



Start date: 15 April 2019 End date: 1 Nov 2019

## **NARRATIVE REPORT**

### **A. SUMMARY OF THE ACTION**

At the beginning of the Project implementation the Initial list of sites of archaeological sites to be included in the RER&DWR was created containing total of 12 archaeological sites from Austria (10) and Slovenia (2).

The desk evaluation of the archaeological sites from the Initial list was thoroughly performed by the experienced project team, collecting and evaluating all relevant information and pictures/photos available on the Internet for each of 12 individual sites.

Following desk research and further evaluating thematic relevance, status of archaeological excavations, storytelling potential, quality of preservation and presentation for tourists (how well has the site been prepared to accept visitors), and connectivity options (mobility and traveling potential) of the archaeological sites included in the Initial list, the Tentative list of archaeological sites to be included in the RER&DWR was created. The Tentative list contains 4 archaeological sites from Austria (2) and Slovenia (2).

The conference focusing on Expansion of the existing tourist itineraries was organized on 3rd September 2019, in Belgrade, Serbia, at the DCC's premises. The event was organized in cooperation with regional travel agencies who are members of the DCC network and gathered together 15 guest-participants, from five different countries – UK, Belgium, Netherland, Germany and Poland. With regional travel agencies, DCC members from Serbia and Bulgaria, tourism experts and staff from the DCC side, the total number of conference participants was 25.

Following successful implementation of desk evaluation and the RER&DWR Conference on new touristic itineraries, the project team implemented two field trips: one to Carnuntum (AUT) and one to Ptuj (SLO). The field trips and on-site evaluation served as a baseline for compiling the Final list of sites for inclusion into the RER&DWR.

When compiling the Final list the team was taking into account its thematic/historical relevance, readiness for tourism (based on RER&DWR common standards) and mobility and transportation connectivity among the sites (analysis of the logical directions of travel and time travel was assessed). Secondary, the sites were evaluated within the contemporary context, for example existence of other cultural itineraries based on Roman heritage or existence of other type of tourism as dominant (in terms of purchasing motives and storytelling) at/around the archaeological site.

When it comes to visibility actions, three Route's orientation and information Boards are posted in the City Museum of Sisak (CRO), at the open-air archaeological site Sarmizegetusa near city of Alba Iulia (ROM) and at the UNESCO site Early Cristian Necropolis in Pecs (HUN).



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## B. ACTIVITIES

### **Activity 1. Mapping the new potential archaeological sites to be included in the Route**

#### ***Specific objective: Creation of a tentative list of archaeological sites for potential inclusion into RER/DWR***

The mapping and evaluating of archaeological sites is being executed by two key members of RER-DWR Scientific Committee – prof. Michael Werner, Head of Archaeology Department and prof. Goran Petkovic, Head of Tourism Department, assisted by Mr. Vladan Kreckovic, DCC Route Coordinator and Mr. Dejan Veselinov, an expert and close DCC associate, with extensive experience in tourism inventory (common standards evaluation and inventory of services).

The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route is listed among the 38 Cultural Routes, certified in 2015 (and re-certified in 2019) by the European Institute of Cultural Routes under the auspices of the Council of Europe. From the very beginning, this Route was created to be appeal to travellers curious to find and experience something unexpected in a relatively less known region of the South East Europe (Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria). Linking the two themes from different aspects of cultural life, archaeology and wine, which have common points in the Roman era, has since been supported by this key motive - a call to travel.

The progress of the route and its consistent marketing positioning depend on how much the curiosity of visitors will evoke and encourage their desire to travel and enjoy a unique cultural and gastronomic experience focused on the Roman legacy of the Empire during the 2nd to 4th centuries of the new era.

The scientific justification for selection of sites for inclusion in the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route (RER&DWR) is based on their physical remains and events in their history, which embody the leading theme of the cultural route, the role of the Roman emperors in the introduction of Roman culture in the Danube region. They do not necessarily have to be the most important monuments according to the criteria of archaeology in a given region, but they must have archaeological content to provide an understanding of the Roman context to the average tourists about how the users of these facilities lived, worked and entertained. The wine dimension also significantly influences the selection of new points that the Route will follow. Finally, it is always taken into account that the sites are accessible, that is, they are traffic-connected but also accessible on the site for people with special needs. New locations are expected to offer additional tourist activities and already attract a certain number of tourists, thereby increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the Route.

The main 'building block' of the RER&DWR is a Hub. A Hub (or a sub-destination) is typically geographically determined, as tourists prefer to have a concentration of attractions that makes consumption easy and reduces to a minimum the time spent on travelling between attractions within the same Hub. The common ground of all Hubs is Roman heritage as a key tourism attraction.

The Initial list of sites of archaeological sites to be included in the RER-DWR was created containing total of 12 archaeological sites from Austria (10): Aguntum, Carnuntum, Clunia, Enns, Flavia Solva, Lauriacum, Noreia, Teurnia, Vindobona, Virunum; and Slovenia (2): Emona and Ptuj.



