

Walk the Talk

„Access of Rural Youth to Cultural Heritage:

European Youth Card's role in promoting Cultural Routes”

23-25/26 September 2024

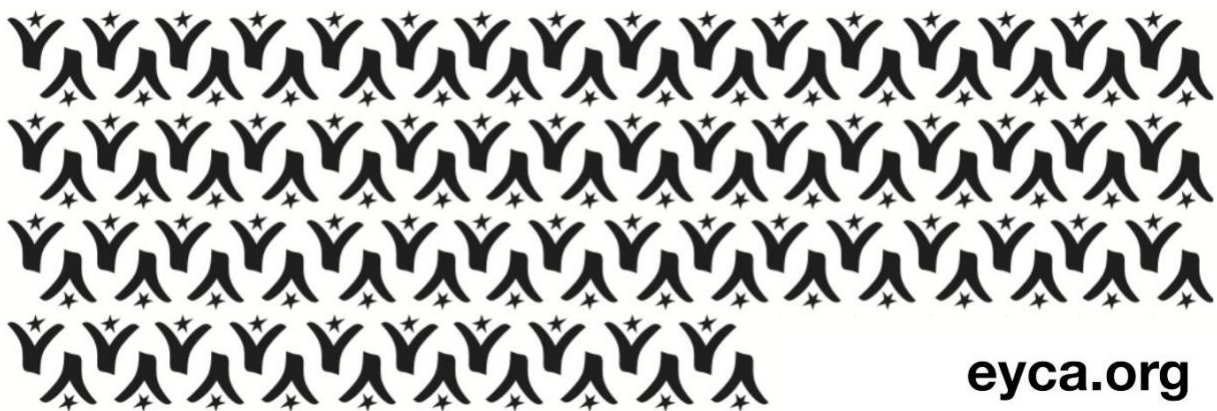
Visegrád, Hungary

with a possibility of attending

the 13th Annual Advisory Forum Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

Seminar of the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility
through the Youth Card
and the European Youth Card Association (EYCA)

REPORT



Introduction

The seminar "Access of Rural Youth to Cultural Heritage: European Youth Card's Role in Promoting Cultural Routes" was organised within the framework of the 2024 programme of activities of the Council of Europe's Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card. This innovative event adopted an interactive format known as "Walk the Talk," which allowed participants to engage in a cultural route while learning and exchanging insights about youth mobility, the Youth Card, and cultural heritage. The seminar placed special emphasis on young people in rural areas, addressing the challenges they encounter in accessing cultural and mobility programmes.

Organised by the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card in collaboration with the European Youth Card Association (EYCA), the Youth Department of the Ministry of Culture and Innovation of Hungary, and the Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, this seminar aimed at creating a collaborative environment among stakeholders.

The main objectives of the seminar were:

- Promoting the European Youth Card as a vital tool for connecting young people, particularly those from rural areas, with cultural offerings from Council of Europe member states, especially Hungary;
- Introducing EYCA members to cultural heritage opportunities for youth, particularly in rural areas, and encouraging partnerships with cultural heritage actors to benefit young people;
- Providing networking opportunities for civil servants from member states, European Youth Card organisations, and youth organisations that represent rural youth.

Additionally, participants had a unique opportunity to join the **13th Annual Advisory Forum of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe**.

About the Organisers

The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card, established in 1991, aims to develop the youth card scheme at the European level. It is dedicated to advancing the best interests of young people by facilitating their mobility and access to the goods and services essential for personal and cultural development.

The European Youth Card Association (EYCA) comprises 38 youth card organisations across Europe and serves as the statutory partner of the Partial Agreement. EYCA envisions a Europe where all young people are mobile and active in social, cultural, educational, and economic realms. Its mission involves delivering quality youth card services and contributing to better policies on youth mobility and active citizenship. Currently, over eight million youth cardholders benefit from various opportunities provided by the Youth Card.

The **Ministry of Culture and Innovation of Hungary** is responsible for a wide range of cultural and educational policies. The ministry plays a significant role in shaping higher education policy in Hungary and is responsible for managing the country's higher education system. One of the key responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture and Innovation is to develop policies and regulations that govern the operation of universities and other higher education institutions in Hungary. The Ministry also provides funding for higher education and oversees the distribution of resources to universities and research institutions.

