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Regular Evaluation: **IRON AGE DANUBE ROUTE** 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 2024-2025

Independent expert report

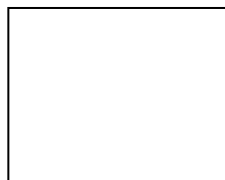
IRON AGE DANUBE ROUTE

Author's information:

Dr Nikola Naumov

University of Northampton, United Kingdom

Nick.naumov@northampton.ac.uk



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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

The concept for the Iron Age Danube Route originated from the INTERREG project "Monumentalized Early Iron Age Landscapes in the Danube River Basin," part of the Danube Transnational Programme and a 2018 RegioStars finalist. This project brought together 20 partner institutions from Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia to develop a collaborative approach to researching, managing, and preserving complex prehistoric landscapes. Following the conclusion of the Iron-Age-Danube project, the partnership continued with support from the Council of Europe's Routes4U initiative.

To build on this foundation, the Iron Age Danube Route Association was established in June 2020. It united institutions from Austria, Croatia, Hungary, and Slovenia specializing in archaeology, cultural heritage protection, tourism, and local stakeholder involvement. The association aims to advance the development and management of the Iron Age Danube Route (IADR). Concurrently, the network expanded through the "Virtual Archaeological Landscapes of the Danube Region" Interreg project (July 2020–December 2022). This initiative focused on enhancing the visibility and appeal of archaeological landscapes in the Danube region, integrating them into sustainable cultural tourism at regional, national, and international levels. New studies, strategies, and digital reconstructions of Iron Age heritage were developed during the project, forming part of the IADR network as innovative tools for presentation, awareness-raising, and cultural tourism.

In May 2021, the Iron Age Danube Route achieved certification as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, marking a significant milestone. This recognition opened numerous opportunities for the Route, its members, and its partners. This evaluation report assesses its progress and achievements from 2021 to 2024, outlining strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for further development.

Key findings reveal that IADR has expanded its network from 11 to 38 members across eight countries, integrating institutions like universities, museums, and local stakeholders. This growth reflects improved collaboration and an interdisciplinary approach to archaeology, cultural heritage preservation, and sustainable tourism. The route has successfully organized events, including conferences, educational programs, and cultural festivals, enhancing public awareness and engagement. Notable advancements include the development of digital tools like augmented and virtual reality for heritage interpretation and the establishment of a dedicated Tourism Committee to promote sustainable tourism.

However, challenges remain. The route's financial stability relies heavily on EU funding, with limited diversification of revenue sources. Additionally, the focus on tangible heritage overshadows opportunities to explore intangible heritage elements. Partnerships with tourism businesses and local artisans are underdeveloped, limiting potential for innovative tourism products such as culinary and eco-tourism. Lastly, the Scientific Committee lacks adequate interdisciplinarity, and its composition should include experts from tourism, anthropology, and cultural studies.

Main recommendations:

- Diversify funding sources by strengthening partnerships with public authorities, tourism businesses, and private sponsors.

- Expand the network to include countries not yet represented and broaden stakeholder types, such as DMOs and NGOs.
- Shift focus to intangible heritage and enhance community engagement through workshops and local narratives.
- Develop alternative tourism products like Iron Age-themed culinary experiences and eco-tourism trails.
- Broaden the Scientific Committee to include expertise beyond archaeology, particularly in tourism and cultural studies.
- The Iron Age Danube Route has made commendable progress, but continued efforts are necessary to achieve greater sustainability, inclusivity, and cultural impact.

Criteria	Excellent	Very good	Satisfactory	Poor	Unsatisfactory	Assessment
Compliance with the eligibility criteria for themes listed in Resolution CM/Res(2023)2, I. List of eligibility criteria for themes.	X					Excellent
Compliance with the eligibility criteria for actions listed in Resolution CM/Res(2023)2, II. List of priority fields of action.		x				Very Good
Compliance with the eligibility criteria for networks listed in Resolution CM/Res(2023)2, III. List of criteria for networks.		X				Very Good
The Cultural Route implements the Guidelines for the Use of the Logo “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe”	x					Excellent

2. Introduction

The Iron Age marked a pivotal chapter in the history of Central Europe, including the Danube region. This era followed the Bronze Age and heralded the widespread use of iron, a metal that was both more abundant and more versatile than bronze. Iron tools and weapons revolutionized agriculture, warfare, and trade, contributing to significant societal transformations.

In the Danube region, the Iron Age is broadly divided into two cultural phases: the Hallstatt culture (9th–5th century BCE) and the La Tène culture (5th–1st century BCE). The Hallstatt culture, centered in modern Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia, is recognized for its fortified hillforts, elaborate burial mounds, and artifacts reflecting hierarchical social structures. These communities were part of extensive trade networks that reached as far as the Mediterranean, exchanging goods like salt, metals, and pottery. The La Tène culture succeeded Hallstatt and is commonly associated with the Celts. Characterized by intricate art styles and continued trade expansion, La Tène communities established their influence across much of Europe.

Key groups influencing the region included the Illyrians, Thracians, and early Celts, as well as interactions with Greek and Roman civilizations. The introduction of writing and coinage during this period further transformed social and economic systems. This dynamic era set the foundation for the historical and cultural identity of Central Europe. Today, the Iron Age Danube Cultural Route celebrates this legacy, preserving and interpreting its contributions through archaeological research and sustainable tourism.

The following report is a part of a regular 3-year evaluation cycle and focuses upon the past three years of performance of the route. It is noteworthy to mention that this report is the first evaluation since the designation of Iron Age Danube Route as a certified Cultural Route of Council of Europe.

The purpose of the evaluation report is to assess the progress and developments of the Iron Age Route, evaluate the success of the various projects associated with it, and examine the strategic expansion of the network and collaborative work between the partner institutions and entities. Attention is drawn to the weaknesses and recommendations specified in the previous evaluation report.

The following evaluation is based upon:

- A detailed content analysis of the self-completion dossier and relating documents provided by IADR
- Additional documents provided by IADR and associated partners during the field visit
- Examination of IADR official website and social media channels and partner organisations
- A 4-day field visit to few places and sites in Croatia (see Annex 1)
- Interviews, informal conversations and online meetings with members of IADR and associated partners involved with the Route from Croatia, Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria and Slovenia (see Annex 1)

3. Main Body Evaluation

3.1 Cultural Route Theme

3.1.1 Definition of the theme of the route

The Iron Age Danube Route explores the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the Iron Age period with a focus on the Danube Region countries, such as Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia and Bulgaria. The Iron Age is a very important historical period defined by technological innovations such as iron smelting and the establishment of interregional trade networks, a period which profoundly shaped the social and economic landscape of Central Europe. The main aim of the Route is to promote the archaeological and cultural heritage of this significant period. Through interactive exhibits, educational programs, and partnerships with local communities, the IADR seeks to not only celebrate this shared heritage but also ensure its continued relevance and protection. This initiative demonstrates the enduring impact of the Iron Age, offering insights into the past while promoting cultural appreciation and regional identity today.

A key focus of IADR is on the tangible and intangible heritage of the Iron Age era, including pre-historic archaeological sites, fortified hilltop settlements, museum collections and landscapes. The theme is a very strong one as it draws upon the shared history and heritage of the Iron Age historic settlements in general, and the immovable heritage and tangible representations of this historic period in the Danube Region countries, in particular. As per IADR Declaration of Values and Standards, the main priorities and goals of IADR are focused on the following sub-themes.

Firstly, IADR seeks to disseminate knowledge and raise public awareness of the movable, immovable and intangible heritage of the Iron Age period and more specifically, in the Danube Region among members of the Council of Europe and beyond.

Secondly, IADR puts a great emphasis on heritage protection and conservation of the Iron Age sites and it stimulates collaborative dialogue and engagement of many stakeholders to protect and preserve tangible heritage attributes as well as cultural landscapes.

Thirdly, IADR, through its scientific engagements and its open approach to science, seeks to promote and encourage synergies and collaborative partnerships focused on Iron Age history and heritage. Fourthly, IADR aims to promote public awareness and increase the community's general level of knowledge about IADR through various educational engagements (e.g. public lectures, local events), particularly among the youth.

Overall, the IADR highlights archaeological sites such as hillforts, burial mounds, and settlements that serve as windows into the lives of Iron Age communities. By blending research, preservation, and tourism, the route emphasizes sustainability and cultural accessibility. It invites visitors to experience historical narratives while fostering a deeper understanding of the ancient societies that influenced the Danube region's evolution.

3.1.2 Historical and cultural context

The Iron Age Danube Cultural Route encapsulates a transformative era in Central European history. Spanning from approximately c. 1200 to c. 550 BC, the Iron Age followed the Stone, Copper and Bronze Age, bringing significant advancements in metallurgy, settlement patterns, and cultural expressions. This period is particularly notable for the introduction of iron, which revolutionized tools, weaponry, and agricultural practices, enabling communities to thrive and expand.