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## **Activity 2. Evaluating thematic and programme relevance of the new potential archaeological sites to be included in the Route**

### ***Specific objective: Evaluation of thematic and programme relevance of the potential archaeological sites (based on route's criteria and common standards)***

The RER&DWR is conceptually rooted in the factors, which drew Roman emperors to be physically present and military active along the northern frontier of the Empire. In brief historical moment, somewhere between the 2nd and the 4th century, the political center of the Roman Empire was not in the Rome, but on the Northern-Danube frontier. The Route encompasses archaeological sites with their individual (unique) histories that are monuments to the leadership of the Roman emperors. The wine part of the Route incorporates the same regions that continue the tradition of wine production begun in Roman times.

In order to additionally investigate tourism-ready potential of all localities (from the Initial list), the desk research and evaluation has been conducted. Surfing through the variety of websites and content available online, the team checked more than 50 different sources/links. The primary target of the research was websites of local municipalities, tourism organizations and museums in charge of the proposed localities. Objective was to check if the websites contain tourism-friendly information related with the localities, through which any interested visitor can learn more about the history of the site and ways how is it possible to reach it. In cases where some information were not available on the official websites, research continued in a way of checking alternative means of promotion – such as Wikipedia, Facebook pages, or Trip Advisor profiles, trying to find any additional information related with the current status of the locality.

The thematic evaluation of the sites from Initial list was implemented by Professor Michael Werner, the head of RER-DWR Scientific Committee (in close communication with the project team). The scientific justification for selection of sites for inclusion in the Route was based on their physical remains and events in their history that embody the leading theme of the cultural route, the role of the Roman emperors in the introduction of Roman culture in the Danube and Illyrian regions.

Four different categories of association with Roman imperial rule have been identified for the RER-DWR: The first consists of sites which had a demonstrated presence of an emperor; a second category recognizes sites which were connected with the Roman conquest of the region and the emperors who managed the military campaigns. The last two categories include sites which resulted from an emperor's military policy in the region and urban entities brought into existence by the emperors' policy of building loyalty and cohesion among conquered indigenous peoples by encouraging acculturation to Roman standards with the introduction of Roman ways of life.

Following desk research and further evaluating thematic relevance, status of archaeological excavations, storytelling potential, quality of preservation and presentation for tourists (how well has the site been prepared to accept visitors), and connectivity options (mobility and traveling potential) of the archaeological sites included in the Initial list, the Tentative list of archaeological sites to be included in the RER-DWR was created:

**Austria:** Three cities were taken into consideration, based on their historical relevance and touristic potential:

1. Carnuntum;
2. Lauriacum; and



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### 3. Vindobona.

**Slovenia:** The desktop research showcased the historical and cultural importance of two cities/localities:

1. Emona; and
2. Ptuj.

### **Activity 3. Field trip and on-site meetings and evaluation**

#### ***Specific objective: On-site evaluation and creation of the tourism inventory list of the potential archaeological sites***

The desktop research of existing online material, and direct communication with the partners from Upper Austria Danube Region, didn't offer strong argumentation in the case of Lauriacum, locality positioned in the vicinity of Enns city, 160 km from Vienna. There were no available photos of the locality, while locally discovered heritage was exhibited in local or regional museums, providing no concrete / uniformed experience and platform for storytelling.

Vindobona was an oppidum (proto-urban settlement), just north of what is now the center of modern Vienna. The city fell into the Roman hands, when of the Fifteenth Legion Apollinaris, which was stationed at Carnuntum, was sent to Vindobona. The site of the first Roman fort has not been identified yet, but it must have been closer to the center of modern Vienna. In that sense, the lack of physical remaining of the Vindobona combined with limited storytelling potential of the locality which is overshadowed by various other dominant types of tourism and tourism dynamics of the modern city of Vienna, suggest that inclusion of Vindobona in the RER&DWR Principle Itinerary should be considered in later iterations. However, Vienna remains as relevant entry/exit transportation Hub.

The same argument stands for Emona, nowadays Ljubljana, and modern capital of Slovenia. The lack of physical remaining of Emona combined with limited storytelling potential of the locality which is overshadowed by various other dominant types of tourism and tourism dynamics of the modern city of Ljubljana, suggest that inclusion of Emona in the RER&DWR Principle Itinerary should be considered in later alternations. This especially having in mind that Emona is already part of another Roman Heritage inspired route – ITER ROMANUM. For these reasons, the Scientific Committee of the Route made a decision to give priority to smaller, but touristic attractive destination of Ptuj, i.e. Ancient Roman city of Poetovio, located 90 km from Zagreb and nearby Roman locality already included in the RER&DWR – Andautonia (located on a cross-country arterial between the Sava valley and Trans Balkan Highway and the major Roman town of Poetovio (Ptuj)).

Consequently, the project team implemented two field trips: one to Poetovio, to Slovenia; and one to Carnuntum, to Austria.

The first field trip was implemented in Slovenia, visiting Poetovio. The team arrived in Ptuj 8th of October in the afternoon. Ptuj, Poetovio is the oldest Slovenian town. Entering the city immediately gave the impression of visibility of Roman heritage – the hotel was welcomed by a smaller Roman monument display with English signboards.

