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of the Council of Europe
Certification cycle 2021-2022

Regular evaluation:
**EUROPEAN ROUTE OF HISTORIC
THERMAL TOWNS**

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 2021-2022

Independent expert report

European Route of Historic Thermal Towns

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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 European Cultural Route of Historic Thermal Towns has demonstrated strong commitment and belief towards the Programme rationale, purpose and values. The current Covid-19 pandemic has been impacting hardly in this evaluation period the cultural, tourism and thermal sector, yet it has also opened up new possibilities for the Route, notably by allowing closer and new forms of interaction towards its membership as well as reinforced the societal and tourism trends that favour products and destinations such as those that thermal towns offer. The Route has been active using digital means and other communication strategies to keep and even increase the dialogue and accessibility to its membership.

Serious efforts have been made in the last years, taking into account the former evaluation feedback. The governance and management have been renovated and made more flexible, and reinforced in terms of human resources; the membership has been extended in number and diversity; and a series of activities, partnerships and new opportunities ahead for the Route have been traced, notably at the international level.

The Route and its members have been exemplary in enhancing European memory, history and common heritage as well as proposing cultural tourism and environmental sustainable offers. This multitude of themes and fields of action potential featured by the Route can be further explored if human and financial resources are enlarged. In this way, research and development, cultural and educational activities, notably for youngsters, can be reinforced and promoted at joint network level as they offer excellent opportunities for cooperation and fundraising. On the other side, the reinforcement of the creation of joint touristic products and their communication as Route, will allow to engage members and interact directly with local audiences demonstrating the benefits of this common European approach for thermal towns.

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

2. Introduction

The European Cultural Route of Historic Thermal Towns (hereinafter “the Route”) was created in 2009 and certified by the Council of Europe in 2010. It acknowledges the value, singularity and diversity of Europe’s thermal cultural heritage and its contribution to the continent’s history and identity. Currently, it brings together 48 diverse stakeholders, corresponding to various spa towns and regions, across 18 European countries, spanning Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

The Route is managed by the European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA), an international non-profit organisation set up in Belgium in 2009 with headquarters in Spa. The founding members are: Acqui Terme (Italy), Bath (United Kingdom), Ourense (Spain), Salsomaggiore Terme (Italy), Spa (Belgium), and Vichy (France). This network actually results from the 3 year cooperation project “*Thermae Europae*”, funded by the EU Culture 2000 Programme, in which many of these towns were partners, that aimed to value and preserve thermal cultural heritage in Europe. Nowadays, it brings together towns and regions which have an acknowledged thermal tradition and heritage and its mission is to encourage their integrated development while safeguarding, promoting and enhancing their cultural heritage.

Throughout history, since pre-historic times, spa towns had their ups and downs. Thermalism had their height eras in the Roman, Greek and Ottoman traditions, and then again in the 18th and 19th centuries until the period after the Great Wars; it has then declined in the last part of the 20th, to renew again in the 2000’s, moving on from a paradigm of being a place for medical treatment, associated to sick and diseases, to a place for all associated to health and well-being. The actual Covid-19 pandemic, with its dramatic negative impact on tourism and thermalism, has again put into question the vocation of spa towns, opening up yet new doors of opportunities, that legitimate their past and may renew their future. Now it is therefore a strategic and essential moment to evaluate and reflect on the Route’s recent path and future.

The Route was subject to two regular evaluations in the certification cycles 2013-14 and 2017-18. This present report concerns its 3rd regular evaluation within the certification cycle 2021-22. The expert’s individual evaluation took place between September and early December 2021. The Secretariat of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and of the European Institute for Cultural Routes (EICR) has provided diverse documentation (see 5. List of References) and support. There was also close collaboration with EHTTA representatives. The Secretariat, Board, Scientific Committee and some of its Members have given access to additional documents (see 5. List of References) and participated in face to face and digital interviews, as well as via email exchanges. Field visits were also conducted to two EHTTA’s members in 24-26 November, namely São Pedro do Sul (Portugal) and Chaves-Verin Eurocity (Portugal and Spain), where varied stakeholders were met and several sites visited (see Annex 2). The evaluator takes the opportunity to thank the availability and cooperation of all EHTTA’s stakeholders in regards this evaluation exercise.

3. Main Body Evaluation

3.1 Cultural Route Theme

The theme featured by the European Cultural Route of Historic Thermal Towns continues to fulfil to a very good extent the criteria set by the Council of Europe listed in Resolution CM/Res(2013)67. The Route addresses and personifies a consistent multiplicity of European values and topics, by featuring a diversified and rich tangible and intangible cultural as well as natural heritage. Moreover, the content and narrative of the Route responds well to current tourism and societal trends and needs in search for sustainable and holistic destinations, that cater for experiences inscribed in the local heritage, arts and culture, nature, local communities and produce as well as health, wellbeing and leisure. It should be noted though, that the numerous opportunities offered by the theme of the Route bring challenges to the management since it demands considerable and ever growing human and financial resources to fully explore and tap into its huge potential. Notwithstanding, EHTTA is well aware of the challenges and opportunities ahead and is making the necessary plans to develop and explore further connections, partnerships, funding sources and activities to take the most out of the multidisciplinary richness of its theme.

3.1.1 Definition of the theme of the route

Being a reticular route, it aggregates diverse European towns and regions connected by a common theme that springs from their thermal resources and consequent cultural identity. These towns and regions have one or more mineral water springs that have been used for healing and recreation since ancient times. Indeed, this natural resource has been explored for different purposes (bathing, drinking, inhalation) giving place to specific buildings and infrastructures (baths, buvettes, fountains, pumping rooms, halls and pools). To respond to the incoming visitors, these towns and regions have invested in making provision for the necessary complementary structures and services, from accommodation and catering to sports, leisure, gaming, artistic and cultural activities. In this way, they have developed a common culture translated onto a specific architecture and sense of place, permeated by different styles throughout the times; and an "*art de vivre*" result of the gathering and interaction of varied guests coming from across-borders throughout Europe and materialised in diverse practices, rituals, products, tools and knowledge. The Route captures the essence of this common identity featuring a multifaceted theme that spans built and immaterial cultural and natural heritage. Finally, it has got a potential for extension and inclusion of new members inside the already adhering countries as well as in countries that are not yet integrated, since thermal resources and heritage is present throughout most of the European continent.

The theme of the Route is comprehensive and has been subject to research conducted by experts on behalf of EHTTA's Scientific Committee but also promoted by some of its members. This work took shape in the form of projects, publications and dissemination events. It is the case of the research on the spas anatomy developed within the "Great Spas of Europe" UNESCO successful bid dossier which official nomination as transnational UNESCO World Site was announced in July this year. This bid was firstly discussed within EHTTA's membership, and developed as a parallel initiative by several EHTTA's members, involving as well the expert Paul Simons (EHTTA's Scientific Committee President). Today it unites 11 spa towns members of the Route. Moreover, another relevant project idea was put forward in 2017, namely the "Thermal Atlas of Europe", an open geographical information system aiming at mapping the complexity of thermal heritage in Europe. This project did not managed to get the necessary funding to be implemented, despite some fundraising attempts to European programmes such as Creative Europe and H2020. EHTTA continues to pursue ways to implement it since it would be essential to shed light on the multiplicity of the thermal heritage

theme in Europe and may serve the prospects for network extension. The Scientific Committee has also published on the Route's theme, notably within the frame of the celebrations of European Thermal Heritage Day: "Thermal Tourism and Spa Heritage in Europe" (2018); "What'Spa – A concept to be redefined" (2019); and "Thermal Architecture", including the development of a comparative map (2020).