The Danube region, strategically located as a crossroads of Europe, became a hub of cultural exchange during this time. The Hallstatt culture (9th–5th century BC) was the earliest manifestation of Iron Age communities in the area, characterized by complex social hierarchies, fortified settlements, and rich grave goods. Later, the La Tène culture (5th–1st century BC) emerged, traditionally associated with Celtic groups. These groups shaped the history and heritage of Central Europe and later expanded to south-eastern Alps, the Balkans and Greece. These societies also left behind remarkable archaeological evidence, including hillforts, burial mounds, and settlements, reflecting their advanced organizational structures and extensive trade networks. Both the Hallstatt and La Tène civilizations played an important role in the Danube Region. The legacy of these cultures as well as their impact on local societies are highly important in the context of shared European history and heritage. For example, the large settlements built along important trade routes known as “oppida” can be considered as some of the first European cities. Archaeological findings from that period are now exhibited at museums but there are notable Early Iron Age burial mounds which form a significant part of the cultural landscapes. Further, residential buildings and houses dating back to that historical period are not easily visible above ground and are currently a subject of continuous archaeological works. Once excavated, and with suitable interpretation and visualisation techniques, they will showcase much more about the Iron Age history.

The Iron Age history and heritage are an integral part of Europe's common history and will remain so in the forthcoming years and even centuries. It is evident that only a small fraction of that history has been discovered and explored as yet. Many archaeological sites and landscapes are still unexplored. The IADR focuses on sites like the Burgstallkogel settlement in Austria, the Kaptol burial mounds in Croatia, and the Poštela hillfort in Slovenia. Each location offers unique insights into the cultural and technological achievements of the time. For example, the burial mounds reveal sophisticated funerary practices, while hillforts demonstrate defensive strategies and settlement planning. By integrating these sites into a cohesive cultural route, the IADR enhances the visibility of the region's shared heritage. It connects local communities, researchers, and visitors through educational initiatives and sustainable tourism practices, ensuring the preservation and promotion of this invaluable legacy for future generations.

3.1.3 Council of Europe values represented by the theme

Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe are considered as tools suitable for the development and promotion of a cultural, sustainable, and ethical form of tourism which is respectful of the regions travelled through and which provides a concrete demonstration of the founding values of Europe: human rights, the rule of law, cultural democracy, diversity and European cultural identity, dialogue, exchange and mutual enrichment regardless of spatial and temporal considerations.

The theme of IADR is focused on the history of the Iron Age Danube Region and most importantly, the material legacy and its tangible and intangible heritage. As previously indicated, this is a strong theme for a cultural route which is (still) under-represented and is

representative of the European values advocated by the Council of Europe. The Route provides opportunities for a wide dissemination of knowledge among Danube Region countries and beyond, and encourages the development of many special interest forms of tourism, including cultural and heritage tourism, archaeological tourism, rural tourism, culinary tourism, and ecotourism among others.

The Route theme promotes cross-border history and provides opportunities for cultural exchanges and appreciation of common history. IADR provides a platform for various stakeholders in Croatia, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and others to cooperate and develop different collaborative projects explicitly focused on the shared history of the Iron Age. This in turn provides further opportunities for more stakeholders to get involved in any of the countries represented. In addition, there is a great opportunity to promote Iron Age history to the new generations and stimulate a more active, interactive and engaging approach to learn about history, particularly among the youth.

However, there is a lot of room for further development, and more specifically, projects to showcase the shared history of IADR. For example, more collaborative work is needed to promote cross-border history, to focus more explicitly on how Iron Age as a historical period brought changes to local communities, enhanced their lifestyle, etc. Further, more is needed to promote those heritage assets which now define cultural identities and demonstrate how the different nations of the Danube Region are united/defined by common themes. It is recommended that a more explicit focus is placed on intangible heritage. At the moment, most of IADR is on tangible heritage which partly motivated by the explicit focus on archaeology.

Second, IADR is about archaeology, history and heritage and incorporates a more ethical, sustainable, and responsible way of tourism. The variety of paths and heritage trails, some of which are developed extensively, provides opportunities for local businesses and wider stakeholders to get involved in various activities and to take part in the organisation and management of the various paths and trails. In this context, IADR provides many educational opportunities, particularly for young Europeans to learn more about the history of Iron Age, its roots and links to heritage and culture.

Third, the theme of the Route, provides many opportunities for the development of special interest forms of tourism, and particularly ones aligned with the principles of sustainability, sustainable development and sustainable tourism. There is sound evidence of engagement, particularly in Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary, for the development of tourist activities. It is very pleasing to see various types of events such as guest lectures, public talks, museum exhibitions, all the way to the annual festive days in Kaptol.

Despite the notable achievements of IADR, however, there is a lot of room for development. At the moment, there is an over-emphasis on archaeological tourism and this dominates all materials about the activities and engagement of IADR. A diversification is needed. For example, culinary tourism and eco-tourism are currently underdeveloped with a huge potential to attract tourists (see section 3.2.5 for more on special interest tourism and sustainability). A particular recommended is to engage more tourism stakeholders in the promotion and development of events. It is evident that the IADR team puts an incredible amount of effort to organise various events and make them popular. A more active involvement is needed from the wider stakeholders, particularly public authorities.

3.2 Fields of Action

3.2.1 Co-operation in research and development

The study of the Iron Age has evolved into a multidisciplinary endeavour, combining archaeology, anthropology, history, geography, and natural sciences to provide a holistic understanding of this transformative period. These disciplines collaborate to explore technological advancements, socio-economic structures, and cultural interactions of Iron Age societies.

Archaeological methods, such as excavation and material culture analysis, reveal settlement patterns, burial practices, and artifacts. For example, studies published in *Antiquity*, or the *Journal of Archaeological Science* often focus on Iron Age tools, weapons, and ceramics. Advances in scientific techniques, including radiocarbon dating and isotopic analysis, help refine chronological frameworks and provide insights into trade networks, dietary habits, and migrations.

Anthropology contributes through bioarchaeological studies of human remains, often featured in *Bioarchaeology International*. These studies explore health, diet, and demographics, offering a window into everyday life. Journals such as *Current Anthropology* and *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* also have papers related to Iron Age. Geographical approaches, including Geographic Information Systems (GIS), analyze settlement distributions and their relationship to natural resources, a topic discussed in journals like *Archaeological Prospection*.

Historical texts and linguistics add depth by contextualizing material evidence with written records when available, especially for late Iron Age periods. This interdisciplinary approach enriches our understanding, showcasing how Iron Age societies adapted and contributed to Europe's cultural heritage. Key journals like *European Journal of Archaeology* and *World Archaeology* further explore these themes.

As documented in the submitted dossier (p.24-25), IADR includes research centres involved in scientific work on the route in Austria (Institute of Prehistoric and Historical Archaeology, University of Vienna and Institute of Antiquity, University of Graz), Croatia (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb), Slovenia (Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana and Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Maribor) and Hungary (Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Archaeological Sciences, Eötvös Loránd University). In addition, the scientific work is also supported by the presence of other institutes and museums which are also involved in the scientific dissemination of knowledge about IADR. Although the number of research centres and institutes has increased since the last evaluation, there is still a notable dominance of public archaeology. This is acceptable given the aims and priorities of the Route, but more efforts are needed to diversity the scope of scientific works, the research themes, and the nature of the scientific outputs. At the moment, there is lack of studies on anthropology, cultural studies, cultural and historical geography, and alternative forms of tourism (e.g. heritage, ecotourism, gastronomy). More research on these domains will greatly enhance the profile of IADR and its reputation among the scientific communities in Europe and beyond.

IADR has successfully managed to expand its Scientific Committee which now includes seven members across five countries. Despite this notable achievement, there are still few seats which remain vacant. Further, the committee still lacks interdisciplinarity and mainly includes individuals with demonstrated expertise in archaeology. As previously recommended, the

committee should include more members from different scientific fields to broaden its scope of interests and scientific outputs.

It is commendable that IADR have taken the previous evaluation's comments on board and now put a much more explicit emphasis on Tourism. Pursuant of Article 45 of the Statutes, an expert Tourism Committee has been established under the aegis of the Scientific Committee with the aim of having an especially dedicated and more focused group working and consulting on tourism-related matters. Although this is a great initiative, it is recommended to re-consider the duties and responsibilities of the committee. It is recommended that IADR should have academics with expertise in tourism in the Scientific Committee. This will broaden the research interests and add a broader scope of perspectives. At the same time, it is recommended for Tourism Committee to have non-academic members and rather include professional/industry members (which is partly the case now already). The reasoning behind this division lies in the fact that most of duties and responsibilities of the Scientific Committee are focused on research, development and dissemination of knowledge. The roles of and responsibilities of the Tourism Committee shall be focused on industry relations, marketing, fundraising, etc. It is needed to put more efforts on developing tourist activities and having more industry members will definitely help. Hence, it is recommended to also broaden the membership of the committee and include individuals who have certain expertise in marketing, economics, social media, etc.

Since the last evaluation, IADR has managed to significantly improve the number of its scientific contribution and engagements. Firstly, IADR has co-organized "New arrivals to historic landscapes" conference in partnership with the Hungarian National Museum and Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture in 2022. Part of the Mobility Action Week, Hungary which was held within the scope of the Danube's Archaeological eLandscapes project, this special event was not only a scientific conference but a platform for the local stakeholders, policymakers and tour agencies to discuss two major topics: archaeological cycling tourism and smart landscape use. Other notable examples of scientific contributions include "2nd Cremations in Archaeology" conference held in Ljubljana and Novo Mesto (7th – 10th May 2024) and "Iron age textiles: stories from European Crossroads" (14th June 2024) held in Kaptol (Croatia) during the annual tt Days. A particularly noteworthy initiative is the establishment of the Iron Age Danube Talks (since 2021), series of discussions and presentations dedicated to IADR. Examples of topics include "Digital paths along the Iron Age Danube route" and "Integrated Approach in Presentation of Archaeological Heritage".

