

Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Evaluation Cycle 2018-2019

Expert report

THE ROMAN EMPERORS AND DANUBE WINE ROUTE

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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

Established in 2012, the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine route (hereinafter “the Route”) has been certified by the Council of Europe as a European Cultural Route in 2015.

Currently, the Route spreads through five countries (originally, they were four) in the Middle and Lower Danube Region – Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania – encompassing 21 archaeological sites and 12 wine regions (one of them – Ilok (CR) – is an EDEN – “European Destinations of Excellence” destinations).

The Route is led by the Danube Competence Centre (DCC), an institution established within the National Tourist Organization of Serbia and hosted into its headquarter.

Its cultural offer consists of the archaeological sites with their individual histories that are monuments to the leadership of the Roman emperors in the introduction of the Roman culture along the northern frontier of the Empire. The wine tradition is part of this cultural heritage by representing an important sub-theme of this Route’s cultural offer.

The regions crossed by the Route had been in the past interested by different conflicts, the latest in the 90’s.

People living in these territories (most of them were part of the former Yugoslavia) speaks almost all the same language and share mostly the same traditions as a proof of their common historical and cultural roots, however they are currently divided by different borders and it still exists some animosity amongst them.

The rediscovery of their common historical and cultural roots, most of them related with the Roman Empire heritage, plays a very important role in creating peaceful and collaborative relations amongst these regions and their inhabitants.

In this view, the Route has a significant role in trying to bring together different segments of this common historical and cultural heritage with the challenging aims of promoting a common interpretation of it all long its adhering sites and destinations with the final purpose of making the Danube region an international successful tourist destination.

The present regular evaluation (the first one since the Route’s certification in 2015) has shown the Route has enlarged its network by including Hungary and that it is strongly working toward the strengthening of the organization of its cultural and touristic offer at regional scale by supporting the establishment of effective tourist hubs acting as gateways for visitors.

Some minor shortcomings arise from the assessment of the activities of the Route within the fields of “Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans” and of “Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development” which should be strengthened in the future as soon as the tourist organization of the Route’s hubs will be more consolidated. Furthermore, some improvements are required in respect to the visual representation of the Route amongst its members. These shortcomings led to some recommendations and prescriptions whose details are available in the evaluation report.

Taking all these minor shortcomings into account, the Route turns out to properly reply to most of the CoE’s certification criteria, by allowing it to keep its certification as European Cultural Route.

Summary of the conclusions table

According to Annex 2 – Check list,

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

Therefore, the certification Cultural Route of the Council of Europe

	Yes	No
Should be renewed	X	

2. Introduction

The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine route (hereinafter “the Route”) spreads through five countries (originally, they were four) in the Middle and Lower Danube Region – Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania – encompassing 21 archaeological sites and 12 wine regions (one of them – Ilok (CR) – is an EDEN destinations).

Its cultural offer consists of the archaeological sites with their individual histories that are monuments to the leadership of the Roman emperors in the introduction of the Roman culture along the northern frontier of the Empire. The wine tradition is part of this cultural heritage by representing a specific sub-theme of this Route’s cultural offer.

Archaeological sites, museums, restaurants and wineries, small towns and nature parks are the most significant components of the tourist offer of the Route.

The Route has been established and managed so far as an autonomous tourist product within the tourist product club managed by the Danube Competence Centre (DCC) whose headquarter is hosted within the premises of Serbian National Tourism organization in Belgrade.

Established in 2012, the Route has been certified by the Council of Europe as a European Cultural Route in 2015. At that time, its first evaluation reported the following main general issues:

- The opportunity of considering the “wine part” of its underpinning cultural theme as a sub-theme of the Roman Emperors main theme;
- The lack of a coordinative role of the Route addressing the different promotional actions and initiatives carried out autonomously by its adhering members;
- The organizational model of the Route focused on the leading role of the Danube Competence Centre (DCC). In this respect, the Route management is carried out by an autonomous product club of the DCC;
- A limited involvement of academic research institutions (i.e. universities) in the setting out of the general theme and subtheme of the Route and of its corresponding development strategy;
- Delays in the establishment of the Route’s Scientific committee and its limited operational involvement in the management of the Route operation.

The present document reports on the relevant findings arising from the first three-years period (2015-2018) regular evaluation on the Route management.

3. Main Body Evaluation

The sections below include the main findings of the present regular evaluation, compared with the ones of the prior evaluation carried out in 2015 at the time of the certification of the Route. The boxes coloured in red means that the remarks of the prior evaluation are still pending, green ones that the remarks have been overcome in the meantime.

3.1 Cultural Route theme

The cultural theme underpinning this Route is related to the historical role played by the Danube geographical Corridor during the Roman Empire.

The latter had a strategic importance in connecting the western and eastern parts of the Roman Empire by protecting its territorial integrity against destructive invasions of barbarians and Turks. This led to the construction of facilities to house the soldiers and the emperors who commanded them, a network of roads, forts, towns, villas and imperial palaces was created which still exist as tourist destinations.

By considering the Danube river is the *trait d'union* of this Route, by serving as a water corridor for trade and military shipments, one might expect the latter to have a central role in the ways of visiting these regions (mostly by boat); despite what above, the implementation of tourist products concerning boat cruises still is facing several administrative and environmental concerns that do not allow to implement them in the short time.

Besides the historical theme, which surely represents a common historical and cultural value for different EU countries, the cultural offer of the Route includes another significant sub-theme which is related to the Danube wines and vineyards which have been originally introduced in these regions during the Roman Empire.

The findings of the evaluation carried out in 2015 reported on the opportunity of considering the wine and vineyard heritage of these areas as a sub-theme of the Route and not a different Route. In this respect, the present evaluation shows that these cultural components (the historical and the wine ones) are both adequately balanced into the Route's cultural offer, in a way that both would have been weakened from the lack of the other.

Furthermore, the previous evaluation reported some shortcomings in terms of the actual involvement of academics in the setting out of general cultural theme of the Route and in its development strategy.

On this point, the present evaluation has showed significant improvements in respect to the involvement of academics and research institution into the Scientific Committee (SC) of this Route.

The Route management should pay a stronger commitment to make more evident the contribution of the SC members towards the development of the Route's strategy. In this respect, the field visit allowed to better understand the way the SC operates and its actual contribution into the operational work of the Route which can be found in the prior evaluation of the requests of new potential members, the prior assessment of the three-years period activity plan and in the systematic analysis of activities and initiatives to be included in to the action plan which is published annually by the DCC by showing the different initiative foreseen at local scale in the adhering regions/sites.

It is advisable that formal evidences of these SC meetings (i.e. minutes of the meetings) are collected for the CoE's evaluation purposes (**Recommendation 1**).