The **Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (EPA)** established in 2010 seeks to reinforce the potential of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe for cultural cooperation, sustainable territorial development and social cohesion, with a particular focus on themes of symbolic importance for European unity, history, culture and values and the discovery of less well-known destinations. The EPA follows the Council of Europe's policy guidelines, decides the programme strategy and awards a "Council of Europe Cultural Route" certification. It is open to member and non-member States of the Council of Europe aiming at providing political support for national, regional and local initiatives to promote culture and tourism.

DAY 1 | Tuesday 24th September

Welcome

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| 09.00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Gergely Mohay - Head of Department, Ministry of Culture and Innovation |
| - | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. Meltem Önhon – Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, Governing Board Chair |
| 09.30 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. Natalja Turenne - Council of Europe, Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card • Mr. Manel Sanchez - EYCA Director |

Opening and setting:

Manel Sanchez, EYCA Director: Manel Sanchez greeted the participants, setting the tone for the seminar by explaining its objectives and its relevance to the rural youth agenda. He emphasised how Visegrád, with its rich cultural heritage and rural setting, provided the perfect backdrop for discussions on connecting young people with cultural opportunities in rural areas. He noted the importance of **fostering connections between youth and institutions**, going beyond providing discounts through the European Youth Card (EYC). The goal, he said, is to bring young people closer to institutions and create a dynamic, small-group environment for deeper engagement.

Gergely Mohay: Mr. Mohay started the greetings by highlighting the importance of **youth mobility** and how it relates to the **rural youth agenda**. He noted that while cultural heritage is often seen as something accessible in urban areas, rural regions have a wealth of cultural treasures that need to be made more accessible to young people. The aim is to foster a **connection between young people and their local identity** through cultural routes. He

emphasized the need for cooperation between different cultural stakeholders to ensure that young people in rural areas are actively involved in cultural activities, highlighting that rural areas often present unique cultural identities.

Mr. Mohay stressed that young people must be given the tools and opportunities to explore their cultural heritage. He outlined how **cultural routes** are a practical way to introduce youth to their local and national history. He concluded by discussing the importance of providing rural youth with access to cultural education, such as promoting books or other resources that are adapted to their modern needs, and by fostering a sense of **belonging** through these cultural experiences. **"Imagine a world without culture—it would be empty, materialistic,"** he concluded, encouraging participants to embrace the living experience of culture throughout the seminar.

Meltem Önhon: Mrs Önhon focused on the **role of cultural routes** in connecting people and enhancing cultural heritage across Europe. She explained how cultural routes have a dual purpose: they are educational but also create a **sense of European identity** by showcasing shared heritage.

These routes help young people, particularly those from rural areas, to connect with both their local history and a broader European context. Mrs. Önhon also spoke about the **13th Forum on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe**, which provides participants with an opportunity to explore heritage through cultural routes, thereby enriching their understanding of Europe's shared past.

She emphasised the need for **youth engagement** and proposed more **active involvement of young people** in the design and promotion of cultural routes. The hope is that young people will be inspired to participate in cultural programmes, leading to stronger ties between them and their heritage. She concluded by discussing future events, such as the next forum in Türkiye which will continue to promote the involvement of young people in these heritage routes.

Natalja Turenne: Ms. **Turenne** expressed heartfelt welcome to all the participants and gratitude to all the partners for a collaborative effort to create this seminar. She stressed that such transversal projects, this one still being in its pilot stage, are the perfect example of bringing a Youth Perspective into all programmes of the Council of Europe as pushed for by the Reykjavik Declaration of the 4th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Council of Europe of May 2023. In this respect the first edition of the Walk the Talk seminar was a true frontrunner.

She set the stage for discussion about the **living experience of cultural heritage** and the role of youth in maintaining its vibrancy. She acknowledged the challenges faced by rural youth in accessing cultural experiences, noting that while many are used to travel to urban centres, **treasures and cultural landmarks exist in rural areas.**

She underscored the importance of making culture accessible to young people and stressed the significance of nurturing stories that foster a sense of belonging, highlighting the transformative potential of cultural routes in enriching local communities.