The theme multidimensional character lends itself to a myriad of associated pertinent topics such as those proposed by the management in their communication:¹ "Festivals Galore" – films screenings, music, dance and theatre performances, visual arts exhibits, arts festivals, crafts markets, among other cultural events are on offer in the activity programmes of many of the members; "Spas in Antiquity" – from Greek, Roman to Byzantine archaeological and mythological heritage are present in many of the spa towns and regions; "Lights, Camera, Action!" – from being the set of movie shootings and/or the scenario of novels, to hosting movie stars and other famous celebrities, to stage film festivals, the links between cinema and thermal towns are recurrent; "Hop on.. the Train" – the advent of railway has contributed to the resurgence of thermalism, while some lines connected various spas across Europe. From posters to impressive railway stations, architecture and design have contributed to create an image and a considerable associated heritage. Nowadays, the promotion of slow and sustainable travel links again thermal towns and the railway; "The Therapeutic Landscape" that characterises spa towns and regions, from forests and mountains to stylised parks and gardens, used for recreation, sports, walks constitute a privileged and currently highly valued natural preserved environment. Finally the more recently added theme "Great Food and Drink", promotes slow food and quality local produce and gastronomy as an integral part of spa experiences.

The above themes permit the development of initiatives and exemplary and innovative projects in the field of cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development. Based on some of the quoted themes, EHTTA has released 3 Theme kits in English and French entitled respectively "Spas in Antiquity"; "East well, live well!" and "Therapeutic Landscapes" that showcase and promote these specific cultural highlights of the Route.

The development of tourist products in partnership with tourist agencies and operators aimed at different publics - most recurrent are individual visitors and/or couples, as well as families with children - is a common practice among the membership. Various strategies, partnerships and packages are designed and promoted at individual member's level. The Portuguese visited members, for instance, are part of a national association (Termas de Portugal) that promote jointly various packages around themes such as History, Nature and Charm. The Italian member Acqui Terme also proposes a "Bonus Destination Acqui" with over 30 touristic packages where local and regional resources are associated with thermal offers. On the other side, at Route level, EHTTA, admits collaboration with tour operators in still emergent and indeed requires further efforts. There are though some achievements to report as the case of Fred. Olsen Travel (Fred./holidays portal), one of the UK's most established travel companies, that is now promoting the Route; and the recent partnership with FitReisen, a German tour operator. The "Thermal Pass" is a much needed project idea, to constitute a transnational touristic product, linking diverse spa towns by a common theme in Europe. Yet it has not yet secured funding to be implemented, despite an unsuccessful attempt to apply to test it via the Routes4U programme involving members from Greece, Croatia and Italy. Anyhow, the management has been putting forward some communication initiatives, notably, it has been gathering and promoting jointly the member's own tourism packages in 2018, 2019 and 2020. The website displays them under diverse themes such as "Pure Spa Experiences", "Ancient

¹ Themes and itineraries quoted in the 2021 EHTTA brochure "Discover the European Route of Thermal Heritage. Culture – Architecture – History", page 14.

Spa Traditions”, “Gastronomic Experiences”, “Special Events”, “Out & About” and “Medical Spa”. Due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, EHTTA’s has also proposed online, in 2020, a “Thermal Winter Market” where visitors can be linked from a single portal to varied tourism packages and merchandising proposed by members. The Croatian member Daruvar expressed the interest to create together tourism packages that involve several countries to promote their thermal heritage and complete their own tourist offer.

Moreover, these topics have plenty of space to allow the development of cultural and educational exchanges for young people as well as children. The youth involvement was one of the weak aspects noted in the previous evaluation report. The Route and its members are gradually more aware of the need to invest on a regular relationship with youngsters and schools so to disseminate thermal culture and heritage since an earlier age. Youngsters are not only potential future clients but are also certainly their best ambassadors. Moreover only learning how to value thermalism and its specific heritage, past and present, can one respect, preserve and enjoy its benefits and lessons. These are the beliefs expressed notably by two of the thermal towns visited, such as São Pedro do Sul and Chaves, that not only have customised infra-structures for treatment of youngsters but also have links to local schools. Both are actually improving their spa and leisure facilities, as well as re-creating their Roman bath sites, planning a more intensive relationship and the development of specific programmes targeting this age segment and educational establishments in the future. Some other members have also developed activities such as competitions with higher education students, notably in the field of design, as the Routes des Villes d’Eaux du Massif Centrale, Karlovy Vary region and also Vichy which included a visit to Bath (2018). In addition, during the Celebrations@Source, an annual initiative of EHTTA’s, on the United Nations World Water Day (22nd March), member towns and regions give access to their heritage and healing springs in unusual ways, such as open days, special offers, water bars, guided walks, and behind the scenes tours. The target audiences are both local residents and visitors, and some members involve school children. In 2021, EHTTA members had the opportunity to ask (digitally) young people in their towns and regions what they thought about water, and thermal water in particular, through the “What’spa” questionnaire developed by the Scientific Committee that remains available in all the languages of the Association.

Nevertheless, cultural and educational exchanges still take place mostly at initiative of member’s individually and are not yet fully explored at the network level which would allow to reinforce the European dimension of the Route among youth. EHTTA had plans to improve this dimension, yet the Covid-19 pandemic did not allow to fully overcome it. In this respect, the GA Assembly of June 2020 included a sharing of best practices by the EICR Secretariat in order to show EHTTA members how other Routes have approached youth involvement so to inspire new thinking in the network. New initiatives for youth involvement in the Association are said to being explored and will be one of the focus in the future.

3.1.2 Historical and cultural context

The Route theme is illustrative of European memory, history and heritage and contributes in a pertinent way to an interpretation of the diversity of present-day Europe.

Thermalism tradition in Europe dates back to ancient times as in many spa towns remain traces of the use of their hot springs by the Roman and even before. Throughout the centuries, they have accumulated impressive and varied architectonic and built heritage, from water and bath related infra-structures to a panoply of associated buildings to accommodate services to receive and entertain the guests, as quoted already in 3.1.1. This built heritage constitute what today is part of the common identity of an European spa town and its “therapeutic landscape”. Moreover, bath culture gave origin to a rich tangible and intangible heritage linked with thermal

practices spanning rituals and traditions, gastronomy, stories, natural, scientific and medical knowledge and tools, crafts and artistic works. These rich resources have always attracted diverse people, including royalty, politicians, intellectuals, scientists and artists, making spa towns places of inspiration, exceptional knowledge and creativity development, intercultural and cross-border encounters and interactions. Over the centuries, these towns have developed culture, traditions and societal changes that have become part of our way of life in Europe today as well as have created the know-how and infrastructures that are linked to the birth of modern tourism industry.