Relevant outcomes of the 2015 evaluation	2018 regular evaluation follow-up
<p>A recommendation to the Route is to emphasize one theme (The Roman Emperors Route) as the main theme, and to use this as the main concept and present this separately. The wine theme to be seen as one first subtheme but with the focus to develop other subthemes as well. There is mention of the development of a number of both cultural and outdoor adventure products in the application that has the potential to be linked in a good way to the general theme. All such possibilities should be explored and presented to show fully how the general theme can be built upon</p>	<p>The present evaluation shows that these cultural components (the historical and the wine ones) are both adequately balanced into the Route’s cultural offer, in a way that both would have been weakened from the lack of the other.</p>
<p>The general theme and subtheme do not appear to have a very strong academic research base, nor is there a strong list of academic partners involved. Therefore, it cannot be seen from the application material that the theme for the cultural route has been researched by a multidisciplinary team of experts for the purpose of identifying a common understanding of the chosen thematic of the route</p>	<p>This point has been positively checked during the present evaluation.</p> <p>The SC contribution, particularly by means of its most significant representatives (Prof. Goran Petkovic for tourist and business matters and Prof. Mike Weber for the historical and cultural matters), is evident in most of the key operational activities of the Route.</p> <p>The SC operational involvement has been carried out so far in a very informal way among the DCC organization. Provided that its actual contribution can be identified in several key operational tasks of the Route implementation.</p> <p>Besides what above, it is recommended that formal evidences of the most significant tasks carried out by the SC’s members were collected for the evaluation purposes (<i>Recommendation 1</i>).</p>

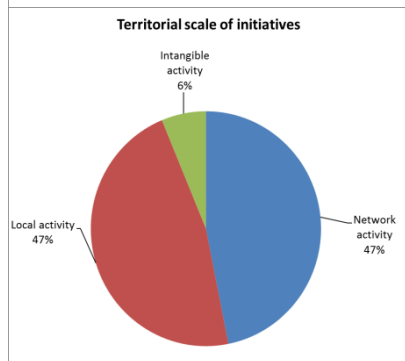
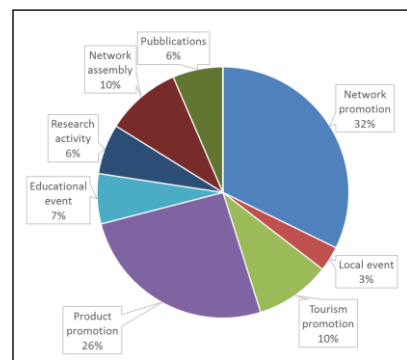
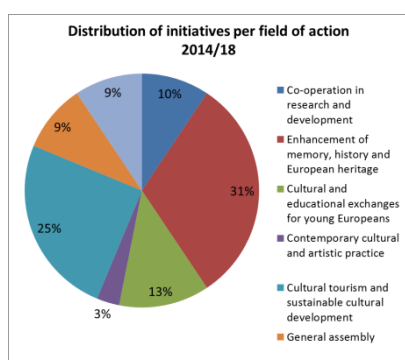
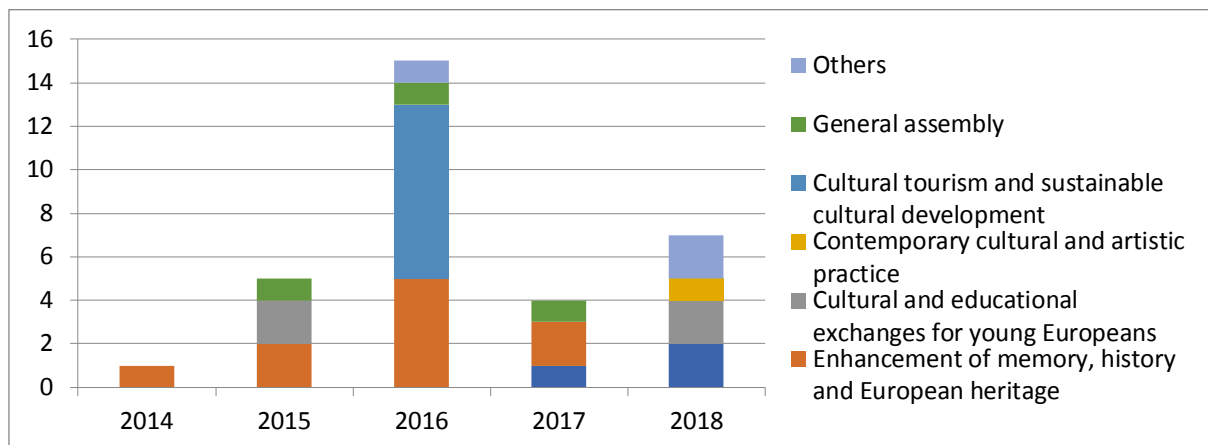
3.2 Fields of Action

The performance of the Route during the last three-years period has shown a peak of initiatives in 2016 which have been carried out directly by the DCC or indirectly by means of its adhering members.

The graph below shows their distribution per field of action (the evaluation takes count only of the activities listed into the evaluation dossier provided by the EICR), starting from 2014. By looking at it, activities made into the field of “Enhancement of memory, history and European heritage” turn out to be the majority (31% of the total).

At the contrary, the initiatives in the fields of “Contemporary cultural and artistic practice” and of “Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans” turned out quite limited in the period 2014/18.

Figure 1 – Route’s activities distribution per year (2014/2018)

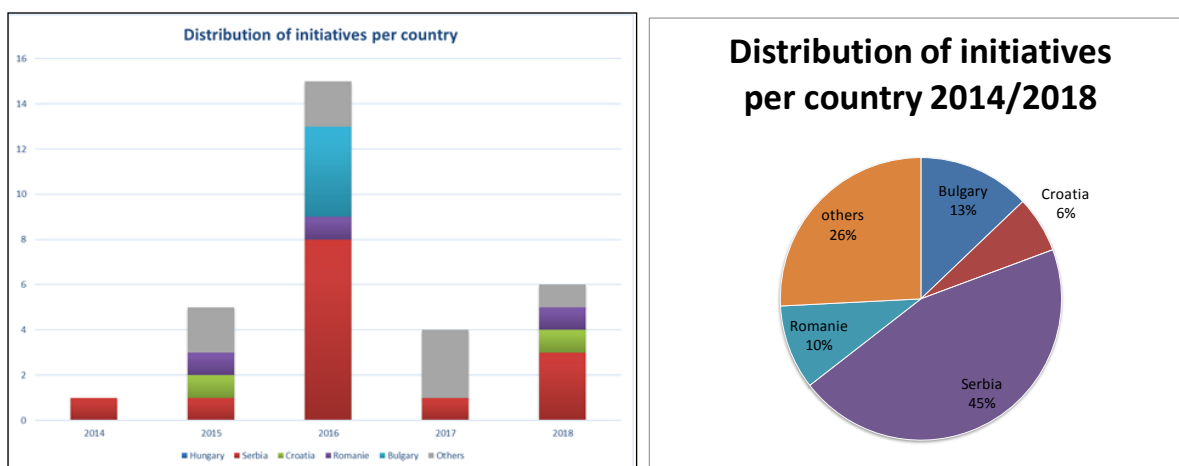


Activities carried out so far had been equally carried out directly by the DCC or indirectly by local partners of the Route. A relevant quota of said initiatives consists of local activities not even bridging other countries involved into the Route.

