

# ISTER Benchmarking Toolkit

For project partners, public authorities and interested parties







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URBASOFIA, Director  
ISOCARP, President

The ISTER project has the great ambition of defining a domain of common reflection, starting precisely from cultural heritage, where concrete experiences can be found for sustainable development with an impact on the trans-regional scale.

Territorial cooperation between the various Danube regions does not always take place easily. Local interests are often not vectors of bottom-up development but tend to be claims for rights that result in a selfish localism that does not know how to build bridges towards the other, and this is accentuated in cross-border regions.

ISTER wants to give a new meaning to the local level, that of development engine. An engine whose pieces are the city networks.

The cultural heritage left in inheritance by the Roman roads is the pretext through which to rediscover the ability to think beyond one's own local interest and learn to build perspectives of a European character.

ISTER is first of all a project that teaches to think and act in an integrated way, which uses cultural heritage as a trigger to generate local clusters of sustainable development based on the variety of different economies (experiential tourism, quality agriculture, craftsmanship, high level hospitality ...).

ISTER's tools are based on the ability to cooperate, to understanding that development is always a positive sum and not zero sum game. The tools developed in this experience are a first step, they have opened a new road, not Roman now, but European starting from the values of unity in the difference that perhaps have roots in Roman thought, there is still a lot to do, and therefore: ad maiora!





Arh. Anca Vignaș  
Lead Partner

The project idea came from the necessity to protect and highlight the built heritage, mark and promote a pedestrian route that could sustain the development of the local areas and connect zones and various rural landscapes.

A question that came up and that was at the base of this idea was: If the transhumance routes are included in the local urban plans (PUG's), why not include also the roman roads?

“Connecting Historical Danube Regions Roman Routes” – acquired the “ITER” acronym in an early stage of the project, the name meaning “path” in latin, and then was further changed into “ISTER” when it was discovered that on the map of the Roman Empire, dating from 117 AD, the Danube river used to be called ISTER in Ancient Greece. The name matched with the starting idea of the project and also with the fact that our partners and founders of the project were Interreg Danube.

The Romanian historian, Florin Fodorean, mentioned in his book “Roman Roads” („Drumurile la romani”) that „[...] the building process of the roads reached its peak towards the end of the Imperial era, when about 30 roads started from Rome in all directions.

It is estimated that during the reign of Emperor Trajan, the length of the Roman road network was 80.000-100.000 km, which had a strategic military role but also a high importance in the economic development of the areas that it crosses. **In the cultural landscape of the Empire, the road was as important as the rustic towns and villas. [...]** “

After 2000 years, we want to put these roads back on the map and we believe that a development of a pedestrian route in a sustainable way can revive the local economy and transform forgotten areas of the world into important points of a vast eco-cultural corridor through a slow motion road for pedestrian, which connects us to roots, traditions, culture and people.

# Colophon

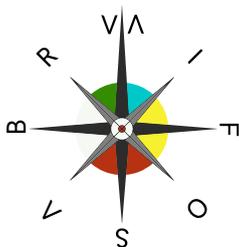
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# The concept of a cultural route



Cultural routes are meaningful experiences to celebrate cultural, historical, and environmental values. They are the infrastructure of living collective memory.

The routes can be either physically linked by bundling pathways, sites, objects or can be under a common narrative of path.

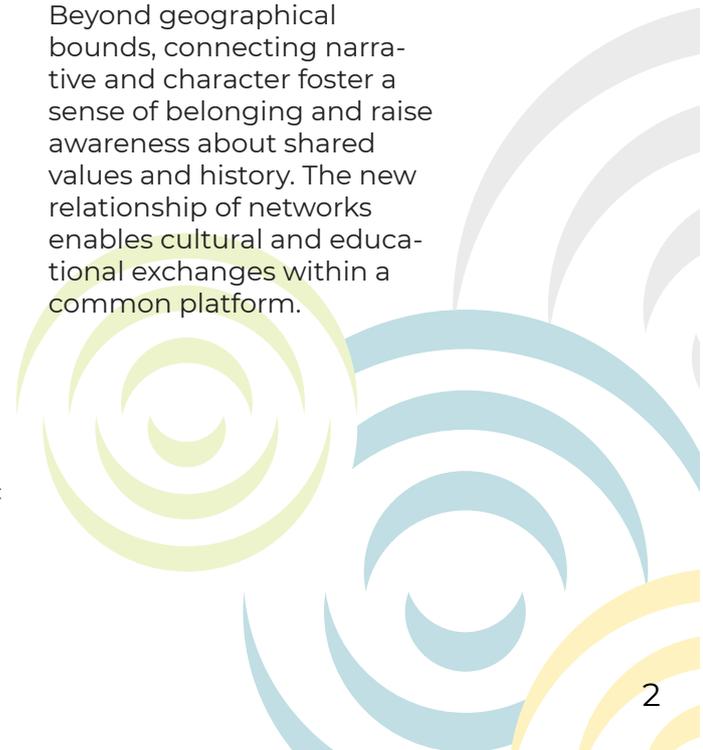
A network of routes is identified by individual points of interest, monumental buildings, existing pathways, or local sites. To connect important milestones and preserve the heritage, a shared theme of the route establishes a continuous cultural bond.

A theme links the common values and offers an opportunity for cooperation

between new boundaries across borders, influencing their development and evolution. Furthermore, the routes are tools for sustaining the local historic values of rural and archaeological landscapes. The connections of route transform the local places, empower their cultural identity, and promote their economy by stimulating tourism.

The organization of thematic events held at various spatial levels illustrates the diversity of cultures by facilitating creative and innovative practices within the route.

