saint Martin's life and the cultural heritage associated with him.⁶⁶

- **Revitalization and re-evaluation of Saint Martin's heritage:**

Contribute to the formation of local cultural identities. This includes preserving diverse and durable intangible heritage elements such as traditions, rituals, and folklore associated with Saint Martin. Local communities are actively involved in maintaining and promoting this intangible heritage, ensuring its continuity and relevance in contemporary cultural contexts. A cultural event is regularly organized to accompany the placement of the footprint, as well as the lectures or presentation of the book and the project.

Collaboration and partnerships have further strengthened the Route's impact. Croatia collaborates with other countries along the Saint Martin of Tours Route through projects supported by the Council of Europe, focusing on sharing best practices, joint marketing efforts, and cultural exchanges.

Promotion: Through strategic site identification, cultural and educational activities, infrastructure development, and robust promotional efforts, Croatia has significantly contributed to the preservation and promotion of Saint Martin's

legacy. The ongoing activities and collaborations, most regularly supported by local tourism boards, continue to enhance the cultural identity of local communities and attract international tourists, ensuring the route's sustained impact and relevance.

10 - The Cyril And Methodius Route

The Cyril and Methodius Route, recognized as a Cultural Route by the Council of Europe in 2021, highlights the rich Slavic cultural heritage and the historical legacy of Saints Cyril and Methodius. As a priority project under the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), this route connects 33 members from 9 countries, including Croatia.⁶⁷

Saints Cyril and Methodius, known as the Apostles of the Slavs, played a crucial role in the spread of Christianity throughout Central and Eastern Europe, including Croatia. The Cyril and Methodius Route traces their missionary work and the Christianization of the Slavic peoples, particularly the creation of the Glagolitic script, which was used to translate liturgical texts into the local language. In Croatia, their legacy is visible in many cultural sites, including churches and historical monuments that reflect this early Christian heritage.



Glagolitic letter © Ministry of Culture and Media

The route's development in Croatia, has gained importance with the involvement of local organizations such as the Old Church Slavic Institute in Zagreb and Udruga Zraka from Draganić. In 2022, the association Zraka from Draganić joined the association as an associated member. Udruga Zraka has a local scope in the field of promoting education, local heritage and tourism and provides workshops.⁶⁸ **The Scientific Basis of the Cyril and Methodius Route**⁶⁹, completed in 2021, provided the foundation for mapping key sites in Croatia,

highlighting the country's potential. The route presents tangible heritage, including original documents, material monuments and artefacts in Old Slavonic language and Glagolitic and (old) Cyrillic script. It also combines with it intangible heritage through cultural events and educational programs, which makes the route a significant spiritual and cultural journey through Croatia and beyond.

Future possible extensions:

The Cyril and Methodius Route in Croatia offers several key points of interest which could be included in the route. On the Island of Krk, visitors can explore the St. Lucia Church in Baška, home to the historic Baška Tablet, and Baška's Glagolitic Trail. In Zagreb, the Old Church Slavonic Institute could be a significant member. The Roč–Hum area features Glagolitic Alley and the Great Doors of Roč. The Island of Hvar is home to the well-known UNESCO protected procession "Za Križen". Lastly, Đakovo boasts the Cathedral Basilica of St. Peter and related Cyril and Methodius sites.

11 - Transromanica – Opening New Perspectives

Croatia's inclusion in the TRANSROMANICA cultural route in January 2023, marked by the acceptance of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Čazma, presents an opportunity of promoting rich Croatian Romanesque heritage within Europe. The Church of St. Mary Magdalene, a rare example of late Romanesque architecture in continental Croatia, is one of the oldest sacral monuments in the Bjelovar-Bilogora County, built in the 13th century. Its unique architectural design makes it a valuable addition to the TRANSROMANICA route.

The church's historical and religious significance is profound. Originally established as a Dominican monastery church and later a Congregational Chapter, it played a central role in medieval Croatia.

Extension possibilities:

By joining TRANSROMANICA, Croatia enhances the visibility of this monument, connects with similar European sites, and opens the way for future project collaborations and extension of the Route to numerous significant Croatian early and late Romanesque sites such as :

- **St. Donatus Church, Zadar:**

Located in the historic city of Zadar, this iconic church dates back to the 9th century. It's renowned for its monumental circular shape and massive stone construction, making it one of the finest examples of early medieval architecture in Europe, by shape often connected to the Aachen chapel. Originally dedicated to the Holy Trinity, it was later named after Bishop Donatus.⁷⁰

- **Cathedral of St. Lawrence, Trogir:**

This cathedral, also known as Trogir Cathedral and UNESCO site, is a masterpiece of Romanesque art and architecture, dating back from the 13th century. Its famous west portal, crafted by Master Radovan in 1240, is a *prime example of Romanesque sculpture*, depicting scenes from the Bible with remarkable detail.⁷¹



Zadar, St. Chrysogonus Church © V. Klarić

- **St. Chrysogonus Church, Zadar:**

The monastery of St. Chrysogonus in Zadar was one of the most notable Benedictine abbeys on the eastern Adriatic coast including the present day church of St. Chrysogonus, consecrated in 1175, as a monumental three-nave Romanesque basilica of exquisite beauty and one of the most significant Romanesque religious monuments of the entire area.⁷²

- **St. Mary's Church, Zadar:**

Part of a Benedictine convent founded in the 11th century, this church stands out with its Romanesque bell tower and simple, yet elegant architectural style. The church is also notable for its association with Zadar's noblewomen, who were patrons of the convent.⁷³

- **The Cathedral of St. Anastasia**

Dating back from the 4th and 5th centuries, the Basilica was rebuilt during the 12th and 13th centuries, with a 15th c. bell tower, a remarkable example of Romanesque architecture!

- **St. Cross Church, Nin:**

This small, charming church is located in the town of Nin and dates back to the 9th to 11th century. Despite its modest size, it is an excellent example of Romanesque architecture with a distinctive shape, making it one of the most unique.⁷⁴

The Traveler's Perspective:

The Sacred Ways Of Europe — such as the Camino de Santiago, the Cyril and Methodius Route, TRANSROMANICA, and the St. Martin of Tours Route - offer profound opportunities for contemporary travellers seeking spirituality, sacred spaces, tranquility, and transformative experiences. These routes, rich in historical and cultural significance, align with modern needs for meaningful travel and personal growth.

These Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, including the **Camino de Santiago**, the **Cyril and Methodius Route**, and the **St. Martin of Tours Route**, play an important role in connecting Croatia's religious, spiritual, and cultural heritage with contemporary tourism trends. As such, deeply rooted in Christianity, they are becoming increasingly relevant to modern travellers who seek holistic, transformative, and reflective experiences. Each of these routes ties to Croatia's religious roots and aligns with current travel aspirations.

- **Camino de Santiago (Way of Saint James) :**

One of the most iconic Christian pilgrimage routes in Europe, symbolizes spiritual renewal and contemplation. While the main route passes through Spain, its impact resonates across Europe,

including Croatia, where local routes are part of the Camino network, often referred to as Camino Croatia. Croatia's rich Christian heritage, reflected in its churches, monasteries, and pilgrimage sites, offers travellers an opportunity for spiritual introspection while immersing themselves in cultural experiences. For many contemporary travellers, the Camino is not only a religious journey but also a **transformative travel experience**, providing time for self-discovery, and personal growth. Walking the Camino connects people with the area, history, and communities they pass through, allowing for a holistic and slow travel experience, which is increasingly sought after in today's fast-paced world, and affects the changes of human values.

Let us not forget that "values are key to explaining the changes of individuals and societies over time"⁷⁵. In Croatia, the Camino de Santiago encourages not just Christian pilgrims, but also individuals looking for a meaningful journey, merging heritage with personal well-being and values.⁷⁶

- The Cyril and Methodius Route:

Spans across a series of paths historically connected to the life and mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius. For modern visitors, this route is not just about exploring historical sites but also about engaging with the spiritual legacy that shaped the cultural identity of a significant part of Europe. Walking this route provides a contemplative experience that opens an insight into the roots of Slavic spirituality and its enduring influence. This route could appeal to modern travellers who are interested in **cultural tourism, religious history, literacy roots, and spiritual experiences**.

By walking the path tracing the churches and sites devoted to the memory of these early Christian missionaries, visitors can explore the deep roots of Christianity in Croatia, while also connecting with broader European early Christian traditions. The route which symbolizes the continuation of the teachers' legacy by their disciples is particularly attractive to those seeking a **holistic travel experience**, where they can reflect on the profound cultural and religious transformations that shaped Europe while engaging in spiritual contemplation.

For many contemporary travellers, the Cyril and Methodius Route offers a chance to explore not just Croatia's Christian heritage but also the cultural exchanges and dialogues that have shaped the region's history. This resonates with the modern desire for transformative travel experiences that combine **intellectual curiosity** with spiritual depth.

- St. Martin of Tours Route:

Saint Martin of Tours, one of the most beloved Christian saints, is celebrated for his humility, generosity, and dedication to the poor.

The St. Martin of Tours Route commemorates his legacy, which extends across Europe and includes Croatia. Saint Martin's influence can be seen in numerous churches and sites dedicated to him throughout Croatia, symbolizing the long-standing Christian values of charity and compassion.

This route invites travellers to explore not only the physical landscapes but also the moral and ethical landscapes of their own lives. The journey offers an opportunity for transformative travel, where the lessons of St. Martin's life can inspire contemporary pilgrims to live with greater kindness and humility.

The St. Martin Route is increasingly relevant for travellers seeking **meaningful and transformative travel experiences**. The story of Saint Martin, particularly the famous legend of him cutting his cloak in half to share with a beggar, resonates with contemporary values of **empathy, social justice, and community care**. These values align with modern travel trends, where individuals are seeking to engage with **local communities and authentic cultural experiences** that go beyond mere sightseeing.

Croatia, with its rich Christian history, offers visitors a chance to explore religious heritage and engage in **regenerative tourism activities**, reflecting Saint Martin's spirit of charity. This is in line with the growing trend of **voluntourism** and travel that fosters **personal transformation** through ethical and significant experiences.



Zadar, St. Anastasia Church © V. Klaric

- TRANSROMANICA:

Connects Romanesque architecture across Europe, offering travellers a journey through time and space

that **highlights the sacredness** of these ancient structures. Pre - Romanesque and Romanesque churches and monasteries, with their **austere beauty** and profound sense of history, offer visitors a serene environment for **reflection and meditation**. These sacred spaces provide a **unique tranquillity** that is increasingly sought after in today's fast-paced world, making them ideal for those seeking both spiritual and aesthetic enrichment.

New Aspirations in Travel and Tourism: Holistic and Spiritual Journeys⁷⁷

These Christian pilgrimage routes are deeply tied to Croatia's religious heritage, but they also offer **holistic travel experiences** that meet modern aspirations for **spiritual, meaningful, and transformative travel**. Today's travellers are increasingly seeking journeys that not only expose them to cultural heritage but also foster personal well-being, mindfulness, and deeper connections with their surroundings.

1. **Spiritual Renewal:** Each of these routes provides an opportunity for **spiritual reflection and renewal**, whether through walking the Camino, exploring the missionary work of Saints Cyril and Methodius, or following in the footsteps of Saint Martin of Tours. In a world where fast-paced travel is the norm, these routes offer a **slower, more meaningful experience**, where travellers can engage with their inner selves while connecting to the cultural and religious prospects they traverse.

2. **Transformative Travel:** The rise of **transformative travel**, where the journey has a lasting impact on the traveller's personal growth and values, aligns perfectly with these cultural routes. Walking in the paths of Christian saints and missionaries encourages **personal reflection** and a sense of purpose, offering travellers more than just a historical or religious experience, it provides a **life-changing journey**.

3. **Holistic Experience:** These routes combine aspects of **well-being, cultural immersion, and historical discovery**, which is particularly attractive to the **mindful traveller**. With increasing interest in **eco-conscious and sustainable tourism**, the routes promote responsible travel that respects cultural heritage and encourages **preservation** of both tangible and intangible heritage.

4. **Interconnectedness of Faith and Culture:** For many travellers, these routes offer a chance to explore the **intersection of faith and culture** in Croatia. They offer a **comprehensive experience**, where visitors can appreciate the **rich cultural context** of Croatia's Christian heritage while

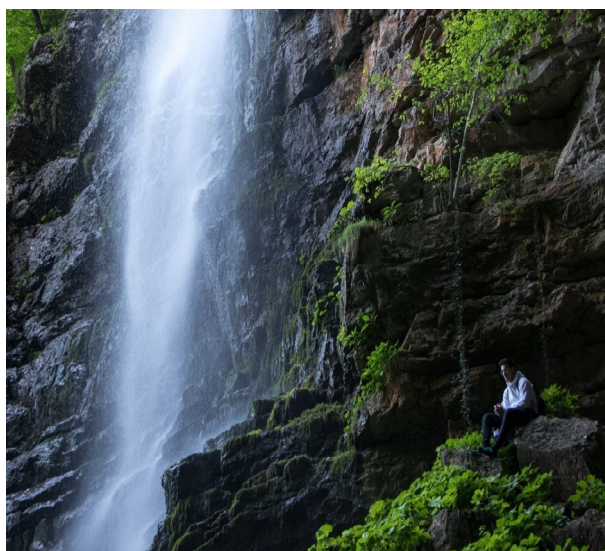
engaging with the **local traditions, histories, and sites** that continue to shape the nation's identity.



Dubrovnik, Franciscan Monastery Cloister © V.Klarić

In conclusion, the **Camino de Santiago, the Cyril and Methodius Route, and the St. Martin of Tours Route** serve as gateways to Croatia's Christian heritage while addressing contemporary travellers' needs for **spiritual and transformative experiences**. By combining religious history with modern aspirations for **purposeful travel**, these routes contribute to a **holistic approach** to tourism that fosters both **personal well-being** and a **deeper connection** to cultural and religious heritage. They open the door to a **new form of pilgrimage**, where the journey is not just about reaching a destination, but about the **inner transformation and cultural engagement** that takes place along the way.

Together, these Sacred Ways support the contemporary desire for meaning in travel, offering experiences that nourish the soul, provide peace, and encourage personal transformation in an increasingly chaotic world.