She also encouraged participants to actively use opportunities of networking between the decision-makers present at the seminar, youth card managers and young people from various

youth organisations involved in issues of youth participation, culture and cultural heritage, in order for possible creative ideas and projects be born.

This second edition of the Walk the Talk seminar includes the recommendations made by the participants of the last year's event and would like to move on the path of creating, in future, a tool (guidelines or a manual or even a learning platform) to help all interested stakeholders to work in the field of bringing young people and cultural heritage, including cultural routes, closer to each other.



09.30	Aim and objectives of this event
10.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mapping the audience • explaining the context of the PA seminar

The seminar proceeded with a focus on the **aim and objectives of the event**, beginning with **mapping the audience** and explaining the broader context of the Partial Agreement seminar. Participants were asked to introduce themselves, sharing their backgrounds and experiences. This mapping exercise revealed a diverse group of individuals representing NGOs, civil society, government officials and institutions, but also young people from various rural regions. The discussion highlighted the unique perspectives of these attendees and the challenges they face, particularly with youth engagement in cultural heritage.

Several participants expressed their **expectations for the seminar**:

1. One attendee emphasised the importance of **engaging young people** with cultural heritage through active, hands-on initiatives. They looked forward to collecting ideas that could be translated into future actions to ensure youth discover the beauty of cultural routes.
2. Another participant raised the challenge of developing **national-level actions** that focus

on young people's needs, rather than fragmented, smaller initiatives. They noted that cultural heritage projects often suffer from a lack of cohesive planning and hoped the seminar would offer solutions to bridge this gap.

3. A third attendee expressed excitement about the **upcoming treasure hunt**, explaining that they were eager to see historical routes and explore how leisure activities like this could be adapted to better engage rural youth with their own cultural heritage.

The discussion touched on the **diversity of rural youth**, who appreciate the rural lifestyle but often feel disconnected from cultural opportunities. The session aimed to explore how best to communicate with young people about the benefits of living in rural areas while ensuring they remain connected to the larger cultural and social framework of Europe.



Presentations	
10.00	1. Natalja Turenne - presentation of the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card
-	2. Stefano Dominioni – presentation of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe
11.00	3. Manel Sanchez – presentation of the European Youth Card Association

Natalja Turenne: presentation of the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card

In her presentation, Natalja Turenne outlined the history of the creation of the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card, which is a specific programme of the Council of Europe, its aims and objectives, its functioning and links to the overall aims, standards and values of the Council of Europe. She emphasised the Agreement's role in facilitating youth mobility across Europe, including for young people in rural areas who often face unique challenges in accessing cultural and mobility opportunities. Natalja highlighted that the Youth Card serves as an important tool in connecting youth to a variety of opportunities of cultural and other experiences and providing access to discounts on services and activities that promote cultural engagement.

Closing her presentation, Natalja shared insights into the collaborative efforts being made to enhance youth engagement in cultural initiatives. She underlined that youth should be involved in the design and implementation of cultural programmes, emphasising that their perspectives are crucial for creating meaningful connections to their own or wider European heritage. This approach not only nurtures a sense of belonging but also empowers young people to take ownership in their cultural identity. By recognising the evolving habits and preferences of youth, cultural and other institutions could better facilitate access to cultural heritage, ensuring that young people are not only passive recipients but active participants in their cultural landscapes.

Stefano Dominioni: presentation of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

Stefano Dominioni's presentation focused on the **Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe** and its mission to promote understanding and appreciation of European heritage through the development of cultural routes. He highlighted that cultural routes serve as dynamic pathways that connect various historical, cultural, and natural sites across Europe, enriching the experience of both residents and visitors. He noted that since the initiative's inception, 48 certified cultural routes have been established, emphasising the collaborative efforts among member States to foster cultural tourism and sustainable development.

Stefano Dominioni elaborated on the concept of cultural routes as journeys through time and space, reflecting shared European values and heritage. He articulated the importance of ensuring that cultural routes not only preserve historical legacies but also serve as platforms for dialogue and intercultural exchange. The presentation underscored the requirement for cooperation among at least three-member states to make a cultural route pan-European, thereby enhancing cross-border engagement and collaboration in promoting cultural heritage.