Beyond geographical bounds, connecting narrative and character foster a sense of belonging and raise awareness about shared values and history. The new relationship of networks enables cultural and educational exchanges within a common platform.



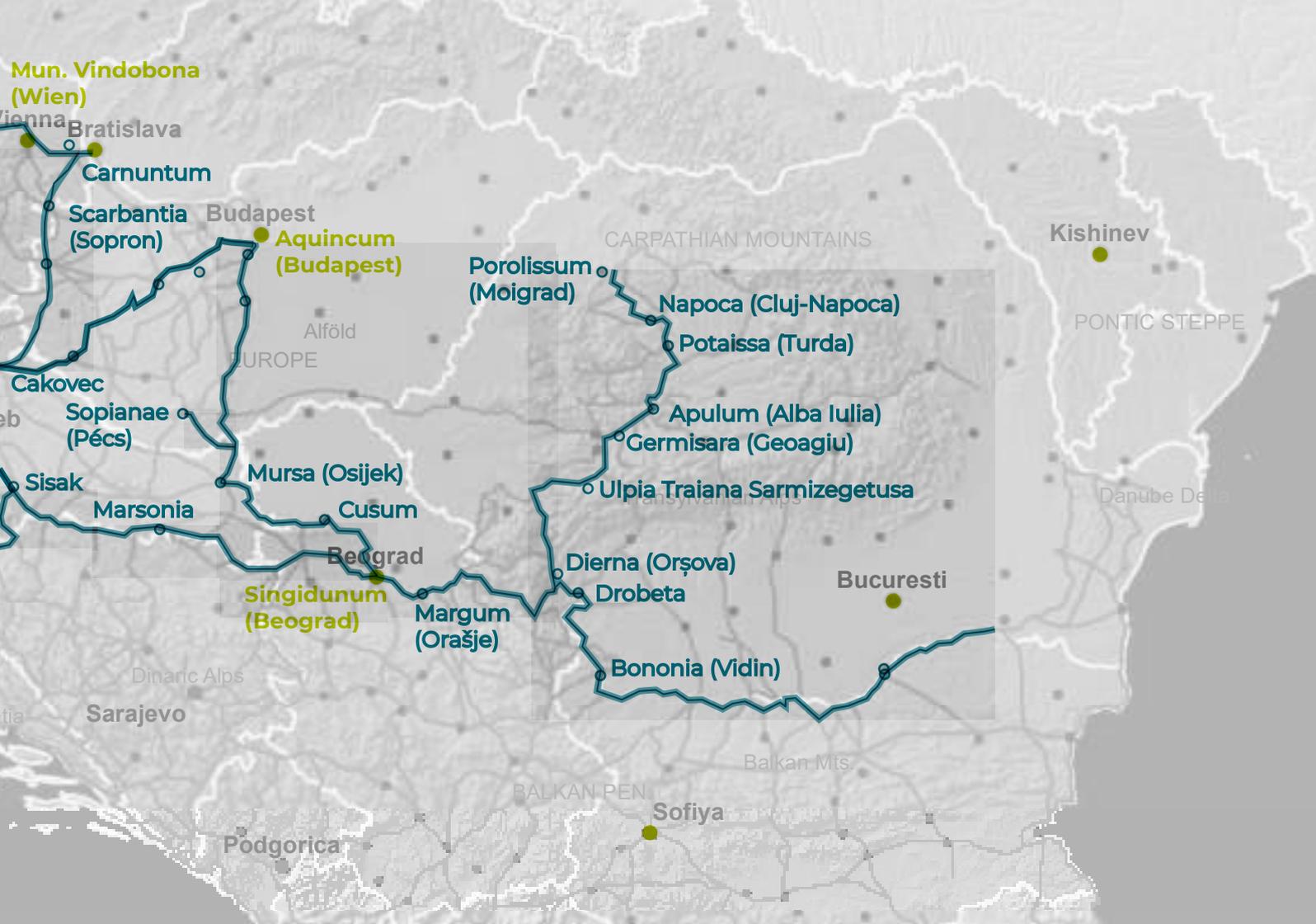
# ISTER project

ISTER's main objective focuses on rediscovering and revitalizing the ancient Roman Roads Network along the DR as a key driver in promoting territorial development based on sustainable use of cultural and natural heritage (specifically, Roman routes).

ISTER tackles the territorial dimension of the Roman Routes, as a contiguous transnational element that passes DR states' borders and provides a relevant scale for exchange and joint development

One of the key assets ISTER is leveraging on, in connection with the Common Benchmarking Toolkit is (1) Acquiring the shift from old policy approaches (protection through isolation) to new, integrative methods for improving the policy and regulatory framework in Danube crossed-regions.





Mun. Vindobona  
(Wien)

Vienna Bratislava

Carnuntum

Scarbantia  
(Sopron)

Budapest  
Aquincum  
(Budapest)

Alföld

EUROPE

Cakovec

Sopianae  
(Pécs)

Sisak

Marsonia

Mursa (Osijek)

Cusum

Beograd

Singidunum  
(Beograd)

Margum  
(Orašje)

CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS

Porolissum  
(Moigrad)

Napoca (Cluj-Napoca)

Potaissa (Turda)

Apulum (Alba Iulia)

Germisara (Geoagiu)

Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa

Dierna (Orșova)

Drobeta

Bononia (Vidin)

Bucuresti

Kishinev

PONTIC STEPPE

Danube Delta

Dinaric Alps

Sarajevo

BALKAN PEN

Balkan Mts.

