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



## CULTURAL ROUTES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE 11<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL ADVISORY FORUM

*“Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe:  
Safeguarding European Values, Heritage, and Dialogue”*

5-7 October 2022  
Chania (Crete), Greece

### DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

#### 1. The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme

The [Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme](#), launched in 1987, provides a framework for the development of thematic routes that demonstrate how the heritage of the different countries and cultures of Europe can contribute to a shared cultural heritage. The Cultural Routes embody the fundamental values of the Council of Europe: human rights, cultural democracy, cultural diversity and identity, dialogue, mutual exchange and enrichment across boundaries and centuries. Currently, the programme counts 48 certified Cultural Routes, bringing together more than 3,000 network members in over 60 countries in Europe and beyond.

The [Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe](#) (EPA), was established in 2010 (Resolution CM/Res(2010)53), to enable closer co-operation between states particularly interested in the development of Cultural Routes. The EPA benefits from the cooperation of the 37 Member States that have joined the initiative to date, as well as regional authorities, local communities, and international organisations such as the European Union, the OECD, UNESCO, and the World Tourism Organisation.

The [European Institute of Cultural Routes](#), based in Luxembourg and created in 1998 under a political agreement between the Council of Europe and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, is the technical agency of the programme.

- The promotion of cultural heritage, sustainable cultural development and intercultural dialogue are priority fields of action for the Cultural Routes. According to the Resolution [CM/Res\(2013\)66](#), confirming the establishment of the EPA, a Cultural Route is “a cultural, educational heritage and tourism co-operation project aiming at the development and promotion of an itinerary or a series of itineraries based on a historic route, a cultural concept, figure or phenomenon with a transnational importance and significance for the understanding and respect of common European values”. Their mission is to: raise “awareness of the shared European heritage as a cornerstone of European citizenship, a means of improving the quality of life and a source of social, economic and cultural development”
- be “tangible illustrations, through European trans-border itineraries, of the pluralism and diversity of European culture based on shared values, and as means for intercultural dialogue and understanding”
- promote European “identity and citizenship through knowledge and awareness of Europe’s common heritage, and the development of cultural links and dialogue within Europe as well as with other countries and regions”
- contribute to reinforcing “cultural co-operation, sustainable territorial development and social cohesion, with a particular focus on themes of symbolic importance for European unity, history, culture and values and the discovery of less well-known destinations”
- foster “cross-border cultural co-operation and the development of sustainable cultural tourism which builds upon local knowledge, skills and heritage assets, promoting Europe – including lesser-known regions – as a destination offering a unique cultural experience”

## **2. The Council of Europe Conventions: safeguarding and promoting European cultural heritage**

Since its establishment, the Council of Europe recognised the importance of culture in laying the foundations for living together in mutual respect and tolerance. In that regard, the first Council of Europe’s treaty following the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) was the ground-breaking [European Cultural Convention](#) of 1954, committing its member States to the safeguard of Europe’s common heritage and encouraging the development of European cooperation in the cultural sector and the appreciation of our cultural diversity. Since then, the Council of Europe has provided a wide range of Conventions, guidelines and tools for the preservation and promotion of our shared cultural heritage. It is worth mentioning a few, including:

The [Convention of the Protection of the Architectural heritage in Europe](#) adopted in 1985 in Granada, strengthens and encourages policies for the conservation and enhancement of Europe’s heritage, while affirming the need for European solidarity with regard to heritage conservation.

The [European Landscape Convention](#) (Florence, 2000), promoting the protection, management and planning of the landscapes, has been a tool with which Member States have been able to ensure the quality and diversity of their living environment. This ground-breaking treaty recognizes that a landscape, whether urban or rural, natural or human-made, reflects

the culture, values and identity of communities, and places them at the heart of the landscape.

The [Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society](#) (also known as the Faro Convention, 2005) marks the beginning of a new appreciation of cultural heritage. By recognizing the importance and value of heritage for society, its contribution to sustainable development and quality of life, the Faro Convention is based on the idea that knowledge of heritage and participation in cultural life are part of the rights of every citizen.

Importantly, the Council of Europe has also addressed cultural heritage protection issues. The [Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe](#) (Valletta, 1992), replacing and updating the original London Convention of 1969, takes into account the changes in the nature of threats to the archaeological heritage by making the conservation and enhancement of archaeological heritage one of the goals of urban and regional planning policies.