As analysed already in 3.1.1, the theme conveys European history and memory and its definition is rightly based on scientific research and consensus.

3.1.3 Council of Europe values represented by the theme

The Route theme is representative of European history and values common among various participating countries (18 different European countries).

Firstly, management wise, EHTTA's upholds that its governance and operation is guided by the Council of Europe's (COE) values of human rights, democracy and the rule of Law. The majority of members are local or regional municipalities, democratically-elected bodies, representing local citizens, whose representatives sit in the Association's General Assembly, Council and Board. The Association follows transparent and accountable procedures. The 10th anniversary of the Association (10th Dec 2019) was celebrated by evoking the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Human Rights Day).

Moreover, thermalism as a theme conveys as well other COE's values such as cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and mutual exchanges across-borders. Having in view the diverse yet common Route's historical and cultural context described above (3.1.2), it clearly connects past traces and stories to present heritage, giving a sense of a joint cultural community in regards participating towns and regions but also visitors and European citizens at large. It also contributes to encourage the experience and discovery of a common European cultural heritage and values, raising awareness for the need for its preservation and enhancement. From ancient times, thermal towns have been places hosting and welcoming diverse visitors to be healed and improve their wellbeing. Additionally, thermal towns, denominated by EHTTA "cafés of Europe", have been places of cross-cultural encounters and experiences, where various levels of society could mix and exchange ideas. In this way, EHTTA's portrays thermalism as an embodiment of "European values" and "human rights" that act as channels for understanding of our shared European cultural identity.

3.2 Fields of Action²

The actions of the European Cultural Route of Historic Thermal Towns are consistently linked to its theme and comply to a good extent with the criteria listed in Resolution CM/Res(2013)67.

The multiplicity and pertinence of activities proposed both by the management and the members should be praised. Yet for the same reasons expressed above for the Cultural Route Theme (3.1), the variety of potential fields of action resulting from the Route defies the management in terms of human and financial resources. In this respect, some of the activities

² In the previous chapter (3.1 Cultural Route Theme) several activities implemented by the Route management and/or its members have already been debated.

analysed below are mostly carried out by members individually not necessarily developed and/or communicated as Route using the network common channels.

Finally, it is relevant to recognise that the present Covid-19 pandemic has severely affected and keeps on affecting the activities of EHTTA and all of its members, as tourism and thermalism have been very hardly hit by restrictions to travel and to the organisation of public activities and usage of infra-structures. EHTTA has actually conducted a Covid-19 impact survey to the membership in 2020 in which members confirmed the discontinuation of projects and loss of income - most notably from events and ticket sales - as all bathing establishments have closed. Therefore, many of the expectations and plans of the network could not be implemented nor pursued further in 2020 and 2021. Nevertheless, EHTTA's and the membership have put forward alternative ways to remain connected and to implement many of its planned activity programmes, mostly with the use of digital means. The referred survey also confirmed the increased online activity, especially social media but also online tours, webinars, blogs/vlogs and newsletters. The pandemic experience has therefore, on the other side, brought some benefits. New forms of communication and interaction among the Route members were tested, actually enlarging accessibility to those normally less present in the network's presential activities (notably due to lack of capacity to travel) and ensuring a more balance geographic coverage. Indeed, having a stronger presence in western Europe, this part of the continent hosts a good deal of the activities proposed by the network. Moreover, the pandemic reinforced the tourism visitor's trends that legitimate the Route' thematic and activities proposal which is linked with cultural and slow tourism, open air activities as well as health and wellbeing.

3.2.1 Co-operation in research and development

The Route pursues a unifying role enabling dispersed knowledge to be brought and disseminated together, notably by cooperating in research and interdisciplinary analysis on both theoretical and practical level. For this end, the Route and its membership have been putting forward and taking part in diverse symposia, scientific conferences and public debates as well as publishing with the participation of experts from the Scientific Committee (see 3.1.1), on issues such as water, thermalism and quality of life; thermal architecture and heritage. The Route has links with various universities and research centres across its participating countries, from Turkey (as the Technical University of Bursa) to Spain (a collaboration protocol was signed with the University of Vigo in 2018); and EHTTA is an associated partner of the European funded HERA project "The European Spa as a Transnational Public Space and Social Metaphor", between 2019-2022, led by the University of Amsterdam that aggregates several European experts. The project intends to rethink spas as a core concept and object of European debate focusing on history and memory and literature and culture. In this way, the Route activities have been showing and illustrating how its theme is representative of European values shared by several European cultures while assuming many diverse profiles. Moreover, the set-up of Cafés of Europe – which remained from the past European project "Sources" - targeting specialists but also the general public in an open informal debate format, is another initiative concurrent to this objective. It took place in 2018 and 2021 in Ourense (Spain) and São Pedro do Sul (Portugal), during GAs, discussing topics such as strategies for environment sustainability in thermal destinations and the Roman origins of thermal towns. Finally, a due reference to the Thermal Atlas of Europe project idea (analysed already in 3.1.1) that gathered several partners, from research centres and tourism institutions, which keeps on hold waiting for funding. In this respect, it should be noted that the network has been having trouble in securing funding for its research and dissemination projects which comes as a limitation to fully fulfil this criteria tapping into the Route rich research and development cooperation potential. Indeed, the existing and diverse members' research and development resources alongside their partner's educational and academic institutions are not fully explored

in view of promoting spa innovation and knowledge advancement in terms of management and heritage preservation and enhancement.

On the side of the members, as said, many have their own research and development units investing in this field in different ways. The visited members, São Pedro do Sul and Chaves-Verin have strong links to the Universities in Portugal and Spain and both are investing in partnership for the development of higher education courses on thermalism, including a PhD. The member La Route des Villes D'Eaux du Massif Centrale cooperated in 2019-2020 with the Saint-Etienne School of Arts and Design, within a cultural and research project, including the development of a historic research on bathrobe, notably in the perspective of textile and object design.

3.2.2 Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage

The Route activities analysed certainly contribute to raise awareness among different publics, and to enhance and explain the historical significance of its tangible and intangible heritage and our common identities in different regions of Europe, including in many cases rural remote areas. Its mission and activities, from research to dissemination and celebration, have this premise as its backbone. Examples are the European Thermal Heritage Days, launched in 2018 in Budapest in the frame of the European Year of Cultural Heritage and then held in Baden-Baden and online; the World Water Day and the European Heritage Days, celebrated by the different members in their respective territories, from Georgia and Turkey to Spain and Portugal, accompanied by joint communication efforts by EHTTA's. The Route also takes into account international conventions and agenda, including the Council of Europe values (see 3.1.3) and UNESCO most notably. At the member's level, The Great Spas of Europe exemplifies how some of the Route members have put forward a successful bid to become World Heritage Site responding rightly to UNESCO demands on heritage protection and enhancement. Actually, the coordination and mutual benefit of this initiative and the Route itself deserves consideration among the management. It can also be highlighted, the thermal library project, physical and digital, to be promoted by Sao Pedro do Sul; and the international thermal heritage resource centre that is being developed in Vichy, together with member La Route des Villes d'Eaux and EHTTA.