Sofiya

Podgorica

# About this Toolkit

This toolkit represents a common transnational instrument, which has its roots in the findings of ISTER Policy and regulatory report on the protection and valorisation of Roman network of Routes and Settlements.

## Why use it?

This Benchmarking toolkit encloses a series of practical methods, policy guidelines, mechanisms and recommendations with high potential for testing, replication and up-scaling of successful adaptive and creative practices for increasing competences in identification and evaluation of cultural routes, as well as to establish new common approaches towards Roman eco-cultural routes development, use and valorisation in Danube Region.

## Who should use it?

Its aim is to allow and empower partners, public authorities and other interested parties to conduct their own evaluation for assessing current conditions and performance in relation to successful European models. Especially, the toolkit is addressed to territorial partners, which will benefit of the main shortcomings in terms of policies and practices towards Roman network of Routes and Settlements protection, valorisation, management and sustainable use.

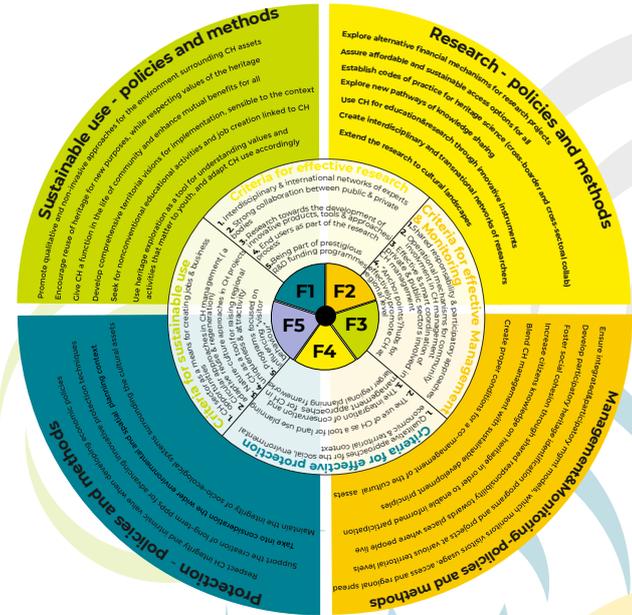


# ISTER Pocket Instrument

The ISTER 'pocket instrument' was designed as a practical tool aimed at supporting policy makers in understanding if and to what extent they meet a set of criteria for fulfilling their potential in different stages, from research and all the way to sustainable use of Cultural Routes.

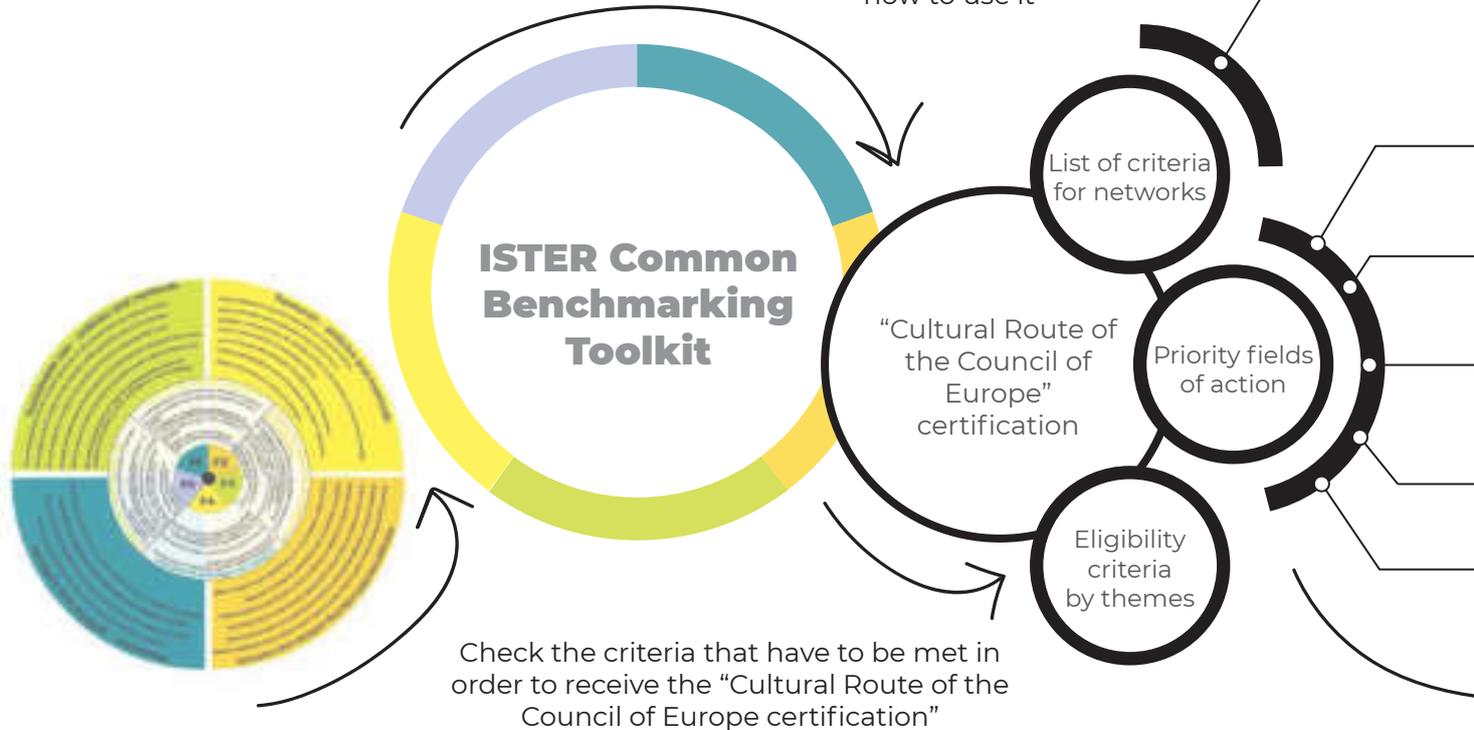
The assessment can be made for each of the 5 action fields defined by the Council of Europe, which are further explained in more detail in the guide. While the criteria is more general, and relevant to the same extent for all the 5 themes, the policies and practical methods relevance is changing for each theme, depending on its focus. The tool was envisioned under the format of 3 independent, but interrelated circles, each with its own axis of rotation - in order to offer the possibility of analyzing the criteria fulfillment and the related strategic