Gorski Kotar ©M.Skjarov

THE HEALTHY WAYS - a celebration of tradition and sustainability

12 - Routes of the Olive Tree

*The Olive Tree Route in Croatia is a cultural journey that celebrates the rich heritage and enduring significance of the olive tree in Mediterranean life. Croatia, with its fragile Adriatic coastline and islands, is home to ancient olive groves that have been part of the living economy for centuries. Croatia officially joined the Route of the Olive Tree in 2005, recognizing the deep-rooted traditions of olive cultivation that date back to the Roman and Illyrian periods. A key highlight of the route is the island of Korčula, renowned for its rich cultural intangible heritage and exceptional olive oil production, particularly its eco-friendly products. In 2016, the Korčula Tourist Board participated in the «Well-O-Live» project, led by the DUNEA Dubrovnik-Neretva Regional Development Agency, which aimed to promote wellness tourism linked to olive oil heritage. This initiative further strengthened Korčula's position as a valuable point on the Olive Tree Route.*⁷⁸

*In 2018, the route expanded with the inclusion of new members, further enriching the cultural and gastronomic offerings of the journey. Over 20 private producers have since joined the route, showcasing Croatia's dedication to preserving and promoting its olive oil heritage. Among these is also the **Olive Museum Klis**⁷⁹, which became a member of the route in 2021, offering visitors an immersive experience into the history and production of olive oil in the region.*

Stretching across Istria, Dalmatia, and the islands, the Olive Tree Route connects picturesque villages, historic olive mills, and centuries-old groves where some trees are over a thousand years old. Along the route, travellers can engage in olive oil tastings, participate in traditional harvesting methods, and learn about the cultural and medicinal uses of olives throughout history.

The Olive Tree Route in Croatia offers a sensory experience through the tasting of world-renowned oils and provides understanding of the cultural topography modelled by this timeless symbol of peace, prosperity, and resilience. It's a unique journey through Croatia's Mediterranean identity, connecting the past with the present in a celebration of tradition and sustainability.

Inventory of Actions and Benefits:

"The Flavors of Korčula": Korčula Tourist Board plays a key role in promoting the island's rich olive

oil heritage through various events and initiatives, particularly «The Flavors of Korčula Island.» This event, held in April/May or September/October, presents the island's olive oil producers alongside other local products, emphasizing the island's commitment to sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems.

The event, organized in collaboration with the Lumbarda, Smokvica, Blato, and Vela Luka Tourist Boards, includes on-site tastings and tours of eco-friendly olive oil producers, enhancing the visitor experience all presented at <https://visitkorculaisland.com/en/olive-oil/> as well in the brochure "The Flavours of Korčula Island".⁸⁰

Benefits achieved:

The «Flavors of Korčula Island» event has evolved from a weekly tasting in Korčula Town (2017-2019) to a more immersive experience that includes walking tours to producers' locations. This shift has increased local **financial revenue** and highlighted the island's cultural and **gastronomic heritage**. The event is supported by the Croatian National Tourist Board, the Dubrovnik-Neretva Tourist Board, and Dubrovnik-Neretva County.⁸¹

- Interpreted intangible heritage - Olive museum Klis:

The Olive Museum Klis, a member of the Route since 2021, has also gained recognition, becoming a finalist for the **European Museum of the Year Award in 2023**. The museum offers olive oil tasting experiences for both adults and children, aiming to preserve and promote the importance of the olive tree in Croatian culture.

Collaboration practices and Extension possibilities:

Korčula Island is not only part of the Route of the Olive Tree but also participates in the European Cultural Route of Saint Martin of Tours. With the Korčula Tourist Board's membership in the Camino Croatia NGO, there is potential for the island to join the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Route, further enhancing its cultural tourism offerings. Additionally, Korčula could expand its participation in European cultural routes by joining the Iter Vitis Route or the Napoleon Route. Such extensions would require adjustments in tourism product design and potential applications for financial support to ensure smaller municipalities can effectively participate in these projects.

13 - Iter Vitis

This Cultural Route in Croatia focuses on the heritage of viticulture and the ancient wine-growing traditions across Europe, with a special emphasis on Croatian wine culture. It connects significant wine-producing regions, showcasing the relationship between wine, local history, and culture, and fostering sustainable wine tourism. The only officially registered member in Croatia is the association Klub članova selo, which coordinates activities through the wine regions such as i.e. Kvarner or Ilok.



Pag, Olive grove Lun © Ministry of Culture and Media

14 - European Route Of Historic Thermal Towns

The European Association of Historic Thermal Towns (E.H.T.T.A.) was founded to create a permanent European organization with the aim of forming a network of towns that can boast of a recognizable tradition of thermal waters and a rich heritage, in order to preserve their history, to preserve and protect their cultural heritage as thermal cities, and to improve their promotion and policies. Likewise, through the activities of the Association, the goal is to strengthen the cooperation of thermal cities and spas on the Trans-European level.

Members of the Route "Thermal cities" present local authorities recognized since at least the 19th century as centres for healing waters, where such waters have significantly influenced the city's development, including its architecture, tourism, and cultural initiatives. These cities typically feature one or more buildings related to thermal spa culture that are classified as historical monuments.

Membership in E.H.T.T.A. promotes Croatian cities within a prestigious group of European towns and offers networking advantages when applying for EU structural funds. The association's backing enhances the visibility and appeal of its members.



Varazdinske Toplice, Aquae Iasae, EHTTA © V.Klarić

Good practice: Institutional support

Representatives of the **Croatian Chamber of Economy** initiated the candidacy of the City of Daruvar, along with the Daruvar Spa, to become the first Croatian member of E.H.T.T.A. in 2011. It provided capacity building and promotion. This milestone allowed Daruvar, and subsequently Lipik and Varazdinske Toplice, to join an international network of historic thermal towns.

The E.H.T.T.A. participation in the International Spa Heritage Festival in Saratoga Spa State, organized by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation of the State of New York⁸², with the support of the **Croatian National Tourism Office**, proves to be an exemplary model of a new elaborated possibility of cooperation in promotion.⁸³

15 - The Historic Pharmacies Route

"The European Route of Historical Pharmacies and Medicinal Gardens recounts the development of botanical and pharmaceutical medicine in Europe through sites that played a crucial role in the history of medical knowledge. Medicinal gardens were places where herbalists cultivated and studied plants with healing properties. Treasures of biodiversity, these gardens continue to preserve ancestral knowledge. Historical pharmacies, with their collections of antique bottles, recipe books and medical instruments, reflect the evolution of pharmaceutical science. Combining cultural and natural heritage,

this route invites visitors to explore exceptional botanical environments while exploring the history of medicine. It promotes a historical heritage that is a source of memory, cultural identity and sustainable human development.

Croatia joined the project in 2022, when the JGL Pharmacy museum from Rijeka joined the Aromas Itinerarium Salutis association at the invitation of the organizers from the University of Valencia.”⁸⁴

Good practice: Institutional support for Promotion

“JGL Pharmacy museum was the host of the 2nd International Forum “Hygeia Legacy,” a collaborative educational and professional event conducted in partnership with the Spanish association Aromas Itinerarium Salutis and Rijeka Tourist Board, with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Media, University of Rijeka, the City of Rijeka and Rijeka City Museum. The forum was held on 11th and 12th March 2024, bringing together experts in the history of pharmacy, museology, tourism, and medicinal plants from 11 countries. Over the two days, focus was on developing the project titled “European Route of Historic Pharmacies and Medicinal Herb Gardens.”⁸⁵

Croatia could consider extending this cultural route to include Croatia’s historical pharmacies in Dubrovnik and Zagreb, enriching the narrative of health and wellness that is central to the route. Two significant sites stand out: the **Old Pharmacy in the Franciscan Monastery in Dubrovnik** and «**K crnom orlu**» (By the Black Eagle) in Zagreb.

The **Old Pharmacy in Dubrovnik**, founded in 1317, is one of Europe’s oldest, originally serving Franciscan friars before becoming public. Today, it operates as both a functional pharmacy and a museum, offering products made from ancient recipes and showcasing historical pharmaceutical tools.

In Zagreb, «**By the Black Eagle**,» established in 1355, is the oldest continuously operating pharmacy in the city. Located in the Upper Town near the Stone Gate, this pharmacy was founded by **Niccolo Alighieri**, the great-grandson of Dante Alighieri. Its name is derived from a neighbouring inn, emphasizing its historical importance to travellers. The “K crnom orlu” pharmacy hosts exclusive visits for groups of up to 15 people that need to be pre-arranged with the Zagreb City Pharmacy and adjusted to the pharmacy’s working hours. The visits are designed for local and foreign guests related to the health profession.⁸⁶

The traveller’s perspective

*Cultural routes such as the Olive Tree Route, Iter Vitis, the European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA), and the Historic Pharmacies Route offer unique opportunities for contemporary visitors seeking wellness, well-being, ecological sustainability, and transformative travel experiences. These routes align with the growing demand for travel experiences that promote regenerative tourism, health, well-being, and a connection to nature. The **Olive Tree Route** emphasizes the cultural and nutritional importance of olive oil, a cornerstone of the Mediterranean diet known for its health benefits. Visiting olive groves and participating in olive picking or olive oil tastings allow travellers to experience sustainable agricultural practices and learn about the historical significance of olive cultivation. This connection to traditional ways of living promotes both physical and mental well-being and provides regeneration to communities.*

*The **Iter Vitis Route**, which celebrates viticulture, offers visitors the chance to explore vineyards that produce wines using eco-friendly practices. Wine tasting in these regions often includes organic and biodynamic wines, reflecting a commitment to environmental sustainability. The route provides a holistic experience that combines cultural immersion with the benefits of consuming natural, health-promoting products.*

***EHTTA** routes focus on historic thermal towns where natural thermal waters have been used for healing and relaxation for centuries. These towns offer modern spa experiences rooted in historical traditions, providing visitors with a revitalizing escape that promotes wellness through natural therapies.*

*Finally, the **Historic Pharmacies Route** invites travellers to explore the evolution of pharmaceutical science through visits to ancient pharmacies and medicinal gardens. These sites preserve traditional knowledge about natural remedies and herbal medicine, offering insights into sustainable practices that have promoted health for generations. Together, all routes cater to contemporary travellers’ desires for destinations that offer more than just hedonism and relaxation—they provide healing and holistic experiences that enhance well-being through cultural, ecological, and historical connections.*

THE FANTASY WAYS

Cultural routes connected with literature, fiction, fairy tales, imaginative characters like professor Balthasar present a kind of a cabinet of curiosities in our fantasy. Our life is full of collecting stories,

real or imaginative, rich beyond any kind of storytelling yet dependent on it, it becomes story living on those routes.



Zagreb, Art in the Park © V.Klarić

16 - European Fairy Tail Route

The European Fairy Tale Route (EFTR), conceived by the National Carlo Collodi Foundation, celebrates European fairy tales, myths, folklore, and oral narratives, primarily aimed at children. Managed by the international Non-Profit European Fairy Tale Route Association based in Collodi, Italy, the route unites cultural associations, foundations, and research centres dedicated to preserving and promoting fairy tales as a vital part of European literature and cultural heritage.



Profesor Baltazar © Professor Baltazar Association Zagreb

In Croatia, the EFTR is highlighted by the town of Ogulin, known as the «Town of Fairy Tales» and the birthplace of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, Croatia's most beloved children's author. The route promotes the education of children through the transmission of

fundamental values such as freedom, solidarity, justice, and respect for people, nature, and animals. The Ogulin Fairy Tale Festival and Ivana's House of Fairy Tales serve as key attractions, offering immersive experiences that connect local folklore with broader European cultural identity.

The EFTR also contributes to the economic and social development of its regions. Croatia's involvement was furthered by the introduction of Professor Baltazar, a character who embodies the route's values, during the Science Picnic event in Gornja Stubica in September 2022.



EProfesor Baltazar Exhibition
© Professor Baltazar Association Zagreb

Inventory of Actions and Benefits:

- *Integrating cultural heritage with innovative educational practices:*

Science Picnic: The project by the Professor Baltazar Association promotes science and art through interactive activities. The Science Picnic supports the European Fairy Tale Route by fostering a broader educational perspective that enhances fairy tale promotion. The event's emphasis on the STREAM concept, integrating Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics, stresses the value of arts and reading alongside STEM, promoting a more holistic educational experience. By incorporating art and science through workshops, exhibitions, and performances, the Picnic creates an environment where cultural narratives can be explored creatively and interactively. Additionally, the use of Professor Baltazar's animated films and the provision of a methodology manual for teachers will facilitate the incorporation of fairy tales into educational settings. This approach supports the dissemination of fairy tales and aligns with the European Fairy Tale Route's goal of integrating cultural heritage with innovative educational practices. Thus, the Science Picnic helps bridge cultural promotion with educational enrichment,

reinforcing the route's objectives.⁸⁷

Looking ahead: the design of tourism products is planned that will merge educational objectives with local cultural elements highlights a commitment to enriching student experiences. By integrating cultural workshops, local art exhibitions, and hands-on projects, these initiatives can enhance educational engagement and promote cultural preservation. Collaborations with local artisans and educators can ensure that these efforts are both educationally impactful and culturally relevant, thereby supporting sustainable tourism and community involvement.

Visibility planned: Improving visibility for the Route is a key component of the project, focusing on comprehensive mapping and signposting initiatives that connect to school and extracurricular activities. Detailed mapping will provide clear, accessible information about the Route's points of interest, cultural landmarks, and educational opportunities, ensuring that visitors and locals can easily navigate and appreciate the area's rich offerings. Signposting will be strategically placed at key locations to guide travellers along the Route, highlighting important stops and providing educational insights.

Collaborations: The initiatives outlined demonstrate a strong commitment to fostering educational growth and cultural enrichment through strategic collaborations and innovative practices. One key action has been the establishment of connections with various Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, such as the European Route of Historic Gardens and the Historic Cafés Route. This collaboration has been instrumental in spreading the appreciation of fairy tales across historical sites, enhancing cultural engagement and educational outreach. Efforts to define new links with additional Cultural Routes are also underway, further expanding the network's impact.

17 - Women Writers Route

The International Foundation Forum of Slavic Cultures is the initiator and organizer of the new cultural route of the Council of Europe, dedicated to the European women writers. A new cultural route initially combining several Slavic countries, and broadened later on, should bring into the attention the outstanding life stories and literary works, which marked the struggle for human and women's rights in the 20th century. Seeing that Croatia has two very important female figures when it comes to women writers at the turn of the twentieth century – Ivana

Brlić-Mažuranić and Marija Jurić-Zagorka – the country was one of the co-founders of this Route: firstly, through Ivana's House of Fairy Tales and later with involvement of the Centre for Women's Studies; Memorial Flat of Marija Jurić Zagorka, the City of Ogulin and the Tourist Board of Ogulin.