Also in view of this goal, EHTTA has been connecting to European networks and taking part in collective and lobbying initiatives and manifestos, being member to the European Heritage Alliance 3.3 which links it to Europa Nostra network.

The Route complies quite well to the need to enhance memory, history and European heritage. Further expansion of activities and references in all countries integrating the network, notably on eastern Europe, giving visibility to their specific heritage, would be of added value.

3.2.3 Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans

Many of the activities put forward by the Route to promote this dimension have been already discussed in 3.1.1. It has been also reported in 3.2.1 that members, notably the visited members, have partnerships with higher education institutions in order to support and promote thermal qualifications and research as well as job opportunities. Moreover it can be added that some members have been implementing Erasmus funded mobility exchanges, like Afyonkarahisar (Turkey); as well as Portuguese and Spanish students internships at Ourense spa company and at the thermal towns of the Route des Villes D'Eaux (where educational exchanges with young people in the frame of artistic residencies within the Artistic Trips project also took place). Finally, the Eurocity Chaves-Verin has launched an app game, which main

character is named “Chavin” for children (and all interested) to discover the cross-border Euro-city.

These examples reiterate that most of the activities targeting groups of young people to promote exchanges take place at the individual member’s level. These actions target mostly the youth of each spa town or region or happen mostly in between two of the participating countries but not so much at an European scale. Therefore the Route keeps on needing to improve this dimension at the European level – as it is part of its plans already since last evaluation cycle, though the current Covid-19 pandemic did not favour.

3.2.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practice

The encouragement and promotion of cultural and artistic events and practices by the Route and its members is a premise that constitutes the nature of spa towns. A myriad of literature prizes, music and other performing arts festivals, movie screenings, crafts markets, historic recreations are on offer in the various spa towns many of them with long traditions and linked closely to the history of the thermal towns. The member’s cultural and artistic programmes concern heritage, traditional and contemporary artistic and cultural practices, as well as professional and amateur arts. Bad Kissinger, for instance is stage to the high class music festivals during the Summer. São Pedro do Sul also promotes the Festival da Água (The Water Festival) proposing a diversified programme from live concerts to exhibitions, with special activities for children. Besides events and festivals, and the spa towns celebrated architecture and archaeological sites, members also have prestigious cultural venues and artistic centres as the case of the Centre of Arts, from Enghien-Les-Bains, dedicated to contemporary digital creation, while the city is part of UNESCO Media Arts Creative City Network. Moreover, the towns integrating the Route des Villes d’Eaux with their “Bathrobe Addicts” brand, together with artists, students and educational establishments have put forward joint projects contemplating artistic residencies and contemporary design creation (graphic, object, textile) based on the concept that thermal culture is a source of creativity.

In order to give a common platform to all this cultural and artistic offer, in 2018 a new section on EHTTA’s website was created, namely “Festivals”: listing artistic and cultural events and festivals throughout the year profiling a rich Route’s event calendar. Withdrawn in 2020 due to Covid-19, this section is expected to return in 2022, as it represents an interesting tool to communicate the Route contemporary cultural and artistic dynamic.

3.2.5 Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.

The Route strategy has always been promoting the importance of spa culture as a strategic factor to foster sustainable territorial development from local and regional to European level. In order to maintain the quality of the water, its main resource, environmental protection and concern has always been a principle for all members. In this respect, the spa towns DNA is at the heart of cultural and sustainable tourism, integrating the protection and the enhancement of its built, natural and immaterial heritage.

Beyond the activities and measures listed already in 3.1.1, EHTTA has been participating in diverse tourism fairs, markets and debates representing and promoting the Route – like the World Travel Market in 2018-19-20; the ITB Berlin with first own stand at the medical tourism pavilion in 2019; and an online participation in 2020 that resulted very fruitful leading to many meetings with journalists and tour operators; Termatalia 2018-2019, where Ourense manages a dedicated EHTTA stand; and the European Health Tourism Summit at the European Parliament in 2018-19 in which EHTTA President has contributed as speaker. EHTTA is also participating in various European and international fora to represent spa towns and regions as

well as defend the cultural sustainable tourism personified by its membership. It has close links with the European Travel Commission via its members national tourism boards; and it is an affiliate member, since 2018, of UNTWTO – United Nations World Tourism Organisation. In this frame, very recently, EHTTA has been chosen to take part in the UNWTO's Affiliate Members Programme of Work 2022 with an International Congress on Thermal Tourism to be held at the end of September 2022 in Ourense. EHTTA takes also part in the Tourism Manifesto an alliance of 70 European organisations calling for European action on key priorities for the sector. It has also been in conversation with Eurorail to develop a train-thermal towns product – initially imagined within the context of the European Year of Rail in 2021-, yet on hold due to the pandemic.

The members themselves also pursue the promotion of their cultural products and sustainability concerns, from a programme for social thermalism (including train tickets) promoted in 2018-2020 by the Province of Ourense; the virtual mineral springs tour by Bad Kissingen (Germany); to the La Ruta Del Agua/Rota da Água (water route) promoting an integrated cultural product suggesting the use of walking and cycling in cross-border pathways (eco-vias) and experience tourism proposals such as the Smuggling route, all in between Spain and Portugal, Moreover, as said, sustainability is very relevant for the membership thus many innovative initiatives and experiences have been developed by members, notably geothermic applications by hot springs, making use of thermal waters in the towns heating schemes and buildings, to harness the “extra” heat in the water for other uses – as It is the case notably of São Pedro do Sul and Chaves, but also Bath (UK). These emergent best practices in the field of sustainability are not yet visible nor subject to joint communication at the Route level. Further partnerships with public and private organisations active in the field of tourism in order to develop tourist products and tools targeting all potential publics would also be an advantage as recognised by the Route itself (see 3.1.1).

3.3 Cultural Route Network

The Cultural Route complies to a very good extent with the criteria for networks listed in Resolution CM/Res (2013)67. From governance and internal procedures to the extension and diversity of the network membership, the Route is performing adequately. It should be remarked yet that at present, EHTTA is in a turning point in regards its development as an organisation. EHTTA's management is well aware that increased activities and budget prospects, which rightly would allow to explore even further the full potential of the Route, would require increased human and financial resources. The management is therefore committed to reach a good balance between the size of the team and the activities and budget expectations so that membership and all the Route requirements are satisfactorily met.

3.3.1 Overview of institutional /legal structure of the network

EHTTA was set up in 10th of December 2009 under Belgium law as an AISBL, an international non-profit association. The Association pursues the mission of “creating and facilitating a permanent European organisation to connect towns with an acknowledged and rich thermal tradition and heritage, to allow them to promote their history and to safeguard and protect their cultural thermal heritage while at the same time defining marketing and enhancement strategies through creative and innovative activities.” According to the documentation analysed, it can be said that governance, decision-making and overall functioning of the organisation follows democratic and transparent procedures in line with the statuses.

