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Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Certification cycle 2022-2023

Regular evaluation:

LIBERATION ROUTE EUROPE

Independent expert report

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



Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Evaluation Cycle 2022-2023

Independent expert report

Liberation Route Europe

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Route
Europe**

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**The opinions expressed in this independent expert report are those of the author, and do not engage the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.*

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1. Executive Summary (1 page)

Liberation Route Europe is a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe that connects people, places, and events to mark Europe's liberation from occupation during World War II and reflects on the long-lasting consequences and history of the war through a multi-national, multi-perspective approach. With hundreds of sites and stories in nine European countries, the route links the main regions along the advance of the Allied Forces in 1943-1945.

The Liberation Route Europe was awarded Certification as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in the 2018-19 evaluation cycle. From this relatively early phase of the network, by 2022, the evaluation shows LRE to be in a mature phase of development, with an impressive growth in membership, important visibility and engagement and strategic expansion of activities. The confidence and reach of its programmes have grown, and it has deployed its resources strategically over the Covid-19 pandemic.

The LRE Youth Programme has grown substantially over the period with several dedicated EU-funded projects, reaching partners and youth participants in a number of European countries. The objective is for the LRE Youth Programme to be a central component of the Liberation Route Europe by 2025. This programme is planned to be a key element of the 80th anniversary strategy of the LRE Foundation. The 80th anniversary of the end of WWII will be marked in 2024-25 with a large-scale awareness campaign and promotion of Europe and its remembrance heritage through the Europe Remembers platform.

Active cultural and remembrance tourism has been enhanced over the period under evaluation. The Liberation Route Europe trails have been developed substantially – with more than 3,785 km of the initial hiking trails system launched (London – Berlin, across the UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany), integrating Vectors of Memory trail markers designed by pre-eminent architect Daniel Libeskind. The aim by 2025 is to have designed and made available to the public 10,000 km of hiking trails, alongside companion tools, information materials and Vectors. A cycling trails concept is under development.

This form of tourism meets environmental sustainability needs and interests, as well as complementing the post-COVID patterns of more localised and domestic tourism. It also provides options for learning and healthy activity amid the economic constraints on household budgets due to inflationary pressures and the energy crisis of 2022 and beyond.

A further indication of the professional development and maturity of the LRE network and overall project has been the in-depth review to develop the Strategy LRE 2025, as a long-term strategy for 2021-25. This important document has been developed through team contributions, a survey of members, consultations with key partners and stakeholders and advice from the LRE boards. As the mission of the organisation has evolved, the Mission Statement has been adapted to reconfirm the definition of the organisation – what it does and what it does not do. In this way the strong values of the organisation are made more explicit. As part of the review, the LRE Charter has been revisited (it was created in 2014), and an updated version has been proposed. The Magna Carta and LRE Charter confer a societal and political message to the project, and set the framework for the values and priorities for the years to come.

Overall, the LRE network is highly representative of the values of the Council of Europe, and the route puts in to practice the principles and values expressed in the conventions of the Council of Europe and other international organisations.

In terms of eligibility criteria for themes, priority fields of action and networks, as set out in CM/Res(2013)67, the Liberation Route Europe meets all elements on the checklist. It is therefore recommended that the certification “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” is re-confirmed.

Expert summary conclusions		
	Yes	No
The theme complies with criteria listed in Resolution CM/Res(2013)67, I. List of eligibility criteria for themes.	Yes	
The Cultural Route complies with the criteria for actions listed in Resolution CM/Res(2013)67, II. List of priority fields of action.	Yes	
The Cultural Route complies with the criteria for networks listed in Resolution CM/Res (2013)67, III. List of criteria for networks.	Yes	
The Cultural Route implements the Guidelines for the Use of the Logo “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe”	Yes	

2. Introduction (1 page)

Liberation Route Europe is a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe that connects people, places, and events to mark Europe's liberation from occupation during World War II and reflects on the long-lasting consequences and history of the war through a multi-national, multi-perspective approach. With hundreds of sites and stories in nine European countries, the route links the main regions along the advance of the Allied Forces in 1943-1945.

The Liberation Route Europe focuses on the liberation of continental Europe from German occupation, including its long-term legacy and sometimes ambivalent consequences. Liberation Route Europe connects the main regions along the advance of the Allied Forces, from southern England to Berlin at the end of the Second World War, with Poland, a country that after German occupation, was subjected to decades of Communist dictatorship and Soviet domination. This project is the first on a European scale to create a multinational perspective on war, occupation and liberation.

Biographical stories of civilians and soldiers connected to the Liberation Route are researched and disseminated to demonstrate the complexity of the individual war experiences of 1944/45. Liberation from German occupation had manifold meanings and utterly different consequences, depending on where and under which circumstances people lived through the turmoil of that time. This multi-perspective dimension is central to the LRE values and communications.

The project aims to make this core part of European history visible and accessible, not the least with innovative and sustainable tourism related products and offers. It also aims to link history to the present and to raise awareness for the importance of freedom as a common value of Europeans today.

The LRE has its roots as a regional project in the Arnhem-Nijmegen region of the Netherlands. In 2008, three of the area's museums joined forces with Tourism Veluwe Arnhem Nijmegen to raise awareness of local World War II history by telling its stories and promoting its remembrance sites by creating a "liberation route". Following the 2011 establishment of a Dutch organisation (Stichting/Foundation), an office was opened in the Netherlands in 2013, with full-time staff, and dedicated to expanding the network. A second office opened in 2014 in Brussels to focus on the international expansion.

The LRE was certified as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in the Evaluation Cycle 2018-2019. The network currently (November 2022) has 132 members, coming from 12 countries (Netherlands, Italy, Germany, United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, Poland, Greece, Sweden and the USA). Apart from the international organisation based in Belgium and the Netherlands, new national LRE branch organisations have been established in Italy (2019), France (2021), the United Kingdom (2021) and Germany (2022).

In 2021, the network and its members launched the Liberation Route Europe trails that allow new ways of experience the route in a sustainable way by hiking, walking, and cycling. Developed in cooperation with hiking associations across Europe, the trails will form a traceable link between the main regions along the Allied Forces' advance across Europe, stretching nearly 10.000km. Renowned architect Daniel Libeskind has designed a symbolic family of trail markers called the 'Vectors of Memory' that honour people, places, and stories found throughout the European landscape.

3. Main Body Evaluation (15-20 pages)

3.1 Cultural Route Theme

3.1.1 Definition of the theme of the route

Liberation Route Europe is a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe that connects people, places, and events to mark Europe's liberation from occupation during World War II and reflects on the long-lasting consequences and history of the war through a multi-national, multi-perspective approach. With hundreds of sites and stories in nine European countries, the route links the main regions along the advance of the Allied Forces in 1943-1945.

3.1.2 Historical and cultural context

The historical roots of modern Europe (with peace-keeping institutions such as the European Union or the Council of Europe) lie in the destruction wrought in the Second World War. Its immediate point of origin was a pact between two totalitarian states, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, which attacked and divided Poland in September 1939. Europe lay at the epicentre of the conflict. Destruction, death and atrocities reached their zenith in the struggle waged by the Western democracies and the communist Soviet Union, attacked by the German Wehrmacht in June 1941, against Germany and its allies.

Europe's self-laceration had already begun in 1914. The Second World War would not have been possible without the First; rather, both conflicts were inextricably interconnected. The First World War resulted in the October Revolution of 1917, which led to the establishment of a radical communist system in Russia, as well as in the rise of fascism and National Socialism.

Nevertheless, there was no direct path from 1918 to 1939. Europe had an opportunity for peace and freedom in the interwar period. There were promising approaches to cooperation, stability and reconciliation that, in the end, were unable to prevail over revisionism, autocracy and dictatorship. The weakness of the western democracies became especially apparent when neither Great Britain nor France stopped the aggressive course of German politics. Furthermore, from the beginning of the 1930s, the violence between and within states increased across Europe, and finally Germany plunged the continent into a devastating war in 1939.

Germany and its allies overran nearly all of continental Europe but established different occupation regimes in different countries; the practice of occupation was far more radical in Eastern Europe than it was in Western or Southern Europe. In fact, Poland and the western territories of the Soviet Union became the primary scene of the Holocaust during the war of annihilation conducted by the Nazi regime. Jews and others deemed racially inferior were transported from all over the continent to Eastern Europe for extermination. Due to its sheer scope and unimaginable horror, this genocide became the signature event of the Second World War.