The members of the WWR are universities and libraries, but also museums and visitors' centres. All such institutions already have an input in the tourist offer or their respective communities, but WWR provides an opportunity to expand that offer even more. For example, in Ogulin at Ivana's House of Fairy Tales, a free guided tour through its permanent exhibition is sometimes organized for all interested tourists as a part of WWR.⁸⁸



Ogulin, Ivana's House of Fairy Tales © D. Blažević

Inventory of Activities

International Women's Day at Ivana's House of Fairy Tales: *All activities proposed along the Route follow the dichotomy of activities connected with specific international dates and common types of activities along the Route. Each of them is aimed at a specific audience, but most of them have a potential to attract each specific group of visitors, depending on the chosen mode. One of such common dates is the International Women's Day, and one specific type of audience is children, when a creative workshop took place at Ivana's House of Fairy tales.*

The Route's institutions offer activities centered around significant dates and common events, celebrating a diverse range of literary genres and cultural heritage. They honour various novelists, authors, and artists, presenting their contributions and national backgrounds. Despite the heterogeneity of the institutions and their target audiences, unified programs are developed based on key dates and collective events. This approach ensures coverage for different audiences, including children, adults, families, the scientific community, and tourists, fostering a meaningful and inclusive cultural experience along the Route.

Extensions: experiential and inspiring

The Route initially included several Slavic countries who already had previous collaborations with the Forum of Slavic Countries situated in Slovenia. From that point on the network has already spread to include more members from Ireland, Norway, Portugal... The strategy of this cultural route is to construct rather than create.

The aim is to make the most of synergies with existing projects to minimize costs; implementations times and, in short, optimize resources and existing infrastructures. A cultural route will include access to heritage that is far more experiential and active than a passive approach in creating experiences, training and socialization. Thus, there is a lot more potential for more members from other European countries to join!



Dubrovnik, St. Dominic Church © V. Klarić

The visitors perspective

The European Fairy Tale Route and the Women Writers Route offer significant benefits to contemporary visitors by addressing their experiential, inspirational, and educational needs:

Experiential Aspirations: European Fairy Tale Route: Engages visitors with interactive experiences such as workshops and themed exhibitions based on fairy tales. These immersive activities allow visitors to explore and participate in the magic of storytelling, often through hands-on workshops and guided tours in historically significant locations. **Women Writers Route:** Provides experiential encounters through visits to memorials, literary museums, and cultural centres dedicated to influential women writers. Activities like creative workshops and historical reenactments offer deep, engaging experiences related to the lives and works of these writers.

Inspirational Aspirations: European Fairy Tale Route: Inspires visitors by showcasing the cultural and literary significance of fairy tales. By highlighting stories that have shaped cultural heritage and personal values, it encourages visitors to appreciate and reflect on the timeless themes of these narratives. **Women Writers Route:** Inspires through the exploration of pioneering women in literature. Learning about the achievements and struggles of these writers motivates visitors to appreciate their contributions and draw inspiration from their stories of perseverance and creativity.

Educational Aspirations: European Fairy Tale Route: Offers educational value by integrating fairy tales into learning experiences. Through workshops, exhibitions, and storytelling sessions, visitors gain insights into cultural history, literary analysis, and the art of storytelling. **Women Writers Route:** Educates visitors about the historical and cultural impact of women writers. Educational programs, such as guided tours and interactive displays, provide knowledge about literary history, gender issues, and the evolution of women's roles in literature.

Both routes cater to the modern visitor's desire for serious, interactive, and enriching experiences, blending cultural heritage with contemporary educational and inspirational elements.



Nin, Ancient Salt pans, Salt Route possibilities ©V.Klarić

8. POTENTIAL FOR NEW CULTURAL ROUTES INITIATIVES EMERGING AT NATIONAL LEVEL

EMERGING THEMES

1. The European Route of Historic Theatres
2. Salt Routes
3. The Neanderthal Route
4. Drywall Stone Routes
5. Wooden Architecture Route
6. Routes of the Medieval Frescoes
7. Bećarac and Ganga Route
8. Hidden Medieval Towns Routes
9. Mary's Route -Old Shrines Route
10. St. Paul the Apostle Cultural Route
11. Roman Heritage Route: Iter Romanum
12. Stećci Medieval Tombstones Route
13. Lacemaking Route
14. European Route of Historical Gardens
15. European Route of Cistercian Abbeys
16. Route of Prehistoric Rock Art
17. Transhumance trails

Croatia's rich and diverse cultural heritage provides numerous opportunities for the development of new cultural routes. Several potential initiatives could emerge at the national level, each focusing on unique aspects of Croatia's history and culture:

- *The European Route of Historic Theatres:*

gathers 120 best preserved historic theatre buildings in Europe on the European Route of Historic Theatres. These theatres can be visited

during the day, in a sightseeing tour. The Route is divided into 12 part routes, each spanning one or several countries, and each connecting about a dozen theatres. Croatia is a part of the Adriatic Route with the Hvar Theatre in the Arsenal created in 1682⁸⁹, making it the oldest theatre in Croatia today.

- Salt Routes:

Building on Croatia's renowned ancient salt pans and culinary traditions, new routes could be developed to present traditional salt production, traditional food producers, and gastronomic heritage. Salt Pans in Nin, Ston and Pag present a huge potential with their more than thousand years old histories.

- The Neanderthal Route:

(Danube's Archaeological e-Landscapes' projects results) In addition to the work and ideas developed within the Danube's Archaeological eLandscapes Project, an initiative to establish such a route—the European Neanderthal Route—has been launched by the network of scholars and cultural managers gathered around the COST Action entitled Integrating Neanderthal Legacy: From Past to Present, abbreviated as iNEAL. Such a cultural route would fully appraise the wide spectrum of present-day perspectives on Neanderthals, from the public appreciation of their role as long-gone partial ancestors of modern Eurasian populations, to the valorisation of their legacy in broader cultural terms, including for instance the cultural tourism angle.⁹⁰

- Drywall Stone Routes:

Croatia, with its rich tradition of drywall construction, holds significant potential for developing a dedicated Drywall Route. This cultural route would celebrate and preserve the ancient art of building stone walls without mortar, a practice deeply embedded in the country's rural scenery and cultural heritage.

Cultural and Historical Significance: Drywall construction, known locally as «suhozid,» is an integral part of Croatia's historical and cultural identity. These structures, often used for agricultural purposes, define the rural terrain of regions like Dalmatia⁹¹, Istria⁹², and the Kvarner islands (Dragodid Association⁹³) some of these

already are part of the European Drystone route⁹⁴. Recognizing and promoting this craft can enhance cultural tourism by attracting visitors interested in traditional building techniques and rural heritage.

Educational and Training Opportunities:

Establishing a Drywall Route provides an excellent platform for educational initiatives and workshops. Training programs can be designed to teach the techniques of drywall construction, ensuring the transfer of skills to younger generations and preserving this intangible cultural heritage. Collaboration with local schools, universities, and cultural institutions can foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of this ancient craft.

Sustainable Tourism and Community Engagement:

The Drywall Route can contribute to sustainable tourism by promoting eco-friendly practices and encouraging visitors to explore rural areas. Engaging local artisans and builders in the promotion and maintenance of the route can create job opportunities and strengthen community ties.

Conservation and Environmental Benefits:

Drywall structures play a crucial role in environmental conservation by preventing soil erosion and supporting biodiversity. The route can highlight these benefits, raising awareness about the environmental significance of traditional building practices. Conservation projects linked to the Drywall Route can attract funding and support from environmental organizations.

Cultural Exchange and International Cooperation:

Joining the Drywall Route with similar initiatives in other countries can foster international cultural exchange and cooperation. Sharing knowledge and best practices with regions that have a strong tradition of drywall construction can enhance the route's appeal and contribute to a broader understanding of this cultural heritage.

The development of a Drywall Route in Croatia offers significant potential for cultural preservation, education, sustainable tourism, community engagement, environmental conservation, and international cooperation. This initiative can serve as a model for integrating cultural heritage into contemporary tourism and conservation strategies.

- Wooden Architecture Route:

The Wooden Architecture Route could be an innovative initiative aimed at preserving and promoting the Croatian unique heritage of wooden

structures. This route celebrates the traditional craftsmanship and architectural styles integral to Croatia's cultural context. Wooden architecture in Croatia represents a significant aspect of the Croatian cultural and historical heritage. From rural villages to religious buildings, wooden structures reflect traditional building techniques and regional identities. The initiative highlights the diversity and historical value of these structures, promoting them as key cultural tourism attractions. *"About forty traditionally constructed wooden churches made of oak, some of which have walls filled with woven twigs and compact earth, are still preserved in Turopolje, Pokuplje and Slavonia. Although most of these churches are from the Baroque period, the oldest type found among them is that of a small one-room chapel, the primaeval form. During the Baroque period they had richer forms, porches, and polygonal sanctuaries. Their interiors are either quite rustic or decorated with painted decorations and figures of saints on side walls and on the panels of their coffered ceilings."*⁹⁵



Čigoč, Posavina, Traditional wooden architecture © V.Klarić



Plitvice Lake © Ministry of Culture and Media

Turopolje and Pokuplje are regions of the primary interest for the Wooden Architecture Route. These areas are known for its traditional wooden houses, which feature distinctive gabled roofs and intricate wooden decorations. An outstanding example of wooden ecclesiastical architecture in Turopolje is the Old Wooden Church of St. Barbara, dating back to the 17th century among other 16 wooden baroque chapels in the region⁹⁶. **Samobor** is also notable for its wooden structures, while **Moslavina**

and Slavonia feature wooden granaries and barns that illustrate traditional agricultural practices. These sites provide a glimpse into the historical lifestyle and building techniques of the region.

In the **Posavina region**, traditional wooden houses are characterized by their raised platforms, adapted to the flood-prone areas.⁹⁷

The **Zagorje region** hosts numerous wooden houses and churches, blending Gothic and Baroque influences. These structures not only add to the region's picturesque scenery but also embody the rich cultural history of Northern Croatia.

The Wooden Architecture Route could offer regenerative tours, educational and creative workshops, and cultural festivals to engage both locals and tourists. By promoting these sites, the initiative should preserve traditional building skills and enhance cultural awareness. Additionally, the route highlights the importance of conserving wooden structures within their natural and cultural setting.

The Wooden Architecture Route in Croatia could be a significant step towards preserving and celebrating the country's rich wooden architectural heritage. Including diverse sites across various regions, the route may be an attraction for cultural tourists while contributing to the preservation of traditional craftsmanship and the revitalization of rural communities. Such initiative could enhance cultural tourism and ensure that the traditional skills and historical significance of wooden architecture are passed down to future generations. In this way, Croatia's wooden architectural heritage could be preserved, appreciated, and integrated into the broader narrative of the nation's cultural identity.

- Routes of the Medieval Frescoes:

Not so long ago, the House of Frescoes in Draguč launched a project to create a cultural route based on Istrian frescoes, the first such route in Europe. The purpose of cultural routes is to connect all buildings, institutions, associations and individuals engaged in research, practical protection and presentation of a cultural phenomenon. Istrian frescoes are one of the valuable cultural phenomena. In addition to their immeasurable historical value, which experts and scientists have recognized for a long time and about which a whole series of scientific papers have been written, it is necessary to highlight all the effort invested in their restoration.⁹⁸

- Routes Celebrating Intangible Cultural Heritage:

Focusing on Croatia's rich traditions and customs, routes such as the «**Croatian Bečarac and Ganga Route**» could present festivals, traditional crafts, and music, preserving and promoting intangible cultural heritage "On 17 February 2023, the Becharac Museum was officially opened in Pleternica which construction was, among other sources, co-financed through Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Croatia – Bosnia and Herzegovina"⁹⁹.

- Hidden Medieval Towns Routes:

Croatia's numerous medieval towns and castles offer a rich potential for new cultural routes. A «**Medieval Croatian Cities Route**» could connect sites like Zadar, Trogir, Rab and the cities of Slavonia, offering immersive historical experiences as already researched¹⁰⁰.



Karlovac, Dubovac Castle © Ministry of Culture and Media

- Mary's Route - Old Shrines Route:

Croatia's religious heritage offers potential for new pilgrimage routes. The «**Croatian Marian Pilgrimage Route**» could connect major Marian shrines, such as Marija Bistrica and Trsat, catering to spiritual and religious tourists.

- Roman Heritage Route: Iter Romanum:

Roman Heritage Routes: Iter Romanum or the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route could be expanded to include additional Roman sites in Dalmatia and Istria. Given Croatia's significant Roman archaeological sites, even new routes

focusing on Roman heritage could be developed, as explained in the COE Cultural Routes Feasibility Study on the Roman Heritage Route in the Adriatic and Ionian Region published in 2019.



Zadar, Archaeological Museum, Roman heritage © V.Klarić

- St. Paul the Apostle Cultural Route¹⁰¹ potential lies on the island of Mljet¹⁰²:

The St. Paul the Apostle Cultural Route celebrates the life and missionary journeys of St. Paul. Croatia offers a convincing addition to this route, particularly the island of Mljet, which is linked to St. Paul through historical and scholarly evidence suggesting that his shipwreck described in the Acts of the Apostles may have occurred there. This inclusion would enhance Croatia's religious tourism profile while contributing to the broader narrative of early Christianity's spread. https://www.croatianhistory.net/etf/st_paul.html¹⁰³

Historical and Religious Context: The Croatian island of Mljet, mentioned as Melita in ancient texts, has a longstanding tradition connecting it to St. Paul. Ignjat Đurđević's 1730 monograph, provides substantial evidence supporting Mljet as the site of St. Paul's shipwreck. The island's unique geographical features, such as its «two seas» described in Acts 27:27, and its connection to early Christian narratives, make it a significant destination for religious and cultural heritage.

