

The Baku Cultural Routes Declaration

Council of Europe cultural routes: cultural tourism for intercultural dialogue and social stability

Adopted at the Council of Europe Cultural Routes Annual Advisory Forum, 30-31 October 2014, Baku

The Participants in the Baku Forum,

Thanking the authorities of Azerbaijan for hosting the 2014 Council of Europe Cultural Routes Advisory Forum in Baku during this country's Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers;

Referring to the Innsbruck Declaration of 22 November 2013: "Quo Vadis? Council of Europe cultural routes 2014-2024", in which participants emphasised the need for all stakeholders in the programme to seek and develop synergies;

Congratulating Slovakia on having acceded to the EPA since the 2013 Forum and encouraging further accessions;

Thanking Spain for its invitation, accepted by the EPA Governing Board, to hold the 2015 Advisory Forum in Aranjuez and inviting other member states to consider hosting the Forum in 2016;

Recalling the continuing support of the European Union for the Council of Europe's cultural routes programme through joint management programmes with the European Commission, and welcoming the renewal of this cooperation in 2015-2016;

Welcoming the increased cooperation with the other international organisations in the field, in particular the United Nations World Tourism Organisation;

Thanking the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for its continued support for the programme through the hosting of the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR);

Taking note of the encouraging progress of the programme since the 2013 Forum, including in the framework of follow-up to the recommendations of the Innsbruck Declaration, in particular:

- the confirmation of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA) on 18 December 2013 with the adoption of Resolution CM/Res(2013)66;
- the renewal of the invitation to the European Union to become a full member of the EPA;
- the inclusion in the resolution of the possibility for other international organisations and a representative of the cultural routes to become observers to the EPA;
- the enhanced cooperation between the cultural routes programme and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), in particular through the Memorandum of Understanding between the UNWTO and the EICR, followed up in September 2014 by a pilot training course on tourism strategies organised jointly with the UNWTO Themis Foundation in Gaillac (France);
- the continued dialogue with the OECD Tourism Committee and joint visibility action with the European Travel Commission (ETC);
- the decision by the Governing Board to set up a joint working group with routes managers on governance of the cultural routes on national and regional levels;
- the cooperation undertaken between the members of the university network of cultural routes studies (CRSN), in particular in the new framework of the Erasmus + HECTOR programme (2014-2016);

Recognising the need to pursue this action in order to fulfill the potential of the programme and the need for all stakeholders to invest sufficient human and financial resources in its implementation;

Recognising that the Council of Europe cultural routes embody the ethical values of sustainable cultural tourism;

Noting that the public of the cultural routes is becoming increasingly aware of the values of solidarity and citizenship, gaining at the same time a stronger conscience of environmental issues and a growing interest in sustainable development and respect for the diversity and wealth of identities and cultures ;

Considering that these changes are the signs of a progressive transformation from consumerist tourism towards participative tourism, where the quality and diversity of European landscapes constitute a common resource and a criterion (as stated by the European Landscape Convention in its preamble) and respect for cultures and destinations makes lesser-known sites more attractive than some of the more visited places;

Endorse the following recommendations which are the result of the discussions held during the four workshops of the Baku Forum, and agree to communicate them to the statutory bodies of the cultural routes programme:

1)

With respect to the role of Council of Europe cultural routes as vectors of intercultural dialogue

The participants in the workshop on this theme, recalling the role of the cultural routes to "*promote dialogue between urban and rural cultures, between regions in the south, north, east and west of Europe, and between developed and disadvantaged regions*" and "*promote dialogue and understanding between majority and minority, native and immigrant cultures*" (CM/Res(2013)67),

Call on Council of Europe cultural routes to make use of the guidelines in the Council of Europe's texts and conventions when carrying out their activities, in particular the Faro Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society and the White Paper on intercultural dialogue, and to promote their principles with their institutional partners;

Stress that a precondition for dialogue is the free and open capacity to participate of all members of the host communities, unfettered by commercial, social or political constraints;

Emphasise the importance of authentic experience as a basis for dialogue. While understanding the need to render experiences accessible, the tendency of tourism to package, objectify and sanitise the experiences of visitors must be avoided in favour of forms of tourism that involve an authentic and unrestricted contact between host and guest communities;

Note that cultural routes can only help satisfy the desire to experience the "other" on condition that the parties concerned are willing to understand and accept their cultural differences;

Believe that dialogue and exchange are facilitated through an appeal to intuition and emotion; creative interpretation and performance must therefore be integrated in the route's activities and communication strategies;

Stress that engagement with the values of a cultural route may also be expressed through physical activities, including sport;

In general, because of the multiplicity of audiences, emphasise the importance of innovation and diversity in the cultural routes' communication;

In particular, emphasise the importance of ensuring the full participation of younger generations and consequently of cultural routes developing active education programmes and tourism products that specifically target young audiences – both of school age and young adults – and communication channels that are attractive and relevant to younger generations.