The Soviet Union subjected large swathes of Eastern Europe to brutal rule in 1939-40 and again from 1944 onwards. Oppression, persecution and mass murder were therefore a central component of the war experience for a majority of Europeans, but so too were arrangements with the occupying forces, collaboration, and resistance.

The destructive violence of the Second World War culminated in 1944/45. In no other year of the war were more soldiers involved, greater battles fought, more people killed, more cities destroyed, more land laid to waste. At the end, Europe was liberated from National Socialism, yet the victory left behind a ruined continent, with untold millions uprooted and traumatized. Western Europe soon established a free democratic system, while communist dictatorships ruled in the East. Liberation meant very different things to the Europeans in 1945.

2014 marked the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War; the fifty-seventh of the Second World War in 2019-2020; and 2019 the twenty-fifth anniversary of the peaceful revolution of 1989. It is therefore of particular importance for Liberation Route Europe that the history of the various wartime experiences and the liberation of during the Second World War be embedded in the larger context of the two World Wars, which began in 1914 and ended, in terms of their political aftermath, only in 1989/90.

As a whole, the Liberation Route Europe focuses on putting the different national experiences and perspectives related to the Second World War into the larger context of European history to illuminate different military, political and societal perspectives on the liberation that led to the peace, reconciliation, and human rights in Europe today.

3.1.3 Council of Europe values represented by the theme

By linking history to the present, Liberation Route Europe aims to raise awareness of the importance of European values such as freedom, democracy, peace and non-discrimination. They are at the core of the organisation's Magna Carta and Charter, which are signed by members as a commitment to these values and beliefs. Signing it is mandatory before becoming a member of LRE network. By commemorating the Second World War heritage, the Liberation Route Europe is strengthening the sense of European identity based on common European values and promotes the reflection on it.

The Liberation Route Europe puts into practice the principles and values expressed in the conventions of the Council of Europe and other international organisations in a number of ways.

First and foremost, the Liberation Route Europe promotes the protection of fundamental freedoms including respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law as outlined in the 'European Human Rights Convention' and section 4.1.2 of the 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue'. The network does not allow membership of organisations that do not respect these fundamental human rights protections. It is the mission of the Liberation Route Europe to use the history of the war to reflect on the importance of these fundamental freedoms as well as that the modern protections (including the development of the 'European Human Rights convention') were developed in the post war period as a direct reaction to the war. Respect of the national regulations, places of remembrance and the memory of the eyewitnesses as well as condemnation of any extremist, denialist and revisionist ideologies are since the beginning at the heart of LRE mission.

Second, the Liberation Route Europe seeks to safeguard the common material and immaterial cultural heritage related to the liberation and the Second World War in Europe as outlined in the 'European Cultural Convention' (art. 1). The Route pays special attention to preserving the memories of eyewitnesses to the war and creating ways to pass these

memories through sustainable ways (e.g. the Liberation Route Europe trails) to future generations. This puts into practice the 'UNESCO Convention – Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage' where “[...] the importance of intangible cultural heritage as a mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development.”

Third, the cornerstone of the Liberation Route Europe is its purpose to educate the public on a multi-perspective understanding of the war, as outlined in its Magna Carta, which promotes peace and reconciliation. LRE presents the different national perspectives on the liberation of Europe of the Nazi occupation and aims to generate a common awareness of the importance of freedom and preventing conflicts. This multi-perspective memory is being promoted by fostering cultural and scientific exchanges for a better mutual understanding and reflection on the consequences of the Second World War. Before joining the network, each member must affirm their support for this multi-perspective approach, and are removed as deemed to violate this principle. Respect of the national regulations, places of remembrance and the memory of the eyewitnesses as well as condemnation of any extremist, negationist and revisionist ideologies are since the beginning at the heart of LRE mission.

The Liberation Route Europe has participated in and contributed to several EPA and EICR events in 2021 and 2022. Representatives of the LRE network have been speakers at two Cultural Route conferences (Nottingham & Venice). LRE has been communicative and consistent over the period with the Council of Europe in informing on its activities, as reported. As such, it enhances its actions by making an active, constructive contribution to the overall programme and being a positive example of good practice in many areas for other certified Cultural Routes, for those at application stage, and pre-application.

3.2 Fields of Action

3.2.1 Co-operation in research and development

The multi-perspective approach on war, occupation and liberation has been developed by a scientific committee of historical experts from different member countries along the Liberation Route Europe, constituting the Historical Advisory Board.

The Historical Advisory Board currently has nine members. These advisors are senior historians attached to various universities and research institutions across Europe. They come from seven countries: Poland, Germany, Luxembourg, Italy, United Kingdom, Netherlands and France. The LRE Historical Advisory Board has been enlarged over the period under evaluation. Mindful of the general patterns of demographics, age, gender and diversity among military historians in Europe, and the need for the Board to expand the participation, three new members have joined in 2022¹: Prof. Katja Makhotina, Prof. Kees Ribbens, and Dr. Benoît Niederkorn. The three new historians from different countries and backgrounds, share distinguished careers in WWII memory transmission and remembrance.

The methodology consisting of storytelling is combined with tourism and thanks to international cooperation is considered as a tool promoting reconciliation and mutual understanding. The theme is still being developed in the fields of historical content, remembrance tourism and memory transmission. Each national branch of the LRE Foundation also has a national historical advisory committee with historians and academics from different disciplines such as anthropology and political science.

¹ <https://www.lre-foundation.org/the-lre-foundations-historical-advisory-board-welcomes-three-new-members/>

The LRE website and its various project activities feature biographical stories of diverse players who experienced World War II in different ways and in many different places. The focus is on presenting various perspectives that represent a wide spectrum of age, gender, ethnicity and modes of engagement, presenting the experiences of war through the everyday as well as the battlefield itself.

The stories which were available on the website at the Certification evaluation have been expanded substantially over the period under review. There has been a strategic approach to integrate the research, validation, publication and dissemination of new stories aligned with various projects. For example:

- History Through Their Eyes (first strand of the EU-funded LRE Youth Programme “Through their Eyes” which started in 2018 and included partners from France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy) has created a travelling and digital exhibition focused on stories of young people who experienced WWII and its consequences and allowed students to identify with the WWII witnesses.
- EASTory Through their Eyes (second strand of the EU-funded LRE Youth Programme “Through their Eyes”) promoted reflection on the Eastern and Western war experiences through specific life stories researched for the exhibition material (viewed at Bastogne War Museum, BE during the field visit for evaluation)
- Persecution Through Their Eyes (third edition of the EU-funded LRE Youth Programme “Through Their Eyes”) will in 2023/24 develop further relevant stories of young people who experienced the war and its consequences, again to be featured in a travelling and digital exhibition.

In addition to the EASTory Through their Eyes and Persecution Through their Eyes, among the other significant projects undertaken by LRE July 2019 - July 2022 which illustrate cooperation in research and development are:

- LRE Guide Network: sharing experiences and knowledge through the network of 45 guides and members of the LRE Foundation. This is achieved through online meetings and email exchanges and provides a resource service for tour operators.
- Platform Memory WWII: a cooperation and development platform of WWII related organisations in the Netherlands, involving 7 organisations and a monthly committee engagement.
- Platform Canada Municipalities: cooperation of various municipalities and cultural stakeholders on the valorisation of the Canadian Liberation heritage. In cooperation with local authorities in the Netherlands.

3.2.2 Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage

Liberation Route Europe focuses putting the different national experiences and perspectives related to the Second World War in larger context of European history to illuminate different military, political and societal perspectives on the liberation that led to the peace, reconciliation, and human rights in Europe today. By creating an international remembrance route(s) that links the various places of remembrance, stories, and cultural organisations

related to the Second World War, the Liberation Route Europe emphasises the shared European dimension of this history and heritage while valorising / preserving collective memories and experiences.

The historical roots of modern Europe (with peace-keeping institutions such as the European Union or the Council of Europe) lie in the destruction wrought in the Second World War. In 1944/45 the destructive violence of the Second World War culminated with more soldiers engaged in bloody combat that resulted in a great loss of life and property. With the final end of the war in Europe on 8 May 1945, Europe was liberated from National Socialism. Yet this victory left behind a ruined continent, with untold millions uprooted and traumatized. Western Europe soon established a free democratic system, while communist dictatorships ruled in the East. Therefore liberation meant very different things to the Europeans in 1945 and continues to do so to the present day.