More recently, the [Convention on Offences relating Cultural Property](#) (Nicosia, 2017) marks a new stage in the protection of heritage, providing a concrete criminal law instrument and fostering international cooperation to fight crimes against cultural heritage.

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

### **3. The Council of Europe Cultural Routes 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Advisory Forum: a conceptual framework for “Safeguarding European Values, Heritage, and Dialogue”**

In the current European context and the challenges our continent is facing following current geo-political crises, Covid19-related and environmental challenges, the focus of the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Advisory Forum will be on the important of reaffirming the Values, Heritage and Dialogue at the very roots of European identity and at the heart of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe’ programme. A Forum aimed at emphasizing again the “*role of cultural heritage in the construction of a peaceful and democratic society*”, as declared in the Faro Convention, both sustainable and respectful of cultural diversity.

*Culture* comes from the Latin verb “colō / colere”, which can be translated as *to look after, to take care* of something. It could refer to three major domains of the human experience. First, to the way a community looks after its physical environment.

Second, to the way a community looks after itself and the new generations (a major component of what is meant by “sustainability”). It is the more common meaning of culture, encompassing education, arts, literature, and so on. This cultivation of the human being was called in Greek *paideia* (παιδεία): formation of a good member of the human community. Third, colō could refer to the relationship a person or a community have with God or the sacred: *cult*.

Based on the above-sketched framework, we can better understand the common values and heritage of Europe as portrayed by the Faro Convention. They consist of “(a) all forms of cultural heritage in Europe which together constitute a shared source of remembrance, understanding, identity, cohesion and creativity, and (b) the ideals, principles and values, derived from the experience gained through progress and past conflicts, which foster the development of a peaceful and stable society, founded on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law”. In particular, dialogue is needed to ensure that all those routes can remain open and can be crossed, without any obstacle due to conflicts or even war.

Dialogue comes from the Greek language *διάλογος*, combining the terms *dia* and *logos*, hence underlying the human capacity to understand and interpret the world (*logos*), as well as to communicate such understanding to others, not in a mono-directional fashion, but in a collaborative way (*dia*), in which everyone, at turns, takes the role of speaker and of listener. The experience of dialogue reminds us that true communication can only happen if an act of expression is matched by a corresponding act of listening/understanding. Even more so: if every person or community engaged in the dialogue recognizes the other party as a partner worth to be listen to and to be understood. Only thanks to a true dialogue, peace and coexistence can be ensured in a sustainable way.

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe are deeply connected with all those layers:

- 1) with natural and material elements, as in the Routes of the Olive Tree or in the Iter Vitis Route
- 2) With historical, educational and artistic dimensions that shape societies and civilizations, like the routes that focus on artistic movements, writers, or civilizations, as in the Aeneas Route, the Phoenicians’ Route, the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns, the European Route of Historic Gardens, or the Historic Cafés Route
- 3) They also follow the steps of pilgrims or document religion-related practices, as in the cases of the European Cemeteries Route, or the Cyril and Methodius Route...

What is the meaning of the term “route” itself? It comes from the Latin expression “*via rupta*”, which indicated the act of opening a passage, an itinerary in a difficult environment, which could be – for example – a forest or a deep sea with troubled waters. The same term has been adopted within the digital domain, where routers and common protocols/languages are needed in order to ensure an effective and efficient way of sending and receiving data and information across an endless network of computers and – eventually – human beings.

This expression helps in particular to underline that every route – or road or path – requires an effort to be opened and maintained: they all need people crossing them and encountering each other along the route, recognizing their similarities and differences, having dialogues and sharing meanings and values.

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe aim at doing exactly that: connecting different countries and communities, unveiling common traits and historical trajectories, fostering encounters among people... Hence the very theme of this Advisory Forum, highlighting and connecting values, heritage and dialogue.

#### **4. The Forum Programme: a thematic overview**

The Forum will explore the above-sketched themes and issues along a high-level dialogue session and three general sessions: *Promoting European values and intercultural dialogue*, *Safeguarding heritage in times of crisis*, and *Fostering creative industries, cultural tourism, innovative technologies for sustainable communities*.

##### ***(I) Promoting European values and intercultural dialogue***

The first general session will have two main focuses: European values and intercultural dialogue.