The overall activities carried out so far since 2014 have been encompassing all the involved countries, with a peak of 45% in Serbia as shown in the graphs below.

No activities have been carried out so far in Hungary which sole representing member (Zsolnay Cultural Quarter) joined the Route only in 2018.

Figure 2 – Distribution of the Route’s activities per country (2014/2018)



A comprehensive activity plan for the period 2018-2020 foresees a very rich list of initiatives and activities to be carried out in the coming years. Most of them are aimed at establishing tourism hubs along the Route path with the purpose of identifying effective tourist gateways for visitors. On the same point, the action plan encompasses activities aimed at the introduction of common tourist standards amongst the adhering destinations with the aim of allowing the same interpretation perspective of their cultural offer related to the Route’s cultural theme. Said activities (which have been started in 2018) proof that at the time of the present evaluation, the Route actually involves mostly local tourist attractions (both historical, cultural and natural ones) which cannot be considered yet by themselves as autonomous tourist destinations/hubs (by using the same words of the actions plan: “A *tourism hub is an entity that has enough resources to provide a rich, diverse and geographically rounded tourist offer to attract and retain tourists*”).

Despite what above, which testify the need of establishing a more effective tourist organization amongst the adhering destinations, the performance of the Route turns out to be fully compliant with the CoE’s certification criteria of Resolution CM/Res(2013)67:

“the theme must be representative of European values and common to at least three countries of Europe” (criterion nr. 2 for themes)

“involve several Council of Europe member States through all or part of their project(s), without excluding activities of a bilateral nature” (network criteria)

3.2.1 Co-operation in research and development

In this field of action, the projects must:

- *play a unifying role around major European themes, enabling dispersed knowledge to be brought together;*
- *show how these themes are representative of European values shared by several European cultures;*
- *illustrate the development of these values and the variety of forms they may take in Europe;*
- *lend themselves to research and interdisciplinary analysis on both a theoretical and a practical level*

During the past three-years period, the Route has carried out different activities and initiatives within the present operational domain. Most of them consisted in the organization of events participated by academics coming from the adhering universities and research institutions aimed at illustrating specific aspects of the historical heritage of the Route’s regions. In this respect, the Route turned out to be quite effective in promoting its cultural

theme by unifying into the same development strategy different knowledge and tradition coming from 5 countries.

The previous evaluation reported that despite the Route could in time become a platform for co-operation in research and development, its network had to be improved by involving a better network of academics and scientists from different institutions with the aim of promoting a wider interpretation of the knowledge connected to the Roman Emperors in this area. In this respect, it was recommended of getting academic partners in closer connection with the route-organization and to enlarge the composition of the scientific committee by including universities and research institution in the common effort of better analysing the historical and cultural heritage of these regions.

Currently, the Route has partially overcome these issues by strengthening the participation of universities and research institutions into its development strategy. On this point, the Route has implemented a dedicate section of its web-site including relevant studies and research findings carried out by the Route members or third parties on the cultural theme of Roman Emperors of the Danube region.

Relevant outcomes of the 2015 evaluation	2018 regular evaluation follow-up
<p>A recommendation for the route organisation could be to look at the possibilities of getting academic partners in closer connection with the route organisation, perhaps as full members of the network. The scientific committee should also consider including a broader range of members and focusing on how existing knowledge should be utilised, identify what knowledge is missing and explore possibilities to initiate new research.</p> <p>The general theme especially has the potential to focus on research and educational activities. The route could in time become a platform for co-operation in research and development but then the network of the route must take an active role in this to identify the needs for research and the possible educational elements. There is a story to be told, with many layers and many points of interest. The route network must build a better network of academics and scientists from different institutions in their pursuit of developing the interpretation of the knowledge connected to the Roman Emperors.</p>	<p>The Route has partially overcome the above-mentioned issues by enlarging the participation of universities and research institutions into its development strategy. On this point, it has implemented a dedicate section of its web-site including relevant studies and research findings carried out by the Route members or third parties on the cultural theme of Roman Emperors of the Danube region.</p> <p>Besides what above, the Route should strengthen its commitment toward a more intense involvement of academics and universities in the setting out of its development strategy and action plan (see <i>Recommendation 1</i>)</p>

3.2.2 *Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage*

In this field of action, the projects must:

- *enhance physical and intangible heritages, explain their historical significance and highlight their similarities in the different regions of Europe;*
- *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;*
- *identify and enhance European heritage sites and areas other than the monuments and sites generally exploited by tourism, in particular in rural areas, but also in industrial areas in the process of economic restructuring;*
- *take account of the physical and intangible heritage of ethnic or social minorities in Europe;*

- *contribute through appropriate training, to raising awareness among decision makers, practitioners and the general public of the complex concept of heritage, the necessity to protect, interpret and communicate it as a means for sustainable development, and the challenges and opportunities it represents for the future of Europe.*

This is the operational field in which the Route has carried out most part of its overall activities during the 2016/18 period (31% of the total).

The activities carried out within this domain encompass the participation to international tourist fairs/exhibitions (i.e. ITB of Berlin or the City fair of London) or the organization of bloggers and fam trips with the aim of promoting the knowledge of the cultural and tourist offer of the Danube corridor on foreign potential visitors.

A significant effort has been paid toward the enhancement of the physical and intangible heritage spread out the different archaeological and cultural sites of the Route, by the installation of story-telling panels and interactive tools supporting visitors with the aim of introducing a common interpretation of the cultural heritage of each of the involved sites.

No evidences of the way the Route takes account of the intangible heritage of ethnic or social minorities in Europe.

As already mentioned in previous evaluation, the Route does only indirectly take count of and promote the charters, conventions like UNESCO and ICOMOS, but no specific incompliances were noted during the evaluation and on the field-visit. In this respect, the Route – as a possible contribution of the Scientific committee to the setting out of the activity plan – should better clarify how its development strategy takes count of the relevant charters and conventions (**Recommendation 2**).