It is important to highlight that members of IADR are active, well-known researchers and regular attendees at various conferences and other scientific events. For example, IADR recurringly participates in the Annual Meetings of the European Association of Archaeologists (Kiel 2021, Budapest 2022, Belfast 2023, Rome 2024) where it co-organizes scientific sessions, and its members participate in them with their scientific papers. Further, IADR develops and fosters cooperation with other cultural routes of the Council of Europe. For example, in 2022 cooperation agreement was signed with the Phoenicians Route and in 2024 with the Prehistoric Rock Art Trail.

IADR has also achieved a notable progress in terms of increasing popularity of the route through media publications. For example, the Iron Age Danube Magazine (see Figure 3) has been published regularly since 2021 with three published issues and a fourth one on the way (see <https://www.ironagedanuberoute.com/iadr-magazine>)

It is recommended that IADR should take the leading role and organise various events to promote the theme of the Route across the wider academic communities in all countries where

IADR members are based. Given the good number of partnerships with museums, schools, and the wider engagement with school pupils and students, it is suggested that academic/scientific events could be organised at universities, engaging both students and practitioners. There is evidence that this is already the case in Croatia and Slovenia but this is particularly needed for the countries where IADR want to expand to and find new members.

It is also recommended that IADR should put more efforts and work with academics and research centres to engage in collaborative research with industry stakeholders. For example, a multidisciplinary team of experts from could produce reports and white papers on the role of archaeology in the Iron Age Danube Region and study the differences/similarities in terms of stakeholders' perceptions on the value of IADR from economic and socio-cultural perspectives.

It would be extremely valuable for IADR to utilize the expertise of its scientific committee members and engage more with non-archaeology related research. For example, in tourism, IADR could study the economic impact (e.g tourism receipts) and visitor economy in general. Comparative studies (conducted in different countries) could result in data which would potentially be useful in securing funding across all countries concerned. In the context of tourism development, having a strong research team is essential to provide empirical evidence about the progress, successes, and further development of IADR. For instance, more (qualitative) research should focus on the needs of local businesses and their engagement, the development of various tourist packages, segmentation of visitors, etc.

3.2.2 Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage

As specified in the Resolution CM/Res(2013)67 the 'identification of European values and a common European cultural heritage may be achieved via cultural routes tracing the history of peoples...' The Iron Age Danube Route complies with the criterion of enhancing the memory, history, and European heritage by preserving and showcasing the interconnected past of Central Europe during the Iron Age. It achieves this by highlighting the shared cultural legacy of the Danube region, where civilizations like the Hallstatt and La Tène cultures flourished. Through archaeological sites, museums, and educational programs, the route brings to life the technological innovations, artistic expressions, and trade networks that shaped European societies.

The Route promotes awareness of the region's historical significance by connecting key Iron Age sites, such as the Kaptol burial mounds in Croatia. These sites reflect the social complexity, rituals, and cross-cultural exchanges of Iron Age communities. The exhibitions and guided tours offered at these locations align with European values of heritage preservation and emphasize the importance of transnational collaboration. It is important to note that IADR does not focus only on individual sites of interests such as monuments and archaeological ruins but instead, it promotes and further enhances the visibility and popularity of landscapes, too.

IADR aligns very well with European heritage policies, focusing on shared history and collective memory. For example, IADR aligns well with the Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe (The Valletta Convention, Council of Europe, 1992) by utilizing non-destructive methods in archaeological excavations and by using innovative methods for heritage interpretation. Further, IADR's main goals include protection, research, and dissemination of knowledge among local communities which is also among the priorities of the Valletta Convention. IADR also complies with The Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention, Council of Europe,

2005) by focusing on raising public awareness and stimulating a dialogue between multiple stakeholders about the history and heritage of the Iron Age.

There are some notable examples of how IADR focuses on the enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage. For example, the annually held Hallstatt days in Kaptol (Croatia) and the Situlae Festival in Nove Mesto (Slovenia) are events which highlight memory, heritage and history and include various on-site activities such as special exhibitions, workshops, conferences, recreational activities, historical re-enactments and others (see Figure 11). Held annually since 2021, those events promote both tangible and intangible heritage of the Iron Age and provide opportunities for local community and wider stakeholders to engage in collaborative activities. Further, such events promote small-scale entrepreneurship, stimulate heritage tourism, and provide opportunities for education and entertainment.

The recommendations in the context of memory, history and European heritage are linked to stakeholders' involvement and collaborations. While there is strong evidence of local collaborations, more can be done to attract partners of the Route and develop promotional activities, special events, and individual elements (e.g. workshops) in partnership with members from different countries. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the Route is strong at local, regional and national levels, particularly in Croatia, Hungary, and Slovenia but more could be done to demonstrate partnerships at international level.

3.2.3 Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans

The IADR fosters cultural and educational exchanges among young Europeans through initiatives that encourage cross-border learning and active engagement with heritage. By targeting schools and universities, the Route creates opportunities for students to explore Iron Age sites and their broader historical context, promoting an appreciation of Europe's shared past.

Youth-oriented programs, such as workshops and archaeological camps, allow young people to engage directly with artifacts and excavation activities (see Figure 4, 5, 6). For instance, the "ArchaeoKids" initiative introduces children and teenagers to the basics of archaeology, combining hands-on learning with storytelling to make history accessible and exciting. Archaeological camps, introduced as part of a multi-country initiative in the Danube region, combine research activities with public engagement to foster collaboration between archaeology students and local schools. These camps provide hands-on opportunities for young participants to engage with ongoing archaeological research, bridging the gap between education and cultural heritage. A publication edited by D. Modl, titled *Iron Age Experience: Educational Workshops and Museum Programmes from the Iron-Age-Danube Project* (Budapest, 2019), outlines interactive workshops tested during these camps. The resource offers a structured framework for integrating educational activities into the archaeological narrative, promoting active learning among students. Complementing these efforts is the children's magazine *Iron Age Kids*, edited by A. Hellmuth-Kramberger, which introduces Iron Age heritage through engaging, age-appropriate content. The magazine has been translated into multiple languages to enhance accessibility across the region, further promoting cultural awareness among young readers.

Two pilot projects—Archaeological Encounters - Iron Age Kids for elementary school children and ArcheoGim for high school and college students—have been developed to support cultural and educational exchanges among young Europeans. Successfully tested in the Kaptol region

of Croatia, these programs will expand to other areas along the Iron Age Danube Route, in partnership with educational and tourism stakeholders.

Additionally, the Situla Festival for Youth, developed in cooperation with the Dolenjska Museum and aligned with the Novo Mesto Situlae festival, will launch in 2024. These initiatives collectively enhance the role of youth in preserving and promoting Iron Age heritage while fostering cross-cultural exchange.

The Route also encourages intercultural dialogue through exchange programs and collaborative projects. By partnering with institutions in Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, and Hungary, it creates a platform for young Europeans to connect, learn, and work together on preserving cultural heritage. Activities such as essay competitions, youth forums, and artistic expressions inspired by Iron Age themes foster creativity and critical thinking. Educational resources, including digital materials and classroom toolkits, further enhance these experiences, ensuring that knowledge of the Iron Age is integrated into formal education systems across partner countries.

By prioritizing educational outreach, the Iron Age Danube Cultural Route helps young Europeans develop a deeper understanding of their shared heritage, reinforcing European identity while instilling values of conservation and collaboration. It is recommended that members of IADR engage more with students and incorporate IADR activities in student workshops, lectures, and other engagement. It has been noted, particularly by members from Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia, that university students often choose IADR-related topics for their dissertations. This is a very good practice and shall be adopted by other members of the Route.

3.2.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practice

The IADR incorporates contemporary cultural and artistic practices to bridge the gap between ancient heritage and modern audiences. By creatively interpreting Iron Age artifacts and narratives, the route revitalizes historical themes through contemporary art, design, and media.

Interactive exhibits and multimedia installations, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) reconstructions, allow visitors to visualize Iron Age settlements and rituals. For instance, digital storytelling at museum sites recreates life in hillforts and burial mounds, blending archaeology with cutting-edge technology. These immersive experiences make the Iron Age accessible to diverse audiences while fostering a connection between the past and present. A good example is the newly opened interpretation centre, the Geo Info Centre (<https://geoinfocentar.com/>) in Voćin. This state-of-the-art facility serves as an interactive museum but also a place to showcase the history and heritage of the Iron Age in many interactive ways.

The Route also collaborates with local artists and designers to create artwork inspired by Iron Age motifs, including jewellery, textiles, and ceramics. These modern reinterpretations celebrate the artistic achievements of ancient communities while supporting local economies and craftspeople. Events such as art fairs and exhibitions provide platforms for showcasing these creations.

Performances, such as reenactments of Iron Age ceremonies and traditional music inspired by historical findings, further enrich the cultural landscape. Community festivals celebrate the region's heritage through dance, music, and gastronomy, blending ancient traditions with

contemporary expressions. Good examples are the Hallstatt Days in Kaptol or the Situlae Festival in Nove Mesto.

By integrating modern artistic practices, the Iron Age Danube Cultural Route ensures that Iron Age heritage remains relevant, dynamic, and inspiring in the context of 21st-century culture.