2)

With respect to Council of Europe cultural routes as drivers for sustainable social and economic development

Recalling the aim of the Council of Europe as set out in its Statute “to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress”,

Referring to Committee of Ministers Resolution CM/Res(2013)66 which states that the EPA should seek to “shape a shared cultural space through the development of cultural routes aiming to foster awareness-raising about heritage, education, networking, quality and sustainable cross-border tourism and other related activities” and that “it shall contribute to the preservation of a diverse heritage through theme-based and alternative tourist itineraries and cultural projects”,

The participants in this workshop recognise that sustainable social and economic development, as an essential element of balanced and peaceful societies, can be achieved through transnational cultural and heritage cooperation projects;

In the light of this, participants recommend that Council of Europe cultural routes realise further their potential as drivers for sustainable social and economic development through:

- increasing residents' awareness of their cultural heritage and encouraging them to become the main promoters of their own culture;
- promoting recognition by the local business communities of both the economic and the cultural value of their heritage;
- encouraging local communities to involve young people in cultural routes management and heritage promotion;
- stimulating capacity-building projects for young people and entrepreneurs;
- encouraging dialogue between cultural routes and the local and global business communities by promoting creative platforms which include local businesses, tourism stakeholders and educational organisations, aiming to devise cultural products and commercialise responsible tourism;
- increasing the dialogue between and within routes and Research and Development departments, in order to strengthen the cultural and economic connections between the different members and stimulate a transnational, multi-level approach.

3)

With respect to Council of Europe cultural routes as educational tools for understanding past conflicts, easing tensions and promoting peaceful cohabitation

The participants in the workshop, recognising that cultural routes can only be based on peace and that they have the potential not only to create places where intercultural dialogue can flourish, but also to foster peace through the promotion of social justice, human rights, economic equity, sustainable development, and democracy, with the capability of non-violent conflict resolution,

Recommend that the cultural routes of the Council of Europe, especially those which illustrate the historical confrontations which have shaped today's Europe, engage in educational activities for all types of public;

Call upon the participants at the Conference of Ministers for Culture and Tourism organised jointly by UNESCO and the UNWTO (Cambodia, February 2015) to bear in mind the importance of cultural routes for fostering intercultural dialogue and propose that cultural routes for peace be a theme for the next World Forum on Intercultural dialogue (Baku, May 2015);

Emphasise the need for routes to identify and promote the fundamental universal values related to their themes, and that a firm foundation on these values will guarantee that their activities and tourism products are sustainable and responsible;

Stress that the history which forms the themes of cultural routes, in particular where it is linked to past conflicts and wars, should not be misused by inauthentic commercial exploitation which is not based on research and reliable historical facts.

4)

With respect to Council of Europe cultural routes as guardians of Europe's memory and living history

The participants in the workshop,

Recognise cultural routes as channels for intergenerational transmission of memory and living history, and the opportunities they offer to tell Europe's "stories" through the different standpoints of the networks of witnesses and inheritors;

Recognise also that the routes are tools for telling and learning history informally, offering inhabitants and visitors a multi-faceted understanding historical events and ways of reinterpreting that history in modern contexts;

Encourage cultural routes to become an instrument for cultural dialogue and reconciliation, especially with regard to living and collective memory, and to this end recommend; that memories presented are respectful of history and that audiences are invited to contribute to their understanding and interpretation as well as to share their own memories, thereby becoming co-producers, through living memory, of common European history;

- that similarities and diversity are equally identified and differences respected, and that synergies are used to enhance individual, personal values;
- that the necessary platforms are created (through research, education, business involvement, new technologies) to foster the co-production of living memories;

Stressing the importance of intercultural dialogue between young generations in order to anticipate and negotiate conflict, the participants recommend:

- that the young generations be encouraged to create intercultural dialogue and to identify common heritage values, aims and objectives;
- the promotion of formal and informal education, taking advantage of new information technologies in order to attract new and younger audiences;
- the promotion and creation of new channels for exchanges between young people from different countries, inviting them to actively participate in the understanding and sharing of European memories;

Emphasising the importance of fostering bottom-up approaches, they recommend:

- that communities related to cultural routes be invited to collectively identify and contribute content to cultural routes as a precondition for their involvement. The sharing of cultural routes contents should be based on different means of actively engaging local communities, such as festivals and events;
- an approach which is both informative and interactive, balancing tangible and intangible heritage, challenging stereotypes and received myths, and stressing common European stories and citizenships;

Considering the importance of tourism as a tool for cross-cultural understanding, they also recommend that different types of storytelling be used as crucial means to link the myths, legends and local identities of different communities and as basis for the development of responsible and sustainable tourism products.

In addition, the participants in the Baku Forum:

- look forward to the further consolidation of relations with the other international organisations in the field through cooperation projects in specific areas related to cultural routes design and management;
- encourage the university network to enlarge its membership to other interested universities and research institutions, taking into account the proposals of member states and as appropriate;
- congratulate the Council of Europe cultural routes managers on their work together to share good practices and to consolidate their position as active partners in the programme, and look forward to increased synergies between routes which can only enhance both the visibility and relevance of the programme;

Finally, the participants resolve to pursue dialogue and interaction around the above subjects as a follow-up to the Baku Forum and in preparation of the 2015 Council of Europe Cultural Routes Advisory Forum in Aranjuez (Spain).

Baku, 31 October 2014