3.2.3 Cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans

In this field of action, the projects must:

- *include the organization of activities with groups of young people in order to promote in-depth exchanges aimed at developing the concept of European citizenship, enriched by its diversity;*
- *place the emphasis on personal and real experiences through the use of places and contacts;*
- *encourage decompartmentalization by organizing exchanges of young people from different social backgrounds and regions of Europe;*
- *constitute pilot schemes with a limited number of participating countries and be provided with sufficient resources for meaningful assessment in order to generate prototypes that can serve as reference models;*
- *give rise to co-operation activities which involve educational institutions at various levels.*

Recently, the regions interested by the Route have been stroke by conflicts whose consequences have dramatically hit the relations among different national and regional communities. In this respect, The Route's cultural theme represents an exceptional platform for reconnecting said communities by rediscovering the common historical and cultural roots and establishing peaceful relation amongst them.

On this point, the performance of the Route during the last three years turns out to be quite limited by including only one initiative carried out in the present operational field in 2018 (Students visit at the Iron Gate).

The Route should strengthen its commitment towards the organization of cultural exchanges amongst educational institutions at all levels and young communities with the aim of creating "cultural bridges" amongst them. The Route is required to foresee into the activity plan for the coming years specific actions/initiatives aimed at promoting co-operation amongst

educational institutions with the purpose of sensitizing young communities on the common historical and cultural heritage related to the Roman empire (**Recommendation 3**).

Relevant outcomes of the 2015 evaluation	2018 regular evaluation follow-up
<p>Due to the limited activities regarding youth and cultural exchange, this field of action is assessed as a negative point at this stage.</p> <p>☐ There is a potential to develop this but a separate programme for educational and youth exchange activities must be made mapping the network members existing, analysing potential activities and making a plan for joint activities initiated by the network.</p>	<p>The performance of the Route during the last three-years period turns out to be quite limited by including only one initiative carried out in the present operational field in 2018 (Students visit at the Iron Gate).</p> <p>The Route is required to foresee into the activity plan for the coming years specific actions/initiative aimed at promoting co-operation amongst educational institutions with the purpose of sensitizing young communities on the common historical and cultural heritage related to the Roman empire (Recommendation 3).</p>

3.2.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practice

In this field of action, the projects must:

- *give rise to debate and exchange, in a multidisciplinary and intercultural perspective, between the various cultural and artistic expressions and sensibilities of the different countries of Europe;*
- *encourage activities and artistic projects which explore the links between heritage and contemporary culture;*
- *highlight, in contemporary cultural and artistic practice, the most innovative practices in terms of creativity, and link them with the history of skills development, whether they belong to the field of the visual arts, the performing arts, creative crafts,*
- *architecture, music, literature or any other form of cultural expression;*
- *give rise to networks and activities which break down the barriers between professionals and non-professionals, particularly as regards instruction for young Europeans in the relevant fields.*

To date, the performance of the Route in this specific field of action turns out to be quite limited. The list of activities carried out in the last three-years period shows only one initiative (Meet Emperor Galerius) consisting in the development of a game mobile application based on the “treasure hunt model”, where visitors by following the “clues” discover parts of the complex built by the Roman emperor Galerius in Felix Romuliana (Zajecar).

The activity plan for the period 2018-2020 includes new interactive tools supporting the visit of the cultural offer of some archaeological sites.

Nevertheless, the Route’s performance has not included so far, any activity or initiative aimed at strengthening links between its underpinning cultural theme and its potential exploitation in the domains of arts (i.e. architecture, contemporary and artistic practices, music, literature, dance, theatre). These shortcomings can be at the basis for implementation of initiatives aimed at involving young artists and local cultural institutions in a wider exploitation of the cultural heritage underpinning the Route development strategy.

In this respect, the Route should implement – with the contribution of each adhering partner – a cultural program including events and initiatives (best if they are hosted within the historical and cultural sites adhering the Route) in the fields of artistic expressions aimed at enhancing and evocate the historical and cultural heritage of the Roman Empire. This program can be able by itself to act as a cultural attraction by boosting the interest of potential visitors to spend their holidays in these regions (**Recommendation 4**).

The organization of the “Blue week – Danube festival” can be an exceptional opportunity to implement this kind of integration amongst contemporary arts and culture.

Relevant outcomes of the 2015 evaluation	2018 regular evaluation follow-up
<p>This field of action is therefore assessed as a partly positive point but not necessarily due to the Route network’s own initiatives.</p> <p>The potential is nevertheless definitely there, and it is recommended that the route framework explore and develop more thematic subthemes (in addition to the wine theme) that can be developed in a structured way by the Route organisation.</p> <p>It is furthermore recommended that the members are included in this discussion, and that ideas for new initiatives are encouraged and nurtured within the Route framework.</p>	<p>the Route’s performance has not included so far, any activity or initiative aimed at strengthening links between its underpinning cultural theme and its potential exploitation in the domains of arts (i.e. architecture, contemporary and artistic practices, music, literature, dance, theatre). These shortcomings can be the basis for future implementation of initiatives aimed at involving young artists and local cultural institutions in a wider exploitation of the cultural heritage underpinning the Route development strategy.</p> <p>The Route should implement a cultural program including events and initiatives in the fields of artistic expressions aimed at enhancing and evocate the historical and cultural heritage of the Roman Empire. This program can be able by itself to act as a cultural attraction by boosting the interest of potential visitors to spend their holidays or short breaks in these regions (<i>Recommendation 4</i>).</p>

3.2.5 Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development

In this field of action, the projects must:

- *take account of local, regional, national and European identities;*
- *actively involve print and broadcast media and make full use of the potential of electronic media in order to raise awareness of the cultural objectives of the projects;*
- *promote dialogue between urban and rural cultures, between regions in the south, north, east and west of Europe, and between developed and disadvantaged regions;*
- *promote dialogue and understanding between majority and minority, native and immigrant cultures;*
- *open up possibilities for co-operation between Europe and other continents through the special affinities between certain regions;*
- *concern themselves, in the field of cultural tourism, with raising public awareness, drawing decision makers' attention to the necessity of protecting heritage as part of sustainable development of the territory and seek to diversify both supply and demand, with a view to fostering the development of quality tourism with a European dimension;*
- *seek partnerships with public and private organizations active in the field of tourism in order to develop tourist products and tools targeting all potential publics.*

The performance of the Route within the present domain is surely outstanding and it can represent a Best practice also for other certified routes. The cultural tourism focus and the sustainable tourism development is the real heart of the Route strategy. Nevertheless, the results in terms of actual tourist flows are still limited even if raising.

It must be pointed out that the Route faces significant issues related to significant shortages of infrastructures into the regions/sites interested by the cultural offer to be promoted. Some of them are positioned into very distant places and they need long time to be reached by car. The visit of these sites by boat all long the Danube river could be a potential solution, but currently there is are significant administrative concerns that makes this solution quite difficult to be implemented in the short time. In this respect, the BP of the DCC foresees very interesting boat cruises along the Danube rivers, some of them specifically built on the historical and cultural theme of the Route:

- **Danube History Cruise Tour.** Example history hubs are: Budapest, Ilok, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Smederevo, Golubac and Lepenski Vir – a route of approximately 350 km long. 2 different routes could be created.