Educating the European public about the nuances of this European history from multiple perspectives is cornerstone of the Liberation Route Europe.

Among the significant projects undertaken by LRE July 2019 - July 2022 which illustrate enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage are:

- Europe Remembers: the European Remembrance platform created for the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII (2019-2020) engaged many LRE members and others active in the field of remembrance commemoration activities. This campaign was amplified with a Europe Remembers On tour! communications campaign, with daily video reports disseminated via social media from significant locations in the UK, France, Netherlands and Belgium in 2019. The tour highlighted destinations, stories and events that marked this momentous period in history. With the end of the 75th anniversary programme, a project initially designed to end in 2020, a strategic engagement has been made by LRE to continue to build this activity towards the 80th anniversary, creating a large-scale awareness programme to mark the end of WWII in 2024-25. Europe Remembers is recognised as a destination brand promoting Europe and its remembrance heritage. For the sector, it is the central tool, a resource platform that is used by museums, local authorities and others to promote their own destination, events and stories. Europe Remembers is therefore an example of a major LRE project which covers the period under evaluation and acts as a bridge to the next years' activities.
- Liberation Route Europe Hiking Trails project: this large-scale action links and way-marks historic routes of liberation across Europe. Research and development of historical places and stories along the LRE in UK, France, Netherlands, Belgium & Germany.
- Liberation Route Europe Audio Spots: this pre-existing action has been expanded in the Netherlands and Germany over the evaluation period to develop new audio stories telling the history of locations along the Liberation Route Europe. Visitors and tourists using the hiking and biking trails can access these audio spots through the LRE app and QR codes.
- Airborne Region: 4 themed routes have been developed in the Airborne Region of the Netherlands 2020-21.

- Operation Market Garden Trail: themed hiking routes have been developed in the specific region of the Netherlands 2021-22.
- Luxembourg: Liberation Route Europe hiking trails are under development in Luxembourg, linking historic places and involving research of historical stories. In cooperation with the Luxembourg Ministry of Tourism, 2022-23.

3.2.3 Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans

The LRE Foundation is committed to promoting innovative active remembrance and memory transmission projects targeting the younger generations through the LRE Youth Programme. An essential feature of these initiatives is the inclusion and sharing of diverse experiences, applying a multi-perspective approach to WWII history and remembrance.

Several important projects undertaken by LRE July 2019 - July 2022 illustrate cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans:

- HistoryTreks - Promoting European Citizenship and Sustainability along the Liberation Route Europe: a 5-day youth exchange with 25 university students from Germany and the Netherlands along the route in DE & NL, 2021-22. With 'HistoryTreks', funded by the Erasmus+ programme, students of different countries get together to reflect on the history and impact of WWII on their regions with formal and non-formal learning methods, including hiking the Liberation Route Europe and visiting remembrance sites along the way.
- To date, three sets of "Through Their Eyes" Youth Conferences have been organized thanks to funding from the European Union (CERV: Citizens, Equality, Rights & Values programme). The first edition, "History Through Their Eyes" (2017-2019), focused on comparing the different European perspective and experiences during World War II. The second edition, "EASTory Through Their Eyes" (2020-2022) focused on comparing the Eastern and Western European perspectives of the war. The third edition, "Persecution Through Their Eyes" (2022-2023) focused on the experiences of individuals and minority groups persecuted by the Nazi regime. Through these projects, young Europeans are invited to learn about personal stories of people who experienced WWII and its consequences across Europe, reflecting on the complexity of such shared history. The 'through their Eyes' series combines an online and travelling exhibition with youth events in partner locations in Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Poland.
- In addition, there have been two youth exchange study trips organised along the route. Thanks to a generous grant from the Starr Foundation and in partnership with National History Day (USA) and Operation Liberty Foundation (USA), a group of American students travelled to the Netherlands for a five day trip. Ten students and ten teachers visited multiple historical sites and museums along the route in the Netherlands learning about Operation Market Garden. At each location, they presented a "Vector of Memory" to mark the future Liberation Route Europe hiking trails. A second trip was organised in May 2022 by the LRE Foundation and Liberation Route NRW e.V. that brought students to Vogelsang-IP/ Hürtgen Forest (DE) & Operation Market Garden/Operation Veritable sites (NL) to learn about the different perspectives and impacts of WWII on the respective regions.

The LRE Active Remembrance Youth Programme has been embedded into the 2025 Objectives (LRE Strategy 2025, developed over the period under evaluation). The LRE Youth Programme will be a central component of the Liberation Route Europe and a key element of the 80th anniversary strategy for the 2024-2025 Europe Remembers commemorations of 80 years since the end of WWII. The youth programme aims to reach recognition within the sector, among national and regional authorities, in Europe and North America.

3.2.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practice

Several activities have been undertaken in the fields of contemporary cultural and artistic practice by LRE over the period July 2019 – July 2022:

- ‘Vectors of Memory’²: this is a major international contemporary art and design project. The renowned architect Daniel Libeskind has designed a symbolic family of trail markers called the ‘Vectors of Memory’ which honour people, places, and stories found throughout the European landscape. These trail markers: Crossroad Vectors (in two sizes), small Floor Vector studs, and the monumental 3.5 metre Remembrance Site Vector are adapted to different location requirements. With the installation of 12 medium/large Vectors in the Netherlands in 2022 (one was viewed as part of the evaluation field mission in Mesch, NL) and installation of around 120 smaller Vector markers in Belgium, Netherlands, Italy and Germany, the programme will progressively install vectors at least every five kilometres along the LRE Hiking Trail. The initial stretch from London to Berlin, runs nearly 4,000 km through the UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany. The Vectors are manufactured in the Netherlands, generating a positive economic benefit for the creative and cultural industries in Europe.

“The Vectors are a topography of memory. They function as points in both space and time, while connecting to the story of liberation. It is important that the markers communicate a very clear and bold message.” DANIEL LIBESKIND

The Polish-American architect Daniel Libeskind has an international design and architectural practice which has been actively engaged in and highly influential in fields related to remembrance and commemoration. Notable among his work in Europe are: the extension to the Museum of Military History, Dresden; the Jewish Museum in Berlin; an outdoor photo installation ‘Through the Lens of Faith’ in Auschwitz; Dutch Holocaust Memorial of Names, Amsterdam; the Jewish Museum, Lisbon; Danish Jewish Museum, Copenhagen.³

- Theatre productions and performances – Theatre Company LRE Italy: various productions as live performances, online and in podcast form have taken place (see 4.4 of Certification Cycle Application), reaching audiences of over 400 in Lucca (January 2020 performances) and 6,000 online views to date.

3.2.5 Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.

² <https://www.lre-foundation.org/vectors-of-memory/>

³ Source: Dezeen Magazine <https://www.dezeen.com/tag/studio-libeskind/>

In order to make the Liberation Route Europe a physical part of the European landscape, the LRE Foundation and its members have been developing a network of Liberation Route Europe trails since 2020 that allows new ways of experience the route sustainably by hiking, walking, and cycling. Developed in cooperation with hiking associations across Europe, the trails form a traceable link between the main regions along the Allied Forces' advance across Europe.

To date, over 4.000 km of hiking routes have been developed in five European countries (United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany). In the upcoming years new long-distance hiking routes will be developed in Luxembourg, France, Belgium, Germany, Czechia and Poland and will be complemented by new sustainable modes of transport including cycling. Complementing this many more local, regional, and city walking routes are also in development. Importantly these routes are waymarked by a symbolic family of trail markers called the 'Vectors of Memory' designed by pre-eminent architect Daniel Libeskind (see 3.2.4).

These Vectors honour the people, places, and stories found throughout the European landscape and are designed as a common, recognisable European monument to the liberation and the Second World War. LREF and its partners have also developed more than 200 audiospots (historical audio stories) throughout Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Importantly, the international collaboration to develop these projects has promoted alternative, sustainable tourism around the Liberation Route Europe.