The statuses are available for members in French and English and have been subject to recent changes in result of the extraordinary GA of December 2019, when it celebrated its 10th

anniversary. It concerned the term of the mandate of the Council from 2 to 4 years, to make it in line with the political mandates of the member's representatives, and also since 2 years was too short to get into the Association's dossiers; Another change concerned the membership fee payment deadline and related possibility of membership exclusion, that was reduced from 2 to 1 year, so to increase the certainty of budgets.

Actually, already early 2019, changes in view of restructuring the organisation to improve the functioning of the management had taken place. It positively follows up, the former evaluation note on the lack of sufficient human means. The Council, the organ with the broadest administration management powers, in its meeting in January 2019, established the EHTTA Board as a smaller decision-making body which could act more easily and quickly than the larger Council. The Board has the executive power to implement EHTTA's strategy and acts as the connection between the management team and the Council. It meets monthly with the Executive Director. As a matter of fact, another decision taken considered the management team. Up until then, EHTTA was managed, in executive terms, by a Task Force³, composed by officers of members within the frame of contracts signed annually between EHTTA's and the respective members. In the same meeting, the Council discussed and approved the role of Coordinators for the different tasks assumed by the Task Force, which in a following meeting in June, proposed the new post of Executive Director.

Later in 2019, in the October's GA held in Spa, 17 members of EHTTA were elected to serve on the EHTTA Council (former Executive Council) for 2 years. The EHTTA Council meets three to four times per year to develop and implement budgets, strategies and the activities of the Association. The Council has then elected the Board, for the period 2019-2021, currently consisting of: President José Manuel Baltar Blanco (Province of Ourense); and Vice-Presidents Eric Brut (La Route des Villes d'Eaux du Massif Central); Lorenzo Lucchini (Acqui Terme); Hugo Oliveira (Caldas da Rainha); and Paul Simons (Expert, President of EHTTA's Scientific Committee). This GA also approved the new Board and Executive Director. Consequently, in early 2020 an interim structure has been created until the recruitment of the Executive Director. It consisted of three persons – including Catherine Lloyd as Coordinator, which had collaborated with EHTTA in the past, and two former Task Force officers Marion Vansingle (in charge of finances) and Anne Kaiser (for communication). Finally, following a public call among the membership, Simone Zagrodnik was recruited as Executive Director of EHTTA's starting in August 2020. Besides the full time Executive Director, the team is now also composed by Catherine Lloyd, part-time, in charge of communications, projects and support; and Marion Vansingle, finances contracted by the La Route des Villes d'Eaux.

Additionally, regarding governance, EHTTA's also comprises a Scientific Committee, based on the concept of a "knowledge network" to assist the development of the Route. It is composed by experts, some connected with members and/or universities and research centres. The President is Paul Simons from the UK, which due to its post as Secretary-General of the Great Spas of Europe has very recently resigned. It is now substituted by Mario Crecendo, Vice-President, from Spain. Other members, some added in 2019, are Astrid Krueger (Bad Homburg, Germany), Christopher Pound (Bath, UK), Barbara Van Der Wee (Belgium) and Karel Kuca (Czech Republic). Its functions span the independent assessment of membership applications; development of bids to funding programmes; development of research and data projects and resulting publications; as well as conception of dissemination events. It should be noted, following up the above referred former evaluation remark, on the lack of sufficient human means, that the contract in 2018 of the prospection and recruitment of

³ In 2018 it was composed by Charlotte Broyart (communications), Luca Bruschi (international relations), Raffaella Caria (Executive Secretary), Lia Perez Dominguez (press officer), Anne Katherine Liehr (communication).

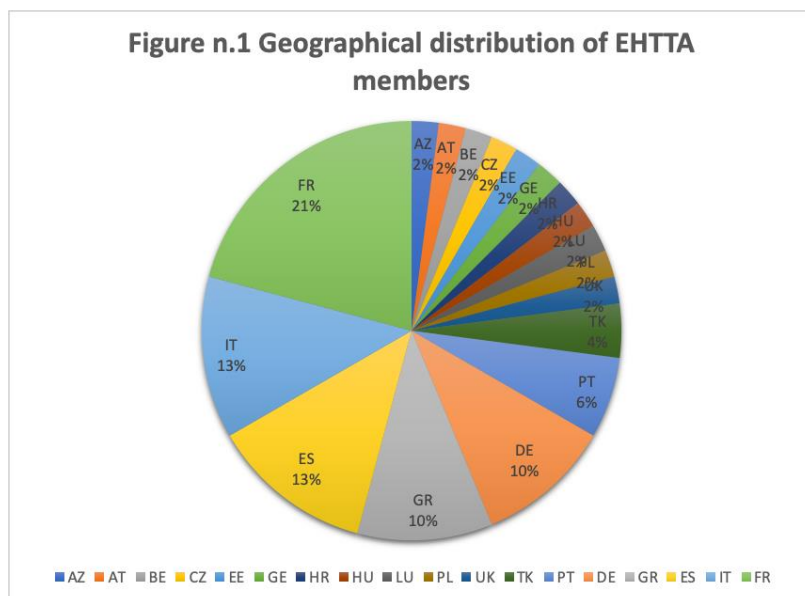
new members to one of the Scientific Committee experts (Crecendo Associates) was considered negatively. This contract was then discontinued. The former evaluator recommended that the management team would take in charge this function. Indeed, now with an Executive Director in functions, the prospection and recruitment can be assumed by the management team (as well as with the support of the members) and the Scientific Committee should focus only on the assessment of the applications, also to ensure the independency of the procedure. Moreover, with very recently announced departure of the former President, the composition of the Committee needs reconsideration. Actually, the present and effective contribution of the varied experts listed is not reflected on the concrete actions presented. Discussion and restructuring is needed therefore to ensure variety of profiles (there is a remaining slight predominance on urbanism and architecture expertise noted already by former evaluator) and geographic origins and putting forward a renovated strategic plan and research and development agenda for the upcoming years, with reinforced interaction and making good use of the membership resources in this field (see further analysis in 3.2.1).

In what regards finances, for the evaluation period, EHTTA's budget accounts on average between approximately 150,000 EUR and 200,000 EUR annually. Despite yearly variations, concerning difficulties in cashing some membership fees, in general, the expenses of the organisation – in terms of structure costs, travel and activities – are covered by the income, coming from membership fees and sponsoring. However, the budget spent on activities (designated events in the budget) is considerable low in view of the expectations of the organisation and Route accounting to 20,000 EUR in 2021 and estimated to decrease in the upcoming years.

The former evaluation referred to weaknesses coming from a budget that is mostly based on the subscription fees of its members. At the moment the situation remains, being alleviated by a sponsorship coming also from one of the members (Ourense Province) in 2020 and 2021 and also planned in 2022. This sponsorship, confirmed annually, it is not estimated for 2023, which reduces the budget expectations and may put into question the viability of the network in the close future. The several European funding requests submitted have been unfortunately unsuccessful. The project-based funding featured in the Route application remains at the level of the members, not being managed directly by EHTTA. As a matter of fact, the actual financial resources, and consequently human, do not allow to put forward the existing projects ideas. Fundraising at private and public level, including European, is clearly an area that needs to be reconsidered and further invested. The restructuring of the management in 2019 was already a step towards having a fully dedicated post that can also give attention to this obligation.