In addition, he highlighted the priorities for future initiatives, including research, youth involvement, and heritage promotion. He emphasised the need to integrate young people into the cultural route framework, stating that engaging youth in these initiatives is essential for fostering a sense of ownership and pride in their cultural heritage. By actively participating in the development and promotion of cultural routes, young people can contribute to the preservation of their history while simultaneously shaping the future of cultural engagement in Europe.

Manel Sanchez: presentation of the European Youth Card Association

Manel Sanchez's presentation provided an overview of the **European Youth Card Association (EYCA)** and its role in facilitating youth access to cultural opportunities across Europe. He emphasised that the EYCA's vision and mission is ensuring that all young people are mobile and active in their own life and the life of the society. With over 8 million cardholders benefiting from discounts and access to various services and opportunities, Manel Sanchez highlighted the growing outreach of the European Youth Card to young people's lives, particularly in promoting social inclusion and active citizenship.

He further elaborated on the two pillars of the Youth Card: **discounts, opportunities** and **information**. He explained that the card not only provides financial benefits but also serves as a gateway to information about cultural events, educational opportunities, and civic engagement activities, among other things. By connecting young people with relevant resources, the Youth Card empowers them to engage more fully in cultural life and develop a sense of belonging within their communities.

In his conclusion, Manel Sanchez stressed the importance of collaboration between the EYCA and cultural institutions to enhance the effectiveness of the Youth Card. He called for increased efforts to develop partnerships that will enrich the cultural experiences available to young people, encouraging them to explore their heritage and connect with others. By fostering these relationships, the EYCA aims to ensure that cultural heritage remains vibrant and accessible allowing young people to take an active role in its preservation and promotion.



11.30 - 12.15	<p>1. Matias Rubio - Keynote speech: <u>“Barriers to access of young people to cultural heritage and possible ways to overcome them”</u></p> <p>2. Hailey Ciantar - <u>Youth Panel presentation on EYCA Rural Youth project</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Q&A</p>
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Following the presentations, participants enjoyed a coffee break, allowing for informal discussions and networking. In the late morning session, **Matias Rubio** delivered the keynote speech, addressing the barriers that rural youth face in accessing cultural heritage.

Matias Rubio – Keynote Speaker: Barriers to accessing cultural heritage for rural youth

Matias opened his presentation in an engaging manner, drawing the audience into the importance of cultural identity. He invited participants to reflect on the cultural heritage of their territories, encouraging them to consider what components—whether national, regional, or local—make them proud. This set the stage for his exploration of the barriers that rural youth face in accessing cultural heritage and the necessity of transformative approaches to ensure wider participation.

The speaker highlighted that rural youth often encounter **structural and logistical barriers** when trying to engage with cultural opportunities. He pointed out that limited transport options, lack of awareness, and the scarcity of cultural programmes tailored to their needs frequently leave young people disconnected from both their local and national heritage. He stated, “When young people are surrounded by cultural heritage but do not have the means to engage with it, we risk losing a generation’s connection to their roots.” This underlines the urgent need for inclusive strategies that allow young people to become not just passive recipients of cultural offerings but active participants in preserving and transforming their heritage.

He emphasised the need for cultural heritage to **evolve and adapt** to stay relevant for younger generations. “If we want to preserve our cultural traditions, we must be willing to transform them,” he asserted. He argued that integrating **youth perspectives** into the decision-making processes surrounding cultural policies is vital. He illustrated this with an example from contemporary Spanish culture, referencing Rodrigo Cuevas, an artist who blends traditional songs with modern electronic music, making heritage engaging for today’s youth. This transformation of cultural expression exemplifies how heritage can be kept alive and relevant. Furthermore, Matias stressed the crucial role that **youth organisations** and local governments play in empowering young people to be co-creators of cultural projects. By fostering a stronger connection to cultural heritage, rural youth can develop a greater sense of identity and belonging, which is essential for building inclusive, democratic societies. He stated, “Cultural heritage is not just about the past; it is about creating a future that resonates with our shared values and identities.”

In conclusion, he encouraged participants to reflect on the **preservation, transmission, and transformation** of cultural heritage within their own communities. He challenged them to consider how **youth-led initiatives** could serve as catalysts for making cultural heritage more accessible and engaging. “Let us work together to ensure that cultural heritage is not a relic of the past but a vibrant part of our collective future,” he urged, leaving the audience with a call to action to actively engage rural youth in shaping their cultural landscape.