The Vector at Mesch village in the Netherlands was visited as part of the field mission for evaluation in November 2022. The first Vector to be installed in the Netherlands, it was unveiled in September 2022⁴, marking the 78th anniversary of the liberation of the first village in the Netherlands (on 12/09/1944). This Vector is well installed and maintained. It is placed very close by the Belgium/Netherlands border, on a hiking/biking route, adjacent to the village primary school whose pupils participated in the launch ceremony. The annual liberation commemorations in Mesch are a multi-faith event, attracting local participants of all ages, including veterans. Several members of the village Liberation Committee, responsible for the ongoing management and maintenance of the Vector, joined the evaluation meeting, together with the local authority representative, and all were very positive about their involvement with LRE. The Vector and audio spot technology brings an added attraction for cultural, remembrance and active tourism visitors to the small village of Mesch, and wider municipality of Eisjden-Margraten, which has various other important remembrance historical sites related to WWII.

The LRE Foundation has partnered with a number of tour operators to include the Liberation Route Europe as part of their tourism products, including a cycling and hiking trip organised the French Operator, Visit Ouest. A notable collaboration in the field of youth, has been the partnership with Education First to develop youth trips around the Liberation Route Europe, primarily targeting the North American market. New partnerships are in development as LREF meets with hundreds of tour operators a year at events such as ETOA (City Fair, Gem, etc.) and the European Cycle Summit.

The attendance at the European Cycle Summit in 2022 was the first formal engagement with the cycle tourism market, and marks the specific strategy to include, where possible, cycling routes alongside the LRE hiking routes. Cycling has always been part of the engagement strategy of LRE in the Netherlands and there is much scope for growth in this tourism area, particularly given the shifting patterns of tourism in Europe, interest in domestic and more

⁴ <https://www.lre-foundation.org/upcoming-unveiling-new-cross-road-vectors-in-the-netherlands/>

localised tourism, cost of living crisis and greater attention to environmental issues, sustainability and transport costs.

A specific product used to engage tour operators are the “Liberation Route Europe Tour & Travel Guides”⁵.

3.3 Cultural Route Network

3.3.1 Overview of institutional /legal structure of the network

Liberation Route Europe network is managed by a Dutch foundation – LRE Foundation (Stichting Liberation Route Europe). This foundation was registered in the Municipality of Overbetuwe, NL on 25.02.2011, and revised on 21.06.2021.

The network’s main office is in Arnhem, NL, with a smaller office in Brussels. The network’s 12 staff members, based in Arnhem and Brussels, are under contract with LRE Foundation in Arnhem.

The LRE Foundation’s International Supervisory Board (the Board of Directors) comprises seven members whose backgrounds encompass various specialist areas (history, diplomacy, tourism, politics and remembrance). The Board members are from the Netherlands (4 board members), and one member each from Germany, Belgium and the United Kingdom. The board composition was revised during the period under evaluation.

The LRE Foundation has two important Patrons/Ambassadors in:

- Martin Schulz: Member of the German Bundestag & Former President of the European Parliament, Patron of the LRE Foundation and the Liberation Route Europe
- Daniel Libeskind: Architect at Studio Libeskind, creator of the Vectors of Memory marking the Liberation Route Europe trails.

At the point of 2019 Certification evaluation, the foundation’s offices were hosted in the HQ of the vfonds in Utrecht. Since 2012 the NL foundation vfonds (National Fund for Peace, Freedom and Veterans Care), which co-finances Dutch initiatives on the themes of liberation, freedom and peace, supported the work of LRE through long term cooperation agreements, which have moved into a different phase over the evaluation period 2019-2022. During this period, for logistical and other reasons, it was decided to move the LRE offices to Arnhem.

Apart from the international organisation based in Belgium and the Netherlands, new national LRE branch organisations have been established over the period under evaluation - in Italy (2019), France (2021), the United Kingdom (2021) and Germany (2022). These are affiliated to LRE Foundation, and are intended to reinforce the overall network structure, enable access to funding, contacts and on-the-ground national connections which are not so available to the international network level. These national branch organisations are an important part of the network strategy, in terms of membership, activities and effectiveness. They also enable the national associations to communicate the values of the LRE to local audiences, donors and young people in an appropriate language and style for the context.

⁵ <https://www.lre-foundation.org/tour-travel-guide/>

The LRE Foundation also has a Historical Advisory Board which currently has nine members (see 3.2.1 for further information). These advisors are senior historians attached to various universities and research bodies across Europe. They come from Poland, Germany, Luxembourg, Italy, United Kingdom, Netherlands and France.

LRE Foundation is the designated parent legal structure of the organisation, covering the international remit of the network, and being the legal staff employer. The Belgian non-profit foundation (LRE aisbl. - Liberation Route Europe international association established under Belgian law, Jan 2018, with 4 founding members including the Dutch Stichting LRE) is not the active governance structure in terms of active implementation or employment of staff. The LRE aisbl. assumes some functions as the legal recipient of funding received from Belgian national institutions for Belgium-based activities, and it is expected to be re-purposed in the coming year as the national branch for Belgium and Luxembourg, with any necessary revision of the governance structure.

Note that the concerns raised in the 2019 Certification evaluation about lack of clarity and different translated names of the legal structure/s have been dealt with and there is a consistent name and acronym use in place now.

3.3.2 Overview of the financial situation of the network

The documentation for the financial situation of the network is provided in three Annual Reports from Stichting Liberation Route Europe (2019-2021), alongside the budget 2022 and projections to 2024.

The vFonds (the Dutch National Fund for Peace, Freedom and Veterans Care – funded in the Netherlands through various lottery sources), which co-finances Dutch initiatives on the themes of liberation, freedom and peace, has made three consecutive three-year agreements with SLRE to provide regular funding of some 500,000 EUR per year. These agreements for substantial regular core funding have covered the period 2012 – 2019. In the early phase, the funding was for activities in the Netherlands only. As reported in the 2019 Evaluation report, an agreement since 2013 allowed for vFonds funding to be spent more broadly outside the Netherlands.

As informed by the vFonds to SLRE, the 3-year regular funding agreements ended in 2019. In 2019, the vFonds had also agreed a loan for a feasibility study on fundraising in the USA. With part of the loan subsequently repaid, the vFonds agreed in 2021 to write off the outstanding amount, which appears in the 2021 accounts as a regular grant from vFonds of 160,000 EUR.

The vFonds has now moved into a new funding phase for SLRE, and granted project funding of 250,000 EUR per year, also on a 3-year cycle. The current project funding from vFonds runs 2021-2023. This has been allocated to different hiking trails in the Netherlands to date, and in 2023 will fund project activity in Poland and work on the cycling trails.

Over the period when the funding awarded by the Netherlands vFonds has been reduced, substantial project funding for the network's activities has been provided by the Germany Government (Germany Foreign Ministry funding, through the Federal Republic Embassy in The Hague). This has been awarded on an annual basis over 2020-2022 as follows:

2020: 408,000 EUR
2021: 593,000 EUR

2022: 540,000 EUR

This funding has allowed for development of various LRE network project activities, not restricted to those in Germany. It was informed by LRE that the initial commitment, made just before the Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020, was for twice this level of funding (i.e. 3m EUR over three years). However, a pragmatic decision was then made by the German government to halve the funding, monitor the pandemic consequences, in anticipation of other important needs. One of the identified challenges for LRE with the Federal Office funding is that it has a complex decision-making and administrative process, which has taken time to understand and navigate. The funding has regularly been agreed part-way into the year, which has imposed an accelerated timetable for the expenditure cycle. Discussions were underway at the point of evaluation in late 2022 on LRE project applications to the German government fund for future years.

In August 2022, a specific funding of 228,000 EUR was awarded by another channel from the German Government for activities in Italy, to develop Liberation Route Europe trails in Italy⁶. This will create thematic hiking routes in Italy to tell WWII history, and develop a comprehensive online marketing campaign to launch the project on completion.

Alongside these large-scale project and regular funding streams, several important projects have received EU funding. The Europe for Citizens programme funded the EASTory project (98,280 EUR, 2020-22); Erasmus+ Mobility of Young People Youth Exchanges funded the HistoryTreks project (19,275 EUR, 2021-22); the CERV Citizens, Equality, Rights & Values programme has funded the Persecution through their Eyes EU partnership project (179,710 EUR, 2022-24) and a further CERV application is anticipated.

Other important project funding has come from the Starr Foundation in the USA (195,000 EUR for a 2019 project marking US history along the Liberation Route Europe). The Belgian Lottery has awarded funding to the Liberation Route Europe Hiking Trails in Belgium (50,000 EUR, 2022-24).