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

As of December 2021 the network is composed by 48 diversified members from 18 countries, being constituted by 36 active members (member towns) and 12 associate members (regions or associations committed to the objectives of the Association). There is also a category of international members which is not filled at the moment. The geographical distribution of the membership is as represented by Figure n.1 below:



As Figure n.1. shows the highest percentage of members come from France (21%), followed by Italy (13%) and Spain (13%) and then Germany (10%) and Greece (10%), demonstrating a higher concentration of members in Western and Southern Europe. In this respect, the management is aware of the fewer number of members in Central and South Eastern Europe, considering this geographical area a priority. Nevertheless, efforts have been made in order to involve and engage the existing members from this part of Europe, as demonstrated by the realisation for the first time of the GA in Galaalti in Azerbaijan in May 2018. It was also planned to have a GA in Daruvar in Croatia in May 2020, yet it had to take place digitally due to the current pandemic.

The criteria for membership is clearly defined and publicly available. Members have to fulfil five criteria that concern the features and quality of their cultural heritage, infra-structures and accommodation. The procedure is more demanding criteria wise regarding Active Members. The assessment of new membership applications is done by the Scientific Committee (which might include a site visit beyond the documentation analysis), that issues a recommendation to be formally approved by the Council and then the GA. In 2021 a “Members Handbook & Toolkit” has been rightly published containing relevant information for the membership, including insights regarding the Cultural Routes Programme. In regards the membership criteria, the discussion of its pertinence and adequacy in view of current cultural tangible and intangible heritage as well as cultural tourism trends would be advisable.

3.3.3 Network extension since last evaluation

In regards the previous evaluation, the network has increased considerably the number of active members (from 27 to 36), keeping approximately stable the number of associate members (to be exact it has decreased from 13 to the present 12). The new added 9 active members are the thermal towns of Baden bei Wien (Austria); Bad Ems and Bad Kissingen (both from Germany); Caldes da Montbui (Spain); Castrocaldò Terme e Terra del Sole (Italy); Istiaia-Aidipsos (Greece); Ladrek-Zdroj (Poland); Mondorf les Bains. (Luxembourg); and Parnu (Estonia). While the new 2 added associated members are the Afyonkarahisar Governorship (Turkey); and Clermont Auvergne Metropole (France). In the case of Bursa associate member, the Metropolitan Municipality took over the membership from the Governship.

There have been also few departures since last evaluation, concerning Chianciano Terme (Italy) and Pamukkale (Turkey), as active members; and ANCOT – Associazione Nazionale

Comuni Termali (Italy) and Kislovodsk (Russia) as associate members. Explanations given by the network include: the resignation of ANCOT due to internal issues; Chinciano, Pamukkale and Kislovodsk were dismissed due to absence of membership fees payment. The same happened with the single international member - as said above in 3.3.2, at the moment of the former evaluation - from Brazil (Poços de Caldas). Moreover, in between both evaluations, there was a number of members that got into and left the network, namely: Archena (Spain); Luso-Mealhada and Monchique (both from Portugal), all of them due to lack of membership payment. It was explained that in these cases after a committed membership request and approval, no membership fees were paid at all – often also due to political changes and wills. On the other side, since last evaluation, Fiuggi and Montegrotto Terme, both in Italy, have been put back into the lists as their delayed membership fees have been paid.

Regarding the network extension, the balance is frankly positive since last evaluation. Despite the exit and dismissal of some members, a significant number of new active members has been added coming from a diversity of geographies, including Central and Eastern Europe – an Austrian an Estonian and a Polish member have joined.

Finally, there are several new membership requests under assessment by the Scientific Committee spanning the thermal towns of Manciano and Telesse (both from Italy); Banja Vrucica and Laktasi (both from Bosnia-Herzegovina), and Lipik (from Croatia); and the Turkey Tourism Promotion Agency for Associate Member. This list spans potential new members in south eastern and eastern Europe which are geographical areas less covered by the Route at the moment which is an asset. There have also been some contacts demonstrating a potential membership interest from Split (Croatia), as well as from spa towns in Slovenia and Lithuania, that again would rightly reinforce the membership on the central-east side of Europe.

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

Being very close to its current membership target that is reaching 50 members in 20 different countries, the network management is in favour of stabilising and improving activities and resources to work with actual members for the moment which is a reasonable decision. It is considered that at the level of network extension, investments should be made in receiving new members from countries where the network is already present though with single members only and where there is potential for new members, most notably from those on south, central and eastern Europe, as the case of Croatia and Georgia, for instance. As said above, there are membership requests under evaluation from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Turkey and some perspectives of incoming requests from Slovenia and Lithuania which would rightly increase the coverage on this part of Europe.

3.4 Communication tools

The Cultural Route implements conveniently the Guidelines for the Use of the Logo “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe”. In this dimension there have been very good improvements since the last evaluation, in regards the availability of other languages than English on the website and visibility materials and the need to go beyond specialised thermal media to include more general travel outlets, most notably by creating a close relationship with journalists and bloggers, and by investing in social media to try to reach more general audiences and engage further with members.

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

In what comes to the EHTTA's external communication tools, it currently features a rich updated website in English with the 1st entry pages in most of the languages of the network. Moreover, the network is also now present in various social media networks, using the English language, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Youtube. These EHTTA's accounts have variable dynamic and audiences, and despite the fact that they do not have very large number of followers (EHTTA's Facebook account has got now 2 406 followers, for instance) they allow to open up to new audiences and most especially to new forms of interactions with members. Interestingly, the results of the survey done to members on the impacts of Covid-19, already quoted, refer that respondents wanted to see more social media content to be shared from EHTTA, demonstrating an interest in making use of digital media. A digital newsletter is also sent out quarterly. These digital tools have seen an increased dynamic and usage due to the present pandemic. Moreover, in 2020, the process of streamlining the image of the Association and the Cultural Route online was resolved by re-naming all the social media accounts, and even the website "Historic Thermal Towns".

The visibility printed materials, comprise the main EHTTA brochure in English and the short "trifold" leaflet in all the languages of the Association. There are also the new Cultural Route brochure, including a printed map, translated into all the languages of the Association and available in Azeri, Croatian, English, Estonian, French, Georgian, German, Greek, Hungarian, Portuguese, Polish and Spanish. Moreover there are also the new Themekits (listed already in 3.1.1) and available in English and French. All these materials are available for download on the website. They are also available to the public and trade professionals at exhibitions and fairs (quoted in 3.2.5) as well as press conferences upon EHTTA's events. Indeed the network events (European Heritage Days, World Water Day, 2 GAs per year) provide opportunities for communication and references in the media. Yet social media is also activated via specific campaigns such as "Thermal Thursday" and "Rediscover Historical Thermal Towns" (launched to support the re-opening of thermal baths after the lockdown).