Matias' speech raised some questions and discussions regarding the transformation of cultural heritage. The discussion was as follows:

Transformation of tangible culture: incorporating metal music with folklore music is a form of transformation; this revitalisation of cultural expressions fosters collaboration between rural and urban organisations. But what about tangible culture? In cases where tangible heritage cannot be physically transformed, we can explore ways to change the way we use it.

Encouraging exchange: such transformations encourage the exchange of ideas and cultural practices that enrich both rural and urban contexts.

Careful consideration: the discussion also emphasised the need for careful consideration during transformation. While it is necessary, it is crucial to maintain the integrity of the heritage. Structural changes to monuments and sites should enhance how they are experienced rather than alter their fundamental characteristics.

Balancing act: this balance allows cultural heritage to thrive in a way that resonates with current generations while respecting its historical significance.

Hailey Ciantar – EYCA Youth Panel: Presentation of the Rural Youth Project

Hailey Ciantar from the **EYCA Youth Panel** presented the outcomes of the **Rural Youth Project**, which aimed to better understand and engage rural youth across Europe. She explained the project's three-phase approach: **information gathering, idea generation** and **roadmap development**. The project began with surveys that gathered responses from **1,650 rural youth** across 17 countries, which gave valuable insights into the unique challenges they face, such as **isolation, lack of infrastructure** and **limited access to services**.

Following this, the **Rural Youth Camp** held in Cazorla, Spain, brought together 43 participants from 28 countries. Many of these young people had never been involved in an international youth project before. The camp allowed them to reflect on the survey results and brainstorm initiatives to address issues such as loneliness, access to services and travel opportunities. Hailey emphasised the importance of **youth-led projects**, which are very important for building sustainable solutions for rural communities. The project culminated in a **10-point roadmap** with recommendations for policymakers and youth organisations to better engage rural youth, including in both cultural and social activities.



12.15 - 13.00	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Antia Loureiro Carbia - Presentation from Galicia Youth Card/Camino de Santiago 2. Marie-Ange Neu - Follow up after the 2023 Walk the Talk seminar in Luxembourg <p style="text-align: center;">Q&A</p>
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Antia Loureiro Carbia – Camino de Santiago from the Galicia Youth Card

Antia Loureiro Carbia presented an insightful overview of how the Galicia Youth Card has been integrated with the Camino de Santiago cultural route, showcasing its impact on youth engagement with cultural heritage in the region. She highlighted how this initiative has increased youth participation, presenting data on the number of discounts applied to young people along the route. In 2023 and 2024, over 3,100 discounts were provided through the Youth Card, indicating a substantial rise in youth involvement.

The presentation also explored the challenges faced in implementing the programme, such as coordinating with private sector partners and managing the logistics of offering discounts along the Camino. However, the collaboration between cultural route managers and local businesses has been a success, offering a unique cultural experience to young people. Antia concluded by discussing future plans to expand the Youth Card's role in promoting the cultural route, aiming to make it more attractive and accessible to rural and urban youth alike.

Marie-Ange Neu – Follow up to the first Walk the Talk Seminar in Luxembourg

Marie-Ange Neu provided a comprehensive follow-up on the 2023 Walk the Talk seminar held in Luxembourg (the city and its wider region), which focused on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and the engagement of young people in discovering and preserving European heritage. She detailed how the first edition of the seminar served as a platform to identify stakeholders and relevant routes in Luxembourg. The seminar aimed to develop collaborations with local municipalities and European institutions to promote the Youth Card and enhance cultural engagement.

Marie-Ange also outlined the challenges encountered during the 2023 seminar, including the need for better coordination among stakeholders and the development of more attractive programmes for young people. She highlighted the importance of continuing to build on the partnerships created, involving young people, educators, and cultural organisations in future projects. The goal, she stated, is to create intercultural collaborations and educational tourist routes that actively engage young people, including rural youth, and promote intergenerational connections within the cultural routes.