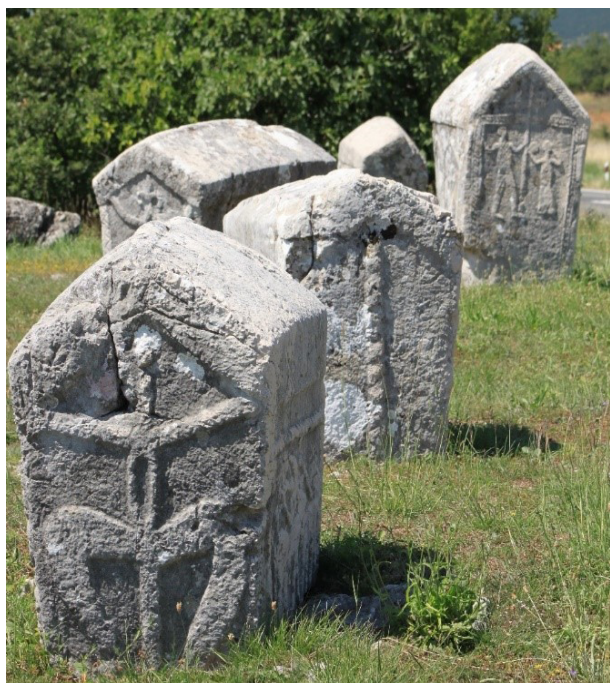
Key Sites and Activities: Mljet Island: Includes the Benedictine monastery on Veliko Jezero and the

bays of Nad Garma and Podškoj, aligning with the biblical description of the shipwreck. Dubrovnik's Dominican Monastery: Hosts a painting depicting St. Paul as a protector of the city, highlighting the Apostle's cultural and spiritual legacy.

Benefits of Inclusion: Incorporating Croatia into the St. Paul Cultural Route would Highlight Mljet's unique Christian heritage, the St. Paul narrative gains an enriching dimension rooted in Adriatic tradition and spirituality, attracts religious tourists seeking meaningful and transformative experiences and finally strengthen international collaboration with existing members of the route.

- Stećci Medieval Tombstones Route:

„Stećci“ are monumental mediaeval tombstones, mostly carved out of limestone and usually rectangular in shape and with a flat or gable-top surface. There are both recumbent and upright versions of the stone monoliths. Stećci are often decorated with inscriptions or rudimentary images, for instance spirals, arcades, stars or religious symbols, but also with more complex motifs such as animals, chivalric tournaments and, most famously, the image of a man with his right hand raised.



Cista Velika, Stećci Medieval Tombstones
© Ministry of Culture and Media

Examinations suggest that the first stećci were built in the second half of the 12th century and reached their peak in the 14th and 15th century.

In the early 16th century, their use completely ceased. There are 4,400 stećci spread over two necropolises in Croatia. They can be found at Velika and Mala Crljivica, Cista Velika and Dubravka/St Barbara, Konavle. The Mala Crljivica site is about 55 kilometres east of Split, so it can easily be reached by car in about an hour. The site at Dubravka is located just an hour's drive south of Dubrovnik.

The stećci are exceptional testimony to the spiritual, artistic and historical aspects of the medieval cultures of southeastern Europe, their reliefs, including decorative, symbolic, and religious motives as well as scenes from everyday life, are an extraordinary testimony of medieval culture.

- Lacemaking Route:

Lace is independent porous handiwork originating from the Renaissance period on the Mediterranean and Western Europe. The main lacemaking techniques produce needle point and bobbin lace.

The difference between the lacemaking in European countries and our country lies in its creators. In Europe, lacemaking was in the hands of nuns, bourgeoisie and nobility, while in Croatia it was transferred from them to the hands of rural women in small villages. They have made lace for traditional clothes and furnishings.

Nowadays, there are three main centres of lacemaking in Croatia, whose work is a continuation of the long-lasting lacemaking tradition. These are: Lepoglava in Hrvatsko zagorje with bobbin lace, Pag on the Adriatic with needle point lace and Hvar on the Dalmatian island with aloe lace.

Each variety of lace has long been created by rural women as a source of additional income and has left a permanent mark on the culture of its region. The craft both produces an important component of traditional clothes and is itself testimony to a living cultural tradition.

Expansion of existing routes:

- Transhumance trails:

“Transhumance has played an essential role in shaping European culture. It has given rise to a varied heritage, both tangible and intangible, which has nurtured a cultural landscape of pastures and meadows meticulously tended by humans, in harmony with nature, for thousands of years.”¹⁰⁴

Transhumance, the seasonal migration of livestock and shepherds, represents a profound intersection of culture, nature, and tradition. Croatia's participation in the Transhumance Trail would add a rich dimension to this European narrative, rooted in the country's unique Dinaric Mountain region. The Dinaric transhumance tradition, practiced since the Neolithic period, embodies both tangible and intangible heritage. The migration of herders and livestock between summer highland pastures and lowland winter grazing areas reflects a symbiotic relationship with nature that has shaped the region's landscapes, biodiversity, and culture for millennia. Evidence of this practice is preserved in archaeological remains, epigraphic monuments (Written stone and Dolabela inscription, Gospić contract from 1887).

Croatia's inclusion could be supported by the fact that *"The remains of the transhumance can be found in fragments today in the mountainous areas of Istria, Velebit, Lička Plješivica and Dinara, and the demand for traditional products is slowly recovering in the context of the original gastronomic and tourist offer. The preservation of this type of animal husbandry is extremely important for the Republic of Croatia, both from the aspect of reviving the areas in question, the recognition of identity and tradition, and also from the aspect of biodiversity through the preservation of mountain pasture habitats and the economy through the exploitation of marginal mountain soils."*¹⁰⁵



Podinarje, Transhumance, the seasonal droving of livestock © Ministry of Culture and Media

- Réseau Art Nouveau Network :

Croatia's inclusion in the Réseau Art Nouveau Network (RANN) would be both fitting and mutually beneficial. The network, which fosters cooperation and promotion of Art Nouveau

heritage, could significantly benefit from Croatia's unique contributions, while Croatia could use the partnership to elevate its cultural profile internationally.

Rich Art Nouveau Heritage: Croatia boasts a significant collection of Art Nouveau architecture, particularly in Zagreb, which was at the forefront of modern architectural and artistic trends during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Architects like Otto Wagner, Rudolf Lubynski, Vjekoslav Bastl, Aladar Baranyai, Viktor Kovačić or Ignjat Fischer played pivotal roles in shaping Croatia's Art Nouveau style, known locally as Secession. The peak of style was realized in the work of architect Rudolf Lubinski, the National and University Library in Zagreb, completed in 1913 and arranged according to the principle of total design. Iconic buildings in Zagreb; Rijeka and Osijek showcase the distinctive floral motifs, curved lines, and functional elegance emblematic of the movement. Zagreb Museum of Arts and Crafts, boasting with the strong Art Nouveau collection is one of the first candidates for membership.



Adriatic Sea © V. Klarić

- European Route of Historical Gardens:

Croatia has already been part of the Route of Historic Gardens in the past, and can contribute to it in the future even more with sites such as the Arboretum Trsteno near Dubrovnik, one of Europe's oldest botanical gardens, reflecting Mediterranean influences and Renaissance design. These gardens showcase biodiversity, artful landscaping, and centuries of cultural exchange.

- *Route of Prehistoric Rock Art:*

Croatia's prehistoric sites, like the Romuald's cave in Istria, features 30000 year old prehistoric cave drawings that provide insights into early human life. The cave paintings have been discovered in 2010. These elements align with efforts to preserve and interpret Europe's shared prehistoric legacy.

- *European Route of Cistercian Abbeys:*

Presents also a great potential. The Cistercians came to Croatia at the beginning of the 13th century. The oldest is the Abbey of St. Mary in Topusko, founded in 1205 by King Andrew II. Abbeys also existed in Senjska Draga (1214), Kutjevo (1232), Dolac in Zagreb (1315) and elsewhere¹⁰⁶. Croatia's Cistercian Abbey of Topusko, with its medieval roots, exemplifies the monastic architecture and spiritual traditions of the order. By highlighting these sites, Croatia can deepen connections between its

cultural landmarks and Europe's broader narratives of history, art, and faith, contributing to shared heritage and sustainable tourism.



Rab © Ministry of Culture and Media



NIn © V.Klarić

9. REVIEW OF NATIONAL FINANCING INSTRUMENTS

Effective financing is crucial for the development and maintenance of cultural routes. Croatia's national financial instruments supporting cultural routes focus on enhancing cultural tourism, preserving heritage and fostering regional cooperation within European framework.

Croatia's location and cultural richness make it an ideal contributor to various European cultural routes. Several funding mechanisms, both direct and indirect, support cultural routes, emphasizing heritage preservation, sustainable tourism and cross-border cooperation:

NATIONAL FUNDS AND PROGRAMS FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM¹⁰⁷

1. Ministry of Culture and Media funds (MCM) funds are regulated through the Law on Financing Public Needs in Culture¹⁰⁸. MCM provides direct grants for heritage preservation

and cultural initiatives, with funds allocated annually. These grants support activities such as cultural heritage conservation and restoration, construction, reconstruction and equipping of cultural infrastructure, museum modernizations, digitalization of archives and educational projects that promote cultural heritage visual arts, interdisciplinary and new artistic and cultural practices, cultural and artistic amateurism¹⁰⁹. Specifically, a Decision was also adopted on determining the criteria and procedure for co-financing projects approved under the European Union programme Creative Europe – Culture sub-programme, implemented by the European Commission. The funds of the Ministry of Culture and Media will co-finance the activities

of projects in which Croatian project partners participate in the status of lead partner or project partners in a project within the Creative Europe programme - Culture sub-programme, in one of the following programme calls where one of four correlates with cultural routes "European networks of cultural and creative organisations." MCM also provides funding in line with UNESCO competitions.

- 2. Tourism Development Fund:** Administered by the **Ministry of Tourism and Sport**, this fund supports the development of public tourism infrastructure, educational activities and scholarships, inclusive tourism development, including public tender for co-financing projects of associations in tourism. The Ministry also provides grants based on the Competitiveness of the Tourism Economy Program. In addition to the main goal - Green and digital transition of entrepreneurs in the entire value chain of tourism and hospitality, this Program contributes also to the development of sustainable tourism products, development of innovative tourist products and services applicable for cultural routes), circular economy, and increasing energy efficiency¹¹⁰. Fund supports projects related to education (professions in tourism), competitiveness of the tourism economy, development of public tourism infrastructure (e.g., interpretation centers), associations in tourism for the development of new tourism products end education.
- 3. Croatian Tourist Board (HTZ)** based on the Program for Granting Small Value Aid (de minimis) for the Development of the Tourism Sector in 2026, allocates financial resources to destination management companies. These funds are intended for programs focused on the development and market introduction of complex tourism products for special interest markets. The goal is to activate underutilized tourism resources, create new motives for tourist arrivals across Croatia, enrich the tourism offering, and develop innovative products that enable the extension of the tourist season and reduce seasonality. Additionally, it aims to increase tourist traffic, particularly during the pre-season and post-season periods and in continental areas, establish a recognizable image of Croatia as a destination for special interest tourism, and achieve market valorization of complex tourism products as key reasons for tourists to visit specific destinations in Croatia. HTZ allocates funds for associated tourist boards, funds for underdeveloped tourist areas, strategic marketing projects, destination management, etc.¹¹¹

- 4. Local and Regional Self-Government Units:** Local and regional governments allocate funds for the development and promotion of sustainable cultural initiatives within their jurisdictions. These funds support local heritage conservation projects, infrastructure improvements, and promotional activities and might be applicable to cultural routes projects. Cities, counties, and municipalities *could* play a significant role in financing cultural routes: **Municipal and County Budgets**-Many local governments allocate specific funds for cultural tourism and heritage projects.
- 5. Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (HBOR):** HBOR offers low-interest loans and financial instruments for projects related to cultural heritage and tourism development.
- 6. National Foundation for Civil Society Development:** This foundation provides funding for projects initiated by NGOs and community groups, for the protection of the environment, nature and ecology and sustainability applicable to projects related to natural heritage. It supports grassroots initiatives that could contribute to the development of cultural routes.

EUROPEAN UNION FUNDING PROGRAMS

- 1. Cohesion fund (CF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (including Interreg):** This program, co-financed by the ERDF, supports projects aimed at enhancing cultural and natural heritage. It funds infrastructure improvements, digitalization of heritage, and the development of sustainable initiatives such as cultural tourism products.
- 2. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in the new financial period** offers significant support for developing European cultural routes in Croatia, particularly through transnational programs like **Interreg MED, Danube, or IPA Adrion**. These programs align with Croatia's cultural tourism goals by fostering cross-border collaboration, sustainable tourism, and heritage preservation. Interreg MED, cultural routes can benefit from initiatives emphasizing eco-tourism and sustainable cultural tourism practices, integrating local heritage with environmental conservation. The Interreg Danube and Interreg IPA Adrion programs focus on transnational partnerships, enhancing connectivity among cultural sites

and routes, and promoting shared heritage narratives across borders. These frameworks enable Croatian cultural routes to engage in joint promotional campaigns, research, and the development of thematic itineraries.

Interreg bilateral programs provide financial and technical support to enhance the visibility of cultural routes through digital tools, infrastructure improvements, and educational programs. They encourage community engagement, training, and capacity building among stakeholders, fostering local economies while preserving cultural heritage.

ERDF funding facilitates the alignment of cultural tourism with sustainability principles, supports digital transformation, and can strengthen the role of cultural routes in regional development.¹¹² By using these opportunities, Croatia can enhance its cultural tourism offer, attract diverse visitor demographics, and contribute to the broader goals of the Council of Europe Cultural Routes program.

Interreg bilateral programs involving Croatia can significantly enhance the development of European cultural routes and their cultural tourism objectives. Here are a few possibilities for collaborations:

Croatia-Slovenia Interreg Program:¹¹³ The Programme will assist the area in becoming greener and more digital, making it more equipped to handle the challenges of the future. Related project themes could include: Sustainable Cultural Tourism and Shared Heritage.

Croatia-Hungary Interreg Program:¹¹⁴ The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) is one of the four macro-regional strategies targeting the European Territorial Cooperation objective, adopted by the European Commission, and endorsed by the European Council. It provides an integrated framework for strengthening cooperation between nations of 14 countries including both Member States (e.g. Hungary) and non-EU countries (e.g. Serbia) covering 112 million people. Related project themes could include: Connecting Historical Narratives Through Digital Innovation.

Croatia-Italy Interreg Program “The Italy-Croatia cooperation area shows a distinct **blue and green pattern**, featuring the sea basin, coastal landscapes, green but also urban areas.”¹¹⁵ Opportunity for cultural routes open up in the PO4 Culture and tourism sustainable development; Specific objective: RSO4.6.

Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation. Related project themes could include Maritime and Religious Heritage Collaboration.

Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina Montenegro Interreg Program *The programme mission, beside strengthening the social, economic and territorial development of the cross-border area, is to encourage and support cross-border cooperation to make the area more resilient to common challenges. This support includes among others next goals: Sustainable and inclusive tourism and culture, SO 4.1: Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation. The programme aims to support the specific, innovative, sustainable, green, digital and smart forms of tourism and culture (including new and existing sustainable tourism/cultural sites) that develops the advantage for the local communities and economies, with strict observance of potential impacts on the environment.*¹¹⁶ Related project themes could include: Promoting Regional Traditions and Intangible Heritage.

Each program can use ERDF funds to foster sustainable tourism, protect cultural assets, and promote regional identity within the framework of the Council of Europe Cultural Routes.

- 3. European Social Fund Plus (ESF+):** This programme finances infrastructure projects, heritage conservation, and tourism development, including indirectly also cultural routes. The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) is the main EU financial instrument for supporting jobs, social inclusion, education and training. The 2021-2027 ESF+ will help Member States to tackle the socio-economic consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak, foster a skilled and resilient workforce that is ready for the transition to a green and digital economy, achieve high employment levels and fair social protection.
- 4. Creative Europe:** Creative Europe is the EU's flagship programme providing specific support to the cultural and creative sectors. It seeks to develop all cultural sectors in Europe and protect Europe's shared cultural heritage, in particular by providing various funding opportunities aimed at co-creation, skills development, network and platform building, knowledge-sharing and mobility and distribution and promotion of content.

5. **Erasmus +:** Erasmus+ is the EU's flagship programme for education. It addresses both formal and non-formal education and training, and also focuses on youth, sport, and culture Erasmus+ promotes lifelong and inclusive learning across Europe. It provides opportunities for mobility, partnerships, and policy dialogue through project funding, often reinforcing cross-sectoral cooperation with a specific focus on creativity Actions. The programme is organized across three Key Actions (KAs) for individuals and organisations from EU Member States, third countries associated to the Programme and other Partner countries. In **Croatia**, the funding of cultural routes is most prominent within **KA2**, which places great emphasis on organizational cooperation and partnerships by developing networks, enhancing capacity, and promoting internationalization and innovation, as well as fostering vocational and educational excellence.
6. **Horizon Europe:** Mission Horizon Europe is a scientific research and innovation multiannual programme, a successor of the recent Horizon 2020 programme and the earlier Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development. It is an initiative aimed at ensuring European leadership in frontier research, tackling climate change, developing new technologies and innovation, achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts the EU's competitiveness and growth.
7. **Single Market Programme (COSME):** incorporating COSME, ensures a functioning Single Market, high-quality statistics, and capacity building for joint actions between the EU and Member States. It supports businesses, particularly SMEs, by enhancing

competitiveness and sustainability through improved market access, entrepreneurship promotion, and industry modernization.

COSME could specifically aid cultural routes by funding sustainable tourism, fostering innovation, and increasing visibility of local resources. Key benefits might include: (a) **Funding for Sustainable Tourism:** COSME supports projects promoting sustainable tourism, developing thematic products, and increasing visibility of lesser-known destinations; (b) **Collaboration and Networking:** It fosters partnerships across regions, linking destinations and involving diverse stakeholders like museums and artisans; (c) **Digitalization:** Funds can be used for apps, VR/AR tools, and online booking systems to modernize cultural routes; (d) **Promotion:** COSME boosts international visibility via marketing, tourism fairs, and connections with other European routes; (e) **Capacity Building:** It offers training, financial tools, and support to improve SMEs' competitiveness... Projects could include creating routes around local products, organizing cultural events, and developing shared branding. To access funding, monitor COSME calls, build partnerships, and align projects with program priorities. COSME enhances cultural routes' sustainability and appeal through SME integration and innovation.

Cultural routes in Croatia, despite their significance (20 routes), lack explicit mention in national funding or strategies. Their development heavily relies on EU funds. To enhance support, Clear prioritization would expand funding opportunities, encouraging the creation of specific national and regional programs to support cultural route projects, reducing dependency on EU funding.



Nin © V.Klarić

10. FIELD MISSION REPORT, INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSIS

Field Trip to Nin, September 2024

Nin, a small town situated near Zadar in the coastal area of Croatia, is rich in historical significance and cultural heritage. Nin has a three-thousand-year-old history and was founded by the Ilyrian tribe of Liburnians in the 9th century BC and known by the name Aenona.



Nin, Interview with Marija Dejanović, Director of the Nin Tourism Bureau, and the poster of the Phoenicians Route © V.Klarić

It also bears the title of the oldest royal town in Croatia, and holds a special place in the country's history, featuring Roman remains, pre-Romanesque sacral heritage, and natural beauty. Once a prominent Roman settlement, the town reveals its deep connection to ancient civilizations and Croatia's early Christian heritage.

As an active member of two Council of Europe Cultural Routes, the **Roman Emperors' Route** and **Danube Wine Route** and the **Phoenicians' Route**, Nin capitalizes on its rich history to promote cultural tourism and international cooperation.

Heritage Highlights of Nin:

- **The Roman Heritage:** The Roman Emperors' Route highlights Nin's archaeological significance, including the remains of a Roman temple, Roman mosaics, and the villa. Visitors can explore these remnants of the Roman Empire, gaining insight into the town's past under Roman rule.

- **Early Croatian Christianity and Glagolitic heritage:** Nin also played a key role in the early Christian period. with landmarks like the Church of the Holy Cross, often called «the smallest cathedral

in the world,» and the Baptistery of Duke Višeslav. It was a diocese from 9th-19th century. Nin's most prominent bishop Grgur Ninski was a fighter for the preservation of the the oldest Slavic script, glagolitic.

- **Natural Heritage:** Nin is known for its healing mud and salt pans production, further enriching its cultural tourism appeal. The salt pans in Nin are still active, since the Roman times, offering visitors a glimpse into traditional salt production methods, and the therapeutic benefits of the healing mud are linked to wellness tourism.

Promotion and Cultural Tourism:

Through its membership in the **Roman Emperors' Route**, Nin wishes to promote its Roman past participating more in transnational initiatives, such as archaeological related to wetland areas. The park plays a crucial role in environmental exhibitions and educational programs. These efforts should position Nin as a key historical site on the broader European map of Roman heritage. By linking with other cities on the Roman Emperors' Route, Nin could attract more visitors interested in the history of the Roman Empire, enhancing its cultural tourism profile.

Similarly, Nin's inclusion in the **Phoenicians' Route** emphasizes its strategic location along ancient maritime trade routes. This route highlights the town's historical connections to Mediterranean trade and cultural exchanges. By integrating its maritime history with other Mediterranean towns along the Phoenicians' Route, Nin fosters a narrative of interconnectedness between ancient cultures and contemporary tourism experiences.

Nin actively organizes cultural festivals, historical reenactments, and guided tours that offer immersive experiences for visitors. These events bring history to life and create a platform for sustainable tourism by promoting Nin's unique heritage as part of a wider European cultural network.

Through its involvement in these Council of Europe Cultural Routes, Nin demonstrates how a small town can use its rich past to engage with modern tourism trends, emphasizing education, heritage conservation, and intercultural dialogue.

As informed in the interview with Marija Dejanović, Director of the Nin Tourism Bureau an active and efficient organizer, the town of Nin continues to promote its rich cultural and historical heritage, despite facing certain challenges. During the interview, several key points were highlighted regarding Nin's involvement in the **Roman**

Emperors' and Danube Wine Route (RER&DWR), Phoenicians' Route, and eco-initiatives.



Nin, Marija Dejanović and the RER&DWR map © V.Klarić

Roman Emperors' Route and the Danube Wine Route From the very beginning, Nin participated in the creation and certification process of the Route of the Roman Emperors', providing sites of immense importance: the remains of the largest Roman temple on the Eastern Adriatic from the 1st c., the remains of a Roman house with mosaics from the 2nd c., and the Roman stone remains of the salt pan, as well as the remains of Roman buildings (1st -6th c.) next to the Church of the Holy Cross.

Nin has also recently participated in several national-level projects, such as "Cultural Route of Liburnian, Roman, and Croatian Heritage". However, despite these initiatives, a significant challenge has been identified: a **lack of continuous communication** with the Roman Emperors' and DWR Route management structure and **lack of inclusion in broader EU projects performed by the Route**. Dejanović emphasized the need for better integration into EU-funded initiatives to ensure more consistent involvement and growth in this cultural route. There are strong hopes to increase participation in more transnational projects, which would help boost visibility and collaboration with other countries that share the Roman heritage.

- **Phoenicians' Route:**

Nin officially joined the **Phoenicians' Route** in 2023, marking a new chapter for the town in exploring its Mediterranean maritime connections. While Dejanović reported **positive cooperation** and communication with the network, she noted that there is still room for strengthening activities. One of the primary obstacles here are **limited financial resources, especially for staff**, which affects the ability to handle all the necessary tasks related to maintaining active involvement in the Phoenicians' Route. Nonetheless, the local tourism authorities are committed to expanding the role of this route in Nin's cultural tourism portfolio.

Eco Activities:

Nin is also deeply committed to **eco-conscious tourism and sustainability**. Dejanović shared that the town runs education programs for civil societies and schools, and has developed three handbooks aimed at promoting sustainability. These efforts align with Nin's focus on preserving its natural heritage alongside its cultural assets. Looking to the future, **eco-awareness** campaigns are set to expand, with plans to strengthen the town's online presence to reach a wider audience. Dejanović also highlighted the **Ninska Laguna Eco Park**, which has been active for over 10 years, conservation efforts and has launched several initiatives around the **Ramsar Convention**, working toward the creation of an ecological reserve in the region.



Nin © V.Klarić

- **Nin Salt Museum and Saltworks (Solana):**

Nin also enjoys intensive cooperation with the **Nin Salt Museum and Saltworks**, one of only three salt production sites in Europe to hold an **ecological certificate**. This collaboration not only strengthens Nin's eco-tourism credentials but also underscores the town's commitment to preserving its unique natural resources. The saltworks offer visitors a unique glimpse into traditional salt production

methods, which are both a historical and ecological asset for the region.

Future Perspectives:

Dejanović outlined several ambitious plans for Nin's future, with a focus on expanding its reach and impact in cultural tourism and eco-awareness. The key priorities include:

- **Expanding eco-awareness campaigns:** There is a strong focus on educating the local community and visitors alike about sustainability. Nin's success in running educational programs and developing handbooks on sustainability reflects its leadership in eco-conscious tourism, which will continue to grow in the coming years.

- **Strengthening the town's web presence:** With the goal of reaching a wider, international audience, Nin plans to enhance its digital platforms to better promote its rich cultural heritage, eco-initiatives, and tourism offerings. This includes making its unique attractions—such as the Phoenicians' Route, Roman Emperors' Route, and the Nin Saltworks—more visible to potential visitors.

- **Development of Ninska Laguna Eco Park:** Already a wetland headquarters for over 10 years, the park is key to environmental conservation efforts in Nin. Long-term plans include working towards creating an official **ecological reserve** through collaborations like the **Ramsar Convention**. This would solidify Nin's role as a leader in sustainable tourism.

In addition to these ongoing projects, **Nin Saltworks (Solana)**, one of only three in Europe with an **ecological certificate**, holds significant potential for the town's future cultural tourism. There is growing momentum to establish a **Cultural Route of Ancient Saltworks**, and Nin's unique salt production methods, deeply rooted in both tradition and sustainability, would make it an ideal candidate to be part of this new cultural route. This route would highlight the historical, ecological, and cultural significance of ancient salt production sites across Europe, further promoting Nin's heritage. Equally it would **strengthen participatory tourism as well as voluntourism as regenerative forms of tourism providing long term sustainability**.

Furthermore, **Nin has a considerable potential to join the TRANSROMANICA Cultural Route**, which celebrates Romanesque architecture across Europe. With its wealth of the Early Romanesque churches of the Holy Cross (Sv. Križ 9th c.) and st. Nicholas in the vicinity – both unique in style, being the most famous icons of the medieval church

architecture in Croatia, Nin would contribute to valuable historical and cultural assets of this route. Becoming part of **TRANSROMANICA** would raise Nin's profile as a centre of cultural tourism, linking it to a wider European audiences and attracting travellers interested in history, architecture, and heritage beyond the summer season.

• **Festival of the Light:** *"The beauty of the play of light on the first day of summer solstice in the church of the Holy Cross holds a unique creative festival with a musical welcome to the first morning sun rays over the slopes of Mount Velebit, with an art workshop, treasure hunt, exhibition and educational lecture. The construction form and position of the church represent a sundial and calendar. Summer is thus greeted, and the World Day of Music is celebrated."*¹¹⁷

- Ancient Shrines Route – St. Mary of Zečevo: A Sacred Site of Spiritual Importance.

Incorporating Nin into a **Pan-European Ancient Shrines Route** would raise the city's profile within European religious tourism. The shrine of **St. Mary of Zečevo** holds immense significance for the people of Nin and surrounding areas. Located on the small island of Zečevo in the Nin Lagoon, this sacred site is central to the religious identity of the region. The shrine is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, who is said to have miraculously appeared there in 1516. Since then, the island has become a pilgrimage destination for devotees seeking spiritual guidance and solace.

The shrine is intricately connected to an annual procession that draws both local and international visitors. Each year, pilgrims gather to participate in a solemn, centuries-old religious procession that begins in Nin and crosses the lagoon to Zečevo. This event reinforces the spiritual significance of the site and highlights its cultural and communal importance. The journey across the lagoon, followed by prayers and ceremonies at the shrine, embodies the deep connection between faith, nature, and heritage in this region.

The shrine of **St. Mary of Zečevo**, could become a hub for spiritual and cultural exchange, drawing pilgrims from all corners of Europe and beyond.¹¹⁸

Incorporating **St. Mary of Zečevo** into the **Ancient Shrines Route** would also highlight the city's connection to wider European religious traditions. By focusing on the universal themes of faith, devotion, and pilgrimage, this route would foster a greater understanding of the shared spiritual heritage that binds Europe together. For visitors,

this could be a journey of personal spiritual growth and a way to connect with the broader historical and cultural narrative of the continent.



