

The Colmar Declaration

25 years of Council of Europe cultural routes

The Participants in the Colmar Forum,

Congratulating the Council of Europe on the 25th anniversary of its Cultural Routes programme since the Declaration of Santiago de Compostela of 23 October 1987,

Thanking the authorities of France for hosting the 2012 Council of Europe Cultural Routes Advisory Forum in Colmar,

Recalling the Declaration of Santiago of 23 October 1987,

Acknowledging the contribution of the Council of Europe's cultural routes programme to the development of cross-border cultural cooperation, social cohesion and economic development in Europe and recognising the great potential still to be fulfilled in these areas,

Approving the statement of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in its Resolution CM/Res(2010)52 that: "the identification of European values and a common European cultural heritage may be achieved via cultural routes tracing the history of peoples, migrations, and the spread of the major European currents of civilisation in the fields of philosophy, religion, culture, the arts, science, technology and trade" and that "such routes lend themselves to long-term European co-operation programmes in the fields of research, heritage enhancement, culture and the arts, cultural and educational youth exchanges, cultural tourism in Europe and sustainable cultural development",

While aware of the unity of Council of Europe's cultural routes in their goal of managing their cultural legacy sustainably and professionally, acknowledging the diversity of the Council of Europe's cultural routes in their cultural legacy, thematic focus and network structures:

Call upon member states of the Council of Europe as well as interested non-member states having not yet acceded to the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes to consider accession as soon as possible, in order to ensure the confirmation of the EPA at the end of its pilot phase and to increase the impact and geographical coverage of the programme;

Call upon cultural routes networks to reinforce their transnational cooperation aimed to implement the values and principles upheld by the Council of Europe's programme;

Endorse the following recommendations discussed during the four workshops held during the Colmar Forum and agree to communicate them to the statutory bodies of the cultural routes programme:

The Council of Europe cultural routes networks

Agree on the importance of defining common positions and strategies in order to strengthen the impact of cultural routes in areas such as sustainable cultural heritage management, the use of new technologies and respectful, cultural tourism;

Welcome the election of a representative and spokesperson for the cultural routes and ask him to:

- plan and convene a meeting of the Council of Europe certified routes during the first six months of 2013, in order to constitute an advisory body and to decide on areas of policy on which to work together;
- send a request to the Governing Board and to the Committee of Member States of the EPA for observer status with these bodies.

Stress the need to make full use of creative and innovative tools in order to enhance the visibility and outreach of cultural routes and thereby fulfill their educational and participative potential.

The representatives of other supranational and international organisations participating in the Forum (European Commission,¹ UNESCO, UNWTO, OECD)

Recognising the added value of cooperation between international organisations active in the field of cultural and natural heritage and in particular its tourism dimension,

Welcoming the opportunity to discuss areas of common interest and possible synergies:

Agree to continue working together on possible common policies in areas such as governance, research and innovation, performance evaluation, knowledge-sharing, training and capacity-building, sustainable cultural heritage management and accessibility;

Undertake to consider favourably the proposal to participate as observers in the work of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes;²

Taking into account that modifications to the statutory texts governing the EPA could be proposed at the end of the pilot phase of the EPA in December 2013, undertake to further discuss these matters in 2013.

The representatives of universities having expressed their interest in working on the setting up of a network of universities for the Council of Europe's cultural routes

In view of the interest and potential of interdisciplinary research on cultural routes and in particular on those of the Council of Europe

Undertake to set up a network of universities working on cultural routes coordinated by the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR).

The representatives of local and regional authorities, interregional associations and routes networks

Underlining the fundamental role of Europe's regions in the successful implementation and development of cultural routes,

Recognising the importance of cultural routes as a tool for sustainable regional development and underlining that they are the expression of European citizenship,

Call for the sharing of good practices promoting regional development;

Undertake to promote the inclusion of cultural routes in local and regional cultural and economic development plans through participative policies;

Decide to promote cooperation between European regions through the cultural routes programme.

Colmar, 23 November 2012

¹ The representative of the European Commission took note of the Declaration and would inform the European Institute of Cultural Routes of the Commission's position at a later date.

² The European Union is already an observer with the EPA and according to Resolution CM/Res(2010)53 is the only organisation which has explicitly the possibility of becoming a member.