14.00 - 18.00	Visegrád tour and engaging in a treasure hunt Return to the venue and debrief session
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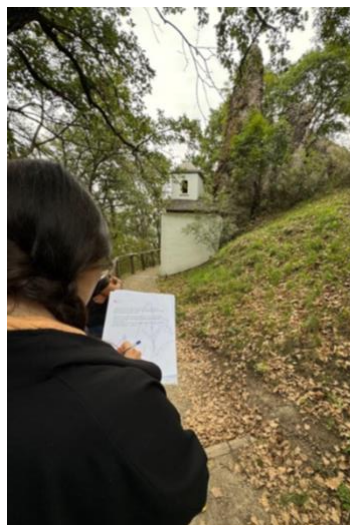
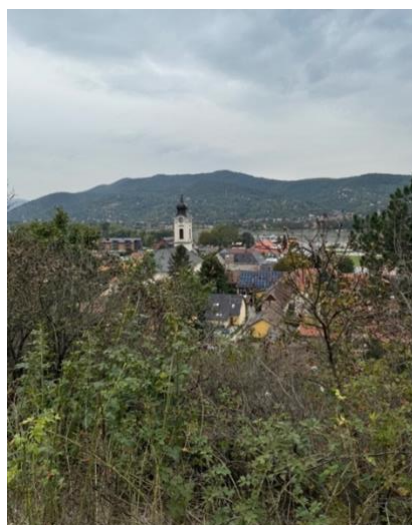
The second part of the day engaged participants in a treasure hunt around Visegrád, organised by the local tourism office, along the high-lights of the future cultural route of Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor, to be officially launched next year.

This interactive experience allowed the participants split in several teams to explore the town while discussing the themes of the seminar in an informal setting. The treasure hunt not only fostered team building but also provided a unique opportunity for participants to connect with the local culture and one another.

As they navigated the cultural landscape, participants shared their insights on how young people spend their time in rural areas and the importance of making cultural heritage accessible. Feedback from the activity highlighted its effectiveness; many noted that the treasure hunt helped them discover aspects of the town they might not have noticed otherwise.

During the debrief session, participants expressed positive sentiments about the experience. They discussed the need for more structured activities, recognising that while engaging with the local culture was invaluable, a combination of engaging games and a guided approach could enhance the experience. The discussions also centered on how these interactive tours can better inform young people about local heritage and history, encouraging them to take a more active role in cultural preservation.

Overall, the treasure hunt was viewed as a successful and enjoyable way to reinforce the seminar's objectives while deepening participants' understanding of the importance of cultural routes. It is worth noting that the treasure hunt concept emerged from the first edition of the Walk the Talk seminar in Luxembourg.



DAY 2 | Tuesday 25th September

09.00	Conclusions and next steps, ahead of the Annual Forum on Cultural Routes
10.00	Closing of the seminar

On the second day, participants convened to wrap up the seminar and engage in discussions around final recommendations, emphasising key takeaways. Working in groups, they collaborated to generate innovative ideas. Some also participated in brief interviews, sharing their valuable insights and experiences from the event.

Voices from the seminar: participants reflections

- **Marta from Andalucia:** Marta, the president of Rurals in Net in Andalucia, emphasised the importance of making cultural experiences accessible to young people. She suggested that providing discounts would significantly enhance their engagement with local culture. Marta proposed fun approaches, such as treasure hunts in their own villages, allowing youth to actively discover and connect with their cultural heritage. She believes this hands-on experience can foster a deeper appreciation for their local history and traditions.
- **Hector from Norway:** Nineteen-year-old Hector from Norway expressed enthusiasm about learning from the seminar and the various states involved in the Partial Agreement. He shared his excitement about meeting young people from across Europe and highlighted the importance of understanding how to support youth in rural areas. Hector noted the myriad of proposals discussed at the seminar, reinforcing the collaborative spirit of the event aimed at empowering rural youth.
- **Matias:** Matias, representing an organisation in a rural area and part of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, highlighted the need to include a youth perspective in discussions around access to cultural heritage. He pointed out that living cultural heritage is crucial for those residing in rural areas, as they are directly surrounded by it. Matias concluded with a call to action to make cultural heritage "cool again," stressing the need to celebrate local traditions.
- **Antia from Galicia:** Antia, working for the Public Administration of Galicia, shared a practical example of how the European Youth Card facilitates access to cultural heritage. She explained how the card provides discounts along the Camino de Santiago, enabling young people to learn about the rich architectural and artistic heritage throughout the diverse routes. Antia's aim is to foster a stronger connection between youth and their cultural heritage through these initiatives.
- **Lea from Austria:** Lea, a culture and tourism student from Austria, advocated for better tourist signage at cultural sites, suggesting that it should be multilingual to enhance understanding for all visitors. She also raised the importance of accessibility for individuals with disabilities, such as incorporating braille signage for those who are blind. Her insights underscored the need for inclusive practices that allow everyone to enjoy and understand cultural heritage.