tools for each theme, and then check the booklet for each case in an organized manner. For each case, the toolkit offers a best practice example, which gives a glimpse of the complexity and beauty related to the process for gaining a successful cultural route from a territorial, socio-economic and cultural point of view. Moreover, it contextualizes each theme and offers a sound justification for adapting and implementing some/all of the proposed policies and practical methods

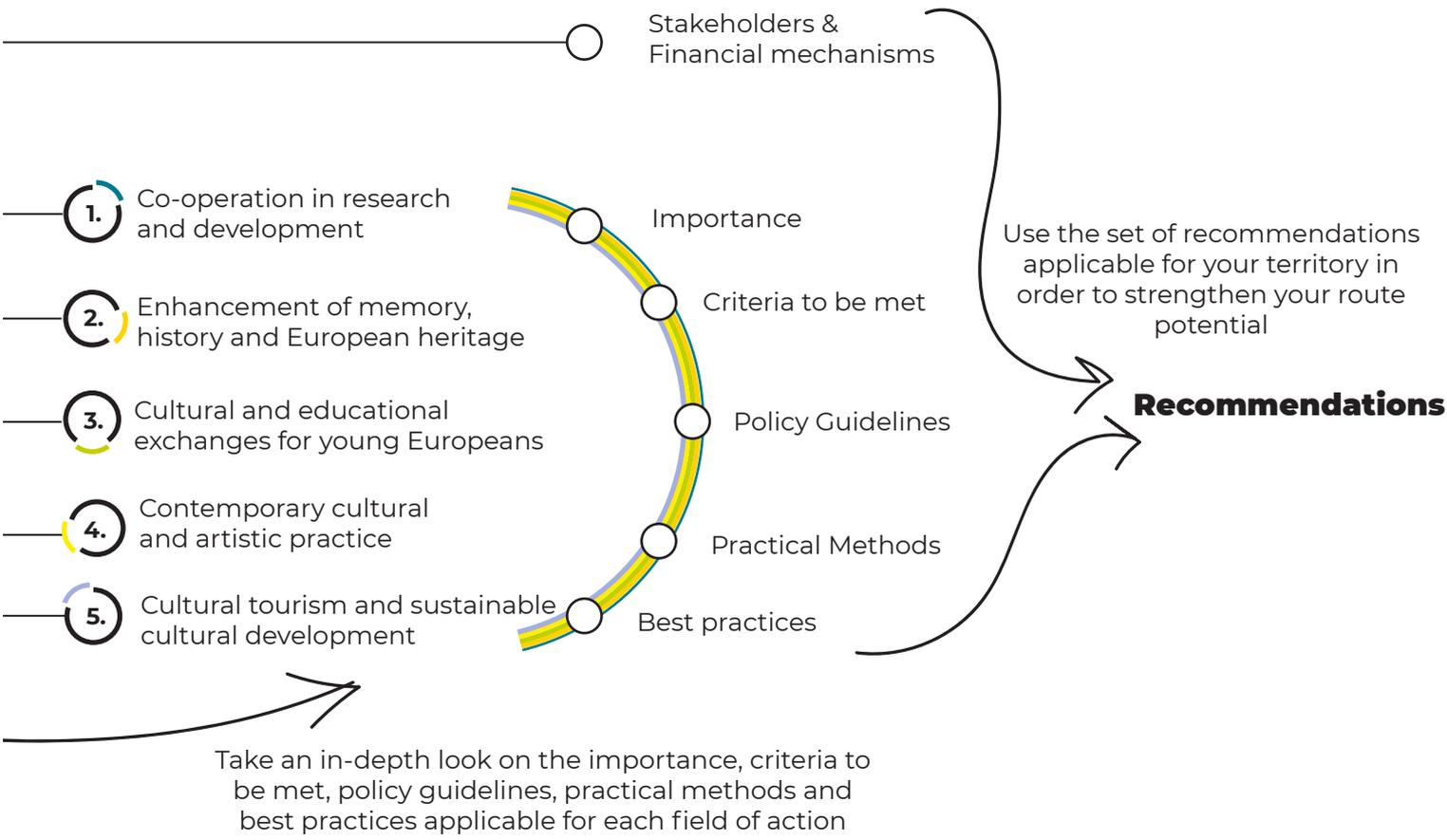


# Five steps to use it

Take first steps: open the toolkit, find out what it is, to whom it is addressed and how to use it



Identify your weak field on your route by using the pocket instrument



# How to find your path?

One main element in developing a cultural route is its story and the way it is shared with the public. A great story is based on a strong narrative and a starting theme, which should be grounded on the essential or particular qualities of the route.