It is also important to note the significant level of membership financial contributions to the annual budget. In 2022, these are scheduled as 326,000 EUR, representing around 20% of the annual income. The annual membership fees range from 500 EUR for the basic membership to a Regional Premium membership of 30,000 EUR, an umbrella rate to cover up to ten regional organisations, and includes the Wall Vector of Memory. Other individual and organisation membership rates fall between these parameters.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisation faced many challenges. Slowdowns in payment rates by partners and members have been experienced, and some projects suffered delays. The foundation made use of the NOW financial support measures in the Netherlands and the temporary unemployment options in Belgium to mitigate staffing costs during lockdown periods.

Overall, the profit and loss accounts show a fairly consistent income, with the reductions due to the loss of the vFonds, and impact of Covid. However, this has not substantially impacted on the staffing or activities programme, as can be observed.

2019: 1,852,308 EUR

2020: 1,708,298 EUR

2021: 1,753,001 EUR

⁶ <https://www.lre-foundation.org/lre-italy-receives-funding-from-the-federal-republic-of-germany-for-the-development-of-the-liberation-route-trails-in-italy/>

The projected income for the next three years is on an upwards cycle, particularly in relation to increased support expected for the Hiking Trail Germany:

2022: 1,631,000 EUR

2023: 1,851,000 EUR

2024: 1,890,000 EUR

3.3.3 Current composition of the network by country and type of member

An updated list tracking new members since 2018 was provided by LRE. When cross-referenced with the list provided in the certification dossier, the current composition of the network is:

Total members: 132

Member country	Number of members	% of total membership
Netherlands	74	56%
Italy	16	12%
Germany	13	10%
Belgium	7	5%
UK / Channel Islands	7	5%
France	7	5%
Poland	2	1%
Czechia	2	1%
Luxembourg	1	1%
Sweden	1	1%
Greece	1	1%
USA	1	1%

There is a wide typology of members, broken down approximately as:

Local authority	45%
Tourism stakeholder	18%
Museum	16%
Cultural institution/NGO	11%
Regional authority	5%
University/research	2%
SME	1%
Natural park	1%

The largest overall segment of members by type/geography is local authorities in the Netherlands.

NB: the list of network members submitted in the Certification dossier is slightly larger than the number of formal, paid-up members, as it includes several additional categories of partners, stakeholders and sub-members. Therefore, the more up to date information provided to the evaluator in November 2022 by LRE has been used for the analysis of the total members and member countries. However, the typology analysis is based on the membership dossier data on members, which detail this information.

The LRE Forum was held in Normandy in April 2022. With the lifting of COVID constraints this was the first opportunity for members, partners and tourism stakeholders to meet in person since 2019. Around 220 participants came from France, Netherlands, Canada, Germany, USA, Belgium, the UK, Czech Republic, Italy and Poland for the event. The 2023 LRE Forum is in preparation for Feb/March 2023 in Florence, enhancing the role of Italian network members and project activities within the LRE network.

3.3.4 Network extension since last evaluation

As reported in the January 2019 Certification Application evaluation:

“[at the point of evaluation...] SLRE had 52 Official Members, including several regional consortia. The majority of members are in the Netherlands: 73% are Dutch / 38 NL members, with seven other countries having 1-4 members each (in DE, BE, UK, FR, LU, CZ and USA)”.

Therefore, with 132 members, it can be seen that there has been a considerable expansion and diversification in the membership of the network over the past 3-4 years. This can be described as the LRE network entering a more mature phase, from its initial structure assessed in 2019 evaluation, which had grown out of the Netherlands-based initiative, and was heavily reliant on Dutch membership.

The membership total has increased by 154% since the Certification evaluation. Over the period under evaluation (from January 2019 to November 2022), there has been a significant increase of 80 members. Along with a large intake of local authority members in the Netherlands, the membership has diversified with 16 members from Italy and smaller numbers from France, Poland, UK, Sweden, Belgium, Germany and Greece. This introduces a much improved European/international balance in the membership make-up.

It was also noted in the 2019 evaluation report: “The LRE involves some European countries without network members and not fully integrated into the main LRE narrative.”, and this has been fully addressed. This referenced the case of Italy which was part of the LRE route but had no members. With the active engagement of LRE Italy (national branch association), and other awareness actions, the more recent membership of 16 significant organisations from Italy, representing the largest country membership outside the Netherlands, is commended.

The majority of members of the network are still based in the Netherlands, reflecting the origins and visibility of the LRE in the NL. Also, it seems there are mechanisms and financial resources for Dutch local authorities to join LRE, which is absolutely not the case in many (or most) other countries. With Dutch local authorities being the largest segment of members, in terms of nationality + typology, this represents an important income stream and participation in the network. This is a positive element and acts as an example and leverage for other local authorities in network countries to join (two recent new members being the Municipality of Milan and the City of Dunkirk).

Overall, there has been a significant re-balancing from a 73% NL membership in January 2019 to the 56% NL membership in November 2022. The LRE network now has members in 12 countries, a geographical expansion of 50% (in January 2019, the network had members in 8 countries).

The growing initiative of national LRE associations (France, Belgium, Italy, UK, Germany) is also expanding into a decentralised network of affiliated national LREs, which in some places also have their own membership. This has grown over recent years, since Certification, both in terms of the number of national associations and the level of engagement. Sometimes the national association's members and partners find a pathway to full LRE membership, and in other situations, organisations choose to join both their national and the international LRE network. Either way, this structure is a positive approach to engagement with the themes and values of the Liberation Route Europe. It amplifies the visibility of the LRE network and its actions. It is also a smart solution to the variable financial resources of potential members of the network – in some countries, member institutions have the financial resources to join at both national and European level, in others only one is an option.

It was informed by the Council of Europe that there had been discussions on potential Russian participation in the Liberation Route Europe during the period under evaluation. As understood through the evaluation interview, the Council of Europe mediated an approach to LRE in 2021 by potential Russian ministry partners who challenged some of the accuracy and balance of the WWII multi-perspective narratives of the Liberation Route Europe, its network members and Historical Advisory Board. Subsequently a high level meeting was organised in 2021 to launch a dialogue on these matters. At this meeting, the LRE asserted the values of the network and the commitment to the Magna Carta and the Foundation Charter which are obligatory for all members. While the Russian ministry views remained narrow in perspective, and scope for a meaningful commitment to the multi-perspective LRE charter values was not evident, some encouragement for eventual Russian membership was nevertheless posited by the Council of Europe at that time. With the invasion of Ukraine, a procedure was launched under Article 8 of the Statute of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly decided on 16 March 2022 that the Russian Federation would cease to be a member of the Council of Europe with immediate effect, ending the country's 26 years of membership⁷. The LRE Foundation's Supervisory Board made a statement⁸ on the Russian invasion of Ukraine at its 2022 LRE Forum, re-asserting the WWII legacies of freedom and democracy:

“Since its creation, the LRE Foundation has been committed to expanding the knowledge of WWII history, creating a platform of international dialogue, and inviting reflection on the lessons of the past, with the LRE Forum being one of the main expressions of this mission. All this work and effort is meant to promote a peaceful Europe. In these regards, we would like to renew our admiration for the hard work our members and partners put every day into their remembrance projects. The LRE Foundation's network represents an outstanding example of international cooperation among countries that have been once enemies but found the path of reconciliation and now pursue a shared mission of peace.”

⁷ Note by the Secretariat: Following the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe Resolution CM/Res(2022)03, the Russian Federation ceased to be a member of the Council of Europe on 16 March 2022. The Russian Federation ceased to be a member of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes as of 23 March 2022.

⁸ <https://www.lre-foundation.org/lre-forum-2022-statement-from-the-lre-foundations-supervisory-board-on-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine/>

3.3.5 Strategy for the network extension in the three years to come

The above-mentioned national branch organisations are an important element of the strategy for network extension in the three years to come.