Exploring the destination began early in the morning with a visit to the tourist information centre. Employees presented the destination and all activities that contribute to the promotion of archaeological tourism and cultural content of the place. Walking through the city to the



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upper town where the castle is located took us past Roman monuments, posters in shops and flags on buildings. There are several monuments of a great importance in the city centre as well as Roman tombstones. Archaeologists believe that some 30 thousand people lived in the greater area around Poetovio, which was one of the most important Roman army base camps, at the time.

The team continued further to the upper town where the castle and museum are located, with a section dedicated to the Roman period. From this position, one can see the whole city and its surroundings. The museum has a small flute / double that has been found and is a rare find - a musical instrument. At the foot of the castle is a continuation of the hill towards the five-point archaeological park with replicas and signboards of findings. Excavations are planned in the future, and with applications and some technological innovations, it may be of additional interest.

The whole city exudes a Roman atmosphere, posters, souvenirs in shops and other displays are located around the city. Wine tourism is a veil developed, the oldest winery is within the castle, and there are wine shops in the city, etc. This part of Slovenia is also perfect for exploring a thousand years of know-how about winemaking, which you can combine with tasting delicious traditional and modern dishes made with local ingredients. Visitors can count on number of available private accommodation, restaurants and wineries, suitable for the reception of large tourists groups.

Following, the trip to **Carnuntum** was organized. The team arrived to Vienna in the evening of 18th October and had a meeting at the Carnuntum locality early in the morning of 19th October. Forty-five minutes' drive from the Vienna city center led the team to the one of the best managed localities which management team of the Route had a chance to see – both in the sense of presentation and interpretation of the cultural heritage, and visitors' management.

The complex of the Carnuntum locality spreads across the whole municipality with most important elements such are the remains of the city, amphitheatre, Heidendor and the building of the Museum. On annual level, complex attracts more than 300.000 visitors. The information center merges ticket selling point, souvenir shop and place where the visitors can take free brochures on more than 15 different languages. Free Wi-Fi is available on spot, enabling the users to download mobile application dedicated to the museum history and presentation. Before stepping into the garden of the locality, visitors can watch a movie on big and small screens, each depicting the life of the Romans in the ancient period. While in the garden, the guide takes the visitors throughout the impressively reconstructed Roman settlement. The reconstruction has been done based on the most modern historical interpretation of the events in the past, and what is the most interesting, every recreated element can be removed and changed, if the future scientists come to new discoveries. In that sense, it is possible to see basic elements of Roman life, completely rebuilt and almost authentic – from Roman houses, villa's, through public toilets and public baths renovated in marble. Right next to the city, following the main street, team could see remains of amphitheatres and stone gate. The amphitheatre is used for the events throughout the year, but it also has its own exhibition. While most of the excavated objects are held in the Museum at the far way of the municipality, five minutes from the entrance into the locality.

Visitors can count on number of available private accommodation, restaurants and wineries, suitable for the reception of large tourists groups.

For more details please see Appendix 1: Field trip and on-site meetings and evaluation Report\_SLO\_AUS.



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## Activity 4. Final selection

***Specific objective: Creation of the final list of archaeological sites and definition of surrounding sub-destinations for potential inclusion into RER/DWR itinerary***

Following the field trips the Final list of archaeological sites to be included in the RER-DWR was created.

When compiling the Final list the team was taking into account the direct communication and readiness of local management organization to become integrative part of RER&DWR, as well as their thematic/historical relevance, readiness for tourism (based on common standards) and mobility and transportation connectivity among the sites (analysis of the logical directions of travel and travel time was assessed).

Table 1: Final list of archaeological sites to be included in RER-DWR

	<i>Austria</i>	<i>Slovenia</i>
1	Carnuntum	Poetovio
<b><i>SITES TO BE RECONSIDERED IN NEXT ITERATION</i></b>		
1	Vindobona	Emona

### Carnuntum

There was directly expressed readiness of the local management organization in Carnuntum to become part and to be included in the RER&DWR and participate in networking and development activities with other members of the Route. However, the tourism promotion of the locality and the region (Römerland Carntum-Marchfeld) is part of the overall state-level effort implemented through ARGE Donau Austria.

From their side, the national management is of the opinion that Austria is already directly involved in the work of DCC through the ARGE Donau Austria. They insist that the ARGE Donau is the contact point for all archaeological sites in Austria. This opinion is not quite in line with the internal RER&DWR policies and strategies, suggesting the Route Management Authority to work directly with heritage organizations on the local level on developing and implementing the concept of Routes Hubs/sub-destination and local product clubs. The work on including Carnuntum in the RER&DWR and communication on this matter will be continued after the end of this Project.

### Poetovio

The local heritage organization in Ptuj, responsible for managing the archaeological site Poetovio and the local museum, showed high interest in collaboration with and joining RER&DWR. The process of inclusion of the Poetovio is therefore in its initiation phase. The work on this matter will continue after the end of this Project.





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## Activity 5. Expansion of the existing tourist itineraries

### *Specific objective: The creation of innovative and sustainable touristic offers.*

During previous activities on RER&DWR promotion and valorisation of its tourism potential, DCC and partners from the private sector (tour operators) created different marketable tourism offers related to and inspired with the Route.