The certification “**Cultural Route of the Council of Europe**” may be granted to projects that deal with a European theme, comply with the priority fields of actions and are presented by a single network. According to Council of Europe, the themes of your route must satisfy a set of 6 eligibility criteria:

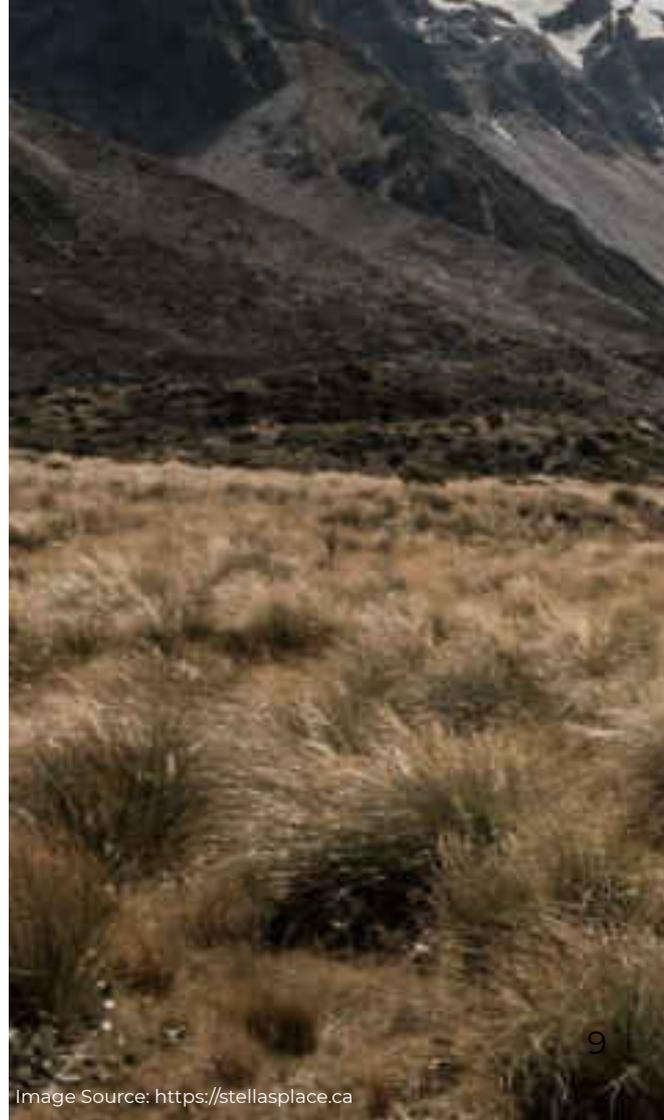
1. Be representative for European values and common to at least three countries of Europe;
2. Be researched and developed by groups of multidisciplinary experts from different regions of Europe;

3. Be illustrative for the European memory, history, and heritage and contribute to an interpretation of the diversity of present-day Europe;

4. Lend itself to cultural and educational exchanges for young people;

5. Permit the development of initiatives and exemplary projects in the field of cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development;

6. Lend itself to the development of tourist products in partnership with tourist agencies and operators







# Field 1: Co-operation in research and development

## Why is important?

In general terms, co-operation can take place between any public or private entities, as business and another enterprise, university or college. It allows the transfer of skills and knowledge, and ensures access to facilities, expertise and potentially new development ideas that would otherwise be out of reach solitary.

Among the **benefits** of an R&D co-operation are: quality product offered and competitive edge, resource and profit sharing, costs and risks sharing, access to new markets and faster time-to-market.

From the territorial point of view, long term co-operation can ensure a shared understanding of the existing territorial issues and challenges among all partners involved in the cultural route network and an unitary and integrated development approach, emerged from a common vision; these being prerequisites for sustainable use of heritage values .

## What criteria a project must meet? (according to Council of Europe)

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.

# How to approach R&D in CH for a real impact

The research related to CH assets is most often a rather isolated process, which focuses mainly on exploring the materiality of heritage objects and ways to maintain their integrity and authenticity. But is it all?

According to an extensive study prepared by ICCROM, the actual impact of research activities is increasingly asked for by funding bodies across the world. The study stands for the need to shifting focus from **knowledge transfer to knowledge exchange**, as the relevance and effectiveness of research

activities in CH highly depends on how closely they are aligned to the needs of the users, and also how well it engages with them. Thus, the research process should be really inclusive and support the work of other professionals and bring benefits for the community.

Last but not least, seeking interdisciplinarity in heritage science brings added value to the **scientific discovery**, through 'complementary knowledge and exposure to different ways of thinking, ideas and concepts.'

## First "take aways"

- \*Shift focus from knowledge transfer to knowledge exchange
- \*Seek for inclusive processes and gather opinions from interwoven network of actors
- \*Interdisciplinary collaboration leads to a higher quality of scientific discovery
- \*Research value and impact is highly dependent of the diversity of engaged partners and quality of knowledge exchange
- \*Scientific inquiry should align with the professionals and community interests and with the policy and funding bodies

# Policy guidelines



Promote the use of CH for educational, research and tourism purposes through innovative tools and platforms

Take into consideration alternative financing mechanisms for CH-related research, protection and valorisation projects



Applying and further developing innovative non-invasive technologies and tools for an effective research of CH assets



Establish networks of interdisciplinary experts which join their efforts in the R&D of CH areas

Extend the research to cultural landscapes (the wider socio-economic, territorial and environmental contexts of the concerned H asset)



Develop collaborative, scientific and technological research projects for the protection of CH

# Practical methods



Key players within the heritage sector need to negotiate affordable and sustainable open access options for all



Established codes of practice for research, specifically developed for heritage science (In order to enhance collaborations across institutional, disciplinary and geographic borders)



Moving from an emphasis on academic impact towards a non academic impact achieved through working closely with research beneficiaries (active contributions of individuals)



Heritage institutions should engage in knowledge dissemination pathways that extend beyond traditional journal article publishing to new models of research sharing and knowledge exchange

## Best practice: European Route of Historic Gardens



The route brings together 28 historic gardens from 6 European countries: Georgia, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain, together reaching an annual number of 8 million visitors and 500 pedagogic and artistic manifestations organized. Its general aim is to recognize the historical, artistic and social value of historic gardens and their belonging to the common European heritage.

