Cycling Tourism and Cultural Routes

**ONLINE WORKSHOP**

**2 October 2020**

**CONCLUSIONS on afternoon session dedicated to CULTURAL ROUTES**

* Number of cultural routes certified by the council of Europe is increasing, as well as the membership number in most of the routes. Currently, there are 38 certified routes, of which 23 cross Adriatic – Ionian and Danube regions.
* The European Cultural Route project is continuously evolving since its inception in 1987, when it initially started as a cultural idea. Recent developments include:
  + Diversification in terms of stakeholder network enlargement and their active engagement
  + Cultural routes today spread through numerous MRS countries, over thousands of kilometres, gathering together a number of sites into an integrated route destinations, in line with sustainable tourism offer, promoting less developed and unknown regions, off the beaten track,, providing social and cultural sustainability and new visibility of European identity levels
  + Expansion in terms of regional dimensions, as illustrated by the project Routes4U with 8 routes included from all MRS, and 4 from EUSAIR and EUSDR – Iron Age Route, Olive Tree Route, the Cyril and Methodius Route and Roman Heritage Route
  + Research and development, diversification of tourism offer, training and skills, cooperation in culture and creativity, sustainable and responsible management of destinations can be recognized as common points of interest for MRS and cultural routes
  + Cultural routes can provide deseasonalization, new comfort zones for visitors, harmonization and redistribution of visitors through time and space
  + Integration in terms of products and activities, from tourism to which they are intrinsically linked early on to, most recently, creative industries which are finding their interest in teaming up with tourism and cultural route networks
  + Alliances between routes such as integration of cultural routes and cycling routes, such as Eurovelo network or national/local cycling networks, as amply illustrated by a presentation of Iron Curtain Trail, or on a local scale by Romanian initiative Bike in Time.
  + To be fully developed and certified cultural routes, identified through their strong thematic and scientific background still need financing for their structural and infrastructural support and have proved to be best developed through transnational programs
* The Covid-19 crisis has brough to light trends already rolling in the background – small, slow, local, authentic, green, ethical – possibly indicating that positive social transformation is enfolding faster and manifesting stronger. Cultural and cycling routes offer almost ideal conditions for convergence of these new trends observable in terms of consumer demands and growing number of sustainable suppliers of products and services.
* While cultural routes are results of local initiatives and huge number of enthusiastic stakeholders, with a myriad of activities related to research, networking, knowledge and business alliances, a dedicated supranational/regional funding, especially in terms of cultural and tourism promotion to the wider public would add greatly to the fulfilment of cultural route core mission – to establish and promote a common European heritage.