3.2.5 Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.

As per IADR Declaration of Values and Standards (p.2-3), IADR “aims to promote sustainable development policies in favour of the regions and cultural landscapes where Iron Age heritage is located, with the aim of improving the well-being those (mostly rural) regions and striving to create added economic value for the local communities inhabiting them”. In addition, IADR aims to:

- Develop initiatives to encourage the development of archaeological tourism in rural areas, as well as encourage and promote the use of tourist accommodation in rural areas
- Integrate local communities and providers in the cultural tourism activities
- Support sustainable tourism instead of mass tourism
- Jointly promote destinations and regions from different countries
- Combine Iron Age themes with other heritage themes and offers in the region
- Promote a sustainable cultural tourism
- Establish relations with other institutions, associations and authorities

Since the last evaluation period, IADR has incorporated a number of alternative forms of tourism. By working with local communities, raising public awareness, and stimulating further engagement with the Iron Age history and heritage, the IADR promotes alternative tourism forms that provide enriching and sustainable travel experiences.

Firstly, a major part of IADR is to promote the history and heritage of the Iron Age through public archaeology. This provides a variety of offerings, encouraging deeper engagement with the region’s history, culture and environment by inviting individuals to explore archaeological and cultural treasures of the Iron Age. Such activities are classic examples of archaeology/archaeological tourism (see Afkhami, 2021). Museums, guided tours, and interactive workshops enhance visitors' understanding of Iron Age communities and are available in many places part of the Route. Events like reenactments and festivals, such as the Situlae festival in Novo Mesto, bring history to life and allow tourists to immerse themselves in the era’s cultural vibrancy.

Secondly, IADR provides many opportunities for nature lovers, and anyone interested in ecotourism. Many archaeological sites are located within natural landscapes, encouraging eco-conscious exploration. For instance, many places in Požega Valley are suitable for hiking trails that pass through forests and rolling hills, offering a blend of history and nature. There is a good number of trails already developed as a part of IADR, but more could be done to promote those tourism products both locally and nationally.

Thirdly, food tourism provides a unique opportunity for tourists to connect with the local culinary traditions rooted in the region’s history. Though Iron Age cuisine is no longer practiced, there

is a room for modern interpretations which can potentially draw on local ingredients and preparation methods from that period. For example, local festivals and workshops can incorporate Iron Age-inspired recipes, utilizing ancient grains, foraged herbs, and traditional cooking techniques. Although there is evidence of promoting the gastronomic heritage of the Iron Age, little has been done to develop this as a tourism product. Recent developments during the Hallstatt days in Croatia have demonstrated the engagement and interest to such initiatives.

In general, while IADR has made significant strides in promoting alternative forms of tourism, several enhancements could elevate its offerings further. Firstly, there is a need for increased collaboration with more local artisans and businesses. Expanding partnerships with local businesses and vendors could enrich the cultural and economic impact of the Route. For instance, integrating Iron Age-inspired crafts into souvenir shops or museum exhibits could enhance visitor experiences.

Secondly, strengthening food tourism with more Iron Age themes is needed. Introducing more Iron Age-themed food festivals or cooking workshops could further develop the culinary aspect of the route. Collaborating with culinary historians and chefs to create Iron Age-inspired menus would provide unique, educational dining experiences. It is recommended that food tourism shall be further developed by developing more partnerships with local producers (such as farms and restaurants). There is evidence of good practices in Croatia and Slovenia where visitors can enjoy regional specialties and enjoy culinary experiences which offer a taste of history while supporting local economies and sustainable agricultural practices. However, there is little evidence that a collaborative approach does exist among the network to further plan and develop such activities.

Thirdly, IADR should promote community-led ecotourism initiatives. Engaging local communities in eco-tourism projects, such as guided nature walks led by residents or conservation workshops, could strengthen the relationship between the route and its stakeholders while promoting environmental education.

By incorporating these recommendations, the Iron Age Danube Cultural Route can continue to set a benchmark for alternative tourism, blending history, culture, and sustainability into an unforgettable travel experience.

3.3 Cultural Route Network

3.3.1 Overview of institutional /legal structure of the network

As per Article 1 of the Statute, IADR is managed by the Iron Age Danube Route Association, a voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit, professional, scientific and cultural association with headquarters in the city of Zagreb, Republic of Croatia (see Figure 1). As per Article 3 of the Statute, the Association operates on the territory of the Republic of Croatia, and on the territories of the Republic of Austria, Hungary and the Republic of Slovenia, as well as other Danube countries, in accordance with their laws. The association is a legal entity registered in the Register of Associations at the City Office for General Administration of the City of Zagreb since 12th June, 2020 (Article 13 of the Law on Associations, Official Gazette nos. 74/14, 70/17, 98/19).

As per Article 8 of the Statute, the goals of the Association are:

1. Supporting common transnational approaches of the protection and exploration of prehistoric landscapes, especially monumental monuments from the Early Iron Age.
2. Joint promotion of sustainable tourism on the Iron Age Danube Route as well as monuments of archaeological cultural heritage on the Route and the countries and regions in which they are located.
3. Raising public awareness of the archaeological heritage in the Danube countries.
4. Promoting cooperation with other organizations with similar goals.
5. Active commitment and work on the prevention of damage, elimination of already incurred damage and harmful effects, and acting with the purpose of comprehensive protection of archaeological heritage in the Danube countries.
6. Development and promotion of new products, activities and activities of cultural tourism
7. Participation in the archaeological research and scientific publications.

In accordance with its goals, the Association operates in the field of education, science and research, culture and art, and economy, including tourism (IADR, 2020).

3.3.2 Overview of the financial situation of the network

IADR utilizes the traditional forms of funding which include membership fees and EU-funded projects. As a result of the increased number of members since the last evaluation, the membership fees contribution has increased from EUR 4,711 (2021) to EUR 6000 (2024). In 2021 and 2022, the entire budget was formed from those contributions. Since 2023, IADR has received funding of EUR 8,248 per annum from Routes4Routes project and EUR 14,530 from NextRoutes project.

The 'Exchange of Good Practices between Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe – ROUTES4ROUTES, is funded by Erasmus+Action Type KA122-ADU Short Term projects for mobility of learners and staff in adult education. will increase Iron Age Danube Route staff competencies in archaeological heritage management through learning from already existing and tested good practices in the area of cultural route management. The participants will become aware of various models and tools that can be used to better connect the route with the communities archaeological heritage is located in, to make it more visible, and to find new approaches on how to serve as a connecting platform between heritage experts and SME's and tourism workers in order to help develop new business ideas or models for creating new cultural products, which would the overall increase the value of Iron Age archaeological heritage in the Danube region and would result in measurable benefits to the local communities. During ROUTES4ROUTES project activities, IADR plan to collaborate with colleges from hosting organizations in exchanging expertise and good practices regarding archaeological heritage management and cultural routes management.

The "NEXT ROUTES – Upskilling of staff through digital, creative gamification and innovative strategies for the enhancement of EU Cultural Routes" (2023-2025) is funded by Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union with a budget of EUR 400, 000 (IADR's funding is EUR 36, 235). The beneficiaries of the project alongside IADR are The Phoenicians' Route, European Route of Jewish Heritage, European Mozart Ways, The Routes of the Olive Tree and ATRIUM – Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century.

NEXT ROUTES is a very innovative project that will implement actions to further reinforce skills and knowledge of cultural routes members in all aspects related to digital and creative

competencies, to support them in the digital transition and to help them manage and disseminate route's contents in an engaging and effective way by promoting their cultural heritage through innovative gamification approaches. NEXT ROUTES will achieve the following results:

- Develop Training Methodology (PR1) to guide cultural route's members in upskilling digital & creative competencies
- Develop a Toolkit (PR2), an interactive platform delivering tailored training pathways for cultural route's members digital upskilling and embedding gamification apps for users engagement;
- Develop a user manual (PR3), a step-by-step guide supporting in the use of the toolkit for training purposes and for the creation of customized game-based solutions

Both projects will be highly beneficial for IADR and will enable IADR's members to develop their skills and enhance their competencies. Further, both projects will facilitate a cooperation between different cultural routes which will surely help IADR establish new partnerships and develop collaborative projects in near future.



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



		EUR	EUR
I.	SITUATION ON 1.1. 2024		10.000,00
II.	INCOME		28.748,00
	1. PROJECT ROUTES4ROUTES	8.248,00	
	2. PROJECT NEXT ROUTES	14.500,00	
	3. MEMBERSHIP FEES	6.000,00	
III.	EXPENSES		28.198,00
	1. MATERIAL EXPENSES	850,00	
	2. ACCOUNTING FEES & BANKNG COSTS	600,00	
	3. PROJECTS IMPLEMENTATION	22.748,00	
	4. IADR MAGAZINE VOL.4	4.000,00	
IV.	SITUATION ON 31.12. 2024		10.550,00

Table 1. Annual Budget of IADR for 2024.

As of December 2024, the overall income is EUR 28,748 and annual expenses amount for EUR 28,198. At the moment, IADR does not receive funding from public sources, sponsorships, crowdfunding or any private individuals. One person is employed on a part-time basis in Croatia and three volunteers are currently based in Graz, Budapest and Ljubljana, all members of the IADR Communication Committee. It is important to highlight that IADR relies heavily on volunteering hours (1500+ per annum) and a good number of people who help with its various initiatives. Although there are no notable concerns regarding the use of volunteers, there is a concern regarding for how long such a model can support the expanding activities of IADR.