Among the things that make the route special is the theme particularity, being rarely addressed in the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, as well as the link with other certified European routes such as: the "Impressionisms Route", the "Route of Al-Andalus Heritage", the "Cluniac Sites", the "Cistercian Abbeys", "The Casadean Sites", and of course the "Route of the Olive Tree".

The Route Network supports cooperation activities in research and development, working with the Benetton Foundation and Universities of Barcelona, Girona and Lisbon.



In less than three years, the network has organized three forums, bringing together specialists and managers of European historic gardens with the aim to exchange knowledge and good practices. These events are also open for anyone interested in the European cultural heritage.

One operational output which emerged from these forums is the "Best Practices Manual of the European Historic Gardens", establishing the conditions that must govern the integrated management of the sites part of the network, based on 4 pillars: protection, research, conservation and dissemination.

It also encourages researchers and specialists, by establishing connections with "collaborating members" (persons or institutions) considered by the General Assembly, able to provide expertise on specific topics.

Two research projects are underway: one led by the historic gardens of Boboli (Italy) and Warsaw (Poland) on "Citri and Aurea", and the 2nd led by Boboli (Italy) and the Alhambra (Spain) on Mediterranean species.



## Field 2: Enhancement of memory, history and European heritage

### Why is important?

Enhancement of the historical values, the common good passed from our previous generations, represent the way how people relate to the past and how they will built they future identity.

Heritage enhancement at European level is important for building a **collective understanding** of these values and defining a holistic and integrated **identity** which will ensure strong connections between territories, cultural diversity and the promotion of peace and understanding between nations.

### What criteria a project must meet? (according to Council of Europe)

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;

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.

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;

# Current approaches for CH safeguard and promotion

One of the most impactful initiatives concerning the CH promotion was the European Year of CH (2018), which stated that “through cherishing our cultural heritage, we can discover our diversity and start an intercultural conversation about what we have in common”.

During 2018, several initiatives and events were organized around Europe in order to raise the awareness regarding the importance of getting involved in CH management, while 10 long-term impact projects were chosen, which included research for innovative

solutions for re-using CH, activities for schools, etc. In the next year, a Declaration for Safeguarding CH was adopted, which claimed for the need to form an European network of experts, the involvement of youth in CH-related activities, including inter-generational promotion, the mobilization of funds, bringing together stakeholders with complementary skills to join their efforts for tackling the challenges CH is facing - in general raising awareness among various types of key actors.

## First “take aways”

\*CH is a tool which has the potential to enhance the inter-cultural, international and inter-generational dialogue of people

\*We need innovative solutions for re-using CH, in order to make it more attractive for the current and future generations and also assure its safeguarding

\*Youth need to be more involved in CH safeguarding and promotion

\*International networks of experts need to be created

\*Stakeholders with complementary skills need to join their efforts for safeguarding CH

\*CH must be understood in a wider socioeconomic and ecological context

# Policy guidelines



Promote qualitative approaches for the environment, which do not harm its cultural value



Seek for integrated policies, which take into consideration cultural, biological, geological and landscape diversity and assure a balance between them

Use innovative techniques to present CH to the public, while preserving its integrity



Strengthen international cultural relations

Respect CH integrity and intrinsic value when developing economic policies



Use CH as a means to giving the region a distinctive character and make it more attractive and better known



Enhance mutual benefits for the community and the heritage itself and give CH 'a function in the life of community'

# Practical methods



Create long-term partnerships with innovative enterprises which could support the digitalisation of CH and enhance its protection and valorisation through innovative techniques



Indepth desk and field research aimed at supporting the collection, classifying and intergration process for the overall territorial vision for implementation



Implement programs and projects for the community on the CH premises, and seek for nonconventional educational activities and job creation linked to CH



Develop a comprehensive territorial vision for implementation, sensible to the socio-economic, cultural and ecological values of the surrounding territory of the targeted CH values



Support the creation of local, regional and transnational networks of stakeholders and create proper conditions for a co-management of the cultural assets



# Best practice: TRANSROMANICA

## The Romanesque Routes of European Heritage

Officially recognized in 2007 as a “Major Cultural Route of the Council of Europe”, TRANSROMANICA connects the common Romanesque heritage values of nine European countries: Austria, Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Slovakia, Germany, Serbia and Romania.

The aim of the route is to promote the European heritage of the Romanesque art and architecture and develop tourism so as to support sustainable regional and economic development; ensuring thus, the ongoing conservation of the buildings.

The general thematic of the route is representative for this theme in the context of creating a historically grown cultural space in Europe, teaching the “principle of unity in diversity by showing the original and meaningful links between European regions.”

Visitors have the opportunity to hear stories of Europe in the Middle Ages, experience culture and understand the idea at European level thus forming the capacity to recognise and distinguish the similarities and differences between various European regions.



Some of the activities undertaken in this thematic are: Castle Construction Project (30 years) in Friesach, Austria; Participation in European Heritage Days; Publication of 360 degree panoramic views of the Romanesque Heritage Sites in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany; Communication in the event “The Cafés of Europe” etc. The ongoing project of the Castle construction in Friesach



(the oldest city of Carinthia), Austria is located on a medieval site which spans 6.5 hectares. It represents a historical experiment for the visitors being built using only medieval methods without any modern tools. The experiment wants to answer the question of how monumental buildings like castles, churches and town walls were built during the Middle Ages.