The conference focusing on Expansion of the existing tourist itineraries was organized on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2019, in Belgrade, Serbia, at the DCC's premises. The event was organized in co-operation with regional travel agencies who are members of the DCC network and gathered together 15 guest-participants, from five different countries – UK, Belgium, Netherland, Germany and Poland. With regional travel agencies, DCC members from Serbia and Bulgaria, tourism experts and staff from the DCC side, the total number of conference participants was 25.

Following travel agencies were represented during the conference: Robinson (Serbia, <https://www.robinson.rs/>), Panakomp (Serbia, <http://www.panacomp.net/>), Odyssea-in (Bulgaria, <https://www.hiking-bulgaria.com/tour-classic-fullwidth/>), Regent Holidays (UK, <https://www.regent-holidays.co.uk/>), Davidsfonds Culturreizen (Belgium, <https://www.culturreizen.be/>), Oost Europa Reizen (Belgium, <https://www.oosteuropeareizen.be/>), Zonvaart Reizen (Netherlands, <https://www.zonvaart.nl/nl/Home>), Eurocult Lito Reizen (Netherlands, <https://www.eurocult-lito.nl/>), Sovjet Reizen (BE and NL, <https://www.sovjetreizen.nl/>), Weitblicke (Germany, <https://www.weit-blicke.de/>), ViaVerde (Germany, <https://www.via-verde-reisen.de/>), Studiosus (Germany, <https://www.studiosus.com/>), ViadellArte, (Germany, <https://www.viadellarte.de/>), Go East Reisen (Germany, <https://go-east.de/>), Die Landpartie (Germany, <https://www.dielandpartie.de/>), Horyzonty (Poland, <https://www.horyzonty.pl/>), Barents (Poland, <https://www.barents.pl/en>).

RER&DWR is still relatively unknown among European tour operators. However, the Route has much potential to attract more international visitors including its cultural heritage, numerous wine yards and wine cellars and areas of exceptional natural beauty. Thematically, the event was organized to raise awareness and motivation among international tour operators to include (parts of) the Route in their product portfolio, along with introducing new potential Route's extension.

After the introductory words of Ms. Gordana Plamenac, Director of the Board of Danube Competence Center, Mr. Danko Ćosić, Route Manager, explained the idea behind the creation of RER&DWR, explaining potential synergetic with localities in Slovenia and Austria, i.e. creating one overarching Danube cultural Route. Mr. Vladan Krečković, Route's project coordinator, presented the redesigned website of the Route, announcing that all localities which were included in the new extensions will be presented in the new part of the website, with following social media campaigns on specifically opened social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram. After the presentation of tourism expert Mr. Dejan Veselinov on the importance of development of touristic sub-destinations/hubs, each of the representatives from various travel agencies had a chance to present their companies and interest in developing new cultural itineraries from the Danube region.

The conference continued with a small workshop, facilitated by Mr. Ljubisa Nesovanovic from Robinson, setting-up the framework for further development activities (within this Project and beyond) and help participants understand wider development perspectives, objectives and challenges along the Route, and vice versa, on the side of participating travel agencies. The



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discussion concluded with the 'promise' on DCC side, that all future packages and offers will be promoted through various channels like Route newsletter, web site, promotional materials etc.

For conference participants and DCC guests and stakeholders a Gala Dinner was organized after the event.

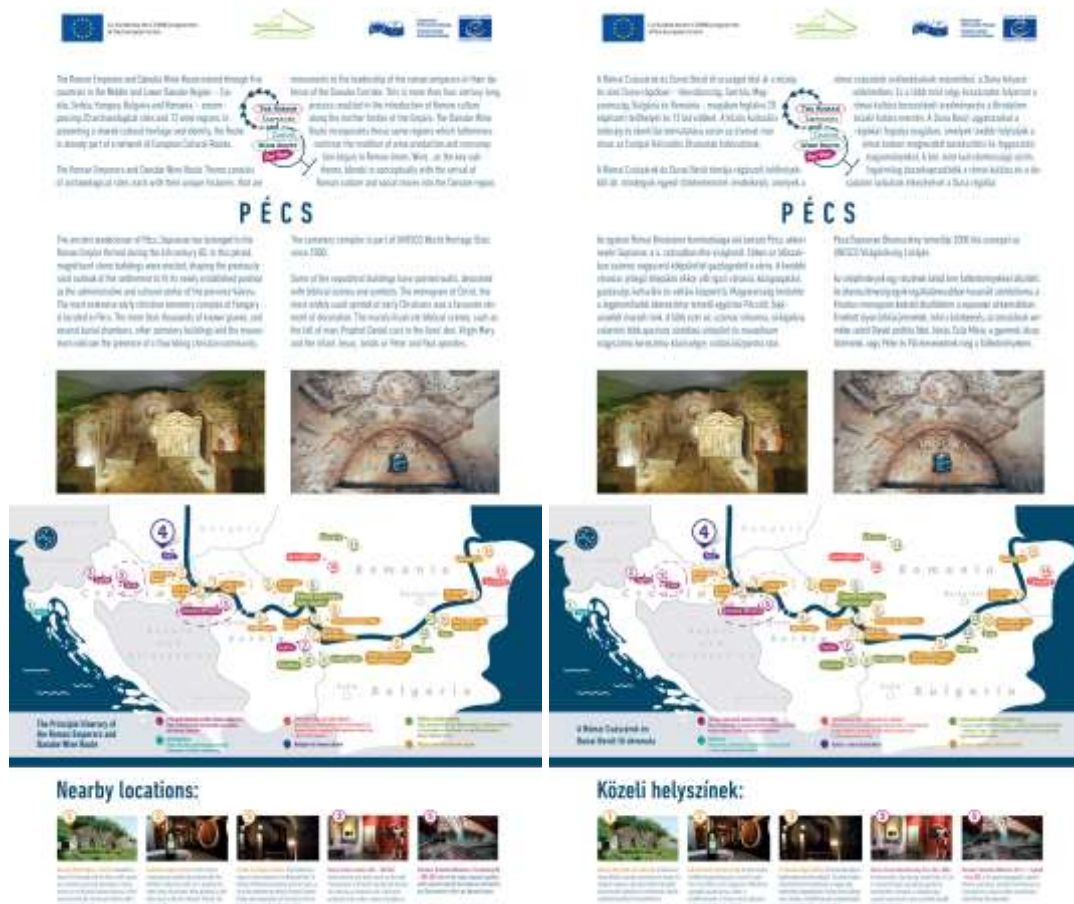
## Activity 6. Visibility actions – Posting Information Boards