The submitted budget forecast for 2025-2027 indicates no change in the current sources of funding for the Iron Age Danube Route (IADR). While the association has successfully secured EU funding in the past, there is significant concern about whether the current mechanisms can ensure financial stability and independence in the long term. Without a diversified revenue portfolio, the financial sustainability of the association is at risk. To address this critical need, IADR should implement several strategies to diversify and stabilize its funding sources.

Firstly, IADR can strengthen its relationships with local governments and public authorities, leveraging its successful history of organizing events that receive public support. By proposing collaborative projects that align with local cultural, educational, and tourism objectives, the association could secure long-term public funding for its initiatives. For example, creating regional festivals, community workshops, or youth education programs tied to Iron Age heritage could attract grants or subsidies from cultural and educational funds.

Secondly, IADR should engage its network of local businesses to form sponsorship agreements or co-marketing initiatives. Partnerships with local craftspeople, artisans, and hospitality providers could generate additional funding in exchange for promotional opportunities. Such collaboration could be particularly effective if tied to tourism events or themed activities, such as food festivals inspired by Iron Age traditions.

Thirdly, partnerships with tourism and hospitality businesses should be expanded. Hotels, tour operators, and travel agencies could support IADR in return for exclusive promotional rights or integration into tourism packages. Joint marketing campaigns emphasizing the unique offerings of the route could generate mutually beneficial results.

Finally, IADR should actively explore grants from international cultural and heritage organizations, such as UNESCO or the Council of Europe, and diversify into crowd-funding platforms to attract private donors interested in cultural preservation. A membership program offering exclusive access to workshops, digital content, or events could also encourage contributions from individuals passionate about the Iron Age legacy.

By adopting these strategies and exploring new avenues for financial support, IADR can create a more robust funding model that ensures its long-term sustainability and growth.

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

The association has a common structure with elected members, a President, Board of Directors (Management Board) and committee members. The network governance includes the Governing Board (Board of Directors), Secretariat, two committees (Scientific Committee and Tourism Committee), and a Communication Committee. As previously noted, there is a Scientific Committee which includes seven members from five countries.

The structure works well for IADR, and it is good to see that members from all partner countries are present and active.

The Governing Board consists of seven members, including President, Vice-President and four Board Members). There is good representation across the participating countries. There is a rotation principle which is implemented in a good manner. For example, the past president was from Croatia while the newly elected one is from Hungary. In addition, it is also nice to see

that the management board is comprised of individuals with wider interests and ones who have key positions within their respected institutions.

Secretariat is comprised of only one member, based in Zagreb, Croatia. There is also a good number of volunteers who assist with the daily tasks. However, the current structure may be insufficient if the network expands further in the next years.

As a network, there is sufficient evidence to suggest a good level of management and planning is in place. There are regularly held General Assembly (once a year), and two (or more) Management Board meetings, Scientific Committee meetings, Communication Committee meetings and Tourism Committee meetings (at least two for each committee).

3.3.4 Network extension since last evaluation

As per the previous evaluation report, IADR was comprised of 11 member institutions from five countries: Austria, Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary. For the period 2021-2024, IADR has successfully managed to expand to 38 members from 8 countries: Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Germany and Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are also institutions waiting to join from Hungary and ongoing talks with potential partners in other countries (e.g. Republic of Serbia). There is a good representation across the network in terms of types of institutions – public institutions, NGOs, local businesses, museums, universities, etc. It is recommended that IADR continues to seek partnerships particularly in the public (government) sector in order to secure funding and also private sector (local businesses). At the moment, the majority of the partner institutions are museums and universities and there is a need for more diversification.

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

As highlighted in the previous section, IADR is currently seeking new partners and actively communicating with potential partners from the Danube Region which are currently not represented in the Route (e.g. Republic of Serbia). It is good to see that IADR take different approaches for network expansion. Firstly, they seek partnerships with other members of the Cultural Routes network. In addition to the already existing ones, there plans to collaborate further with the Prehistoric Rock Art Trail and Cultural Routes of Megalithic Structures. Such potential partnerships build on the successful engagement of IADR members and participation at various events organised by the Cultural Routes Institute and Council of Europe. For example, IADR members attended the Training Academy Workshops in France (2022) and Italy (2024), the Annual Advisory Forums in Chania (2023) and Lodz (2023). IADR members also take part at various events to promote their activities (see Figure 12).

Secondly, IADR plans to develop new programmes for young Europeans in 2025-2026 which will potentially result in the expansion of the network. For example, “Archaeological Encounters – Iron Age Kids” will be developed at selected schools in Croatia (1), Austria (1), Slovenia (1), Hungary (1), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1). In addition, a volunteer pilot programme for students “Iron Age Guides” is aimed at developing specialized guides for the Iron Age sites. The programme would involve cooperation with universities within the partner network.

Thirdly, IADR also seeks to expand the network and develop scientific partnerships. The current plans include thematic sessions in the forthcoming conferences of the European Association of Archaeologists in 2025 and 2026. In addition, IADR will organize an international scientific conference “Communications along the Amber Road in the Iron Age – New

perspectives” in Szombathely in March 2025 and also contribute to the “Connecting the past with the Future” conference in Vienna in 2026.

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.)

IADR has put a lot of work since the last evaluation cycle in order to improve their communication tools and channels. Firstly, the official webpage of the Route (www.ironagedanuberoute.com) is comprehensive and easy to navigate (see Figure 9). It has different sections which explain the purpose of the Route, its projects and more info about IADR Association. It also has direct links to the IADR Magazine, Event Calendar, News, etc. There is a new section about Merchandise which provided information about IADR related products and their partners. Although there is no online shop, there are details about where those products can be purchased. The website was available in English only in 2021 but it is now available in five language: English, Croatian, German, Hungarian and Slovenian. There is a regular newsletter with an option to subscribe (also available in print, see Figure 10). It is good to see that the web also has a dedicated section with relevant IADR documents (e.g. IADR Declaration of Values and Standards, IADR Strategic Plan 2022-2025) which are freely available.

In addition to the official webpage, IADR has dedicated Facebook and Instagram accounts (see Figure 8). Both seem very active with regular posts about IADR activity (e.g. Call for Papers for an academic conference or participation of IADR members at Council of Europe events). Overall, IADR has a very strong online communication presence. However, there is a room for more engagement. For example, both social media accounts have less than 1000 followers. As previously pointed out in the last evaluation report, IADR could take a more participatory approach and develop different activities, engagements, themed experiences, etc. to engage its followers.

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

IADR’s online channels fully comply with the regulations and guidelines for the use of the Logo “Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe”. IADR has developed a very comprehensive visual identity which is enhanced by modern technologies. The logo is clearly visible in all channels, including social media networks (Facebook and Instagram) as well as related merchandise available for purchase, all official magazines, etc. (see Figure 2). IADR signposting is clearly visible at the headquarters (see Figure 1) as well as with their partners (see Figure 7).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Iron Age Danube Route has established itself as a dynamic and innovative cultural initiative that preserves and promotes the rich heritage of the Iron Age across the Danube Region. Over the past three years, it has demonstrated substantial progress in network expansion, event organization, and the integration of modern technologies into heritage interpretation. Key achievements include:

- **Network Growth:** The route expanded its membership from 11 to 38 institutions across eight countries, reflecting improved collaboration and inclusivity.
- **Public Engagement:** Through cultural festivals, archaeological camps, and youth-oriented programs, IADR has fostered educational exchanges and community involvement.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** The establishment of a Tourism Committee and collaboration with local communities has laid the foundation for sustainable cultural tourism.

Despite these accomplishments, certain areas require improvement:

- **Financial Sustainability:** Heavy reliance on EU funding poses risks to long-term viability. Diversifying income through public and private partnerships, sponsorships, and community fundraising is essential.
- **Broadening Focus:** While the emphasis on tangible heritage is strong, greater exploration of intangible heritage, such as oral traditions, music, and gastronomy, would enrich the route's offerings.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Increased collaboration with local artisans, businesses, and tourism professionals is needed to create unique tourism products and experiences.
- **Interdisciplinary Research:** Expanding the Scientific Committee to include diverse fields like tourism, anthropology, and cultural studies would enhance research and innovation.

To ensure continued success, IADR should implement the following strategies:

- **Expand the Network:** Actively seek partnerships in unrepresented countries, particularly within the Danube Region, and include a broader range of stakeholders, such as DMOs and private businesses.
- **Promote Intangible Heritage:** Develop initiatives focusing on storytelling, music, and culinary traditions tied to the Iron Age to diversify cultural tourism offerings.
- **Strengthen Financial Foundations:** Pursue multi-source funding, including grants from international cultural organizations, sponsorship agreements, and crowdfunding campaigns.
- **Enhance Community Involvement:** Engage local communities in ecotourism and cultural workshops to foster shared ownership of heritage projects.

The Iron Age Danube Route has developed really well since the last evaluation cycle. By addressing its financial and operational challenges, diversifying its focus, and strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration, IADR can achieve its long-term goals and continue to enrich Europe's cultural landscape. The next phase of development should prioritize inclusivity, innovation, and resilience to ensure its impact endures for future generation.