When it comes to European values, one of the aims of the Council of Europe is “to achieve greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and fostering the ideals and principles, founded upon respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, which are their common heritage” (Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society – CETS No. 199, 2005). Hence, it is important “to put people and human values at the centre of an enlarged and cross-disciplinary concept of cultural heritage; emphasising the value and potential of cultural heritage wisely used as a resource for sustainable development and quality of life in a constantly evolving society” (*ibid.*).

Intercultural dialogue is hence required in order to promote mutual understanding and enriching of all cultural communities. It starts from encouraging “the study by its own nationals of the languages, history and civilisation of the other Contracting Parties and grant facilities to those Parties to promote such studies in its territory” (European Cultural Convention – ETS No. 18, 1954); and promoting “the study of its language or languages, history and civilisation in the territory of the other Contracting Parties and grant facilities to the nationals of those Parties to pursue such studies in its territory” (*ibid.*). In the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199, 2005), it is stressed “the soundness of the principle of heritage policies and educational initiatives which treat all cultural heritages equitably and so promote dialogue among cultures and religions” (Preamble). Such dialogue is not value-less, as in a purely relativistic approach, on the contrary: it is based on the above-indicated values, which are common to the European shared heritage.

The cultural routes are themselves designed to promote value-based (inter)cultural encounters: their themes have emerged from the rich European history, promote cohesion among the State parties as well as among all the involved bodies, and promote meaningful and enriching encounters between locals and visitors.

##### ***(II) Safeguarding heritage in times of crisis***

As seen above, since its very establishment, the Council of Europe has focused on the preservation of heritage. The most recent *Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property* (CETS No. 221), which has entered into force in April 2022, has replaced the

European Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property (ETS No. 119) and elaborated onto several other documents<sup>1</sup>.

However, crisis should be considered here not only in very important terms of physical damages or in terms of illegal appropriations, as it is likely to happen during conflicts or in the case of geopolitical instabilities, but also within a wider framework, encompassing natural threats – which might be linked to natural hazards (also due to climate change) or to health-related crises (as in the case of Covid19) –, to economic as well as to social crises. All those crises challenge culture and its related activities (artifacts, events, professions), making it difficult for people or specific groups to access them and for professionals to work within the cultural sector.

In general, such safeguard should be interpreted in terms of a “Sustainable use of the cultural heritage”, as foreseen in art. 9 of the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199, 2005).

Cultural Routes are themselves a very effective antidote against attacks or threats to heritage and its sustainability.

### ***(III) Fostering creative industries, cultural tourism, innovative technologies for sustainable communities.***

The third session will explore the close connections between creative industries and cultural tourism, highlighting how digital media can support them and the involved communities in a sustainable way.

Creative industries in Europe can leverage on its incredible cultural richness and roots – as celebrated by the Cultural Routes – while at the same time adding to such tradition in a creative way. In particular, cultural tourism can promote a sustainable development, both of urban as well as rural places, avoiding problematic impacts due to an unbalanced distribution of travellers in space (crowding) and in time (seasonality). In fact, Cultural Routes foster also a better balance between tangible and intangible heritage, which both support creative industry’s practices and are equal attractors for cultural tourists.

Both cultural industry and tourism should integrate in a wise fashion the affordances of digital media. For instance, as declared in the Roadmap of the 6th Annual Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes (Vilnius, Lithuania, 2016): “ICT [Information and Communication Technologies] can help to extend access, especially of young generations, can better the experience of travellers, help connect locals with their routes, and locals with visitors, dis-intermediate some relationships, they can also be used to train relevant players, especially micro enterprises”.

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<sup>1</sup> Among them: the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18, 1954), the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (ETS No. 66, 1969; ETS No. 143, revised in 1992), the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (ETS No. 121, 1985) and the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199, 2005).

## 5. The Forum's strategic objectives and the Chania Declaration

Through such meetings and dialogues, the Forum will:

- Reflect, in partnership with European and International organizations, on fundamental values at the heart of European heritage
- Identify and promote best practices when it comes to heritage preservation and safeguarding
- Foster dialogue among different national partners as well as among all the relevant stakeholders
- Promote a sustainable development of creative industries and cultural tourism
- Explore relevant applications of digital media as true enablers of the above-sketches processes
- Produce an **outcome Declaration** that will form a framework to ensure that common heritage, values and dialogue are at the centre of the establishment and management of all Cultural Routes.

### Contact information:

The Secretariat of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes ([culturalroutes@coe.int](mailto:culturalroutes@coe.int)) remains available for any further information you may require.

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