Members have available all visibility materials upon the network meetings but are also able to print their own supplies from pdfs supplied by the Association. Media kits are also provided. In accordance with the last evaluation recommendation, in 2019 all members were sent a "drop" display unit, designed around the EHTTA symbol "the bubbles" in the Route logo, which they are encouraged to display in their tourist information centres, with the original "trifold" leaflets. These drop displays were seen in all the member's visited tourism offices, such as those in Termas São Pedro do Sul, Vidago and Eurocity Chaves-Verin.

In what regards the media and press, new relations were established with travel writers and bloggers, that resulted from the presence in reputed travel fairs, like IBT Berlin, that when taking place online allowed for extra visibility of smaller organisations. A close and regular relationship is then maintained via "press cafés", to give them the latest news and keep the interest. These key agents have got a wider following on social media, therefore it is rightly considered a preferable way to grow EHTTA's audience and expand its outreach in terms of B2C. EHTTA managed, for instance, to get German spa towns covered within Rachel's Ruminations travel blog; and 6 episodes featuring various spa towns were recorded and will be screened in Globetrotter TV to the UK and USA, which can reach to at least an estimate of 1 million people on first streaming and can go up to 9 million

Several positive efforts were also advanced regarding internal communication. The EHTTA Office regularly updates the members about activities and events, and useful information with a weekly newsletter called "From the EHTTA desk". A Tourism & Communications Commission

group was created, joining together members with jobs related to tourism, marketing and communication, that is meant to exchange and assist the team in realising the aims of the Association. A Share File system was also created in 2020 allowing an easier exchange among the team and members. Finally, a note regarding Covid-19 impacts on the communication dimension, as it was said that the use of digital means, notably the increased use of social media, has contributed to a close proximity and dialogue to members, as well as wider accessibility to events and activities, notably in geographical terms. Special activities have also been implemented, such as webinars to create a platform of education and exchange for the members.

Lastly, despite recognised improvements some challenges still lay ahead in the communication domain to which the management is aware of. The local engagement is still an area to be worked on, as EHTTA mostly relies on the members to disseminate contents locally. The fact that contents are in English is also a barrier to get local coverage. Additionally, members have to deal with multiple identities – their own, EHTTA's and the Route -, which communication wise represents a complexity in what comes to logo display and visibility, language use but also on how to define their own communication strategy and target audiences. The members visited and discussed with, declared their interest in belonging to a wider cultural space and market, as internationalisation is on their strategic agendas. In this respect, the need to value this European joint approach and recognise its benefits is crucial, so that local engagement into the Route communication is achieved.

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

The materials and communication tools of EHTTA comply with requirements displaying the Route logos. The three logos of the Association, the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns and the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme are placed on every single piece of print produced by the Association, from leaflets and brochures to headed paper, the newsletter, press releases, and every page of the website. Nearly every social media post by EHTTA includes #culturalroutes. The EHTTA's Guidebook & Toolkit, already quoted in 3.3.2, contain information on the internal regulation for the use of the Route's logo that is to be respected by the members.

In what regards signposting, the Cultural Routes logo is featured in plaques given to every EHTTA member, placed in their town halls, thermal buildings or in tourist information centres, as again has been seen on the members visited. The logo is clearly visible on each of these plaques. In addition, members have been sent stickers for the doors of their tourist information centres. Moreover, regarding the display of the Route logos on their communication material, for example, the visited member Eurocity Chaves-Verin offers a profusion of brochures, leaflets and videos where EHTTA's and the Route logos were always present. This objective shall continue to be nurtured among the membership so that Members not only give the due visibility to the Route but also benefit from this belonging.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The overall conclusion of this evaluation report reiterates that the European Cultural Route of Historic Thermal Towns complies with this Council of Europe Programme eligibility criteria and guidelines and it is recommended for certification. This final chapter contains a set of recommendations that result from the various conclusions that have already been integrated throughout the analysis.

- 1) Invest in fundraising at private and public level – most notably taking advantage of Europe funding opportunities for cultural cooperation and exchanges, notably that of youngsters, as well as research, development and innovation - to ensure the full exploration of the Route's theme and field of action potential and the budget sustainability.
- 2) Pursue strategic partnerships in view of cooperation as well as advocacy and lobbying, notably reinforcing the achieved links to European and international networks, platforms and organisations.
- 3) Invest on closer relationship with national authorities, including tourism boards, to promote and create opportunities for the Historic Thermal Towns Route alongside other Cultural Routes.
- 4) Continue to pursue the implementation of the "Thermal Atlas" project, via ensuring the necessary funding, in order to map thermal heritage and to promote its dissemination and allowing to gain further awareness of potential new members and geographical areas of growth for the network.
- 5) Reconsider the Scientific Committee composition, for the sake of diversity of profiles and geographical origins, while discuss a new strategic and activities agenda with reinforced interaction with the membership and exploration of member's own resources and expertise. Make sure the development of data collection, notably on the impacts of the Route, are considered, so to better monitor and access arguments for lobbying.
- 6) Reconsider the current membership criteria pertinence and adequacy in view of current cultural tangible and intangible heritage as well as cultural tourism trends so to reformulate and/or reconfirm the membership selection procedure.
- 7) Promote the discussion about the relationship between the Great Spas of Europe and the Route, to ensure coordination and mutual benefits for both within a joint strategy.
- 8) Invest further on cultural and educational activities for youngsters, as well as children, promoting the European dimension via joint and transnational internships, exchanges and voluntary activities and taking benefit of existing European funding opportunities.
- 9) Resume the "Festivals" platform or create similar tools to jointly communicate the diversity and richness of member's cultural and artistic activities, ensuring that their own events are promoted as Route while encouraging them to use the Route logo on

their communication. Explore opportunities also to develop artistic and cultural cooperation projects at the network level, promoting innovation and use of design and creativity among the membership.

- 10) Expand further the Route activities and references in all countries integrating the network, notably on central eastern Europe, giving visibility to their specific cultural heritage.
- 11) Promote cross-marketing among the network, promoting cooperation and joint products development among the Route members as well as across diverse Cultural Routes. Pursue the realisation of projects such as the “Thermal Pass”, that can ensure transnational joint promotion as well as direct engagement of the Route with local audiences.
- 12) Give visibility and promote jointly the sustainability efforts and initiatives already taking place at membership level, creating new joint products and campaigns promoting green tourism among the Route while supporting members to promote integrated approach to sustainable development, sharing common and best practices.