Zadar, Archaeological Museum, Nin Imperial Collection
© V.Klarić

Field trip to Zadar, September 2024

Cultural routes opening international partnerships

The field trip to Zadar, Croatia, highlighted two main themes: the U-MAR project, which ties into the Phoenician Cultural Route, and Zadar's potential for greater participation in Council of Europe (COE) cultural routes, such as the Roman Emperors' Route, or any similar Roman Heritage Route, Phoenician Route, and TRANSROMANICA. Interviews with key figures in the tourism and heritage sectors of Zadar provided insights into how the city can better utilize its rich historical and cultural resources to strengthen its role in European cultural routes, thereby enhancing its profile as a cultural tourism destination.



Doris Kurtov, Head of the Department ICUA © V.Klarić

U-MAR Project and the Phoenician Route

The **U-MAR** project, which is a collaborative effort involving multiple European countries, serves as a model of how cultural routes can promote heritage and tourism simultaneously. Doris Kurtov, Head of the Department for International Cooperation and Funds at the **International Centre for Underwater Archaeology (ICUA) in Zadar**, described how ICUA's involvement in the project was initiated by the Nin Tourism Board, positioning ICUA as a strategic partner for the Phoenicians' Route. This project aim was to raise awareness about the expansive maritime routes, the submerged cultural heritage that lies beneath the waters of the Mediterranean, tackling the influences of the Phoenician civilization.

Kurtov explained that **ICUA Zadar** played a key role in the project's first phase, which focused on creating an educational course tailored to cultural workers, tourism operators, and archaeology students. This initiative promotes environmentally conscious tourism focused on underwater cultural heritage and offers participants hands-on

experience in archaeology. The ICUA's contribution is part of a broader effort to develop methodologies for promoting underwater archaeological heritage, a niche that Zadar is uniquely equipped to explore due to its coastal location and historical ties to maritime civilizations like the Phoenicians.



Zadar, International Centre for Underwater Archaeology (ICUA) Interpretation Centre © V.Klarić

Future developments in the ICUA Interpretation Centre include a dedicated room for the **Phoenicians' Cultural Route interpretation centre**, adding to the existing exhibits on maritime heritage. This space will further integrate Zadar into the larger network of the Phoenicians' Route, aligning the city's tourism offerings with international heritage tourism trends.

Zadar's Potential for Cultural Routes

In a meeting with **Iva Bencun, Director of the Zadar Tourism Board**, discussions centred around how Zadar could better integrate its strategic tourism development with the cultural routes of the Council of Europe. Bencun emphasized that while Zadar is rich in cultural and historical assets, there is room for improvement in how these resources are marketed and presented within the framework of European cultural routes.

Strategic Integration of Cultural Routes

Bencun outlined that Zadar's tourism strategy already recognizes culture as a significant asset, but its full potential has yet to be realized. The city has

recently promoted the museum treasures, photo points, food, cinematic points, making it attractive for movie audiences¹¹⁹. The city's prehistoric, Roman, and medieval heritage, including pre-Romanesque and Romanesque landmarks, positions Zadar as a strong candidate for multiple COE cultural routes, such as the Roman Emperors' Route, Phoenicians' Route, TRANSROMANICA, Olive Tree Route, and Iter Vitis. Each of these routes presents unique opportunities for Zadar to expand its tourism offerings and attract a more diverse array of travellers.

1. **Roman Heritage Route:** Zadar's extensive Roman heritage, including urbanism, ancient roads, and monuments, aligns well with the themes of the Roman Emperors' Route, which follows the footsteps of Roman rulers across Europe. The Roman forum in Zadar is the largest on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, and it also contains an interesting Capitolium, the remnants of the wall built by Emperor Augustus, as well as rich collections of ancient artefacts in the Archaeological Museum and the unique Museum of Ancient Glass. Greater participation in this route could spotlight Zadar's role as a significant Roman city, offering visitors a historical journey through time, tracing the impact of the Roman Empire on the Adriatic region.
2. **Phoenicians' Route:** Zadar's involvement in the U-MAR project already strengthens its connection to the Phoenicians' Route, but there is potential to develop this further. For example, additional collaborations with other Mediterranean cities and ports involved in the route could lead to joint cultural events, exhibitions, and educational programs that highlight Zadar's maritime heritage and its historical ties to ancient seafaring civilizations.
3. **TRANSROMANICA:** This cultural route focuses on Romanesque art and architecture, and Zadar's numerous Romanesque churches and structures make it an ideal candidate for inclusion. Episcopal complex in Zadar includes the largest Dalmatian cathedral, a harmonious Romanesque building from the 12th and 13thc., dedicated to saint Anastasia (Stošija) with the renewed baptistery from the 6thc. Zadar is also proud of St. Crysogonus (Krševan) church, and the iconic **9thc. rotunda of st. Donatus church**, the most famous early medieval monument of Zadar and Croatia. By joining TRANSROMANICA, Zadar could strengthen its position as a cultural destination known for its medieval heritage, attracting visitors interested in art history, architecture, and European cultural evolution.

4. **Olive Tree Route and Iter Vitis:** Zadar's Mediterranean climate and long-standing agricultural traditions make it a suitable participant in these routes, which focus on the heritage of olive oil production and viticulture, respectively. These routes emphasize the sustainable and historical aspects of agriculture, aligning well with Zadar's existing efforts to promote eco-tourism and heritage preservation.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Despite its cultural wealth, Zadar faces several challenges in fully valorising its heritage for tourism. According to earlier research , tourists visiting Zadar often expressed dissatisfaction with the way cultural and sacred heritage is presented. Issues included inadequate signage, limited opening hours for key landmarks, and insufficient integration of cultural attractions into the overall tourism product. These factors limited so far Zadar's ability to fully exploit its heritage in a way that enhances the visitor experience.

The Council of Europe cultural routes could, in a few positive steps that need to be taken, provide Zadar with several benefits for better use of its cultural assets:

1. **Improved Presentation and Accessibility:** Enhancing the thematic focused presentation of Zadar's cultural heritage, including better signage, multilingual information, and more accessible opening hours for cultural and sacred sites, would improve visitor satisfaction and engagement leading to high value markets.
2. **Integration of Cultural Resources into Tourism Products:** Cultural heritage should not be treated as an isolated aspect of tourism. Instead, it should be woven into the broader tourism experience, from guided tours to culinary offerings and accommodation. Additional education and trainings for staff would be needed. This would allow visitors to immerse themselves in the cultural life of Zadar, beyond merely visiting museums or monuments.
3. **Partnerships, Promotion, and Collaborative Projects:** Entering international associations, and expanding partnerships with other cities and institutions involved in cultural routes, would strengthen Zadar's position within these networks. Joint marketing campaigns, cultural festivals, and shared exhibitions

would attract a responsible and sophisticated audience and position Zadar as an important player in European cultural tourism, providing visibility and strategic promotion.

- 4. Digital and Interactive Tools:** Building on the success of ICUA's interactive exhibits, Zadar could further develop digital platforms and interactive tools to engage visitors. Virtual thematic tours, augmented reality experiences, and mobile apps could provide visitors with a more immersive experience of Zadar's cultural routes, whether they are physically in the city or exploring remotely.
- 5. Sustainability and Tourism:** Zadar has already made steps in promoting sustainability through its initiatives¹²⁰. Integrating these efforts with cultural tourism—such as promoting the **Olive Tree Route** and **Iter Vitis** as examples of sustainable agricultural practices—could attract eco-conscious travellers and enhance Zadar's reputation as a responsible tourism destination.

The field trip to Zadar confirms the city's immense potential for cultural tourism, particularly through its participation in the Phoenicians' Route and its suitability for other COE cultural routes like **TRANSROMANICA** or the Roman Emperors' Route. By improving the presentation of its cultural heritage, fostering international partnerships, and integrating digital tools and sustainability practices into its tourism strategy, Zadar can position itself in European cultural tourism based on Romanesque or ancient Roman art. The city's rich heritage, from its Roman and medieval past to its maritime connections, offers a unique combination of historical and cultural attractions that can be used to attract a broader, more diverse group of travellers.

Field Trip To Novigrad, October 2024

The field trip to Novigrad and the interview with the mayor of Novigrad Anteo Milos, held on October 19th 2024 highlighted the benefits and challenges of its membership in The Phoenicians Route, offering insights into the potential for sustainable tourism development. Currently, Novigrad enjoys increased visibility and promotion through its membership. However, challenges remain in actively engaging small producers and SMMEs due to the lack of technical organizational support and coordinated partnerships. Micro enterprises are prepared to offer services aligned with local heritage and traditions but require a Destination Management Company (DMC) for

effective collaboration. Key concerns included weak commercialization of cultural heritage and excessive focus on seaside tourism, which risks overshadowing Novigrad's authentic heritage. Participants at the meeting stressed the importance of education and awareness to integrate small enterprises creatively while preserving cultural and environmental integrity. Despite these challenges, the Phoenicians Route has a huge potential to offer notable benefits, including economic growth, preservation of authenticity, and diverse offerings. Initiatives like «sea to table» culinary experiences could cater to varied audiences, making Novigrad a model for sustainable tourism within the Route.



Novigrad, Rdf, Musuem Lapidarium, Field trip © V.Klaric

OVERVIEW OF THE INTERVIEWS

Conducted for the Destination Napoleon Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in Croatia, November 2024.

The interviews were conducted with four out of six Croatian members of the Destination Napoleon route: the tourism boards of Mali Lošinj, Slunj, Milna, and Orebić. The interviews aimed to understand their roles, activities over the past three years, and expectations from the route.

- Tourism Board Mali Lošinj:

[interview conducted with the director of the DMO, Tourism board Mali Lošinj, Dalibor Cvitković]

Activities and Heritage: Mali Lošinj boasts several Napoleonic heritage sites, including Monte Baston, currently undergoing signification, as well as the Kaštel (the conceptual plan for the reconstruction of the fort is completed) and the "Napoleon's Path" which serves as a combined bike and hiking trail.

Unfortunately participation in an EU project in 2023 was not realized due to the lack of finances.

Proposals and Expectations: Being very active in UNWTO, Mali Lošinj is preparing for the Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3) (Nice, 9-13 June 2025) where they will be taking a sailing boat to promote maritime heritage. This is the sort of events they are interested in.

Within cultural routes perspective they would appreciate more activities, perhaps initiated on the national level through a zoom meeting. They are also interested in the network of contacts to establish joint EU projects (for reconstruction of built heritage i.e.). Primary goal is to find opportunities for joint EU projects, particularly for heritage reconstruction, interpretation, and networking.

- Tourism Board Slunj:

[interview conducted with the director of the DMO, Tourism board Slunj, Jasmina Mrkonja]

Activities and Heritage: Joined the Route in 2022, because of the heritage connected to the Napoleonic administration. Slunj was marked in the early 19th century by a brief French rule during which roads, bridges, warehouses and similar military objects were built. In particular, it was during this period that Auguste Frédéric Vieusse de Marmont, Marshal of the Empire under Napoleon I, ordered the establishment of fortified positions and sentries against the Turks. The old bridge over Korana and the military warehouse also date from this period.

Key Initiative: In 2024, a costumed, interpretive guided tour was staged with a Napoleonic-era love story, combining tangible and intangible heritage with community inclusion: A story from the Napoleonic era - a costumed guided themed tour with an emphasis on the heritage of the era French administration. An interpretive walk in English language, with a character from the era of the French administration, in which the character will visit girls, from the era of French administration from the beginning of the 19th century, tell the love story between Samson and Manda. Manda is a local girl, and Samson is a Napoleonic soldier who fell in love with Manda and the town. In the stories, locations and historical events would be connected with anecdotes from their life in Slunj and customs of the Slunj region.

Benefits and Expectations: They were awarded as rural destination "Best little village". Networking through the route was recognized as positive

initiative and brought them the award. Visibility through the Destination Napoleon platform is important for them. Sharing knowledge, experiences, ideas on international level through online meetings as well is very precious.

- Tourism Board Milna:

[interview conducted with the director of the DMO, Tourism Board Milna, Ana Grasi]

Activities and Heritage: Milna carries a fascinating connection to the Napoleonic era through the «Baterija» fortification. Built in 1806, this historic site stands as a testament to the region's tumultuous past. The fort, shaped as an irregular pentagon and fortified with defensive walls, remains well preserved, providing a tangible link to the strategic conflicts of the era. This historical landmark has been **revitalized by the community and transformed into an engaging destination for history enthusiasts** and casual visitors alike. To honour its Napoleonic heritage and commemorate the 1806 maritime battle between French and Russian forces, several **innovative activities** have been introduced. Visitors can explore a specially **designated photo point**, offering picturesque views and a visual homage to the period. Additionally, a **mobile-based virtual reality experience** brings the maritime conflict to life, allowing users to immerse themselves in a vivid recreation of the battle.

The **dedication of the local community** has been instrumental in these efforts. **Volunteers undertook a thorough cleaning of the fort**, ensuring it remains accessible and well-maintained for educational and cultural purposes. Complementing these interactive experiences is ongoing scholarly research.

Ongoing Research: Professor Belamarić, a noted art-historian, is conducting an in-depth study of the 1806 maritime battle. His findings will soon be compiled into a comprehensive book, shedding light on the intricacies of this historical event and enriching our understanding of the fort's significance.

Together, these initiatives weave Milna's Napoleonic past into the fabric of modern tourism and education, making the town a dynamic site where heritage and innovation intersect.

Proposals and Expectations: While significant strides have been made in preserving and promoting Milna's historical legacy, certain challenges and expectations remain. **Greater involvement** was anticipated from the leaders

of the cultural Route, but constraints, such as the **inability to participate in EU projects** due to prefinancing requirements, have limited their contributions.

Despite these obstacles, efforts like the initiative by the Dragodid association **to reconstruct the fort hold great promise**. This reconstruction project, if realized, would further enhance the fort's historical and cultural value, adding another layer to Milna's rich heritage.

Additionally, the Tourism Board of Milna (TZ Milna) is actively contributing to the area's appeal by **participating in the Camino Route**. While the path is primarily frequented by hikers rather than pilgrims, it remains an important draw for visitors, reflecting the community's dedication to intertwining heritage preservation with modern-day exploration and recreation.

- Tourism Board Orebić:

[interview conducted with the director of the DMO, Tourism board Mladen Đeldum]

Activities: Orebić is part of the route primarily for visibility purposes. However, no specific activities have been undertaken recently.

- Tourism Board Petrinja

[via questionnaire]

Activities and Heritage: Petrinja was part of Napoleon's Illyrian territories (1809–1813), leaving a legacy of Franco-Croatian cooperation. Highlights include **Bicentennial park with linden trees** planted during French rule. Tours are promoted encompassing Napoleonic landmarks like the old town core and pottery workshops.