It is planned to adjust elements of the Liberation Route Europe aisbl. (Liberation Route Europe international association established under Belgian law, Jan 2018). This legal structure is not adequate to become the main legal and administrative structure of the network/route (this remains the Stichting Liberation Route Europe, NL foundation, established Feb 2011, as the parent body, main implementation organisation and employer of LRE staff team). Nevertheless, the LRE aisbl. plays an important role as the channel for Belgian funding awarded to dedicated activities/projects in Belgium (e.g. Belgian hiking trail development, funding from Belgian National Lottery awarded in 2022). Therefore, it is planned to transform the LRE aisbl. into the national LRE association for Belgium and Luxembourg, creating a necessary enlargement of the national association network structure. Where appropriate, in terms of the numbers of members and interest, options will be explored for further national associations affiliated to the Liberation Route Europe.

In terms of other strategies for network extension in the three years to come, there is an ongoing research, communications and visibility strategy with the museums sector across Europe. In the evaluation interviews, important museums with content related to WWII and the Liberation Route theme in the UK, Finland, Malta, Slovenia and Slovakia were mentioned as communications targets. Discussions are underway at high level with Slovenia, with a view to developing an engagement strategy for the Western Balkans.

Overall, there is a strong awareness within LRE management of the problematic of weaker engagement with Eastern European partners and potential members. The 'Liberation Route' language does not resonate with the WWII aftermath experience of these countries. However, the network seeks other routes to engagement, for example by inviting a speaker from Hungary to the 2023 LRE Forum. Also, in this context, the 'Europe Remembers' campaign and brand, which has been substantially developed over the period under evaluation, is a more accessible entry point for organisations and local initiatives to engage with the wider LRE network.

MoUs are another strategy which is developed to expand the partnerships of LRE, and this is also a way of expanding the affiliations of the network, and can lead to new paid members. Examples in this area are:

- MoU signed with Maison de la Randonnée – GTA Belgique (June 2022)⁹
- Forthcoming MoUs are anticipated in the UK (to be signed with the UK LRE Association) with Ramblers Association UK and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

A further element of the network expansion and visibility strategy is high level engagement. For example, on 9 May 2022, Liberation Route Europe was presented at the Italian Chamber of Deputies during the Plenary Meeting of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Carlo Puddu, LRE Italy Managing Director, and Mirco Carrattieri, President of the LRE Italy Historical Advisory Board, represented the Liberation Route Europe at a joint hearing about two reports on culture,

⁹ <https://www.lre-foundation.org/lre-foundation-signs-memorandum-of-understanding-with-the-maison-de-la-randonnee-gta-belgique/>

heritage and remembrance, in the presence of Tiny Kox, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and Committee members.¹⁰

3.4 Communication tools

3.4.1 Current state of communication tools developed by the network (graphic charter, communication materials, logo, communication channels, signposting, maps, etc.)

SLRE has three staff with direct responsibility for communications activities (Communications Manager, Press & Communications Advisor and Digital Manager). The professional and comprehensive array of communications tools (which were noted in the 2019 evaluation report) has continued to expand and reach specialist and general media in different formats in Europe and North America.

It is noted that the COVID-19 lockdown period was used constructively to review this area and to work more intensively on the development of the new website and rebranding.

The Liberation Route website (www.liberationroute.com) is the public-facing information site, and available in English, French, Italian, German, Dutch and Polish. This new iteration of the website was launched in May 2021 and presents more than 1000 locations and stories. Over the first six months, a total of 263,000 visitors¹¹ were recorded, an average of 43,000 unique users per month (the statistics for 2019 Certification evaluation were 30,000 visitors per month), and more than 4,500 new pages.

The cultural route has maps in printed and digital forms. The developed hiking routes following the Liberation Route have been developed in cooperation with European hiking organisations (including the European Ramblers Association), historians, local partners etc. and have been mapped using professional GIS software (ArcGIS & QGIS).

Routes are signposted, integrated into a system developed by local partners in various regions, including in regions of the Netherlands and Belgium, with work underway in Luxembourg. The Vectors of Memory are a specific part of the signposting system (further information in 3.2.4).

Social media communications are well developed, with active engagement and growth in followers. As reported in 2021:

Facebook page: 30,900 followers (+24.9% against previous year, 61 new followers per day)
At the point of evaluation, this had grown to 36,000 FB followers.

Instagram: 2,300 followers (+35.8%, 5.8 new followers per day)
At the point of evaluation, this had grown to 2,669 followers (430 posts)

A new designed newsletter was launched in 2021, that focuses on the Liberation Route Europe project and keeps readers updated on developments. Over the period under evaluation, six editions of the LibRE magazine were published.

¹⁰ <https://www.lre-foundation.org/liberation-route-europe-represented-at-italian-parliament/>

¹¹ Statistics for website and social media engagement taken from 2021 LRE Foundation Annual Report.

LRE foundation has a separate website (<https://www.lre-foundation.org>) which serves the interests of the network members, again with a rebranding during the evaluation period. Information on governance, the International Supervisory Board, the Historical Advisory Board, network projects, Forum and news are published on this site. It is publicly accessible to anyone wanting to know more about the project. The LRE Foundation social media are aimed at a smaller professional cohort of network members, partners and stakeholders - Twitter (3,128 followers at point of evaluation) and LinkedIn (1,215 followers). The links to the Twitter and LinkedIn pages are also found on the main public information site for Liberation Route Europe.

The LRE also manages a separate web portal for the project Europe Remembers (<https://europe remembers.com>), an initiative launched by LRE Foundation with other strategic partners. This centralised online platform provided a collaborative calendar of events in 2019-2020 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII. This content drew in over 500,000 unique visitors over the activity period of 18 months, with parallel social media campaigns on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, also reaching a wide-ranging online community. The Europe Remembers portal will renew its active online presence and content update for the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII in 2024-25.

A new area of communications reported (which also demonstrates the maturity level of the LRE network and cultural route project) is that three academic publications have focused on the LRE work. These three theses (by graduate students at universities in France, Italy and the Netherlands) appeared in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

The Rough Guide – Travel the Liberation Route Europe¹² – which was anticipated in the 2019 certification evaluation, was published in 2019. As part of the communications strategy to promote the book, Rough Guides launched a dedicated information site on the route on their website¹³. In 2020, through an agreement with the publishers, a Dutch language version of the guide book was published by ANWB.¹⁴

As reported during the evaluation interview, a tender was in process for a new communications initiative – a podcast series focused on historical stories and places along the Liberation Route Europe. The selection, contracting, production and launch phases were due to take place in 2023.

As set out in the Strategy LRE 2025, a new brand strategy has been implemented which presents a clear brand recognition between the LRE Foundation and its initiatives and projects (Liberation Route Europe, Europe Remembers, and other project actions).

Again, it can be confirmed that the LRE communications tools are professional and comprehensive. The rebranding of the websites and the new logo create a clear visual image, and site are easy to navigate with regular and recent content publication.

3.4.2 Compliance with the Guidelines for the Use of the Logo “Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe”

The Liberation Route Europe complies with the guidelines for the use of the logo “Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe”.

¹² <https://www.roughguides.com/articles/revealing-the-rough-guide-to-the-liberation-route-europe/>

¹³ <https://www.roughguides.com/liberation-route-europe/>

¹⁴ <https://www.anwb.nl/webwinkel/p/35151/bevrijdingsroute-europa>

The logo of the 'Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe' has been integrated into the larger 'Vectors of Memory' trail markers (described in more detail, 3.2.4).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations (2-3 pages)

In terms of eligibility criteria for themes, priority fields of action and networks, as set out in CM/Res(2013)67, the Liberation Route Europe meets all elements on the checklist. It is therefore recommended that the certification “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” is re-confirmed.

List of eligibility criteria for themes

The Liberation Route Europe satisfies the criteria

- The theme is representative of European values and common to at least three countries in Europe
- The theme has been researched and developed by groups of multidisciplinary experts from different regions of Europe, so as to ensure that the activities and projects which illustrate it are based on consensus.
- The theme is illustrative of European memory, history and heritage and contributes to an interpretation of the diversity of present-day Europe
- The theme lends itself to cultural and educational exchanges for young, in line with the Council of Europe’s ideas and concerns in these fields
- The theme permits the development of initiatives and exemplary and innovative projects in the field of cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development
- The theme lends itself to the development of tourist products in partnership with tourist agencies and operators aimed at different publics.

List of priority fields of action

The Liberation Route Europe is active in all the priority fields of action:

- Cooperation in research and development
- Enhancement of memory, history and European heritage
- Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans
- Contemporary cultural and artistic practice
- Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development

List of criteria for networks

The Liberation Route Europe continues to meet all the criteria for networks as set out in the guidelines.