CRITERIA		Recommendations previous evaluation 2017-2018	Has the route addressed the recommendation since the last evaluation?		Recommendations current evaluation 2021-2022
			YES	NO	
I. Cultural route theme			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
II. Priority fields of action	Cooperation in research and development		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4)
	Enhancement of memory, history and European heritage		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans	1. It would be interesting to promote youth exchanges and internships in diverse spa towns. They can be funded by Erasmus+.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8)
	Contemporary cultural and artistic practice		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	9)

	Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Cultural development		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
III. Cultural Route Network	2. The budget is limited not allowing to carry on projects nor to have sufficient human means. Hopefully the European funding requests submitted will be successful. The examination of membership requests should be carried on by the network responsible and not keep on being a "subcontract".	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1) 2) 3) 5) 6) 7) 10)	
Communication Tools	3. The involvement of the general press and media is insufficiently developed. The European Year of Cultural Heritage should represent an opportunity to communicate the cultural dimension. Communication supports should be augmented. The website and documents should be available besides English, also in French, as it is in the EICR. 4. Thermal towns should undertake reciprocal promotion. A display or shelf could be	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	11) 12)	

	dedicated to the network in every tourist office, with its future bilingual brochure and flyers from other towns. It could also appear on the interactive terminals. It could be centred on the "Thermal Pass" project.			
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All documents required for the evaluation had been duly submitted by the Cultural Route.

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

Field visit, 24-26 November 2021, accompanied by EHTTA's Executive Director, Simone Zagrodnik

Wednesday, 24th November

12.00 Meeting and working lunch with EHTTA's Executive Director, Simone Zagrodnik, in the vicinity of Porto's Airport

13.30 Drive to Termas de São Pedro do Sul

14.30 Check-in at INATEL Palace S. Pedro do Sul

15.30 Meeting with Vice Mayor of São Pedro do Sul, Pedro Mouro, and Termalistur / Termas de S. Pedro do Sul, Victor Leal (President) and Fátima Saraiva (Public Relations)

17.00 Digital lecture on the history of the thermal town of São Pedro do Sul and talk with Eduardo Nuno Oliveira, Roman bath museological site

17.30 Visit and thermal experience at "Rainha D. Amélia Spa"

20.00 Dinner at Hotel Vouga with Hotel owner and Termalistur team: Victor Leal, President; and Fátima Saraiva, Public Relations

Thursday, 25th November

9.00 Drive to the city of São Pedro do Sul and walking guided visit by Tourism Officer Fátima Ferreirinha Carvalho of the City Hall (former Franciscan Monastery of São José)), Chapel of São Sebastião, Rua Direita, Theatre Jaime Gralheiro, Reriz Palace. Republic Square and Main Church and Nogueiras City Park . Drive back to Termas São Pedro do Sul

11.00 Visit to the renovated Roman Bath museological site

11.30 Tea and meeting with David Homem, entrepreneur "Emotions & Balance"/Pension David

12.00 Walking tour through the thermal site, stop at tourist information, water source, drinking facilities, Rainha D. Amélia museological room

12.30 Visit to modern facilities Balneário Dom Afonso Henriques (treatment facilities)

13.00 Lunch at Hotel Rural Villa do Banho with Termalistur team: Victor Leal, President; and Fátima Saraiva, Public Relations

14.30 Drive to Vidago

16.00 Meet-up Nerea Perez from EuroCity Chaves-Verín and visit to Hotel Vidago Palace Spa and thermal buildings / Angelo Botelho, plus experience of tasting the water and stamp the Ruta del Agua passport

16.45 Reception at the tourist information centre Vidago, Sandrine Alves

17.00h Visit to Pedagogic Balneary of Research & Development of Thermal Practices by Joaquim Esteves from Chaves Termas

18.30 Drive to Chaves and check-in at Forte de São Francisco Hotel

20.30 Dinner at Carvalho Restaurant with President of the EHTTA Scientific Committee, Mario Crecente and EuroCity representatives Pablo Rivera Bua and Nerea Perez

Friday, 26th November

9.00h Visit to Chaves Termas & SPA, guided by Fátima Pinto (Director) Walking tour to treatment and spa facilities, see and experience the thermal heritage, taste the waters

11.30 Drive to Portuguese-Spanish border and visit Eurocity Headquarters, located in the former's Spanish customs house. Presentation of the work of Eurocity and "La Ruta Termal y del Agua", talk with Director, Pablo Rivera Bua and Nerea Perez

13.00 (PT time) Drive to the city of Verin and lunch at Restaurant Zapatillas with Eurocity team

14.30 (PT time) Meeting with Deputy Mayor of Verín, Diego Lourenzo Moura and visit to the Museum Claustro Mercedarios guided by Luis Congil

15.15 (PT time) Drive and visit to Caldelañas bath facilities ruins (Verín), with Luis Congil

17. 00 (PT time) Drive and visit to Cabreiroá site and park (Verín)
18.00h (PT time) END of programme and return drive to Porto

Digital interviews/discussions and email exchanges

30th November, EHTTA's Communications and Support manager, Catherine Lloyd

1st December, Member Daruvar/Croatia, Tourist board Daruvar-Papuk Director, Ivana Plažanin

2nd December, EHTTA's Board, President Manuel Baltar, Vice-President Eric Brut and Vice-President Lorenzo Lucchini

2nd December, Member La Route des Villes d'Eaux du Massif Centrale/France, General-Director, Eric Brut and European Cooperation Responsible and EHTTA Financial Manager, Marion Vansingle

2nd December, Member Acqui Terme/Italy, Assessor to Tourism, Raffaella Caria

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 Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage	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?	0	1

		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?	0	1
		31	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to give rise to co-operation activities which involve educational institutions at various levels?	1	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?	1	0
		33	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage artistic projects that establish links between cultural heritage and contemporary culture?	1	0
		34	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage innovative cultural and contemporary art practices* connecting them with the history of skills development?	1	0
		35	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage collaboration between culture amateurs and professionals via relevant activities and networks creation?**	1	0
		36	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage debate and exchange - in a multidisciplinary and intercultural perspective - between various cultural and artistic expressions in different countries of Europe?	1	0
		37	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage activities and artistic projects which explore the links between heritage and contemporary culture?	1	0
		38	Do the Route's cultural activities highlight the most innovative and creative practices?	1	0
		39	Do the Route's cultural activities link these innovative and creative practices with the history of skills development?***	1	0
		3.2.5	40	Do the Route's activities (relevant to sustainable cultural tourism development) assist in local, regional, national and/ or European identity formation?	1

		41	Do the Route's activities (relevant to sustainable cultural tourism development) actively involve 3 major means to raise awareness of their cultural projects: print, broadcast and social media?	1	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?	0	1
		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?	0	1
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
	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?	1	0
	For certified	77	Is the title of "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" present on all communication materials (including press releases, webpages, publications, etc.)?	1
78		Is the certification logo present on all communication materials?	1	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				75	6	

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

List of acronyms

AISBL- Association International Sans But Lucratif
AT - Austria
AZ – Azerbaijan
BE - Belgium
COE – Council of Europe
CZ – Czech Republic
DE - Germany
EE - Estonia
EICR - European Institute of Cultural Routes
EHTTA - European Historic Thermal Towns Association
ES - Spain
EU – European Union
FR - France
GA – General Assembly
GE – Georgia
GR – Greece
HR - Croatia
HU - Hungary
IT – Italy
LU - Luxembourg
PT – Portugal
PL – Poland
TK - Turkey
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UK – United Kingdom
USA – United States of America

List of figures

Figure n.1 – Geographical distribution of EHTTA members (page 17)