CRITERIA		Recommendations previous evaluation 2020-2021	Has the route addressed the recommendation since the last evaluation?		Recommendations current evaluation 2024-2025
			YES	NO	
I. Cultural route theme		N/A	☐	☐	More collaborative work is needed to promote cross-border history, to focus more explicitly on how Iron Age as a historical period brought changes to local communities, enhanced their lifestyle, etc. (see section 3.1.3)
II. Priority fields of action	Cooperation in research and development	Scientific board of the Route should be interdisciplinary and bring together different researchers from different fields The IADR Association has 11 members in the Scientific committee and these have not yet been filled	☒	☐	This has partly been addressed. Although there is a more diverse Scientific Committee, there is still a need to add more members with multidisciplinary research interests.. It is recommended that IADR should have academics with expertise in tourism in the Scientific Committee. (see section 3.2.1)
		Co-operation at the level of universities is needed within countries of the Danube Region	☒	☐	The number of universities and research centres has expanded with the addition of new members and partner countries.
	Enhancement of memory, history and European heritage	N/A	☐	☐	It is recommended that IADR should take the leading role and organise various events to promote the theme of the Route. It is also recommended that IADR should put more efforts and work with academics and research centres to engage in collaborative research with industry stakeholders (see section 3.2.1)
	Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans	N/A	☐	☐	N/A

	Contemporary cultural and artistic practice	N/A	☐	☐	N/A
	Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Cultural development	There is no involvement of tourism stakeholders. The Route should seek partnership with public and private organisations active in the field of tourism in order to develop tourist products and tools targeting the potential public The Route should consider organizing trainings and raising awareness on the importance of a shared cultural heritage.	☒	☐	There is an involvement of tourism stakeholders. Further, there is also a dedicated Tourism Committee. However, the overall number of businesses involved needs to be improved. IADR regularly organizes events, including trainings and workshops. Further, members of IADR regularly participate as speakers and conference attendees at many events. There is a need for increased collaboration with more local artisans and businesses. Further, a more alternative forms of tourism (e.g. culinary, eco) should be developed.
III. Cultural Route Network		The network currently has merely a regional character as it includes only four countries. This should be enlarged • At the moment the Route has 20 members consisting mainly of museums and universities. Other types of stakeholders should also be included	☒	☐	The IADR network has expanded significantly since the last evaluation cycle and now includes members from various stakeholder groups and from different countries.
		Ensure financial viability through membership fees, i.e. increasing the number of association members	☒	☐	This has partly been addressed. The number of members has increased but the fees are relatively low. IADR mainly relies on EU funding for their operations.
Communication Tools		Greater visibility of the Route should be secured in order to attract prospective members and specific benefits of joining the association should be more clearly defined	☒	☐	IADR improved their visual identity and visibility significantly since the last evaluation. Further, an expert Communication Committee has been founded under as a part of the IADR Secretariat.

	It is recommended to improve communication tools (especially online marketing). The content of the website should be critically revised and its usability for the target groups addressed (cultural tourism products and benefits for potential users, future members of the Route, availability in different languages etc.).	☒	☐	<i>IADR is continuously working on improving its communication tools and progress has been made. For this purpose, an expert Communication Committee has been founded under as a part of the IADR Secretariat.</i>
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5. List of references

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I hereby confirm that all documents required for the evaluation had been duly submitted by the Cultural Route:

- Iron Age Danube Route Activity plan and budget overview 2024-2027
- IADR Financial Reports 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024
- IADR Budget Forecast 2025-2027
- IADR General Assembly (Agenda, Meeting Minutes and Reports) 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024

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

The field visit Itinerary took place between Sunday, 20th October and Wednesday, 23 Oct 2024. The programme is provided below:

- Day 1 (Sun, 20th Oct 2024):

Arrival at Zagreb International Airport, Zagreb, Republic of Croatia. Dinner meeting with IADR's Board of Directors (Management Board) to discuss route development, external collaboration and field visit agenda. Attendees: Dr Szilvia Fábián (President of IADR and Scientific Director of Hungarian National Museum), Prof Hrvoje Potrebica (Vice-President of IADR and Professor of Archaeology at University of Zagreb), Dr Jacqueline Balen (IADR Management Board member and Museum Advisor at the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb) and Mr Szabolcs Czifra (Archaeologist at Hungarian National Museum, Budapest and IADR Scientific Committee and IADR Tourism Committee member).

- Day 2 (Mon, 21st Oct 2024):

A visit to the IADR Headquarters at the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb. A tour of the museum, and the headquarters with a focus on the role of the museum as a starting point of IADR promotional activities and knowledge exchange. A short discussion with Ms Marta Rakvin (IADR Secretary and Assistant Director at the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb)

about the current facilities, availability of promotional materials, signage of the Cultural Route, use of official logos, etc.

Formal introductions and meetings with key members of IADR: Dr Szilvia Fábián (President of IADR and Scientific Director of Hungarian National Museum), Prof Hrvoje Potrebica (Vice-President of IADR and Professor of Archaeology at University of Zagreb), Ms Marta Rakvin (IADR Secretary and Assistant Director at the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb), Dr Jacqueline Balen (IADR Management Board member and Museum Advisor at the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb) and Mr Szabolcs Czifra (Archaeologist at Hungarian National Museum, Budapest and IADR Scientific Committee and IADR Tourism Committee member) and Mr Porin Šćukanec Reznicek (IADR project associate and Communication Committee member). A discussion about the principal idea behind the Cultural Route, previous and ongoing activities, recent developments and memberships.

An online meeting with IADR members and representatives from Austria, Hungary and Slovenia to discuss the Cultural Route network, knowledge exchange, collaborative projects and partnerships, route development and management. Attendees: Dr Karl Peitler and Ms Sarah Kiszter (Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz), Ms Katalin Wollak (Archaeolingua Foundation, Budapest), Petra Stipančić (Dolenjska Museum, Novo mesto).

A hybrid meeting (onsite and online) with members of the IADR Scientific Committee to discuss research activities, participation at international conferences, ongoing scientific works and projects. A focus on collaborative work, development since the last evaluation as well as future ideas and plans about scientific collaborations. Attendees: Dr Matija Črešnar (University of Ljubljana), Dr Szilvia Fábián and Mr Szabolcs Czifra (Hungarian National Museum), Ms Karina Grömer (National History Museum, Vienna), Ms Jerem Erzsébet (Archaeolingua Foundation), Mr Daniel Modl (Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz), Dr Nikolay Nenov (Ruse Regional Museum of History, Bulgaria) and Mr van Dmić (Archaeological Museum in Zagreb).

An online meeting with members of the Tourism Committee to discuss tourism-related projects, events, route promotional activities, scientific works and future ideas. Attendees: Ms Christa Fürnkranz (HistArk Neumarkt), Ms Kristina Rupert (Zlatni Papuk Tourism Board), Mr Czifra Szabolcs (Hungarian National Museum) and Dr Maja Turnšek (University of Maribor, Faculty of Tourism)

- Day 3 (Tue, 22nd Oct 2024):

Departure from Zagreb to Požega Valley (travel by car with Prof Hrvoje Potrelica, IADR Vice-president). A visit to the newly-built Geo Info Centre (<https://geoinfocentar.com/>) in Voćin (part of the IADR member Papuk Nature Park). A tour of the facilities and discussion with the local partners about the role of the centre in promoting IADR, ongoing collaborations, benefits of collaborative works and future plans. Attendees: Mr Goran Radonić (Director of Geo Info Centre) and Ms Valentina Volf (Museum Guide and Coordinator, Papuk Nature Park). A visit to Shhhuma Restaurant (a partner of IADR).

Transfer to Kaptol and meeting at Kaptol Municipality with IADR partners and stakeholders, including local government officials, members of local businesses, coordinators of local public institutions to discuss the tourism development, event management, route development, stakeholders' perceptions and plans for ongoing and future collaborative works. Attendees: Mr. Mile Pavičić (Mayor, Kaptol Municipality), Ms Kristina Rupert (Zlatni Papuk Tourist Board), Mr Josip Lukačević (Thillseaker Croatia, tour operator), Ms Valentina Šljivac (Director of the Vilim Korajac Elementary School), Ms Anita Katić (Director of the Požega High School), Mr Petar Odvorčić (Stari Fenjeri Inn), Barbara Ljevar (Kaptol Winery), Iva and Mihovil Pranjić (Craft Spirits) and Mr Josip Pavičić (Kaptol Brewery).

A visit to experience the cultural trail "In the Footsteps of the Warriors – Early Iron Age at the Požega Valley". Overnight at Vallirea Guesthouse, a partner of IADR and a thematic dinner at a local restaurant (Slavonska kuća" Vinkomir, <https://www.kutjevo.com/en/restaurant>).

- Day 4 (Wed, 23rd Oct 2024):

Visit to the Mayor's Office in Požega. Discussion with local government officials and members of public institutions to discuss past, present and future partnerships with IADR at local and regional levels. Attendees: Ms. Antonija Jozić (Head of the Požega-Slavonia County), Maja Vukušić (Head of the Požega-Slavonia Tourism Board) and Dr. Marijana Lukačević (Project manager at Panora Development Agency).

A museum tour of Požega City Museum to explore tourist facilities and partnerships with IADR. A short meeting and discussion with local museum guides and the museum director.

