

# UNIVERSITIES AND CULTURAL ROUTES

## 1<sup>st</sup> International Academic Conference

**-SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, SPAIN, 13 -14 NOVEMBER 2024-**

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### CONCEPT NOTE



**Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme  
1st International Conference on Universities and Cultural Routes.  
13-14th November 2024, Santiago de Compostela (Spain)**

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**I. The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme**

Since its beginnings, the Council of Europe has been aware of the importance of cultural heritage for achieving greater unity among Europeans. One of its most innovative initiatives was to launch in 1987 the **Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme**, to enhance the richness and the diversity of European culture.

Today, the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe encourage European citizens to re-explore their heritage, acting as emblematic spaces for inter-cultural dialogue, transnational cooperation, sustainable development and cultural tourism.

Over the past 37 years, the programme has continuously grown, counting today 48 certified Cultural Routes and bringing together more than 3,000 network members in over 60 countries in Europe and beyond. While some routes enhance arts, architecture, history and civilisations, some others are dedicated to landscapes, handicrafts and religious heritage.

The programme is supported by two pillars: the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (EPA) and the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR).

In 2010, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe established an Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA) to enable closer cooperation between states particularly interested in the development of the Cultural Routes. The EPA benefits today from cooperation among its 41 member States, regional and local authorities, as well as international organisations, including the European Union, OECD, UNESCO and UNWTO. Its headquarters are located at the European Institute of Cultural Routes in Luxembourg.

The European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR), set up in 1998 as part of a political agreement between the Council of Europe and the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg (Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research), is the technical agency of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme. It assists certified Cultural Routes, provides advice to new projects applying for certification, coordinates a network of universities, and houses the extensive information and documentary resources of the Programme.

**II. Background**

The European Institute of Cultural Routes has been involved since its creation in cooperation actions with various universities and academic institutions. In 2012, the University Network for Cultural Routes Studies was established with the purpose of facilitating exchanges between the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme, universities active in the field of preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, and certified Cultural Routes.



The University Network aims to promote research on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe related issues, encourage students to undertake their academic research on Cultural Routes, jointly apply for European Grants with the European Institute of Cultural Routes, participate in the annual programme of activities of the Institute and offer scientific advice where required.

As of today, the University Network of Cultural Routes Studies counts 32 members:

1. University of Luxembourg (Luxembourg)
2. IREST, University Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne (France)
3. LABPACT, University of Barcelona (Spain)
4. CAST, University of Bologna (Italy)
5. INTOUR, University of Bedfordshire (United Kingdom)
6. IPAC, Laval University (Canada)
7. University of Haifa (Israel)
8. Compostela Group of Universities
9. USI, Università della Svizzera Italiana (Switzerland)
10. UniMib, Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca (Italy)
11. Mid Sweden University (Sweden)
12. BSUN, Black Sea Universities Network
13. DIST, Politecnico di Torino and University of Torino (Italy)
14. University of Angers (France)
15. Mardin Artuklu University (Turkey)
16. University of Piraeus (Greece)
17. Armenian National Agrarian University (Armenia)
18. University of Maribor (Slovenia)
19. University of Donja Gorica (UDG) (Montenegro)
20. Nottingham Trent University (United Kingdom)
21. Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (Slovakia)
22. Lebanese American University-Louis Cardahi Foundation (Lebanon)
23. Università Ca'Foscari Venezia (Italy)
24. Mediterranea University of Reggio Calabria (Italy)
25. Ege University (Türkiye)
26. Juraj Dobrila University of Pula (Croatia)
27. Antalya Bilim University (Türkiye)
28. Nevsehir Hacı Bektasi Veli University (Türkiye)
29. Balikesir University (Türkiye)
30. Budapest Metropolitan University (Hungary)
31. University of Eötvös Loránd (Hungary)
32. Universidad de La Laguna (Spain)

Network members are specialised in a variety of disciplines, such as: cultural heritage, landscape, heritage management, interpretation and mediation, urban requalification, tourism, economy of tourism, geography, local development, sociology, among others.

Furthermore, cooperation in research and development takes place within each of the certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, as this is one of the five priority fields of action established in Committee of Ministers Resolution CM/Res (2023)2 revising the rules for the award of the "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" certification.

With the purpose of fostering research practices within the network, the European Institute of Cultural Routes, previously held Academic Workshops, platforms for regular interactions between scholars from interdisciplinary fields discussing trends, innovative approaches, challenges and best practices in the

field of Cultural Routes. In 2024 the EICR in cooperation with the Compostela Group of Universities (member of the University Network for Cultural Routes Studies) organises its **1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Universities and Cultural Routes at the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain)**. Bringing together leading scholars, educators, researchers, and students to insemenate the result of their research works on Cultural Routes and to reflect on new perspectives for action. The event aims at to highlight existing research and academic activity of universities and to lay the basis for forthcoming new actions and collaborations in the field of Cultural Routes

The Conference provide opportunities for intellectual and human exchanges across borders, cultures and languages, seeking to build a common reflection on different themes related to the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe through a multidisciplinary approach.