KEY OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengths include unique and diverse Napoleonic heritage across Croatian destinations as well as creative approaches to interpretation, such as guided costumed tours and virtual reality. International visibility through the Destination Napoleon platform is expected.

Weaknesses detected include rather limited communication resulting in isolated actions and lack of joint activities at the national and

international levels. Challenges exist in accessing funding for significant projects.

Proposals for Enhancement:

Regular online meetings for better coordination and idea exchange are proposed as well as national-level initiatives to foster collaboration among Croatian members. Participation in EU-funded projects with a focus on heritage restoration and promotion is expected. Expansion of interpretive experiences would be beneficial to deepen visitor engagement.

By addressing these gaps, the Croatian members of the Destination Napoleon route can use their unique heritage to contribute to cultural tourism and the wider objectives of the Council of Europe's cultural routes.

Connection to the Federation's Objectives

1. Preservation and Promotion of Napoleonic Heritage

The Federation emphasizes safeguarding and promoting Napoleonic heritage as a shared European legacy. Croatian members actively work toward this:

- Mali Lošinj invests efforts to preserve and interpret sites like Monte Baston and the "Napoleon's Path" echo the Federation's focus on preserving tangible heritage.
- Milna works on the cleaning and maintenance of the "Baterija" fortification and conducts research on the 1806 maritime battle reinforce the narrative of Napoleonic military history, which is central to the Federation's objectives.
- Slunj created the interpretive costumed tour, which intertwines local history with Napoleonic narratives, exemplifies the integration of intangible heritage into cultural tourism, a key aim of the Federation.

2. International Collaboration and Networking

Croatian members have demonstrated a willingness to engage in cross-border activities, consistent with the Federation's goal of creating a cohesive network of Napoleonic cities:

- Slunj and Mali Lošinj expressed interest in participating in joint EU-funded projects, which aligns with the Federation's support for transnational cultural initiatives.

- Milna stresses collaboration with researchers like Professor Belamarić and contributes to the broader academic and cultural dialogue encouraged by the Federation.

3. Innovative Interpretation and Visitor Engagement

The Federation seeks to enhance the visitor experience through innovative interpretation and storytelling. Croatian members contribute by developing virtual reality experiences (Milna); creating unique narratives, such as the love story of Samson and Manda in Slunj and preparing for international events like the Nica World Day of Oceanography (Mali Lošinj).

4. Educational and Cultural Exchange

Educational initiatives are central to the Federation's vision. Croatian members' activities, such as Milna's historical research and Slunj's community-involved tours, provide opportunities for knowledge-sharing and educational growth, benefiting both locals and visitors.

Opportunities for Enhanced Collaboration

- Strengthening Croatian Representation through regular participation in Federation meetings and international events that could enhance Croatian members' visibility and influence within the Federation, and hosting Federation-supported events, such as workshops or conferences, in order to further integrate Croatian members into the broader network.
- Joint EU Projects: Members like Mali Lošinj and Milna could collaborate with other cities in the Federation to apply for EU funding for heritage restoration or interpretation projects.
- Federation-wide Promotion: Croatian members could use the Federation's platform to promote their unique assets, such as the "Napoleon's Path" and the "Baterija" fortification, to a broader audience.
- Expanding Digital and Educational Tools: Sharing digital assets, such as Milna's virtual reality battle experience, with other Federation members could enhance the collective value of the route.

Conclusions

Croatian members of the Destination Napoleon route actively contribute to preserving and promoting Napoleonic heritage. Their initiatives resonate with the Federation's goals, particularly in areas of heritage conservation, innovative interpretation, and international collaboration. Strengthening ties with the Federation and engaging in joint activities could further elevate their role within the route while advancing the overarching mission of the Destination Napoleon Cultural Route.

Coordination meeting in Ministry of Culture and Media

The third regular coordination meeting of the national representatives of the Council of Europe Cultural Routes passing through Croatia was held at the Ministry of Culture and Media with the aim of better networking as well as getting to know the activities and plans in the implementation of the program. Presenting the current news and activities, the participants contributed to the preparation of the Country mapping document for Croatia. The meeting was chaired by the representative of Croatia in the Extended Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and the head of the Service for Movable, Intangible and Ethnographic Heritage Tatjana Horvatić.



Zagreb, Coordination meeting in Ministry of Culture and Media
© V.Klarić



Posavina, Lonjsko polje, Stork Lookout © V.Klarić

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

3 key areas of intervention have been detected: National level support in technical management of CR, Tourism cooperation and Visibility, sustainability and regeneration. *Based on the comprehensive analysis and findings, this document concludes with a set of recommendations aimed at enhancing the Cultural Routes programme in Croatia.*

POSITIVE MANAGEMENT EXAMPLES: EU PROJECTS ROLE IN CR DEVELOPMENT

Participation in EU projects has significantly benefited European Cultural Routes in Croatia by enhancing the preservation, promotion, and sustainable development of cultural heritage. These projects facilitated **transnational cooperation**, connecting Croatia with other European countries to share knowledge, resources, and best practices. Such collaboration has led to the development of innovative tourism products and strategies that bring new meanings to Croatia's heritage.

Sustainability is a core focus of these projects, as seen in initiatives like the Phoenicians Route or the Roman Emperors Route. These routes emphasize sustainable tourism models that balance cultural preservation with economic development. For example, the Phoenicians Route incorporates inclusive and environmentally friendly eco-itineraries in MED Routes project, and preservation of the Mediterranean Diet and regenerative tourism in the SMARTIEs for SMEs project, while the Roman Emperors Route promotes the development of Models for Danube Region Observatories and Common Standards for developing Green travel packages and itineraries developed through collaboration with tour operators¹²¹.

Youth engagement and local community involvement are also key benefits, as demonstrated by the **Iron Age Danube Route «ArcheoGim»** awarded project and **ATRIUM** Route's educational initiatives and the involvement of students in projects like «PEOPLE.» These activities foster a deeper understanding of European history and cultural heritage among younger generations, ensuring that these traditions are passed down and remain relevant.

Additionally, **EU project participation enhances visibility and marketing** efforts for Croatian cultural routes. Projects like **ATRIUM GO!** and the **Bicycle Museum** in Koprivnica present the potential for cultural tourism to attract international visitors while promoting local traditions, such as regional gastronomy.

Finally, the **integration of cultural and natural assets** into tourism development, seen in **EuroVelo 13** projects, such as the **Inclusive Border Cycling (IBC)** initiative, ensure that Croatia's cultural routes are accessible and appealing to a diverse audience, further boosting the local economy and preserving cultural assets for future generations

Participation in EU projects has provided European Cultural Routes in Croatia with a range of substantial benefits, driving coherence, sustainability, and innovation in cultural heritage management. These projects offer **coherence** by aligning local cultural initiatives with broader European strategies. This structured approach facilitates **coordinated management**, allowing for the efficient allocation of resources and consistent application of best practices across all participating regions.

Financial support from EU projects is crucial, enabling the preservation and promotion of cultural sites that might otherwise lack the necessary funding. This financial backing helps in developing infrastructure, organizing events, and creating tourism products that enhance the attractiveness and accessibility of cultural routes.

Structured management and coordination are also key benefits, as EU projects often require well-organized frameworks that guide the development and execution of cultural initiatives. This structured approach leads to more effective collaboration among stakeholders, ensuring that all partners work towards common goals.

Vivid collaboration is fostered through transnational partnerships, bringing together a diverse array of stakeholders, including local governments, cultural institutions, and private sector entities. This collaboration enriches the cultural routes and promotes the exchange

of knowledge and expertise, leading to more innovative and impactful projects.

Visibility and sustainability are significantly enhanced through EU projects. Initiatives like those of the **Phoenicians Route** and the **Iron Age Danube Route** boost the international profile of Croatian cultural routes, attracting more visibility and ensuring long-term economic viability. These projects emphasize sustainable tourism practices, balancing heritage preservation with economic growth.

Involvement and inclusion of a broader range of partners, including local communities and young people, ensure that the cultural routes are dynamic and relevant. By engaging diverse groups, EU projects help to maintain the vitality of cultural routes, making them inclusive and representative of a shared European heritage.

The **financial support provided by EU projects** is valuable to the flourishing of Cultural Routes in Croatia. This support facilitates the **development of high-quality, sustainable, and attractive tourism products** that celebrate and preserve the country's rich cultural heritage. Through strategic investments in infrastructure, marketing and interpretation, community engagement, and sustainability initiatives, tourism boards help ensure that these cultural routes continue to **enrich local economies, educate visitors, and strengthen Croatia's presence on the European cultural tourism map.**

VISIBILITY AND TOURISM COOPERATION: KEY ROLE OF TOURISM BOARDS

Cultural Routes in Croatia frequently cooperate with tourism boards, and this collaboration yields significant benefits in promoting and enhancing these routes. **Tourism boards** could play an even more important role in the **strategic promotion** of cultural routes, using their expertise in marketing, and their networks to increase the visibility of these routes both locally and internationally. This collaboration should ensure that cultural routes are effectively integrated into broader tourism strategies, which can help in attracting a diverse and larger audience.

For instance, the **Iron Age Danube Route**, in collaboration with the local tourism board, benefited from **targeted promotion and site preparation. Camino Croatia and St. Martins Route**, each in collaboration with more than 30 **tourism boards** use their help in designing the

visitor experience, ensuring that the sites along the routes are well-prepared and engaging for tourists. They also provide valuable insights into **visitor preferences**, helping to tailor the cultural offerings to meet the expectations of different tourist segments.

Tourism boards also assist in **event organization** and **branding initiatives**. For example, the ATRIUM Cultural Route's cooperation with tourism boards led to the development of successful products like the ATRIUM GO! itinerary for students, which won awards for its excellence in cultural tourism and sustainable development. This highlights how tourism boards can facilitate the creation of high-quality, innovative tourism products that enhance the cultural routes' appeal.

Furthermore, tourism boards contribute to the **sustainability and economic viability** of cultural routes by promoting sustainable tourism practices. They work with cultural route managers to ensure that tourism growth does not compromise the preservation of heritage sites, balancing economic benefits with cultural conservation.

Overall, the cooperation between cultural routes and tourism boards in Croatia results in **enhanced visibility, better-managed tourism flows, and sustainable development**, all of which are crucial for the long-term success and impact of these cultural routes.

Cultural Routes in Croatia greatly **benefit from close cooperation with tourism boards**, particularly through various forms of **financial support** that enhance the development, maintenance, and promotion of these routes. This financial collaboration has an important role in ensuring the **sustainability and success** of cultural heritage tourism across the country.

Direct Funding and Resource Allocation

- Tourism boards often provide **funding** for the improvement of visitor facilities, information and interpretation centres, ensuring that these sites are accessible and appealing to tourists.
- **Event Organization and Support:** Financial assistance from tourism boards enables the organization of **cultural events, festivals, and exhibitions** that bring these routes to life. The **ATRIUM Cultural Route** benefited from such support in hosting events like the «Young Europeans: Future Ambassadors of Sustainable Cultural Tourism,» which required

substantial funding for logistics, promotion, and participant engagement.

Marketing and Promotion

- **Strategic Advertising Campaigns:** Tourism boards allocate budgets for **targeted marketing strategies**, including domestic and international advertising, promotional materials, and participation in tourism fairs. This financial investment significantly increases the **visibility** of routes like the **Iron Curtain Trail - EuroVelo 13**, attracting a wider audience and boosting tourist numbers.
- **Digital Marketing Initiatives:** Funding from tourism boards supports **digital platforms and online promotion**, such as interactive websites, virtual tours, and social media campaigns. These efforts are essential in reaching global audiences and engaging younger demographics interested in cultural tourism.

Collaborative Funding Opportunities:

Securing EU and International Grants: Tourism boards often play a crucial role in **identifying and securing additional funding sources**, including EU grants and international sponsorships. Their expertise and networks assist cultural routes in successfully applying for programs like **Interreg Central Europe, Interreg Med or Europe for Citizens**, providing substantial financial resources for expansive projects and cross-border collaborations.

Supporting Local Economies and Communities:

Investment in Local Businesses: Financial support extends to **local entrepreneurs and service providers** such as tour operators, accommodation services, and artisans. For instance, along the **EuroVelo 13**, funding helps promote regional gastronomy and local products, thereby **stimulating economic growth** and supporting community livelihoods.

Training and Capacity Building: Tourism boards fund **educational programs and training workshops** for local stakeholders, ensuring high-quality services and sustainable tourism practices. This investment builds local capacity to manage and promote cultural routes effectively.

ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY AND LONG-TERM IMPACT

Environmental Conservation Efforts: Financial contributions support **sustainable tourism initiatives**, including environmental conservation and the development of eco-friendly infrastructure. Projects like the **Inclusive Border Cycling (IBC)** initiative receive funding to create accessible and environmentally responsible cycling paths that preserve natural and cultural properties.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Ongoing financial support allows for **regular assessment and improvement** of cultural routes through data collection, visitor feedback, and performance analysis. This ensures that cultural routes remain relevant, engaging, and beneficial for both tourists and local communities over time.

The next combined matrix, will be mapping the elements from the survey and resulting SWOT analysis to the CAME strategies, showing where strengths can be maintained, weaknesses addressed, opportunities capitalized upon, and threats managed:

WEAKNESSES

| THREATS | OPPORTUNITIES |
|--|---|
| <p>ADAPTIVE STRATEGY “RESIST”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 17% of routes have not implemented any changes in response to new trends. ▶ 43% did not participate in projects, indicating a lack of engagement or resources. ▶ 25% of cultural routes reported no financial or technical support, revealing a gap in funding. <p>Weakness: Lack of joint national coordination might lead to fragmented efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Action: Implement risk management plans and policies to prevent overlapping or conflicting actions by different routes, ensuring a coherent strategy. ▶ Explanation: Without coordinated efforts, routes may work at cross-purposes or miss out on collaborative opportunities. By introducing risk management protocols—such as clear communication channels, standardized policies, and regular updates—a coherent strategy can be maintained even when managing multiple routes with diverse needs. | <p>CORRECTIVE STRATEGY “TAKE ADVANTAGE”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 46% of respondents expect improved preservation of cultural heritage. ▶ Collaboration potential with National Tourism Boards and DMOs was identified by 29% and 24%, respectively. ▶ Interest in organized training sessions and visibility campaigns (23% and 23%, respectively). <p>Opportunity: Need for structured and sustainable cultural routes management on a national level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Action: Create capacity-building initiatives and training programs to address gaps in route management, enhancing expertise and knowledge-sharing across routes. ▶ Explanation: By identifying existing weaknesses in management, targeted training programs can equip stakeholders with the necessary skills for effective route management. Workshops, seminars, and expert consultations would help close knowledge gaps, thereby improving efficiency, stakeholder engagement, and route performance. <p>Opportunity: Need for joint national coordination of all (European) cultural routes passing through Croatia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Action: Establish a national body or task force dedicated to coordinating European cultural routes across Croatia, fostering collaboration and synergy. Organize stakeholder meetings and consultations to design an integrated national strategy for route coordination and resource sharing. ▶ Explanation: To overcome the fragmented approach currently present, stakeholder meetings will be essential. These meetings bring together route managers, tourism officials, and cultural experts to create a cohesive national strategy. The emphasis would be on coordinated marketing, shared funding opportunities, and collaborative events that collectively benefit all routes. |

THREATS

MAINTAINING STRATEGY “KEEP UP”

- ▶ 36% of routes have organized awareness-raising events.
- ▶ 15% have revised their marketing strategies to adapt to new trends.
- ▶ 27% of routes have successfully engaged in EU projects.