7. 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	0		
	2	Does the theme of the route offer a solid basis for youth cultural and educational exchanges?	1	0		
	3	Does the theme of the route offer a solid basis for innovative activities?	1	0		
	4	Does the theme of the route offer a solid basis for cultural tourism products development?	1	0		
	5	Has the theme been researched/developed by academics/experts from different regions of Europe?	1	0		
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	0	
		7	Does the Route play a unifying role around major European themes, enabling dispersed knowledge to be brought together?	1	0	
		8	Does the Route show how these themes are representative of European values shared by several European countries?	1	0	
		9	Does the Route illustrate the development of these values and the variety of forms they may take in Europe?	1	0	
		10	Does the Route have a network of universities and research center working on its theme at the European level?	1	0	
		11	Does the Route have a multidisciplinary Scientific Committee?	1	0	
		12	Does the Scientific Committee work on its theme at the European level?	1	0	
		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	0	
		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	0	
	3.2.2	15	Do the Route activities take into account and explain the historical significance of tangible and intangible European heritage ?	1	0	

		16	Do the Route activities promote the values of the Council of Europe?	1	0	
		17	Do the Route activities promote the brand of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe?	1	0	
		18	Does the route work in conformity with international charters and conventions on cultural heritage preservation?	1	0	
		19	Do the Route activities identify, preserve and develop European heritage sites in rural destinations?	1	0	
		20	Do the Route activities identify, preserve and develop European heritage sites in industrial areas in the process of economic restructuring?	0	1	
		21	Do the Route activities valorize the heritage of ethnic or social minorities in Europe?	0	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	0	
		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	0	
		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	0	
	3.2.3 Cultural and educational	25	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to develop a better understanding of the concept of European citizenship?	1	0	
		26	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to emphasize the value of new personal experience through visiting diverse places?	1	0	
		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	0	

		28	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to offer collaborative opportunities for educational institutions at various levels?	1	0	
		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	0	
		30	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to set up pilot schemes with several participating countries?	1	0	
		31	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to give rise to co-operation activities which involve educational institutions at various levels?	1	0	
	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?	0	1	
		33	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage artistic projects that establish links between cultural heritage and contemporary culture?	0	1	
		34	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage innovative cultural and contemporary art practices* connecting them with the history of skills development?	0	1	
		35	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage collaboration between culture amateurs and professionals via relevant activities and networks creation?**	0	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?	0	1	
		37	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage activities and artistic projects which explore the links between heritage and contemporary culture?			
		38	Do the Route's cultural activities highlight the most innovative and creative practices?	0	1	
		39	Do the Route's cultural activities link these innovative and creative practices with the history of skills development?***	0	1	
	3.2.5	40	Do the Route's activities (relevant to sustainable cultural tourism development) assist in local,	1	0	

		regional, national and/ or European identity formation?			
	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	0	
	42	Do the Route's activities promote dialogue between urban and rural communities and cultures?	1	0	
	43	Do the Route's activities promote dialogue between developed and disadvantaged regions?	1	0	
	44	Do the Route's activities promote dialogue between different regions (south, north, east, west) of Europe?	1	0	
	45	Do the Route's activities promote dialogue between majority and minority (or native and immigrant) cultures?	1	0	
	46	Do the Route's activities open possibilities for co-operation between Europe and other continents?	1	0	
	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	0	
	48	Do the Route's activities aim to diversify cultural product, service and activities offers?	1	0	
	49	Do the Route's activities develop and offer quality cultural tourism products, services or activities transnationally?	1	0	
	50	Do the Route's activities develop partnerships with public and private organisations active in the field of tourism?	1	0	
	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	0	
3.3 NETWORK	52	Does the Route represent a network involving at least three Council of Europe's member states?	1	0	
	53	Was the theme of the route chosen and accepted by the network members?	1	0	
	54	Was the conceptual framework of the route founded on a scientific basis?	1	0	
	55	Does the network involve several Council of Europe member states in all or part of its projects?	1	0	

	56	Is the network financially sustainable?	1	0	
	57	Does the network have a legal status (association, federation of associations, EEIG,...)?	1	0	
	58	Does the network operate democratically?	1	0	
	59	Does the network specify its objectives and working methods?	1	0	
	60	Does the network specify the regions concerned by the project?	1	0	
	61	Does the network specify its partners and participating countries?	1	0	
	62	Does the network specify the fields of action involved?	1	0	
	63	Does the network specify its overall strategy in the short and long term?	1	0	
	64	Does the network identify potential participants and partners in Council of Europe member states and/or other world countries?	1	0	
	65	Does the network provide details of its financing (financial reports and/or activity budgets)?	1	0	
	66	Does the network provide details of its operational plan?	1	0	
	67	Does the network append the basic text(s) confirming its legal status?	1	0	
3.4 COMMUNICATION TOOLS	68	Does the Route have its own logo?	1	0	
	69	Do all partners of the network use the logo on their communication tools?	1	0	
	70	Does the Route have its own dedicated website ?	1	0	
	71	Is it the website available in English and French?	1	0	
	72	Is it the website available in other languages?	1	0	Croatian, Slovenian, Hungarian
	73	Does the network use effectively social networks and web 2.0?	1	0	
	74	Does the network publish brochures on the Route?	1	0	
	75	If yes, are the brochures available in English?	1	0	
	76	If yes, are the brochures available in French?	0	1	
	77	Is the title of "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" present on all communication materials (including press releases, webpages, publications, etc.)?	1	0	
For certified	78	Is the certification logo present on all communication materials?	1	0	

		79	Is the certification logo used in accordance to the guidelines for its use (size and position,...)?	1	0	
		80	Are the logos (Cultural Route + certification logo) provided to all the members of the Route?	1	0	
		81	Does the Council of Europe certification logo appear on road signs/ boards indicating the cultural route?	1	0	
SCORE				70	10	

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

Figure 1. Iron Age Danube Route Poster at IADR Headquarters, Archaeological Museum, Zagreb, Croatia.



Figure 2. Souvenirs available for purchase with IADR and Council of Europe Logo. Archaeological Museum, Zagreb, Croatia.



Figure 3. Iron Age Danube Route Magazine. Archaeological Museum, Zagreb, Croatia.



Figure 4. Interactive cinema experience at the Geo Info Centre in Voćin, Croatia.



Figure 5. School learnings having a lecture at the museum. Geo Info Centre in Voćin, Croatia.



Figure 6. Young school learnings having a workshop about Iron Age history. Geo Info Centre in Voćin, Croatia.



Figure 7. Iron Age Danube Route Public Information. Kaptol Municipality, Croatia.



Figure 8. IADR Official Facebook Page.

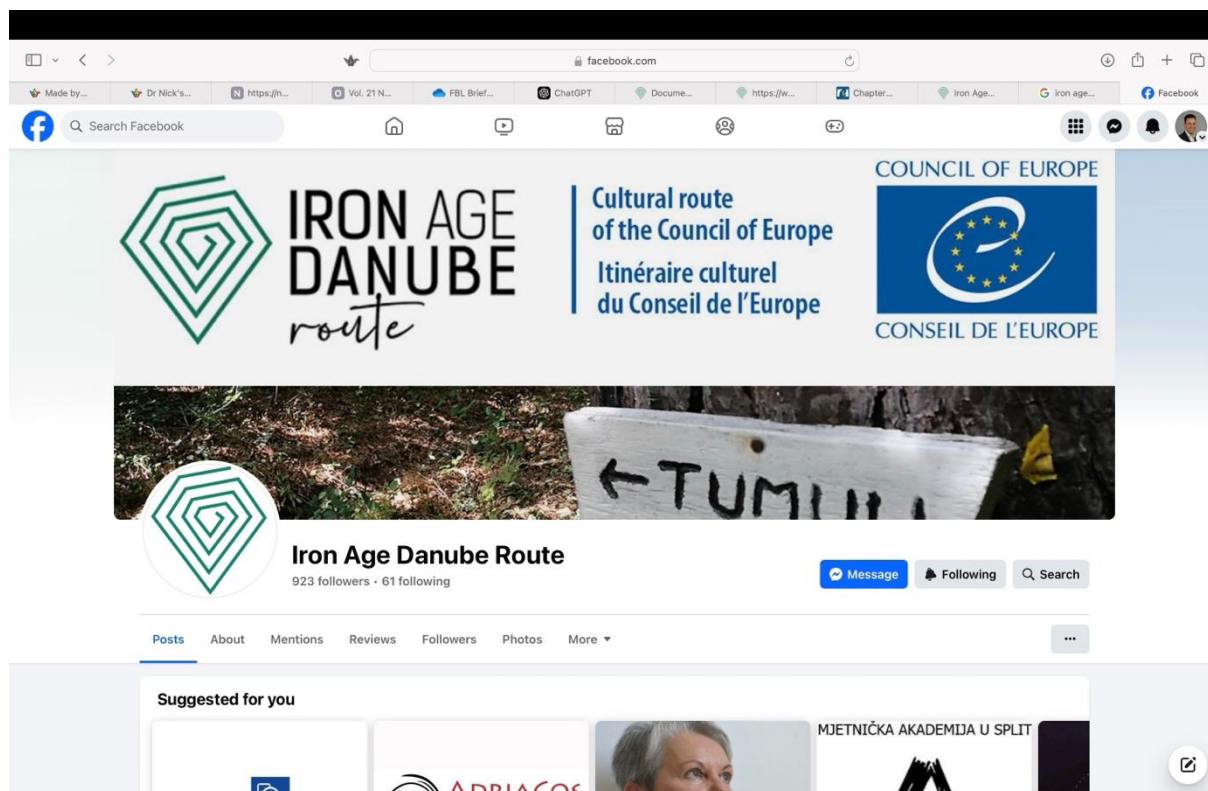


Figure 9. IADR Official Web Page.