The Liberation Route Europe was awarded Certification as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in the 2018-19 evaluation cycle. As the LRE acknowledges, this was in a relatively early phase of its development, being just a few years after the formation of the international network. By 2022, however, it can be seen to have entered a mature phase of development, with an impressive growth in membership, important visibility and engagement and expansion of activities. The confidence and reach of its programmes have grown, and it has deployed its resources strategically over the Covid-19 pandemic to address various communications and governance issues in a positive way.

The LRE Youth Programme has grown substantially over the period with several dedicated EU-funded projects, notably reaching partners and youth participants in Eastern Europe, one of the important target areas of the LRE. The objective is for the LRE Youth Programme to be a central component of the Liberation Route Europe by 2025. This programme is planned to be a key element of the 80th anniversary strategy of the LRE Foundation. The 80th anniversary of the end of WWII will be marked in 2024-25 with a large-scale awareness campaign and promotion of Europe and its remembrance heritage through the Europe Remembers platform.

Active cultural and remembrance tourism has been enhanced over the period under evaluation. The Liberation Route Europe trails have been developed substantially – with more than 3,785 km of the initial system launched (London – Berlin, across the UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany), integrating Vectors of Memory, audio spots and other way mark information. The aim by 2025 is to have designed and made available to the public 10,000 km of hiking trails, alongside companion tools, information materials and Vectors. The cycling trails concept is under development, with research through dedicated travel trade fora to further build the active cultural and remembrance tourism options, and reach other engaged users.

This form of tourism meets environmental sustainability needs and interests, as well as complementing the post-COVID patterns of more localised and domestic tourism. It also provides options for learning and healthy activity amid the economic constraints on household budgets due to inflationary pressures and the energy crisis of 2022 and beyond.

A further indication of the professional development and maturity of the LRE network and overall project has been the in-depth review to develop the Strategy LRE 2025, as a long-term strategy for 2021-25. This important document has been developed through team contributions, a survey of members, consultations with key partners and stakeholders and advice from the LRE boards. As the mission of the organisation has evolved, the Mission Statement has been adapted to reconfirm the definition of the organisation – what it does and what it does not do. In this way the strong values of the organisation are made more explicit. As part of the review, the LRE Charter has been revisited (it was created in 2014), and an updated version has been proposed. The Magna Carta and LRE Charter confer a societal and political message to the project, and set the framework for the values and priorities for the years to come.

Overall, the LRE network is highly representative of the values of the Council of Europe, and the route puts in to practice the principles and values expressed in the conventions of the Council of Europe and other international organisations.

CRITERIA	Recommendations previous evaluation 2018-2019	Has the route addressed the recommendation since the last evaluation?		Recommendations current evaluation 2022-2023
		YES	NO	
<i>I. Cultural route theme</i>	Consider whether to introduce a clause in the SLRE Charter code of conduct on heritage restoration and protection obligations	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	The LRE Foundation Magna Carta and Foundation Charter have been reviewed as part of the 2025 Strategy. The recommendation from the previous evaluation is no longer seen as a priority for the

					network by the evaluator, and is therefore not carried forward.	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
II. Priority fields of action	Cooperation in research and development		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Enhancement of memory, history and European heritage		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans	Finalise and disseminate the SLRE education strategy; look for ways to build on the experience of EYES project to expand and deepen meaningful cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans	Yes			
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Contemporary cultural and artistic practice		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Continue to develop contemporary cultural and artistic practice	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Cultural development		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
III. Cultural Route Network	-Develop a strategic approach to diversify the LRE/SLRE membership, in order to move away from the numerical and financial imbalance of NL memberships and aim for a more balanced and	Yes		Continue to expand the membership to countries represented by the cultural route. Continue to develop and support the decentralised membership strategy of national branch LRE		

	<p>diverse European network membership.</p> <p>-Aim for greater consistency between network members representation and the countries represented by the tourism routes proposed</p> <p>-Consider whether the membership fees are set at an appropriate level for all targeted countries and potential members</p>			<p>organisations, allowing for differentiated membership fee levels.</p>
	<p>Ensure full consistency of the name used in English for the Dutch SLRE (at present several variations were found in LRE documentation, creating the impression of multiple legal structures)</p>	<p>Yes</p>		
	<p>Empower the LRE aisbl. to acquire the necessary financial and organisational capacity to position itself as an international partner/project leader for EU projects, building on the experience and track record of SLRE in the Netherlands.</p>	<p>Yes</p>		<p>Note: this recommendation has been addressed, but the LRE aisbl. has been found to not be the adequate legal and tax efficient structure to take overall governance of the LRE Foundation work. Therefore the decision to transform LRE aisbl. into the more necessary national branch association for Belgium and</p>

				Luxembourg is seen as the positive way forward.
Communication Tools		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Ensure greater clarity of the LRE route/s on a map of Europe for user benefit	Yes		

Other recommendations in 2019 report:

Ensure adequate planning and oversight of any fundraising missions outside Europe, to project a net income, taking into account all expenditure and staff costs

- This is seen to be achieved, according to accounts, and is not seen as a relevant recommendation to carry forward.

No further recommendations are made. The LRE Foundation and Liberation Route Europe network are assessed as being well managed and on a solid development pathway, fully addressing all requirements for the Regular Evaluation as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe.

1. List of references

1. Certification form: Certification Cycle 2022-2023
2. Self Assessment Grid
3. Declaration of Honour
4. Updated legal statutes: Stichting Liberation Route Europe
5. Members list 2022 (submitted with Certification form)
6. LRE new members tracking since 2019 (names, dates, countries of new members to date – additional requested info)
7. Financial Statements 2019-2021
8. Budget Forecast 2022-2025
9. Budget SLRE 2022
10. Annual reports 2019-2021
11. LRE Magna Carta
12. LRE Youth Programme Info brochure
13. LRE Foundation Member booklet
14. LRE Charter – revised version 2021
15. LRE List of past projects (covering period July 2019 – July 2022)
16. Funded projects and activities (13 files including Canadian Trail, Groningen; hiking trails project plans – BE & LU; Mondriaan Funds proposal – 75 year anniversary programme; several other project reports covering evaluation period)
17. LRE Forum 2022 attendees (requested by evaluator)
18. LRE Foundation Strategy 2025
19. LRE Hiking Trails project plan
20. LRE Active Remembrance Youth Programme 2022
21. Communications materials (BtoB brochure; BtoC brochure; Poster – 2 formats; Programme: July 2022, Berlin: launch of LRE hiking trails)
22. LRE Brandbook
23. Places to discover England's WWII History
24. 3 academic theses referencing work of LRE (Angele Carpentier, Diego Audero, Eva Vos)
25. Jersey Evening Post: article on heritage trail in Jersey, Channel Islands
26. Previous evaluation report of the route (Evaluation cycle 2018-19)

Additional documentation from field visit:

Bastogne War Museum: Art Liberty exhibition 2022

Visit Zuid-Limburg: Fietsen naar vrijheid in Eijsden-Margraten

All documents required for the evaluation have been duly submitted by LRE

2. Annex 1: Expert field visit and interviews with the network management and members

Field visit programme: 24 November 2022 – Belgium & Netherlands

- 08.30 Departure Brussels
- 10.30 Arrival at the Bastogne War Museum – meeting with Mathieu Billa (Director)
Visit of the Museum
Lunch at the museum café
- 14.00 Visit of the Bois Jacques with Pierre Lhote (Bastogne Memorial Association)
- 15.00 Departure to Mesch (NL)
- 16.15 Visit of the Vectors of memory and meeting with Roger Deckers (municipality of Eisjden-Margraten) and local committee members.
- 17.00 Departure to Brussels
- 18.30 Arrival

Stakeholders met/interviewed:

Rémi Praud (Managing Director, Liberation Route Europe)
Emme Johnson (Project Officer, Liberation Route Europe)
Mathieu Billa (Director, Bastogne War Museum, BE – LRE network member since 2016)
Pierre Lhote (Bastogne Memorial Association, BE – LRE network member since 2019)
Roger Deckers (Municipality of Eisjden-Margraten, NL – LRE network member since 2021)
Pasteur Roy Driessens (Liberation Committee of Mesch, NL)
Giel Weerts (Liberation Committee of Mesch, NL)