Recommendations

The participants considered specific recommendations to help improve access for young people from rural areas to cultural heritage. These included:

- **Preserve, transmit, and transform:** focus on connecting with young people through the transformation of cultural heritage.
- **Grants and competency building:** direct rural youth to relevant grants and equip them with the skills needed to develop and manage youth projects.
- **Cultural packages:** create packages that include accommodation, discounts and travel options, similar to the Discover EU programme.
- **Promote cultural routes:** utilise active channels, such as institutions, schools and youth organisations, to raise awareness of cultural routes.
- **Improve information flow:** enhance cooperation between institutions to ensure better communication regarding cultural opportunities through schools and youth networks.
- **Cultural routes youth camps:** implement camps for underage participants to deepen their connection with cultural heritage.
- **Mobile youth work:** develop mobile youth work programmes with a cultural focus to engage young people in meaningful ways.
- **Support for disadvantaged youth:** provide specialised programmes, including Braille services and discounts, for disadvantaged rural youth.
- **Volunteering programmes:** establish volunteer opportunities that immerse young people in rural communities, fostering a better understanding of rural life.
- **Transportation and accessibility:** improve transportation services in rural areas to facilitate easier access to cultural heritage sites.
- **Co-designing local youth policies:** encourage young people to actively participate in the design of local youth policies.

With joint efforts, we can make life in rural areas preferred and respected, forming an integral part of many young people's identities across Europe. This engagement will empower them to become proud carriers and promoters of cultural heritage and diversity.



Conclusion of the Seminar

The seminar concluded with a strong call for deeper partnerships between cultural and youth organisations, improved information sharing, and the development of inclusive policies that connect rural youth with their cultural heritage.

The **European Youth Card** was identified as a critical tool for making cultural heritage more accessible and promoting youth mobility across Europe.

Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Participation

As the seminar drew to a close, participants had the opportunity to attend the **13th Annual Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe**, where they engaged in an enriching programme.

The forum provided a platform for meaningful discussions and showcased remarkable cultural initiatives.

On the first day of the forum Liliya Elenkova, Chair of the Board of Co-ordination of the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card, presented the findings from the Walk the Talk seminar, sharing key highlights and reflections on the discussions held. The following day, Manel Sanchez, the EYCA Director, participated in a panel discussion titled *“Encouraging Youth Engagement along the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe”*. This session focused on strategies to foster youth participation in cultural routes, aligning with the overarching goals of the seminar.



During the coffee break, participants took an opportunity to get to know each other and forge new connections.



The forum culminated in a series of **B2B meetings**, where various cultural routes across Europe expressed interest in collaborating further. These discussions highlighted how the European Youth Card Association can assist cultural routes in attracting more young people to their activities.

The meetings underscored a shared commitment to enhancing youth involvement in cultural heritage initiatives.

Overall, the Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes was a horizon-opening experience, with highlights including a visit to the Skansen Open Air Museum, a vibrant folklore programme and moments of exploration during a cruise on the Danube featuring significant historical buildings. These activities allowed participants to fully immerse themselves in Hungary's rich culture, fostering a deeper appreciation for local traditions and encouraging meaningful community engagement.

A short video showcasing key moments from the seminar, the presentations, and photos can be found here: [Walk the Talk - Cultural Heritage and Rural Youth](#)

Appendix - Speech of Mr. Gergely Mohay

Allow me to begin with a quote: "When culture is alive, it is an experience. When it is dead, it is merely information." This quote comes from a Hungarian horseback archer, Lajos Kassai. If anyone knows what it means to sustain an old Hungarian tradition and live it as an experience, it is him.