### Specific Objective: Posting 3 Information Boards in Sisak (CRO), Alba Iulia (ROM) and Pecs (HUN)

When it comes to visibility actions, three Route's orientation and information Boards are posted in the City Museum of Sisak (CRO), at the open-air archaeological site Sarmizegetusa near city of Alba Iulia (ROM) and at the UNESCO site Early Cristian Necropolis in Pecs (HUN).

All tables are bi-lingual: Domestic language (Croatian, Hungarian and Romanian) and English.

The first two tables, in Sisak and Pecs, are boards serving purposes of Route's sign-posting. Each Board, has part about the Route, part about the respective locality, and third part where nearby Route's localities are promoted.

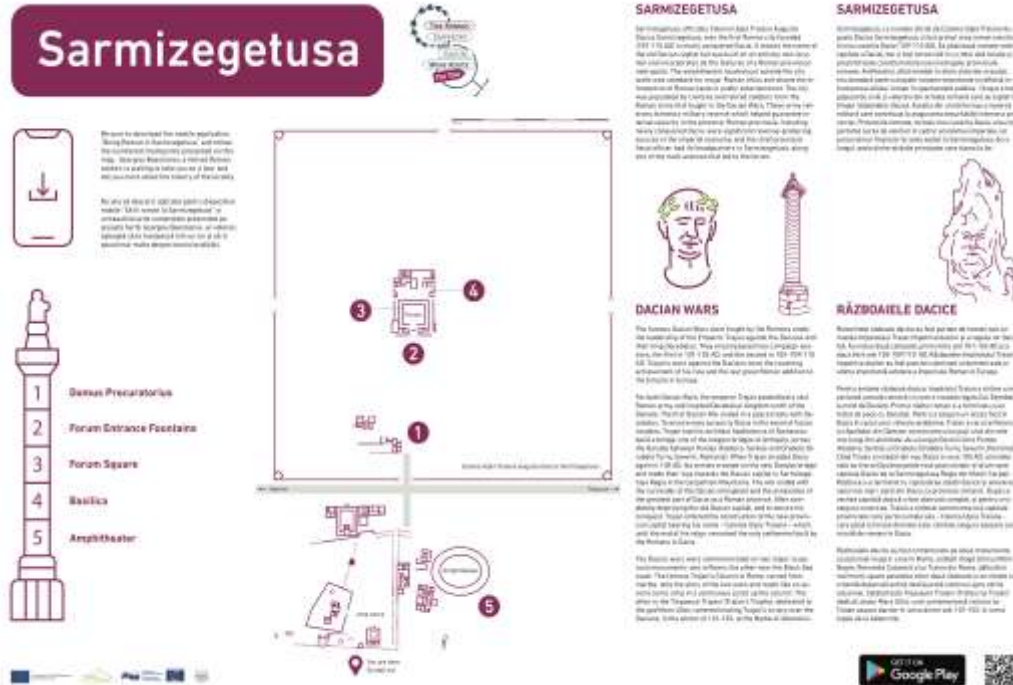


Picture 1. Illustrative sign-posting table in Pecs (HUN)



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The board posted in Sarmizegetusa has direct interpretation purposes – it tells story about the site relevance in the wider historical and geographical context, the story of two Dacian Wars (the conquest of Dacia was the last great conquest and territorial annexation in history), and provides orientation for visitors.



Picture 2. Lay-out of the Interpretation Table in Sarmizegetusa (ROM)



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## C. IMMEDIATE RESULTS

### **Immediate Result 1 – Creation of the list of sites suitable for Route expansion from Slovenia and Austria.**

At the beginning of the Project implementation the Initial list of sites of archaeological sites to be included in the RER-DWR was created containing 12 archaeological sites from Austria (10), and Slovenia (2).

Following their thematic relevance, status of archaeological excavations, storytelling potential, quality of preservation and presentation for tourists of the archaeological site (how well has the site been prepared to accept visitors), and connectivity (traveling potential) the Tentative list of sites of archaeological sites to be included in the RER-DWR was created.