Places visited

Bastogne War Museum
Mardasson US Memorial
Bois Jacques ('foxholes' forest site of Easy Company siege 1944-45, classified Wallonia heritage site)
Mesch village - 1st 'Vector of Memory' installed to mark the 1st liberated village of the Netherlands (September 1944)

Additional interview

01/12/2022 – phone interview
Ben Mayne, National Coordinator, Liberation Route United Kingdom (LRE network member since 2021)
Discussion on set up and role of national organisation for the UK; plans for activities in 2023 (delegated work with funding from Federal Foreign Office of the Republic of Germany)

3. Annex 2: Expert assessment checklist

EXPERT ASSESSMENT CHECK-LIST					
QUESTIONS			Yes	No	Comments (if any)
3.1 THEME	1	Does the theme of the Route represent a common value (historical, cultural, or heritage) to several European countries?	1		
	2	Does the theme of the route offer a solid basis for youth cultural and educational exchanges?	1		
	3	Does the theme of the route offer a solid basis for innovative activities?	1		
	4	Does the theme of the route offer a solid basis for cultural tourism products development?	1		
	5	Has the theme been researched/developed by academics/experts from different regions of Europe?	1		
3.2 FIELDS OF ACTION	3.2.1 Co-operation in research and development	6	Does the Route offer a platform for co-operation in research and development of European cultural themes/values?	1	
		7	Does the Route play a unifying role around major European themes, enabling dispersed knowledge to be brought together?	1	
		8	Does the Route show how these themes are representative of European values shared by several European countries?	1	
		9	Does the Route illustrate the development of these values and the variety of forms they may take in Europe?	1	
		10	Does the Route have a network of universities and research center working on its theme at the European level?	1	
		11	Does the Route have a multidisciplinary Scientific Committee?	1	
		12	Does the Scientific Committee work on its theme at the European level?	1	
		13	Does the Scientific Committee carry out research and analysis of the issues relevant to its theme and/or activities on the theoretical level?	1	
		14	Does the Scientific Committee carry out research and analysis of the issues relevant to its theme and/or activities on the practical level?	1	
		15	Do the Route activities take into account and explain the historical significance of tangible	1	

		and intangible European heritage ?		
	16	Do the Route activities promote the values of the Council of Europe?	1	
	17	Do the Route activities promote the brand of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe?	1	
	18	Does the route work in conformity with international charters and conventions on cultural heritage preservation?	1	
	19	Do the Route activities identify, preserve and develop European heritage sites in rural destinations?	1	
	20	Do the Route activities identify, preserve and develop European heritage sites in industrial areas in the process of economic restructuring?	1	
	21	Do the Route activities valorize the heritage of ethnic or social minorities in Europe?	1	
	22	Do the Route activities contribute to a better understanding of the concept of cultural heritage, the importance of its preservation and sustainable development?	1	
	23	Do the Route activities enhance physical and intangible heritage, explain its historical significance and highlight its similarities in the different regions of Europe?	1	
	24	Do the Route activities take account of and promote the charters, conventions, recommendations and work of the Council of Europe, UNESCO and ICOMOS relating to heritage restoration, protection and enhancement, landscape and spatial planning (European Cultural Convention, Faro convention, European Landscape Convention, World Heritage Convention, ...)?	1	
3.2.3 Cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans	25	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to develop a better understanding of the concept of European citizenship?	1	
	26	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to emphasize the value of new personal experience through visiting diverse places?	1	
	27	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to encourage social integration and exchanges of young people from different social backgrounds and regions of Europe?	1	

development	3.2.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practice	28	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to offer collaborative opportunities for educational institutions at various levels?	1	
		29	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to place the emphasis on personal and real experiences through the use of places and contacts?	1	
		30	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to set up pilot schemes with several participating countries?	1	
		31	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to give rise to co-operation activities which involve educational institutions at various levels?	1	
	3.2.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practice	32	Do the Route's cultural activities promote intercultural dialogue and multidisciplinary exchange between various artistic expressions in European countries?	1	
		33	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage artistic projects that establish links between cultural heritage and contemporary culture?	1	
		34	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage innovative cultural and contemporary art practices* connecting them with the history of skills development?	1	
		35	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage collaboration between culture amateurs and professionals via relevant activities and networks creation?**	1	
		36	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage debate and exchange - in a multidisciplinary and intercultural perspective - between various cultural and artistic expressions in different countries of Europe?	1	
		37	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage activities and artistic projects which explore the links between heritage and contemporary culture?	1	
		38	Do the Route's cultural activities highlight the most innovative and creative practices?	1	
		39	Do the Route's cultural activities link these innovative and creative practices with the history of skills development?***	1	
		40	Do the Route's activities (relevant to sustainable cultural tourism development) assist in local, regional, national and/ or European identity formation?	1	

		41	Do the Route's activities (relevant to sustainable cultural tourism development) actively involve 3 major means to raise awareness of their cultural projects: print, broadcast and social media?	1	
		42	Do the Route's activities promote dialogue between urban and rural communities and cultures?	1	
		43	Do the Route's activities promote dialogue between developed and disadvantaged regions?	1	
		44	Do the Route's activities promote dialogue between different regions (south, north, east, west) of Europe?	1	
		45	Do the Route's activities promote dialogue between majority and minority (or native and immigrant) cultures?	1	
		46	Do the Route's activities open possibilities for co-operation between Europe and other continents?	1	
		47	Do the Route's activities draw decision makers' attention to the necessity of protecting heritage as part of the sustainable development of the territory?	1	
		48	Do the Route's activities aim to diversify cultural product, service and activities offers?	1	
		49	Do the Route's activities develop and offer quality cultural tourism products, services or activities transnationally?	1	
		50	Do the Route's activities develop partnerships with public and private organisations active in the field of tourism?	1	
		51	Did the network prepare and use tools along the route to raise the number of visitors and the economic impacts of the route on the territories crossed?	1	
3.3 NETWORK		52	Does the Route represent a network involving at least three Council of Europe's member states?	1	
		53	Was the theme of the route chosen and accepted by the network members?	1	
		54	Was the conceptual framework of the route founded on a scientific basis?	1	
		55	Does the network involve several Council of Europe member states in all or part of its projects?	1	
		56	Is the network financially sustainable?	1	
		57	Does the network have a legal status (association, federation of associations,	1	

		EEIG,...)?			
	58	Does the network operate democratically?	1		
	59	Does the network specify its objectives and working methods?	1		
	60	Does the network specify the regions concerned by the project?	1		
	61	Does the network specify its partners and participating countries?	1		
	62	Does the network specify the fields of action involved?	1		
	63	Does the network specify its overall strategy in the short and long term?	1		
	64	Does the network identify potential participants and partners in Council of Europe member states and/or other world countries?	1		
	65	Does the network provide details of its financing (financial reports and/or activity budgets)?	1		
	66	Does the network provide details of its operational plan?	1		
	67	Does the network append the basic text(s) confirming its legal status?	1		
3.4 COMMUNICATION TOOLS	68	Does the Route have its own logo?	1		
	69	Do all partners of the network use the logo on their communication tools?	1		
	70	Does the Route have its own dedicated website ?	1		
	71	Is it the website available in English and French?	1		
	72	Is it the website available in other languages?	1		
	73	Does the network use effectively social networks and web 2.0?	1		
	74	Does the network publish brochures on the Route?	1		
	75	If yes, are the brochures available in English?	1		
	76	If yes, are the brochures available in French?	1		
	For certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe only	77	Is the title of "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" present on all communication materials (including press releases, webpages, publications, etc.)?	1	
		78	Is the certification logo present on all communication materials?	1	
		79	Is the certification logo used in accordance to the guidelines for its use (size and position,...)?	1	
		80	Are the logos (Cultural Route + certification logo) provided to all the members of the Route?	1	

		81	Does the Council of Europe certification logo appear on road signs/ boards indicating the cultural route?		1	
			SCORE	81	0	

4. Annex 3: List of acronyms, figures and tables

LRE - Liberation Route Europe (the unifying European remembrance route project)

LRE Foundation – formerly known as SLRE, Stichting Liberation Route Europe (NL foundation, established Feb 2011, parent body, main implementation organisation)

LRE aisbl. - Liberation Route Europe international association established under Belgian law, Jan 2018, 4 founding members including SLRE.