It is a great honour for me to be here and to open this special event. First of all, I would like to thank you all for attending, despite the current flood situation. I would also like to thank to the Partial Agreement on European Youth Mobility and the Youth Card for organizing this event. We have an excellent partnership with EYCA, as youth mobility must always be a priority when it comes to young people.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Rural Youth Panel initiative. The Panel's recommendations have inspired us during the preparation of the presidency. I want to thank all of you for your outstanding ideas and contributions to the project. Our values and goals align: we work with young people and for young people. The Council of Europe, the COE-EU Partnership and EYCA focus on rural youth with their projects. This is no coincidence since rural youth is an important topic. Also, the Hungarian presidency of the Council of the European Union highlights the pivotal role of rural youth as well.

During the Hungarian Presidency, we specifically aim to focus on how to better involve young people living in rural, underdeveloped areas, far from economic, cultural, and educational centres, in decision-making and European networks. No one is responsible for where they were born, but everyone is connected to the place and region where they grew up. It would be ideal if every young person could start their adult life with equal opportunities, whether they were born in a village of 500 people or in a metropolis.

When we ask them, young people living in small rural settlements often express that they lack quality entertainment and cultural opportunities locally. There is a perception that "if you want access to quality cultural products, you have to go to the capital." Is this saying true? My experience tells me it's not so black and white. But it does indicate that there is still work to be done in this area. It's not entirely true because many cultural treasures can be found in rural areas as well—art collections, arboretums, museums, excellently operating theatres, historical landmarks.

At the same time, it's certain that we could further exploit the opportunities in promoting local culture. Hungary has many local festivals and village fairs. These festivals are about locals showcasing the best of their values, reinforcing their local identity to the outside world and to themselves.

Ladies and Gentlemen, local identity and patriotism are key phenomena—let's not take them lightly. Europe has achieved so much because it was built on local communities, allowing them to flourish. This is why cultural routes are also significant, as they remind us of the richness of this heritage. We must ensure that young people, too, learn about the history of their communities and European heritage.

But how can we bring classical culture closer to young people, or even create opportunities for them to engage with it? Research shows that only a portion of young people access cultural products.

Recently, a famous young Hungarian actor set out to promote reading among young people. He realized that he was using his smartphone too much and experienced its negative effects. So, he said: more book reading, less phone usage. This is a direction we can all agree on. He began publishing classical works, but in an unconventional format. These books are the size of a smartphone, so they can be read while standing on the street or during commutes. These books are sold very cheaply from vending machines across the country.

This is a great example of how classical cultural products can be adapted to young people's tastes and lifestyles. Another example could be the numerous cultural services and events accessible through the European Youth Card. Introducing young people to cultural routes could be another such method.

Did you know, for example, that the first royal meeting between the Czech, Polish, and Hungarian kings took place here in Visegrád in the 14th century? They decided to resolve their trade disputes through negotiations. This was also the inspiration for Hungary's first Prime Minister, József Antall, when he invited the leaders of these countries again after the political transition. Or did you know that in the 15th century, King Matthias had a Renaissance court built here? King Matthias respected Italian Renaissance culture, and besides Buda, this was his other seat of power.

To jump forward in time, General Artúr Görgey, a commander during the 1848 Revolution, also spent his old age here in Visegrád.

It is important that we continue to share and nurture these stories. It is vital that young people know their cultural heritage, to understand their identity and origins, thus strengthening their sense of belonging and continuity, and appreciating the struggles and achievements of previous generations.

Why? Because culture is the binding force of every nation and of Europe. It is the glue through which we recognize each other, that connects us, and makes us familiar to one another.

Imagine a world without culture. It would be a bleak, empty, materialistic world. Fortunately, that is not the case in Europe. We are surrounded by cultural values and routes, and it is important to recognize and preserve them. Visegrád will be joined to the Cultural Routes as there will be a Route named after King Sigmund next year. The participants of today's event will walk on an upcoming approved cultural route. I am glad that this future route will be visited by young people.

I hope that by the end of this event, everyone leaves feeling that culture was not just information but an experience. I wish you all a pleasant time here in Visegrád!