The Tentative list contains 4 archaeological sites from Austria (2) and Slovenia (2).

	<i>Austria</i>	<i>Slovenia</i>
1	Carnuntum	Poetovio
<b>SITES TO BE RECONSIDERED IN NEXT ITERATION</b>		
1	Vindobona	Emona

### **Immediate Result 2 – Engagement of new SMEs and CCI operators in the Route as tourism product.**

The desk evaluation of the archaeological sites from the Initial list was thoroughly performed collecting and evaluating all relevant information and pictures/photos available on internet for each of 12 individual sites, including initial mapping of CCI actors. The desk research and evaluation provided a strong baseline for understanding level of tourism development along the archaeological sites to be included in RER&DWR.

By extending the Route towards Austria and Slovenia, RER&DWR is exiting itself as an operational platform for direct and successful involvement of CCI actors along the Route. By diversifying the means and channels for interpretation of local archaeology and surrounding cultural heritage, the wider group of local tourism actors can be involved. Through this process, a meaningful involvement of local communities, i.e. local authorities, SME's, CCI actors and other interested stakeholders, is possible, focusing on enhancing visitor experience and conveying joint cultural heritage for a contemporary audience with new artistic and technological means (creative interpretations, living history, digital services, etc).

The main 'building block' of the RER&DWR growth and development is a Hub. A Hub (or a sub-destination) is typically geographically determined, as tourists prefer to have a concentration of attractions that makes consumption easy and reduces to a minimum the time spent on travelling between attractions within the same Hub. The common ground of all Hubs is Roman heritage as a key tourism attraction. Product club is driving engine of the Hub. Product club is natural cluster of interrelated businesses and local initiatives – individual service providers



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joining forces in developing diverse service packages (integrated services) to increase visitors' satisfaction and experience. Various researches and analyses in tourism are showing that implementation of product clubs has clear benefits on local tourism by: improving and differentiating tourism products and services, creating new collaboration-business synergies, increasing competitiveness and stimulating innovation.

The results of initial mapping of service providers and CCI actors in Austria are already included in the Danube Tourism Inventory (<http://inventory.danubecc.org/>), under Vienna Hub/Romerstadt Carnuntum. The Danube Region Tourism Inventory is an interactive platform for the compilation and presentation of existing tourism offers along the Danube.

By extending the Route towards Austria and Slovenia, the Route will benefit out of at least two new Hubs and subsequently out of two future product clubs.

At the same time, the Project initiated important process in raising awareness about RER&DWR within regional and international travel agencies provoking their interest in developing bookable tourism packages combining roman heritage and local traditions and in creation of new marketing channels for future development and marketing efforts along the Route. As it presented in Activity 5, representatives of 18 travel agencies from 7 European countries already discussed this opportunity and expressed direct interest for further collaboration and involvement.

### **Immediate Result 3 – Creation of the new and extending of the existing tourism offers.**

For many tourists, especially those from distant starting destinations, the ability to combine two or more economies into one itinerary based on specific interests or convenience plays a large factor in the ultimate purchase decision.

Within the framework of the Project, a conference focusing on Expansion of the existing tourist itineraries was organized on 3rd September 2019, in Belgrade, Serbia, aiming at RER&DWR materialization into a bookable tourism product. The principle objective was to work closely with selected international and regional tour operators on creation of a specific collaborative tourism packages inspired with the RER&DWR.

The event was organized in co-operation with regional travel agencies who are members of the DCC network and gathered together 15 guest-participants, from five different countries – UK, Belgium, Netherland, Germany and Poland. With regional travel agencies, DCC members from Serbia and Bulgaria, tourism experts and staff from the DCC side, the total number of conference participants was 25.

During the workshop with travel agencies, two RER&DWR itineraries were used as a baseline for the future extension: BETWEEN BUDAPEST AND BELGRADE – A CULTURAL AND GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCE and BETWEEN ZAGREB AND BELGRADE – DIVERSE CULTURE AND AUTHENTIC GASTRONOMY (<https://romanemperorsroute.org/discover/>).

During the workshop, the participants jointly discussed strengths and weaknesses of the proposed itineraries, and jointly developed recommendations for future improvements, to serve as a foundation for the extension:

a) Strengths of the product:

- Combination of historical sites, culture, excellent food and wines;
- Cities and the fortresses;
- Experience of different countries and culture in one trip (cross-border experience);



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- Short distances between POIs;
  - Evident operational development.
- b) Weakness of the Route/ product
- Inconsistent quality and experiential value;
  - More variation in the programme/ along the Route, since it is completely focused on cultural heritage and wine/ gastronomy.
- c) Suggested Improvements
- Extend itinerary over several days, prolong length of stay, expenditures and visitor satisfaction.
  - Intensify marketing to raise the awareness among potential visitors, especially apart of already known POIs.
  - Improve signage to better highlight the Route.
  - Provide suggestions for alternative/ additional program and/ or places to visit nearby.

The participating travel agencies ranged from generalists to specialists and cover a broad range of interests. Their professional evaluation of quality and experiential value of the Route, existing and new potential itineraries, will be used to raise awareness and motivation among international tour operators to include (parts of) the (extended) Route in their product portfolio, as well as in further consolidation and development of the Route.