- **On the cruise of the Emperors.** Long Danube history cruise tour - 7 days from Budapest to Lepenski Vir. Listed tourism hubs: Budapest, Ilok, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Smederevo, Golubac and Lepenski Vir.
- **Danube Fortresses.** 4 days from Smederevo to Budapest. Listed tourism hubs: Smederevo, Belgrade, Novi Sad and Budapest

It must be pointed out that the Route is part of the Club of tourist products managed by the DCC (Danube Competence Center) whose mission is the promotion of The Danube as a single tourist destination worldwide. Within this strategic framework, the DCC is committed to the setting out, management and promotion worldwide of different tourist products related to the Danube corridor. The one concerning the Route (as stated into the business plan of the DCC) is still the least commercially mature amongst the others.

Extract of the DCC's business plan dated March 2018

The approach of the route is profound, but very academic. The Route could be regarded as a flagship product. However, results are currently weak in terms of a tourism product. The included archaeological sites and locations need to be reviewed due to a lack of willingness to cooperate with the included Roman localities. Furthermore, several sites lack a basic touristic infrastructure and are difficult to include in regular tour offers by international tour operators. The tour is actually promoted via several public pages (EU, cultural routes), but only a very limited number of tour operators actively promote the route. Currently, the route is a cost factor.

The findings of the survey carried out during the present evaluation amongst the Route members (even if limited only to a very few of them which replied to the survey) confirm they do appreciate the work carried out so far by the DCC towards the promotion of cultural and sustainable tourism in the framework of the Route strategy. Results won't be long in coming.

This field of action is therefore assessed as a very positive point.

3.3 Cultural Route Network

3.3.1 Network extension since last evaluation

The Route has been established and managed as an autonomous tourist product within the tourist product club managed by the Danube Competence Centre (DCC) whose headquarter is hosted within the premises of Serbian National Tourism organization in Belgrade (Serbia).

The DCC started on April 10th, 2010. The association was registered in Belgrade. In terms of legal status, the DCC is a legal, not-for-profit entity under Serbian law.

Its mission is to enable collaboration of major stakeholders interested in the promotion of The Danube region as a single high-quality Pan-European tourism destination.

Stakeholder's structure is based on the premise that DCC consists of three groups of stakeholders, each of them contributing to the organization purposes in a different way:

1. **Strategic partners** – organizations outside of DCC network, providing visibility, positioning, credibility and access to different information, relevant events and individuals;
2. **Strategic members** – full-fledge members
3. **Network members** – members with basic access to DCC products and service and limited participation in in governing and financing of the organization

Based on regional allocation, nearly half of the members are from Serbia and approximately two thirds from Serbia and Romania combined. The middle and lower Danube region is represented by a share of about 90% of all member organizations. However, by comparison,

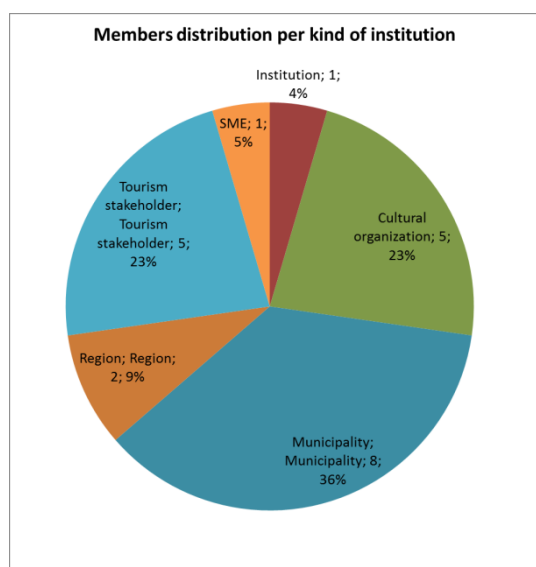
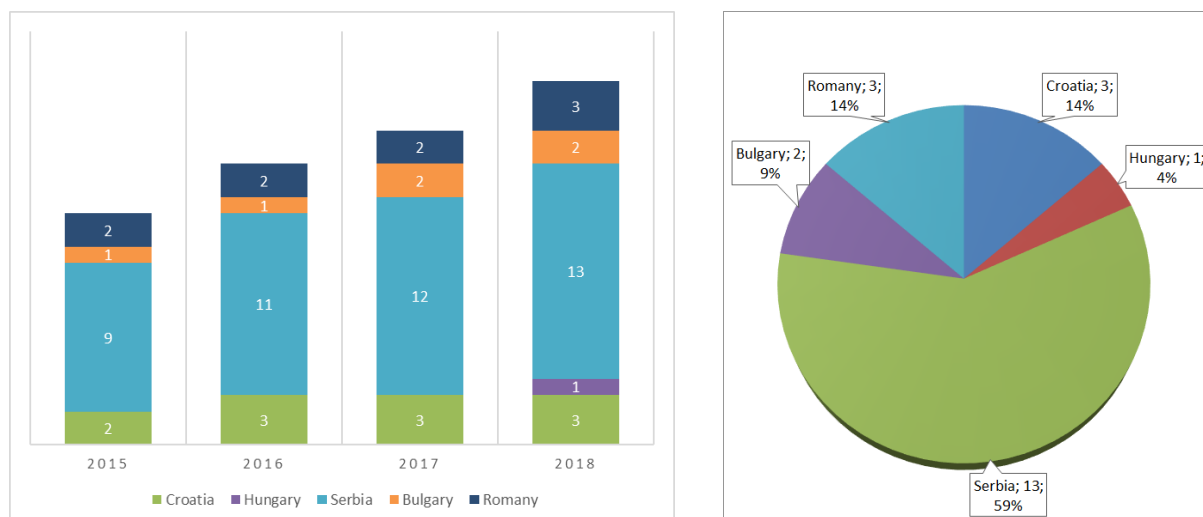
there are significantly fewer members from Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Moldova. The upper Danube region of Austria and Germany is also weakly represented (only 10% in terms of the number of members).

Route's members are, first, DCC members, but not all the DCC members are members of the Route.

The adhesion of new Route's members undergoes a prior evaluation carried out by the Scientific Committee aimed at assessing the coherence of the candidate site both in terms of its historical/cultural relevance and from a touristic point of view (in this respect the SC is required to check the actual possibility to visit the cultural sites related managed or represented by the new potential member). With the positive opinion of the SC, the General assembly of DCC approves the new member adhesion which, anyhow, comes in force only with the payment of the membership fee.