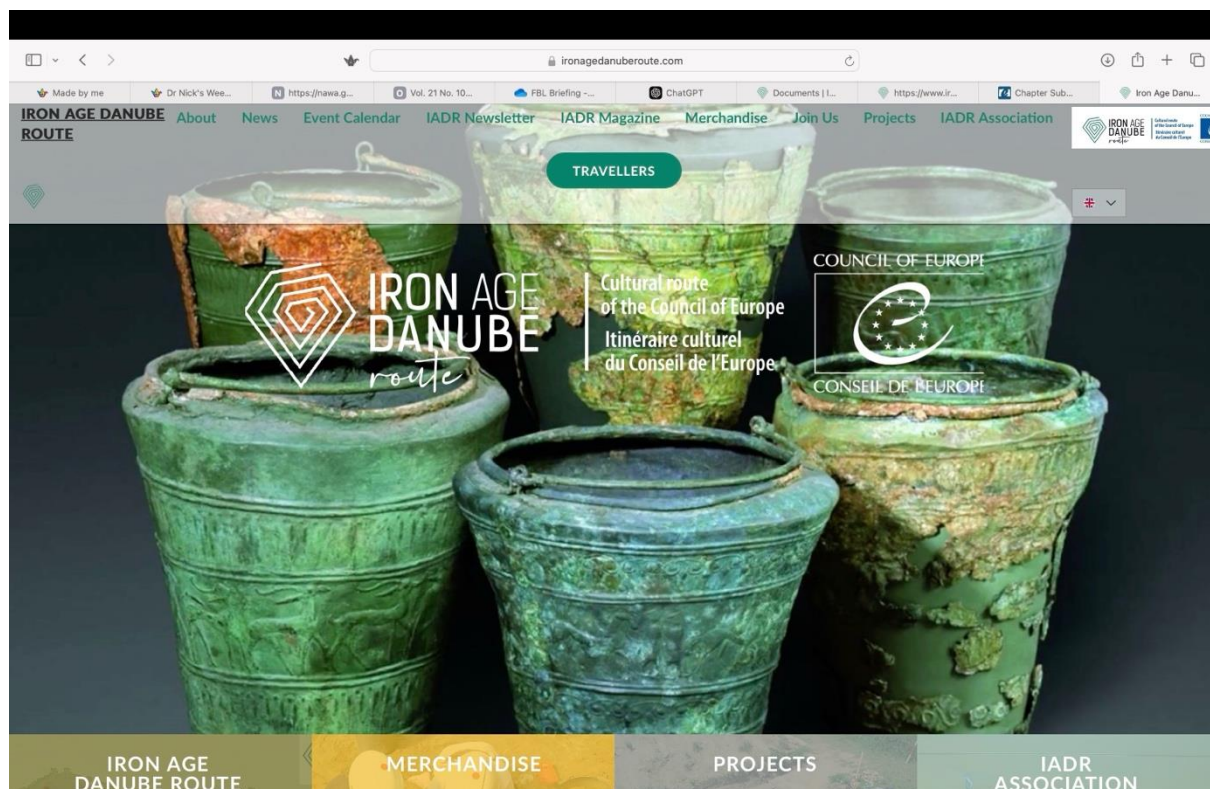


Figure 10. IADR Newsletter

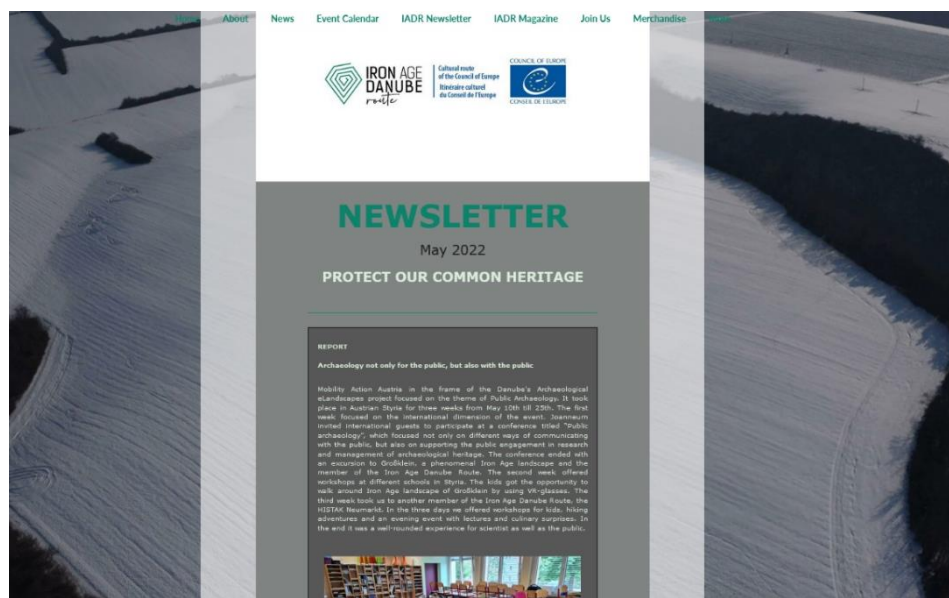


Figure 11. Festivals organised by IADR in Croatia and Slovenia.

HALŠTATSKI DANI 2023.

18-06-2023

NEDJELJA | KAPTOL, TRG VILIMA KORAJCA

16:00 PUTEVIMA RATNIKA — STARIJE ŽELJEZNO DOBA U ZLATNOJ DOLINI

OBILAZAK INFORMATIVNO TURISTIČKE STAZE UZ STRUČNO VODSTVO M. RAKVIN, F. F. SVEUČILIŠTA U ZAGREBU

16:00 RADIONICA HALŠTATSKE HRANE

PRIPREMA HRANE NA OTVORENOME UZ VODITELJSTVO KRČME STARI FENJERI

16:30 RADIONICA IZRADE KOŽNIH NARUKVICA

VODITELJICA PETRA STIPANČIĆ, DOLENJSKI MUZEJ NOVO MESTO

17:00 RADIONICA IZRADE MINIJATURNIH SITULA

VODITELJICA PETRA STIPANČIĆ, DOLENJSKI MUZEJ NOVO MESTO

17:30 IGRA NA PLOČI I INTERAKTIVNA SLIKOVNICA FELIXOVO PUTOVANJE DUNAVOM

VODITELJICA DR. SC. IVANA OŽANIĆ, INSTITUT ZA ARHEOLOGIJU, ZAGREB

18:00 PREDSTAVA KNEŽEVSKA SVITA IZ NOVOG MESTA

GLUMAČKA GRUPA, NOVO MESTO

18:30 ZRNO PO ZRNO... HALŠTATSKI MENI U ŽELJEZNODOBNOM KAPTOLU

VODITELJ LUKA BRUKETA, ODSJEK ZA ARHEOLOGIJU F. F. SVEUČILIŠTA U ZAGREBU

19:00 RADIONICA KLINCI ŽELJEZNOG DOBA

VODITELJICA KRISTINA RUPERT, TURISTIČKA ZAJEDNICA ZLATNI PAPIK

19:00 RADIONICA MALI ARHEOLOZI

VODITELJICA DR. SC. JACQUELINE BALEN, ARHEOLOŠKI MUZEJ U ZAGREBU

19:30 RADIONICA LONČARENJE I LONČARSKO PRIGOVARANJE

VODITELJICA FRANKA OVČARIĆ, ODSJEK ZA ARHEOLOGIJU F. F. SVEUČILIŠTA U ZAGREBU

20:00 RADIONICA PROIZVODNJA TEKSTILA

VODITELJICA LANA MRŠIĆ, ODSJEK ZA ARHEOLOGIJU F. F. SVEUČILIŠTA U ZAGREBU



8. festival železnodobnega življenja in kulinarike

PRAZNIK SITUL

3. junij
2023
NOVO MESTO
Glavni trg
17.00 – 24.00

od 17.00 tržnica
kulinarična ponudba
delavnice

20.00 UPRIZORITEV ŽIVLJENJA NA KNEŽJEM DVORU
DUHOVNO ŽIVLJENJE

21.30 koncert skupine NOREIA

22.00 vodstvo po situlskih spomenikih v Dolenjskem muzeju

prikaz starodavnih obrti in izdelkov: lončarstvo, steklarstvo, krznarstvo, pletarstvo, obdelava lesa, medicinarstvo, barvanje in polstenje volne, tkanje, kovaštvo, ulivanje bron, obdelava jantarja

delavnice za otroke: peka kruhkov, lokostrelostvo, poslikava kože, boji z ročkami, boji s sulicami, peštra kulinarika ponudba za vse okuse: divjačina, pečeni prasicek, sitne in zelenjavne dobrote, med,...

PRAZNIK SITUL

www.dolenjskimuzej.si

Figure 12. Top: IADR Members receiving 2nd Prize (Transnational Thematic Tourism Products) at The European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN) Awards, Pafos, Cyprus, on 19 October



www.coe.int/routes

2023. Below: IADR members at the 25th Mediterranean Fair of Archaeological Tourism in Paestum, Italy.