So far, RER&DWR is still relatively unknown among European tour operators. However, participating travel agencies agreed that the Route has much potential to attract more international visitors having in mind its cultural heritage, numerous wine yards and wine cellars and areas of exceptional natural beauty. However, due to the long travel distances between the different sites and the fact that it is important to include all relevant sites and stakeholders from the project, it is highly recommended to:

- 1) Develop product hubs combined with further themes rather than focusing on the Route as a complete touristic product – “clusters of experiences” bringing together diverse and complementary experiences, sites and attractions, which can be combined individually to meet niche, but also general target markets;
- 2) Create two two-days packages that will easily combine newly selected localities (destinations). Conclusion is that the localities are suitable for a weekend tours, that can easily be combined with other RER DWR locations / regions. The best examples are: Ptuj – Pecs or Ptuj – Zagreb, while locality of Carnuntum is still out of reach of the Route, making it difficult to create a coherent touristic offer. On the other hand, inclusion of the locality would create a strong argument for other nearby destinations / localities to step into the Route, thus filling in the gap.
- 3) Introduce a label for local partners (accommodation, restaurants wineries etc.) providing services connected to the Route (displaying a certain quality for visitors and for promotion purposes);
- 4) Provide partners with (background) information/ knowledge about the Route (marketing of the Route as a collaborative effort).



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#### **Immediate Result 4 – Placing three information boards on existing RER&DWR locations.**

Existing researches are clearly demonstrating that (heritage) interpretation is positively linked to enhanced visitor satisfaction. The results support and confirm the high value of sign posting and interpretation of (heritage) attractions in a tourism context. As a result, sign-posting and interpretation (visitors' education) are very important in strengthening the knowledge of visitors and improving their behaviour at the destination/site.

The results of other studies are underlining that destination loyalty is one of the most important subjects in tourism. Tourism destinations must take particular consideration of the image factor as this will affect international tourists' satisfaction and their recommendation to revisit to potential tourists.

To improve both the level of interpretation and image development along the Route, two Route's sign-posting and one interpretation tables are posted in the City Museum of Sisak (CRO), at the open-air archaeological site Sarmizegetusa near city of Alba Iulia (ROM) and at the UNESCO site Early Cristian Necropolis in Pecs (HUN).

The tables are designed in a way to support contemporary practices in image development and story-telling. Also, all tables are bi-lingual: Domestic language (Croatian, Hungarian and Romanian) and English.





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## **D. MID-TERM RESULTS**

### **Mid-term Result 1 – Enlarged Route and final inclusion of the sites from the Final list into RER&DWR.**

The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route is listed among the 38 Cultural Routes, certified in 2015 (and re-certified in 2019) by the European Institute of Cultural Routes under the auspices of the Council of Europe. The progress of the Route and its consistent marketing positioning depend on how much the curiosity of visitors will evoke and encourage their desire to travel and enjoy a unique cultural and gastronomic experience focused on the Roman legacy of the Empire during the 2nd to 4th centuries, of the new era. The extension of the Route to the new sites in Austria and Slovenia follows the same basic principle. The visitor can count on visiting representative archaeological sites from the target period of the Roman Empire, which allow interpretation and understanding of the way in which the inhabitants lived at that time. They do not necessarily have to be the most important monuments according to the criteria of archaeology in a given region, but they must have archaeological content to provide an understanding of the Roman context to the average tourists about how the users of these facilities lived, worked and entertained.

After creating Initial list with 12 archaeological localities, and thematic desk research, the Tentative list containing 4 archaeological sites from Austria (2) and Slovenia (2) was created. The desk research and evaluation provided a strong baseline for understanding level of tourism development along the respective archaeological sites as well as their tourism potential as founding criteria(s) for the sites to be finally included in RER&DWR, following their thematic relevance, status of archaeological excavations, storytelling potential, quality of preservation and presentation for tourists of the archaeological site (how well has the site been prepared to accept visitors), and connectivity (traveling potential).

All the sites analysed and evaluated are classified in two categories: (1) sites selected to be included in the new extension of the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route, and (2) sites to be kept in communication and to be reconsidered in during next iterations of the Route expansion. Following, two key localities from the Tentative list were visited by the expert evaluation team, for the purpose of meeting key stakeholders, evaluating thematic relevance of the sites in question and collecting relevant tourism and mobility data (mapping and creating inventory of local tourism organizations, local heritage intuitions, and local SMEs and CCI actors).

The final list of sites selected to be included in the new extension of the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route contains 2 archaeological sites from Austria (Carnuntum) and Slovenia (Poetovio). Selected new sites are already offering additional tourist activities and already attract a certain number of tourists, thereby increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of RER&DWR. Other two localities from Austria (Vindobona) and Slovenia (Emona) remain candidates for inclusion in the Route in the next iteration.