Here below the distribution of the Route's members all long the 2016/2018 period. In this respect, it must be pointed out that starting from 2018, the Route has passed from the initial 4 countries involved (3 of them are EU countries), to the present 5 ones by including Bulgaria.

Figure 3 – Route's members distribution per year of adhesion and country (2015/18 period)



The majority of the Route's members are tourism organizations of local municipalities (36%), followed by cultural organizations and tourism stakeholders (23%).

In this respect, it must be pointed out the involvement of the National tourism organization of Serbia (who host the DCC) testifies a strong and high-level institutional interest towards the Route's development strategy.

The DCC structure includes three main bodies: 1) General Secretariat; 2) General Assembly; and 3) Board of Directors.

Within the General Secretariat (the DCC Team), which is the main operational body of the organization, there are currently seven positions, which are held by six employees: General

Secretary, Business Development Manager, Director of Programs, Financial and

Administrative Manager, Project Coordinator, Marketing and Sales Manager, and Administrative Assistant.

The Board of directors leads on the achievement of the DCC vision/mission.

The General assembly represents the interests of the DCC members and their needs to be addressed within the DCC operational strategy.

It must be pointed out again that the Route has not an autonomous organization within the DCC; it represents only a specific product of the DCC club of tourism products related to the Danube destination.

Dedicated meeting of the Route’s members and stakeholders are regularly organized with the aim of agreeing on the initiatives to carry out within the framework of the Route’s development strategy.

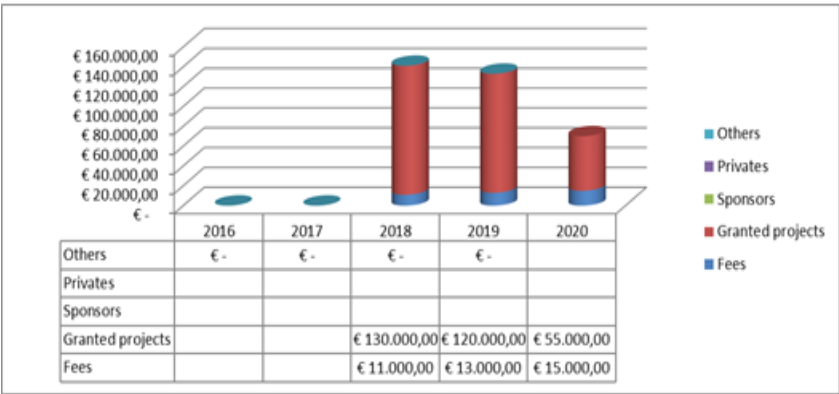
The business model of DCC is based on three types of revenues:

- a) MEMBERSHIP FEES – strategic members and network members pay fees and take responsibility for the overall success of the organization. The amount of fees collected should substantially contribute to covering the minimal fixed costs and should enable the work of a small professional team capable of generating relevant projects and coordinating stakeholders in the Danube region. Fees are included within a range starting from 500€ (for local institutions/municipalities) to 7.000€ (for National Tourism Organizations).
- b) PROJECT INCOME - Project grants will be acquired as a result of the professional work of the secretariat and the information and lobbying activities performed by the Board
- c) Co-financing activities - Internal resources, coming from members through additional contributions. Additional contributions can be in monetary, in kind contributions, hosting activities, running a pilot project or other, agreed forms of input.
- d) SALE OF DCC PRODUCTS AND SERVICES
- e) donations from, for example, private foundations and sponsors.

EU-funded projects make the strongest contribution to the total financial structure. These projects are the financial backbone of DCC. Most of them are directly related to the Route’s purposes (i.e. Route4U, COSME project).

Financial funding of DCC comes mainly from Serbia (33.3%), followed by Germany (23.6%) and Hungary (17.1%). This financial allocation is strongly determined by the contributions of just a handful of partners, namely the three national tourism organizations (NTO) of Germany, Serbia and Hungary, and three regional local tourism organizations of Ukraine, Austria and Serbia. Contributions both from national (55.2%) and regional (15.1%) tourism organizations are the main source (70.3% combined) of DCC’s funding from membership fees.

Figure 4 – Incomes distribution (2016/2020)



The figure on the left shows the forecasts of incomes foreseen in the next three-years period activity plan.

It must be noted that DCC has its own overall balance sheets and that these do not foresees a dedicated section to the

Route (as mentioned above, the Route is a touristic product of the DCC club of touristic products built around the Danube region destination). This does not allow to check separately the financial situation of the Route, however - being the Route a part of DCC - this point is to be considered as a significant pros, by allowing the Route to have a stronger financial coverage and to trust on an effective organization that day-by-day works with the aim of improving the cultural and touristic offer of the Danube region and of its cultural destinations.

In this respect, it must be reported some difficulties of DCC in cashing fees from members coming from Bulgaria and Romania, where payments need an official approval from national institutions.

For what concern the operational plan of the network for the 2018/20 period, the activity plan set out by the DCC is focused mostly toward the establishment of local tourist hubs into the regions characterized by a higher concentration of cultural and touristic attractions. The latter turns out to be a comprehensive programme that specifies its objectives, methods, partners, participating countries (current and envisaged) and its overall development in the medium and long term as requested by the CoE's Resolution. Some more details would be necessary to better explain the activities foreseen into each of the five priority fields of action in Part II of the same Resolution, along with details of their financing and operational plan and of the most significant indicators aimed to measure the impact of the activities on the ground floor.

With the aim of assessing the level of satisfaction of the Route's members, during the present evaluation it has been carried out a survey by means of a dedicated questionnaire sent to all of them (the questionnaire was sent on November 15th, 2018 with a deadline on December 9th). Unfortunately, at the date of the present final evaluation report, only 5 out of the 22 Route's members replied the survey. Because of this limited participation the findings of the Survey cannot be considered reliable (see *Annex 3 for partial results*)

3.3.2 Network extension in the three years to come

Further countries are expected to be joining the Route (among them: Austria, Slovakia and Montenegro) in the next three-years period, but their adhesion is subject to a prior identification of cultural destination/sites coherent with the Route purposes. Their identification is in the pipeline of the SC's work.

Currently the Route organization is focusing its effort toward the consolidation of tourist hubs around 5 specific destinations: Zajecar (Serbia), Pécs (Hungary), Baranja Wine Region (Croatia), Alba Iulia (Romania) and Ruse (Bulgaria). Around these tourist hubs, the DCC is collecting further adhesions from local sites/partners which are expected to be approved in the next coming years, amongst them: TO Pula (Municipality of Pula – Croatia), TO Osijek (Municipality of Osijek – Croatia), NTO Romania (Bucharest – Romania).

