



MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY NETWORK FOR CULTURAL ROUTES STUDIES

Wednesday 22 October 2025, 10:30-12:30

Meeting on the occasion of the 14th Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

REPORT

1. **Opening of the meeting and introduction of participants** by Prof. Carla MARTINS, Chair of the University Network for Cultural Routes Studies; President, Compostela Group of Universities

The Chair opened the meeting, introduced participants, and presented the agenda.

2. **Objectives of the meeting and adoption of the agenda**

As no amendments were proposed, the agenda was adopted.

3. **Recent developments in the Cultural Routes programme**

Rui GOMES, Director of the European Institute of Cultural Routes and Executive Secretary of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, made a presentation to update participants on activities undertaken in the framework of the Cultural Routes programme since the last meeting of the network.

Mr. GOMES outlined some key achievements and set out his priorities for the programme, particularly improving communication and increasing visibility, and how these tie into the University Network.

4. **Updates on the University Network for Cultural Routes Studies**

- a. **Introduction of the network membership and presentation of new members**

Henry VINE (secretariat of Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, Council of Europe) presented recent developments in the Cultural Routes programme and updated on the development of the University Network in 2025 (data correct as of 22 October 2025):

- The network has 34 member universities from 17 countries.
- The University Network has, thus far in 2025, gained one new member: University of Shkodra. The University was represented at the meeting by Dr. Valbona KARAKACI.
- 15 member universities registered for the Forum and to attend the University Network meeting.

- Several interested universities attended the meeting as observers, with a view to applying for membership in due course.
- 9 applications for membership of the University Network are currently being processed by the European Institute of Cultural Routes.

b. Overview of and outcomes from the 1st International Conference on Universities and Cultural Routes

The Chair presented the 1st International Conference on Universities and Cultural Routes, which took place in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, in November 2024. The main conclusions included:

- Cultural Routes as a source of good practices, with the potential to spur academic and non-academic outputs: access to European funding, research/publications/theses, academic modules on Cultural Routes etc..
- A wide range of disciplines can contribute to these outputs: history, art, architecture, economics, cultural studies etc.; interactions between universities or academic networks and Cultural Routes can be mutually stimulating and foster mutual support.

c. Presentation and exchange of views of the 2nd International Conference on Universities and Cultural Routes

Prof. Silvia DE ASCANIIS presented the 2nd International Conference on Universities and Cultural Routes. The Chair welcomed her proposals and invited members to contribute their views on the organisation and content of the conference.

Members discussed plans for the attendance at and contributions to the conference.

The hosts plan to launch a call for contributions for the conference; original publications could be considered for publication in an accompanying book.

The hosts will form small working groups to guide preparations for the conference.

5. Development of the network

a. Areas of interest

Prof. Mike ROBINSON (Nottingham Trent University) mentioned shortcomings of communication with Scientific Committees of Routes, an integral part of the Cultural Route system; suggested exploring strategies for the University Network to communicate with Scientific Committees, via Routes; members agreed.

Members engaged in a discussion on how to better coordinate the University Network and to make information more accessible to members; a consensus was reached on the need to formalise the network (via online means) to make it more useful to members.

Several members suggested an online platform for the University Network, with each member to have an individual profile; this would make it easier for researchers to contact members, other academics etc.; members welcomed proposals of this sort as a means of formalising the University Network and making it more useful to members working on Cultural Routes and adjacent fields.

The Chair briefly presented a similar platform used by the Compostela Group of Universities, to be used as a possible guide to an equivalent platform for the University Network; members welcomed the suggestion.

The Cultural Routes Secretariat will liaise with the Chair and Vice-Chair over a possible online 'tool' for the University Network; if a proposal emerges, it will be pitched to the Network.

b. Working groups: membership and next steps

The Chair discussed the proposal for working groups, previously floated at a University Meeting and endorsed by members, but not taken forward thereafter; participants indicated interest in reviving the concept. The Chair opened an informal discussion on the possible titles, remits and compositions of working groups.

On the proposed group dedicated to sustainability, Prof. Dimitri IOANNIDES (Mid Sweden University) recommended clarity on definition, suggesting an operational focus to ensure it remains focused; the Chair suggested 'Responsible management and planning' as an alternative; members welcomed the proposal.

Prof. ROBINSON suggested groups derive from themes related to the Routes themselves: sustainable development, youth engagement etc.; groups to be tied to Cultural Routes' priority fields of action.

Prof. DE ASCANIIS emphasised the importance of communication, in light of Mr. GOMES's intervention; mentioned the Cultural Routes programme's lack of visibility compared to UNESCO and suggested a working group on communication to work on strategies to correct this; Dr KARAKACI echoed this sentiment.

Representatives of Cappadocia University (observer to the University Network) suggested gastronomy as a focus for a working group; members agreed to incorporate this into the groups as a sub-focus.

The Chair recommended parties continue discussions outside of official meetings to ensure focus and momentum maintained; likewise, the Chair suggested finding a leader for each working group.

Members agreed to proceed with the following groups: (i) Responsible management and planning; (ii) Heritage, (iii) Communication.

6. Conclusions and next steps

Members discussed the practicalities of future University Network meetings. The Chair counselled against hybrid meetings, arguing the format undermines the coherence of meetings and events.

The Chair suggested that the 2nd International Conference take place hybrid format, but with presenters required to attend in person; in other words, online attendance can be arranged via a livestream, but not online participation. Members strongly agreed with the suggestion.

The meeting was closed.

Annex: **List of participants**

University	FIRST NAME
Antalya Bilim University	DINÇ SARAÇ
Balıkesir University	ÖZLEM KÖROĞLU
Balıkesir University	BESTE DEMİR
Budapest Metropolitan University	LIA BASSA
Cappadocia University (observer)	MEHMET BATAR
Cappadocia University (observer)	HALİL BURAK SAKAL
Cappadocia University (observer)	BILGEHAN GÜLCAN
Compostela Group of Universities (Vice-Chair)	MARÍA TERESA CARBALLEIRA RIVERA
Compostela Group of Universities (Chair)	CARLA MARTINS
Ege University	SEVGÜL ÇILINGİR CESUR
Ege University	AHMET SUGLUN
Ege University	TULGA CAN OKAN
Ege University	ARDA EYLUL KARABACAK SUGLUN
IULM University, Milan (observer)	FABIO MOROTTI
Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria	ROBERTA ALBEROTANZA
Mid Sweden University	IOANNIDES
Nevşehir hacı bektaş Veli University	LOKMAN DINÇ
Nottingham Trent University	MIKE ROBINSON
Polytechnic University of Turin	MELDA KAPLAN
Università della Svizzera italiana	SILVIA DE ASCANIIS
University of Shkodra	VALBONA KARAKACI
Secretariat	
Executive Secretary of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes; Director of the European Institute of Cultural Routes	RUI GOMES
Executive Assistant, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, Council of Europe	HENRY VINE
Intern, European Institute of Cultural Routes	ANJA ZIVANOVIC