In the case of Carnuntum (AUT) final inclusion in RER&DWR requires further discussions and negotiations with the locality and their respective marketing organization ARGE Donau Austria. The Austrian side is considering that the locality is already involved in the RER&DWR network through the relationship DCC already established with ARGE Donau Austria on other previous



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marketing initiatives. However, RER&DWR is a special product club of DCC with autonomous Management Authority, so the previous cooperation with the regional marketing organization (such is ARGE Donau Austria) in DCC cannot replace direct site membership and product development imperative to work/communicate directly with heritage organizations on the local level on developing and implementing the concept of RER&DWR Hubs and local product clubs. Promotion and marketing activities are different matter and in that respect involvement of ARGE Donau Austria is possible and desirable.

### **Mid-term Result 2 – Shaped efficient collaboration and networking platform for key route stakeholders (managerial heritage structures’ representatives).**

Well-structured and well-managed and marketed RER&DWR can have multiplying positive effects on visitors flow, further stimulating local residents to become more involved in tourism, and emergence of secondary tourism facilities and services such are guest houses, restaurants, vineries, visitors’ centres, creative heritage interpretation, etc.

The most recent surveys are showing that up to 40% of all tourism related travels in the world are in the category of cultural tourism. At the same time, the process of (cross-border) tourism product creation is complex and is based not only in the existence of tourism attractions and facilities, but also on the development of specific activities or experiences (products and services). Creating high-level quality tourism packages require strong collaboration of various actors from the public and private sector. From one side, on the local level, local heritage institutions needs to cooperate with the local tourism organizations and local service providers, in order to create an reasonable offer for the travel agencies to create competitive product for the market. On the other hand, at the national and international level, travel agencies need to cooperate with national tourism marketing organizations (or equivalents) to expand and diversify their promotional channels. In this context, RER&DWR is creating a perfect ‘playground’ for emergence of efficient and sustainable tourism product development.

Being a certified European Cultural Itinerary, together with integrated management and co-marketing approach, RER&DWR creates ground for synergies and closer “horizontal” cooperation between different localities in different European countries, offering new collaborative opportunities under the umbrella of a common theme. The process of transferring existing cultural heritage into a consumable and sustainable tourism product requires both the long-term commitment and investment. For one well-grounded tourism product it takes a minimum 3-5 years before achieves wider recognisability and reaches the market. Consequently, creating operational pre-conditions for continuous collaborative effort in translating RER&DWR into a consumable tourism product, based on efficient management and marketing, commitment to high-quality services to visitors, local ownership and collaborative funding, is a baseline for long-term sustainability of the RER&DWR.

This requires national public authorities responsible for tourism along the Route to recognize their interest in providing direct support and additional marketing channels to the overall management and marketing of RER&DWR. It also requires commitment on the side of local tourism organizations and local heritage institutions to directly support and contribute to further RER&DWR product consolidation and development efforts. Finally, it requires regional and international tour operators to find their interest in developing bookable tourism packages combining roman heritage and local traditions and bring it on the European tourism market.

### **Mid-term Result 3 – Better rounded and coherent Danube tourism product.**

Tourism products are the building blocks of the successful process of tourism development and marketing: unless the tourism product meets the needs and expectations of tourists, the destination cannot realize its full potential.



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The RER&DWR Glossary of Terms defines tourism product as “a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and human-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific center of interest that represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates and overall visitor experience, including emotional aspects for the potential customers.” From this definition, it is clear that one Cultural Route is not a tourism product per se, but rather a platform for development of a tourism product “around specific center of interest that represents the core of the destination marketing mix”.

The principle aim behind the RER&DWR is developing and promoting cultural tourism in the Danube region, equally putting into perspective common regional and European heritage as well as unique national identities of each country involved and demonstrating how the heritages of the countries included in the Route contribute to a shared European cultural milieu. The Route is conceptually rooted in the factors which drew Roman emperors to be physically present and military active along the northern frontier of the Empire. In brief historical moment, somewhere between the 2nd and the 4th century, the political center of the Roman Empire was not in the Rome, but on the Northern-Danube frontier (RER&DWR USP). The Route encompasses archaeological sites with their individual (unique) histories that are monuments to the leadership of the Roman emperors. The wine part of the Route incorporates the same regions which continue the tradition of wine production begun in Roman times.

The well-known Butler model of tourism development recognizes five main stages in the tourism product life cycle: (1) Exploration Stage, (2) Involvement Stage, (3) Development Stage, (4) Consolidation Stage, and (5) Stagnation Stage. According to the model, after every Stage decline and product dissolution are possible alternatives. The model provides a tool for measuring current state of play along RER&DWR and provides direction(s) for further product consolidation – sustainability actions.

Looking back to the Model, RER&DWR is in its Exploration Stage: it is built around primary tourist attractions and with limited number of integrated secondary attractions; characterised with small numbers of tourists. With some possible exceptions, along RER&DWR, tourism still has no direct economic or social significance to local residents.

Having in mind that successful marketing of the newly created tourism product lasts in average 3-5 years, the future management and marketing of a RER&DWR is a key to a long-term success. Lobbying for creation of functional partnerships at the national, regional and local level along the Route and their future programme (and financial) support are essential in a stepping-in into the next development phase (Involvement Stage: local residents become more involved in tourism, emergence of secondary tourism facilities such as guest houses, incentives for governments to improve transport for tourists emerges, a tourism season extends) and long-term sustainability of RER&DWR.

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