3.4 Communication tools

3.4.1 Compliance with the Guidelines for the Use of the Logo "Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe"

The visual identity of the Route has been carefully studied and implemented both on tangible supports and web contents. The latter use different icons to identify sites and contents related to the Roman Emperors heritage (RER), from the ones related to the Danube's wine traditions (DWR).

The most important communication channels of the Route are its official website (www.romanemperorsroute.org) whose specific contents are also available (in a more touristic/visitor perspective) on the website www.danube.travel managed also by the DCC.

At the time of the evaluation, the Route's official website was expected to be substituted by a new one in January. The latter has been designed with an innovative approach which is based to a more intensive use of videos and images with the aim of catching the attention of millennials. The contents available on the social media profiles (Facebook and Instagram) turned out to be constantly update and managed by the DCC.

The use of the Route's logos and of the one of the Council of Europe turned out to be compliant with the CoE's guidelines of October 2018. In this respect, it must be pointed out that none of the official websites of the adhering Route's members shows the Route's logo and the CoE's one on their homepage. The Route's organization is required to require its effective members to show said logos on their websites (**Prescription 1**).

The field visit carried out from December 14th and 16th 2018 has allowed to positively check the presence of signposting showing the Route's logos. The signals positioned along the highway still show the Route's logo without the one of the CoE's; this is because they had been positioned before the CoE's certification.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

As a result of this first regular evaluation, during the period 2016/18 the Route of Roman Emperors and the Danube Wine has shown a strong commitment towards the consolidation of its network and promotion of a common interpretation of its corresponding cultural heritage amongst the adhering sites/regions.

Its related cultural/historical theme turns out to be still significant and coherent under the Council of Europe values, particularly toward the political need to strengthening peaceful and fair socio/economical and institutional relations amongst countries recently interested by conflicts, with the aim of allowing and fostering their possible formal adhesion to the UE.

The Route performance over the past three-years period turns out to be fully compliant with the certification criteria of CM/Res(2013)67.

Answering all the evaluation grid foreseen in the CoE's evaluation framework (see annex 2), the Route achieved a global score of 59 points on a total of 81. This indicates that the Route was able to answer positively by more than 73% of the check-list questions.

The list below reports the performance of the Route's, as it comes from the assessment, in each of the sections of the CoE/EICR's evaluation grid:

- Theme (100% of positive answers – 5 out of 5)

At the time of its certification, the evaluation of the Route reported that its two-fold cultural theme (the one related to the Roman Emperors heritage and the one related to the Danube wine) would have been potentially misleading. In this respect, it was asked the Route organization to consider the Danube wine as a sub-theme of the Roman Emperors' one. The present evaluation findings have demonstrated that said two components of the cultural theme of the Route are two sides of the same coin that can and must coexist, having their own relevance and meaning only if both are promoted and developed at the same time.

- Field of action (65% of positive answers – 30 out of 46)

Under this topic, the evaluation remarks the operational activities of the Route are mostly focused in the field of "Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development" and of "Enhancement of memory, history and European heritage" (56% of the overall initiatives carried out during 2014/18); activities in the domains of "Contemporary cultural and artistic practice" and "Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans" should be strengthened in future.

- Operation of the Route network (94% of positive answers – 15 out of 16)

The Route's network is managed by the DCC by considering the Route's theme as a tourist product within the club of the tourist products of the Danube region. Currently, the DCC is working towards the strengthening of the Route network and the organization of local tourist hubs which can act as autonomous tourist destination within the framework of the Route. As soon as this phase of the Route development strategy, it might be suitable to think to a separate organization of the Route from the DCC.

- Communication tools (Route presentation) – (64% of positive answers – 9 out of 14)

Under the present topic, the Route should pay attention towards the use of its official logo and the CoE's one by its adhering members. At the time of the evaluation, none of their official websites showed these logos (*see Prescription 1*).

Taking all these minor shortcomings into account, the Route turns out to properly reply to most of the CoE's certification criteria, by allowing it to keep its certification as European Cultural Route.

5. List of references

The evaluation had been carried out on the basis of the information and data included in the following documents:

1. Evaluation form provided by the Route organization and its corresponding appendixes;
2. Self-evaluation grid provided by the Route organization;
3. Appendix 1 – Summary reports of ordinary RER/DWR General Meetings 2015-2017;
4. Appendix 2 – Research and development;
5. Appendix 3 – Indirect academic and professional publications;
6. Appendix 4 – Strategic orientation and Activity plan for the period 2018-2020;
7. Appendix 5 – Members of DCC involved in the development of the Route;
8. Appendix 6 – Brief History of the Route;
9. Previous evaluation report used for the Route's certification;
10. Budget forecasts for the period 2018-2020;
11. DCC's membership fee structure;
12. Decision of the Boar of Director concerning the DCC's Cultural Routes Product Club;
13. Adhesion form for new Route's members;
14. The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route official brochure (version dated 2016);
15. The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route official brochure (version date 2017);
16. Biking along the Danube (brochure);
17. DCC's Report on existing visitors' services and experiences (Part of the COSME project "SDITOROMAN");
18. DCC's Business Plan for the period 2018-2020;
19. www.routesofemperorsroute.org;
20. www.danube.travel
21. Blue week – Danube Festival's brochure;

6. Annex 1 – Field visit programme

Saturday 15/12

- 9.45 am Meeting with Prof. Goran Petkovic (Scientific Committee), Danko Cosic and Vladan Kreckovic (DCC's General Secretariat).
- 10 am Departing to Sremska Mitrovica (SER)
- 11 am Meeting Mr. Ljubisa Sulaja, director of the Institute for the protection of monuments and visiting archaeological locality Imperial Palace Sirmium
- 2 pm Meeting at the DCC's headquarter in Belgrade with Prof. Goran Petkovic (Scientific Committee), Danko Cosic and Vladan Kreckovic. During the meeting were analysed specific aspects concerning the regular evaluation.
- 4 pm Lunch in Belgrade

Sunday 16/12

- 8.45 am Meeting with Gordana Plamenac (President of the Board of DCC), Danko Cosic and Vladan Kreckovic (DCC's General Secretariat) and Departing to Ilok (CRO)
- 11 am Meeting with Mr. Ivica Milicevic, director of Tourism organization of Ilok. Lunch and visiting key local wine landmarks.
- 12 am Departing to Sremski Karlovci (SER)
- 1.30 pm Short guided tour around Sremski Karlovci
Meeting with Mr. Mirko Veselinovic, owner of Benisek-Veselinovic winery
- 2.30 pm Lunch
- 4pm Departing to Belgrade
- 5.30pm Arriving at the Belgrade airport