Strength: Ongoing collaboration among local and regional stakeholders can help build a foundation for structured national coordination.

- ▶ **Action:** Promote best practices from existing cultural route management and expand collaborative initiatives to national coordination efforts
- ▶ **Explanation:** Capitalizing on existing collaboration models at the local and regional levels, this action promotes the sharing of successful practices across Croatia. By highlighting effective examples and scaling them nationally, a more cohesive cultural route management system can be developed. Such efforts encourage mutual support and the transfer of skills, benefiting all stakeholders involved.

OPPORTUNITIES

EXPLORING STRATEGY /MAXIMIZE

- ▶ Only 5% of national funding support, leading to reliance on local or EU funding.
- ▶ Fragmented support and low engagement from specific audience segments (e.g., seniors and women travellers).

Opportunity: Need for structured and sustainable cultural routes management on a national level.

- ▶ **Action:** Develop a national framework for cultural routes with structured management guidelines, ensuring long-term sustainability and promotion.
- ▶ **Explanation:** This action involves creating a standardized framework that provides clear guidelines for managing cultural routes across Croatia. It ensures that each route is effectively managed and contributes to the overall cultural landscape, promoting long-term sustainability and growth. Establishing consistent criteria for operations, marketing, and development will prevent disparities and reinforce best practices.

Opportunity: Need for joint national coordination of all (European) cultural routes passing through Croatia.

- ▶ **Action:** Establish a national body or task force dedicated to coordinating European cultural routes across Croatia, fostering collaboration and synergy targeting tourism partnerships with tourism boards and TA.
- ▶ **Explanation:** This initiative would create a central authority or coordination body responsible for overseeing all European cultural routes in Croatia. Such a body would improve communication, resource-sharing, and strategic planning among different routes, allowing for a unified national approach that enhances visibility and cultural tourism potential.

Strategic recommendations

These recommendations address policy improvements, strategic initiatives, potential new routes, and financial strategies. The goal is to provide actionable steps for stakeholders to strengthen and expand the cultural routes, fostering greater cultural tourism and heritage conservation in Croatia.

These activities demonstrate Croatia’s commitment to the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe program and its efforts to harness the potential of cultural heritage for tourism, education, and community development.

This analysis and recommendations aim to address the current challenges while highlighting opportunities for sustainable growth and strategic

alignment within Croatia’s cultural route initiatives. Expected improvements should:

1. **Strengthen National-Level Support:** Improve the strategic alignment of cultural routes and national cultural and tourism policies, securing greater funding and recognition.
2. **Establish technical management for joint national coordination of all (European) cultural routes passing through Croatia**
3. **Enhance structured and sustainable management procedures** for each cultural route on national level and establish national coordinators for each route
4. **Enhance Tourism Partnerships:** Strengthen collaborations with tourism boards and

destination management companies to create integrated promotional packages that appeal to varied visitor profiles. (more than 70 involved already)

5. **Promote Joint Initiatives:** Support collaborative campaigns that involve joint promotions, awareness drives, and cross-route educational activities, enhancing cohesion and visibility.
6. **Enhance Marketing Strategies:** Encourage routes to revamp their marketing approaches, targeting underrepresented audience segments such as solo travellers and seniors. Develop audiences research and provide training for staff and stakeholders on market trends and tourism products.
7. **Capacity Building and Training:** Regularly offer training programs at the national level focusing on innovation, management, product design and audience engagement to build internal capacities.
8. **Foster Project Participation:** Develop initiatives to increase participation in regional, national, and EU-funded projects by providing training on project design and management.
9. **Incentivize Sustainable Practices:** Introduce targeted financial incentives to routes adopting sustainable tourism models, ensuring long-term viability and alignment with global trends.
10. **Diversify Funding Sources:** Encourage routes to explore alternative funding

sources, including private partnerships and international grants, to reduce dependence on limited public schemes.

11. **Focus on Visibility Campaigns:** Invest in visibility campaigns targeting lesser-known or hidden cultural assets along the routes to draw attention and drive traffic. Invest in awareness raising campaigns, signage and interpretation.
12. **Expand Audience Engagement:** Invest in trainings on developing audiences' segments. Develop tailored experiences and offerings for a broader range of visitor categories, including youth, seniors, families, women, digital nomads, and organized groups, ensuring diverse appeal.



Zadar, St Mary Church © V. Klarić



Kumpanija on the island Korčula © M.Gracin

12. CONCLUSIONS

Finally, Croatia includes a variety of activities at the national level and local level to support and promote the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe program.

Route Development and Promotion: on national level, the Ministry of Culture and Media actively develops and promotes cultural routes through brochures exhibitions and lectures. In this way routes highlight the country's diverse cultural and historical heritage and attract both domestic and international tourists.

Heritage Conservation Projects: Numerous conservation and restoration projects have been undertaken to preserve key heritage sites along the cultural routes. These projects often involve collaboration between national and local authorities, as well as international partners.

Educational and Interpretive Programs: Educational programs and interpretive activities are organized to enhance public understanding of the cultural routes. This includes guided tours, workshops, lectures, and the development of educational materials.

Cultural Events and Festivals: Various cultural events and festivals are held along the routes to celebrate and promote heritage. Examples include the «Medieval Fair in Šibenik,» or «Roman Days in Vinkovci,» which engage the local community and attract tourists.

Research and Documentation: Research initiatives focus on documenting and studying the cultural heritage associated with the routes. This includes archaeological excavations, historical research, and the compilation of inventories of heritage sites and artifacts.

Collaboration and Networking: Croatia actively participates in international networks and collaborations related to the Cultural Routes program. This includes attending conferences, workshops, and meetings organized by the Council of Europe and other relevant organizations.

Marketing and Promotion: Efforts to market and promote the cultural routes include the production of promotional materials, such as brochures, postcards, and leaflets, as well as the use of digital platforms and social media. These efforts aim to raise awareness and attract visitors to the routes.

Infrastructure Development: Investments are made in infrastructure to support cultural tourism, such as improving accessibility to heritage sites, enhancing visitor facilities, and developing interpretive centres.

Community Involvement: Engaging local communities in the development and promotion of cultural routes is a key focus. This includes involving local residents in heritage promotion projects, promoting local crafts and products, and encouraging community-based tourism initiatives as in IADR.

Sustainability Initiatives: Emphasis is placed on ensuring the sustainability of cultural routes through initiatives such as responsible tourism practices, environmental conservation, and the promotion of local economic development. Croatia's participation in European cultural routes presents a significant opportunity to blend cultural preservation with sustainable tourism, driving both economic and social benefits. However, to fully harness the potential of these initiatives, a strategic overhaul is required.

At the heart of these improvements is the need for strengthened **national-level technical support**. Aligning cultural routes with broader cultural and tourism policies will provide clear direction and secure greater funding and recognition. A coordinated approach to the technical management of all cultural routes is equally crucial. Establishing a dedicated central body or framework for technical coordination can streamline efforts and foster synergy across the routes.

The creation of **structured and sustainable management procedures** is another priority. Appointing national coordinators for each route ensures accountability, enhances operational efficiency, and fosters a unified approach. Complementing this is the need to strengthen partnerships with tourism boards and destination management companies. With over 70 organizations already involved, there is an opportunity to integrate cultural routes into broader tourism strategies, creating promotional packages that appeal to new targeted visitor profiles.

Collaborative campaigns are vital to the success of these routes. Joint promotions, cross-route

educational activities, and awareness drives can bolster cohesion and visibility while encouraging shared ownership among stakeholders. These efforts should be reinforced by enhanced marketing strategies that target high value responsible audience segments, including specific segments such as solo travellers and seniors. By investing in audience research and training for staff on market trends, the routes can position themselves as inclusive and innovative destinations.

Capacity building is another essential component of this strategy. Regular training programs focusing on innovation, management, product design, and audience engagement will empower stakeholders to meet evolving market demands. This effort should extend to fostering participation in regional, national, and EU-funded projects. By offering guidance on project design and management, cultural routes can tap into additional funding streams and collaborative opportunities.

Sustainability and responsibility must remain in central focus of these initiatives. Introducing financial incentives for routes adopting sustainable tourism models ensures alignment with global trends while safeguarding the long-term viability of these cultural assets. Diversifying funding sources is also critical, encouraging routes to explore private partnerships and international grants to reduce reliance on public funding.

Visibility campaigns targeting lesser-known or hidden cultural assets along the routes are essential for attracting visitors. Investments in awareness campaigns, signage, and interpretation can spotlight unique offerings and drive traffic to underserved areas. Additionally, expanding audience engagement through tailored experiences for diverse visitor categories—such as youth, seniors, families, women, digital nomads, and organized groups—can broaden the routes' appeal.

In conclusion, Croatia's cultural route initiatives hold immense potential for fostering heritage appreciation and tourism growth while regenerating communities. By addressing existing challenges through strategic alignment, capacity building, sustainability practices, and enhanced partnerships, these routes can become vibrant hubs of cultural and economic activity vital for societies.

With a focused and collaborative approach, Croatia can ensure that its cultural routes remain both relevant and impactful, preserving the nation's heritage while embracing the opportunities of regenerative tourism and dynamic responsible communities.

Croatia's commitment to the preservation and promotion of its rich cultural heritage is reflected in its heritage policies, supportive legislative framework, and diverse financing instruments. The potential for new cultural route initiatives is vast, with opportunities to highlight the country's diverse cultural and historical assets. Using national and international funding sources, Croatia can continue to develop and enhance its cultural routes, contributing to sustainable tourism development and cultural preservation.

The strategic development of cultural routes enhances the visitor experience while promoting local economic growth, engaging communities, and fostering a deeper appreciation of Croatia's cultural heritage. As Croatia continues to explore and expand its cultural routes, it stands to strengthen its position as a promoter and active member.

13. ABBREVIATIONS

AMZ- Archaeological Museum Zagreb

ATRIUM - Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century in Europe's Urban Memory

CR – Cultural routes

CMD - Country Mapping Document

COE – Council of Europe

DMC - Destination management company

DMO – Destination management organization

ECF – European Cyclists' Federation

EHTTA – European Route of Historic Thermal Towns

EICR – European Institute for Cultural Routes

EPA – Enlarged Partial Agreement

ERIH - European Route of Industrial Heritage

EUSAIR – EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region

EUSDR - EU Strategy for the Danube Region

IADR - Iron Age Danube Route

IBC project - Inclusive Border Cycling Project (IBC)
Eurovelo 13

RdF - the Phoenicians Route

RER&DWR - Roman Emperors' Route and Danube
Wine Route

WWR - Women Writers Route

14. ANNEXES

CROATIAN HERITAGE POLICY - More detailed report: National Policy Report¹²²

Register of Croatian Cultural Property: <https://min-kulture.gov.hr/register-of-cultural-property/16777>

<https://min-kulture.gov.hr/croatian-intangible-cultural-heritage-on-unesco-lists/19525>

<https://min-kulture.gov.hr/cultural-routes-of-the-council-of-europe/19597>

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The current legislation on cultural heritage available only in Croatian language.

Additional list of representative archaeological sites¹²³ :

- **Hušnjakovo at Krapina**, which bears witness to the turbulent life of this region's by the wealthiest collection of Neanderthal man remains in the world, and its unique interactive presentation

- **Museum of the Vučedol culture**, which skilfully presents the prehistoric findings, production of the first bronze in the world, the car on four wheels, ceramics and much more, in the most modern architecture

- **Vinkovci**, being not only 8000 years inhabited area with the oldest Indo-European calendar, but also the birthplace of two Roman emperors Valens and Valentinio and a rich find of 36 kg of Silver objects from the Roman period,

- **Hvar's Stari Grad Plain** with the original Greek land division unique in the Mediterranean that still today is respected,

- Archaeological sites on the **Brijuni Islands**, in the **Kvarner** region, in **Ščitarjevo** near Zagreb, **Varaždinske Toplice**, **Burnumu** near Sibenik, bear witness to the daily life of the ancient Romans, and others

- **Rijeka and Lošinj** are excellent examples of marvelous sustainable approach and modern presentation of archaeological heritage

- **Pula** with the best preserved Roman monuments, among which a special place occupies the

Amphitheatre, the sixth largest among the preserved ones in the world,

- Split with the **Palace of Diocletian**, as the most important monument of late antique architecture at all,

- **Vid at Metkovic**, with findings of the most numerous group of marble statues of Roman emperors ever found on the territory of the Roman Empire,

- Representative Bishop's complex in Poreč, Croatia, as a reflection of a golden Justinian's time with the mosaics at the **Euphrasian Basilica** from the 6th century, where for the first time in the history of the Madonna appears in the central main apse,

- **Salona and Zadar** as the testimony to the old Roman, but also the early Christian period of creative energy, particularly through Early Croatian and Early Romanesque architecture that represents an important link in the development of the world's Christian sacral architecture.

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- Maja Cepetić Rogić, director Čazma Museum for TRANSROMANICA
- Agathe Daudibon, EuroVelo and Cycling Tourism Director, European Cyclists' Federation,
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- Benedetta Diamanti for European Route of Ceramics,
- Marija Dejanović, director of the Nin Tourism Board,
- Sara Ferrari vice director RdF
- Ana Gašparović - , Tourist Board of Ivanić-Grad, national coordinator The European Route of Industrial Heritage;
- Martina Janochova on behalf of the The Cyril

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