## Field 3: Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans

### Why is important?

Cultural and educational exchanges give young people an important insight into other perspectives and cultures, helping them enhancing their social and personal development , broadening horizons and encouraging them to develop personal opinions and ideas.

At a larger scale this helps lay the groundwork of relevant and sustainable community networks, promote equality of opportunity, peace and justice between territories.

### What criteria a project must meet? (according to Council of Europe)

Include the organisation 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 decompartmentalisation by organising 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.

# Current efforts for youth exchanges

According to UN, “transmitting heritage values to young people favours intercultural understanding, respect for cultural diversity and help create an environment propitious to a culture of peace”. . . Thus, UN encourages CH practitioners to keep involving young people in actions for heritage protection and promotion, as they are the key persons which can transmit CH values and an “identity embedded in this shared heritage” to the future generations. The organization also advises practitioners to use at full potential the existing instruments which enable youth to act for heritage, thus

enabling also their mobility around Europe and beyond. UN insists on the importance of developing skills for CH management and policy formulation among the youth, by involving them in volunteering programs, internships and jobs in the field.

The active involvement of youth in the policy sector is of great importance, as it leads to more **equitable, transparent and better informed decisions** and to a contemporary understanding of how CH should be approached. Young people should be encouraged to become **“thinkers and actors for development”**.

## First “take aways”

- \*Promote holistic youth development and participation through education
- \*Enhance sustainability of youth engagement
- \*Create and reinforce synergy between youth and heritage stakeholders
- \*Expand the outreach of the projects, promoting regional and international exchange of cultures
- \*Policy formulation with the participation of youth
- \*Capacity-development to support the transition to adulthood - Introducing entrepreneurial and cultural management skills in higher education programmes

# Policy guidelines



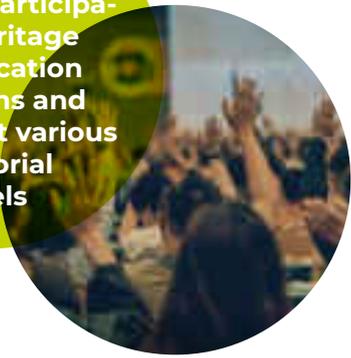
Showcase efforts by local communities to reveal and rehabilitate forgotten heritage (identification and discovery, upkeep, promotion)



Increase citizens' knowledge of and information on heritage in order to enable them to participate in an informed way



Foster social cohesion through shared responsibility towards places where people live



Support creativity, education, innovation and job creation

Develop participatory heritage identification programs and projects at various territorial levels

# Practical methods



Providing more familiar physical, virtual and discursive spaces for engagement and debate on CH for the young people



Engage young people in “formulating their own research questions on CH related topics and formulate original ways to learn about their history” and about themselves



Use heritage exploration as a tool for understanding values and activities that matter to young people, as well as the places they actually use and appreciate



Assure collaborations with tangential fields of activity (ICT, arts&crafts, gastronomy, tourism, etc) and create innovative job opportunities in the CH sector as a result of it



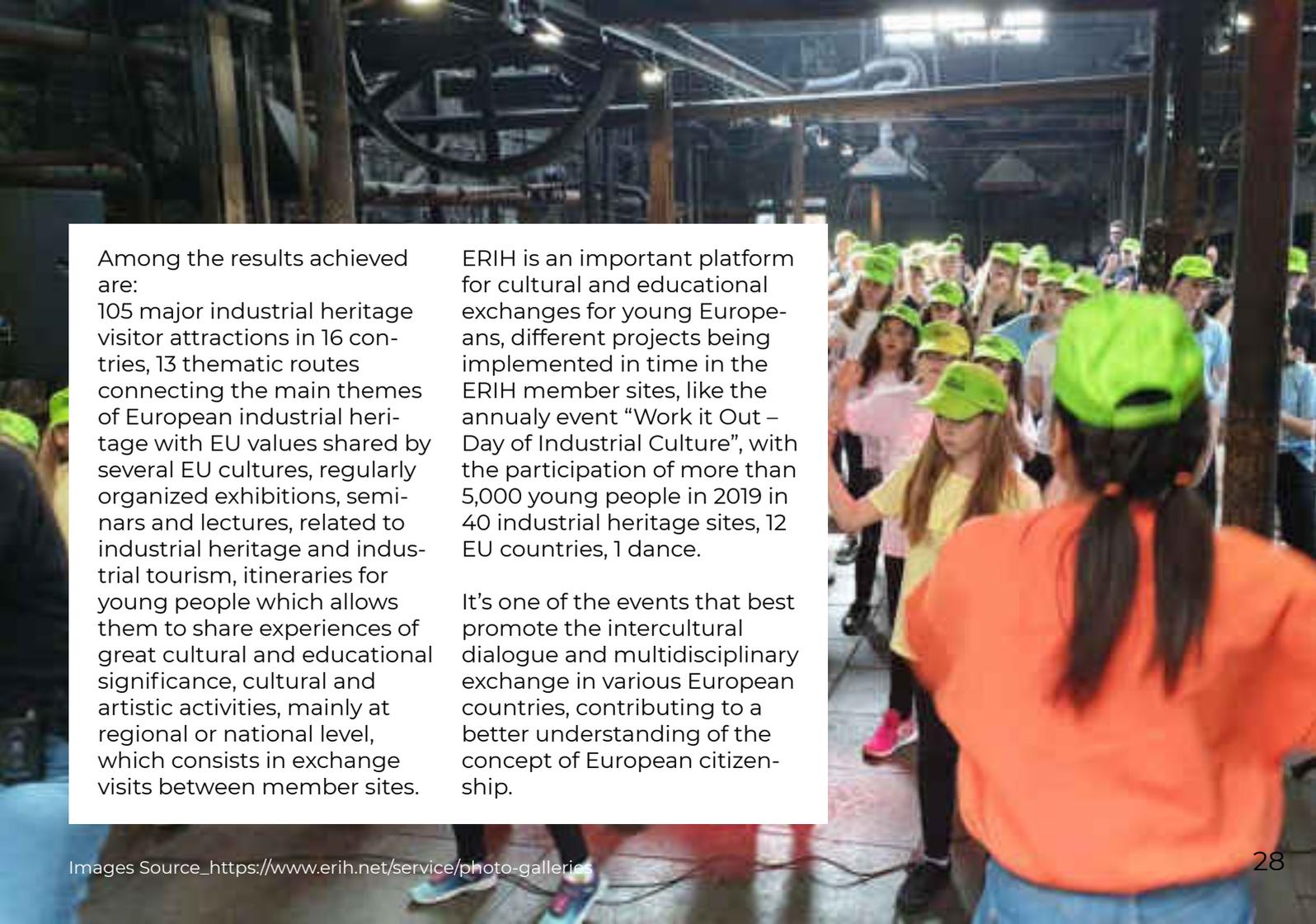
Assure a better coordination between youth (organisations) and heritage sectors, “so that pathways to influence decision making are embedded within existing structures” and young people are formally involved in heritage decision making