7. Annex 2 – Checklist

	COE CULTURAL ROUTES EVALUATION CHECK-LIST			
3.1 THEME	Does the theme of the Route	Yes	No	Note
	- represent a common value - historical, cultural, or heritage -to several European countries?	X		
	- offer a solid basis for			
	youth cultural and educational exchanges?	X		
	innovative activities?	X		
	cultural tourism products development?	X		
	Has the theme been researched/developed by academics/experts from different regions of Europe?	X		
3.2 FIELDS OF ACTION	3.2.1 Co-operation in research and development			
	Does the Route			
	- offer a platform for co-operation in research and development of European cultural themes/values?	X		
	- play a unifying role around major European themes, enabling dispersed knowledge to be brought together?	X		
	- show how these themes are representative of European values shared by several European countries?	X		
	- illustrate the development of these values and the variety of forms they may take in Europe?	X		
	- have a network of universities and research center working on its theme at the European level?		X	Universities are anyhow involved in different tasks and projects
	- have a multidisciplinary scientific committee?	X		
	Does the scientific Committee			
	work on its theme at the European level?	X		
	carry out research and analysis of the issues relevant to its theme and/or activities on:			
	- theoretical level?	X		
	- practical level?	X		

3.2.2 Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage			
Do the Route activities (according with the theme)			
- take into account and explain the historical significance of tangible and intangible European heritage ?	X		
- promote the CoE values?	X		
- promote the CoE CRs brand?	X		
- work in conformity with international charters and conventions on cultural heritage preservation?	X		
- identify, preserve, and develop European heritage sites in rural destinations?	X		
- identify, preserve, and develop European heritage sites in industrial areas in the process of economic restructuring?		X	
- valorize the heritage of ethnic or social minorities in Europe?		X	
- contribute to a better understanding of the concept of cultural heritage, the importance of its preservation and sustainable development?	X		
- enhance physical and intangible heritage, explain its historical significance and highlight its similarities in the different regions of Europe?	X		
- 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, ...)?		X	
3.2.3 Cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans			
Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to			
- develop a better understanding of the concept of European citizenship?		X	This is an important issue by considering Serbia is in the process of adhesion
- emphasize the value of new personal experience through visiting diverse places?	X		
- encourage social integration and exchanges of young people from different social backgrounds and regions of Europe?		X	
- offer collaborative opportunities for educational institutions at various levels?		X	
- place the emphasis on personal and real	X		

	experiences through the use of places and contacts?			
	- set up pilot schemes with several participating countries?		X	Further adhesions are in the pipeline
	- give rise to co-operation activities which involve educational institutions at various levels?	X		
	3.2.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practice			
	Do the Route's cultural activities (contemporary cultural and artistic practice related)			
	- promote intercultural dialogue and multidisciplinary exchange between various artistic expressions in European countries?		X	
	- encourage artistic projects that establish the links between cultural heritage and contemporary culture?		X	
	- encourage innovative cultural and contemporary art practices* connecting them with the history of skills development?	X		
	- encourage collaboration between culture amateurs and professionals via relevant activities and networks creation?*		X	
	-encourage debate and exchange - in a multidisciplinary and intercultural perspective - between various cultural and artistic expressions in different countries of Europe?		X	
	- encourage activities and artistic projects which explore the links between heritage and contemporary culture?		X	
	- highlight the most innovative and creative practices?	X		
	- link these innovative and creative practices with the history of skills development?***	X		
3.2 FIELDS OF ACTION				
	3.2.5 Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development			
	Do the Route's activities (relevant to sustainable cultural tourism development)			
	- assist in local, regional, national and/ or European identity formation?	X		
	- actively involve 3 major means to raise awareness of their cultural projects: print, broadcast and social media?	X		

	- promote dialogue between urban and rural communities and cultures?		X	
	developed and disadvantaged regions?	X		
	different parts (south, north, east, west) of Europe?		X	
	majority and minority (or native and immigrant) cultures?		X	
	- open possibilities for co-operation between Europe and other continents?	X		
	- draw decision makers' attention to the necessity of protecting heritage as part of sustainable development of the territory?	X		
	- aim to diversify of cultural product, service and activities offers?	X		
	- develop and offer quality cultural tourism products, services or activities transnationally?	X		
	- develop partnerships with public and private organisations active in the field of tourism?	X		
	Did the network prepare and use tools all along the route to raise the number of visitors and the economic impacts of the route on the territories crossed?	X		
3.3 NETWORK	Does the Route represent a network involving at least three Council of Europe's member states?	X		
	Was the theme of the network chosen and accepted by its members?	X		
	Was the conceptual framework for this network founded on a scientific basis?	X		
	Does the network involve several Council of Europe member states in all or part of its project(s)?	X		
	Is the network financially sustainable?	X		
	Does the network have a legal status (association, federation of associations, EEIG,...)?	X		
	Does the network operate democratically?	X		
	Does the network			
	- specify			
	methods?	X		
	the regions concerned by the project?	X		
its partners and participating countries?	X			

	the fields of action involved?	X		
	the overall strategy of the network in the short- and long term?	X		
	- identify potential participants and partners in CoE member states and/or other world countries?	X		
	- provide details of its financing (financial reports and/or activity budgets)?		X	Financial statements of the previous periods are available only at the DCC level
	- provide details of its operational plan?	X		
	- append the basic text(s) confirming its legal status?	X		
3.4 COMMUNICATION TOOLS	Does the Route have its own logo?	X		
	Do all partners of the network use the logo on their communication tools?		X	None of the Route's members websites show the Route's logo on their own home pages.
	Does the Route have its own dedicated website ?	X		At the time of the evaluation the latter was planned to be substituted with a new web site
	Is it the website translated into English and French?		X	Contents are available only in English
	Is it the website translated into other languages?	X		
	Does the network use effectively social networks and web 2.0?	X		
	Does the network publish brochures on the Route?	X		
	if yes, are the brochures translated in English?	X		
	if yes, are the brochures translated in French?		X	
	Is the title of "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" present on all communication materials (including press releases, webpages, publications, etc.)?	X		This requirement has been evaluated on the official DCC materials
	Is the logo of the Council of Europe present on all communication materials ?	X		
	Is the CoE logo used in accordance to the guidelines for its use (size and position,...)?	X		
	Are the logos (Cultural Route + CoE) provided for all the members of the Route?		X	Logos are not shown on the members websites
	Does the Council of Europe logo appears on road signs/ boards indicating the cultural route?		X	
	SCORE	59	22	

Note:	Please insert 1 for every positive answer and 0 for a negative one. See your total score at the bottom of the column.	73 %	27 %	
* E.g. visual arts, the performing arts, creative crafts, architecture, music, literature, poetry or any other form of cultural expression				
**Particularly in terms of instruction for young Europeans in the relevant fields				
***Whether these fields include visual arts, performing arts, creative crafts, architecture, music, literature or any other field				

8. Annex 3 – Survey on the Route’s members