### **The Compostela Group of Universities**

The Compostela Group of Universities (CGU) took its first steps in 1994 and has grown over the years, with members from more than 60 universities across the world having since joined this non-profit International higher education association. Acting as a crossroads for all of them, the CGU has become one of the largest such networks in Europe. In the year 2020, the CGU was recognized as an association of public benefit for its transparency in management, its active role in achieving excellence in higher education and its contribution to the dissemination cultural heritage through its activities and initiatives.

All the members belonging to the network share the values of cooperation and integration developed around the Camino de Santiago. Honoring those values, the Compostela Group of Universities aims to foster collaboration and promote dialogue in all fields related to higher education.

The CGU actively promotes international academic collaboration and mobility, supporting staff and student exchanges through its STELLA for Staff and Junior programs. Furthermore, it encourages innovation by fostering Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) projects and hosting an International Video Contest to enhance student creativity and communication skills. It also promotes research cooperation and knowledge transfer among its member universities. At a group level, CGU organizes seminars and workshops, collaborates with global educational institutions, and awards the annual Grupo Compostela-Xunta de Galicia Prize, recognizing contributions to European values in education, culture, and society, while engaging public and private sectors.

The association's mission is manifold: To promote and coordinate mobility actions which enable CGU's community to face new challenges in a global and changeable working environment; to support and facilitate cooperation among member universities and other public and private stakeholders, aiming to contribute to the quality and innovation in Higher Education; to foster respect and dissemination of the European values in Higher Education and to promote and organise activities intended to protect and preserve the cultural heritage connected to the Camino de Santiago and to other routes of Culture and Knowledge.

### **III. 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Universities and Cultural Routes.**

#### **ROUND TABLE "Academic and scientific contributions to Cultural Routes. The example of the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes"**

This round table will explore the importance of academic and scientific insights in the conception, implementation and management of Cultural Routes, with a special focus on the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes. As the first certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, this case study



is fundamental in understanding the role of the Academia in providing tools to address challenges and develop solutions for the successful management of Cultural Routes.

Panellists will discuss how these transnational networks can promote sustainable tourism while engaging local communities. They will address the modern “traveller” and the importance of heritage in connecting visitors and locals, while offering real encounters with local cultures and authentic spiritual experiences. The sessions aim to showcase collaborative efforts among researchers, tourism experts, and local authorities to create meaningful experiences that benefit both tourists and the communities they visit, emphasizing practical strategies for sustainable tourism along Cultural Routes.

### **Session 1 - “Cultural Routes of Council of Europe: Intersections of heritage, education and communities across transnational networks.”**

The first session delves into how Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe act as tools to foster intersections and synergies between heritage, education, and community engagement across transnational route networks. The panellists will showcase various initiatives and projects from different countries where heritage meets education and community involvement, illustrating the importance of multidisciplinary approaches when carrying out Cultural Routes studies.

Discussions will also revolve around the role of Cultural Routes as key elements to foster a better understanding of our common and shared cultural heritage. On the other hand, the importance of cross-border cooperation and key stakeholders' coordination, the reinforcement of local identities and European unity through Cultural Routes and collaborative strategies for heritage education and community development will be discussed.

### **Session 2 - “Measuring Impacts along the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe: Economic benefits, sustainability and management strategies”.**


This session explores how Cultural Routes can drive economic benefits and sustainability through innovative management strategies. With global tourism returning to pre-pandemic levels, concerns about carbon emissions and environmental impact have intensified, casting new light on Cultural Routes as sustainable alternatives that support local heritage and rural economies.

This panel will introduce different approaches and strategies for a better analysis of the challenges faced by Cultural Routes nowadays. A sustainability assessment model to analyse the management, economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions of Cultural Routes will be discussed, providing route managers with a framework to ensure the development of a responsible tourism.

Research outcomes regarding positive and negative impacts of pilgrim flows along the Santiago de Compostela pilgrim routes will be presented, highlighting both positive benefits and congestion challenges. Finally, the role and potential of the Cyril and Methodius Route in promoting cultural identity, community engagement and the boost of cultural tourism will be discussed. Together, these contributions provide a comprehensive approach to sustainable tourism and shed light on evidence-based impacts of tourism along the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

### **Session 3 - “Landscape, tourism and emerging trends: A holistic approach to the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.”**

This session examines the evolving role of landscape and emerging tourism trends within the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, focusing on how these networks conciliate heritage with changing



visitor expectations and offering new visions and approaches to the holistic management of Cultural Routes.

Throughout this session, a variety of aspects characterising Cultural Routes will be presented and discussed, among which the concept of Newtourism and adaptive route planning to enhance visitor experiences while minimizing environmental impact. Further discussions will revolve around the role of heritage tourism grounded in pastoral practices that contributes to the revitalization of local economies and the reinforcement of community identity. A landscape-focused interpretation of Cultural Routes will stress the importance of natural and architectural preservation in enhancing visitor experiences. Finally, innovative models for integrating landscape and socio-economic strategies along Cultural Routes will be discussed.