# Best practice European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH)

ERIH is a network of the most important industrial heritage sites in Europe (some of them World Heritage Sites) from disused production plants to industrial landscape parks and interactive technology museums, being the common link between them all.

Main objective of ERIH is Regeneration through Heritage, while promoting regions, towns and sites and commercializing them as tourist attractions in the leisure and tourism sector.

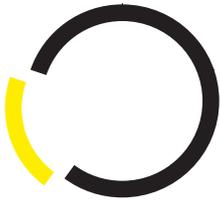




Among the results achieved are:  
105 major industrial heritage visitor attractions in 16 countries, 13 thematic routes connecting the main themes of European industrial heritage with EU values shared by several EU cultures, regularly organized exhibitions, seminars and lectures, related to industrial heritage and industrial tourism, itineraries for young people which allows them to share experiences of great cultural and educational significance, cultural and artistic activities, mainly at regional or national level, which consists in exchange visits between member sites.

ERIH is an important platform for cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans, different projects being implemented in time in the ERIH member sites, like the annually event “Work it Out – Day of Industrial Culture”, with the participation of more than 5,000 young people in 2019 in 40 industrial heritage sites, 12 EU countries, 1 dance.

It’s one of the events that best promote the intercultural dialogue and multidisciplinary exchange in various European countries, contributing to a better understanding of the concept of European citizenship.



## Field 4: Contemporary cultural and artistic practice

### Why is important?

Supporting cultural and artistic practices can bring economic benefits through tourism industry enhancement, leading at the same time to urban regeneration related to social inequalities and gentrification.

They represent opportunities to unite people, enhance self-growth, improve the quality of life and boost well-being for vibrant communities and individuals alike formation.

Sharing cultural and artistic experiences with others have a higher impact for affiliation and community feeling.

### What criteria a project must meet? (according to Council of Europe)

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.

# Current efforts for blending cultural practices with CH

Key actors in framing the cultural policies, such as UNESCO and Europa Nostra, as well as the European Commission, recognize the fact that CH represents a 'key driving force for the cultural and creative sectors, playing a key role in enhancing the social capital'.

Furthermore, according to the EC, both CH and arts have a major influence on the resilience, cohesion and innovative potential of the society. Simultaneously, UNESCO makes a link between cultural practices

and economic development. Thus, both CH and cultural practices have a major role in assuring wellbeing in our contemporary society.

In this regard, the European Union has launched in 2021 a publication entitled Driving a green, digital & innovative European cultural heritage : building our future from the past, which sets several key dimensions to be taken into consideration by policy makers dealing with culture: Green European CH, Digital European CH and Innovative European CH.

## First "take aways"

\*Culture - precious resource for economic development, social cohesion and wellbeing

\*CH - driving force for cultural and creative sectors, with key role in enhancing social capital

\*The use of innovative approaches in cooperation with creative stakeholders is key for safeguarding and valorizing CH

\*CH in collaboration with CCI and Arts can lead to sustainable economic growth and jobs, more competitive and robust creative sectors and more space for artists to promote their products

# Policy guidelines

Foster an economic and social climate which supports participation in cultural heritage activities



Explore cultural heritage as a source of inspiration and as a canvas for artistic work



Increase cultural resilience and sustainability through policies aimed at bringing artists and art and culture entrepreneurs closer to cultural heritage

Promote synergies between tourism and cultural and creative industries



Encourage the reuse of heritage for new purposes while respecting the values of heritage



# Practical methods



Develop heritage experiences combining different forms of cultural expression (dance, music, traditional or new skills, gastronomy, etc.) and appealing to different sides of human nature (senses, feelings, knowledge)



Involve artists in manifestos and protests for raising awareness on endangered cultural heritage assets



Strengthen the role of cultural heritage in the field of cultural entrepreneurship and in sustainable business models involving arts and culture



Facilitate sustainable adaptive reuse of vacant (or not) heritage places in order to accommodate creative actors activity

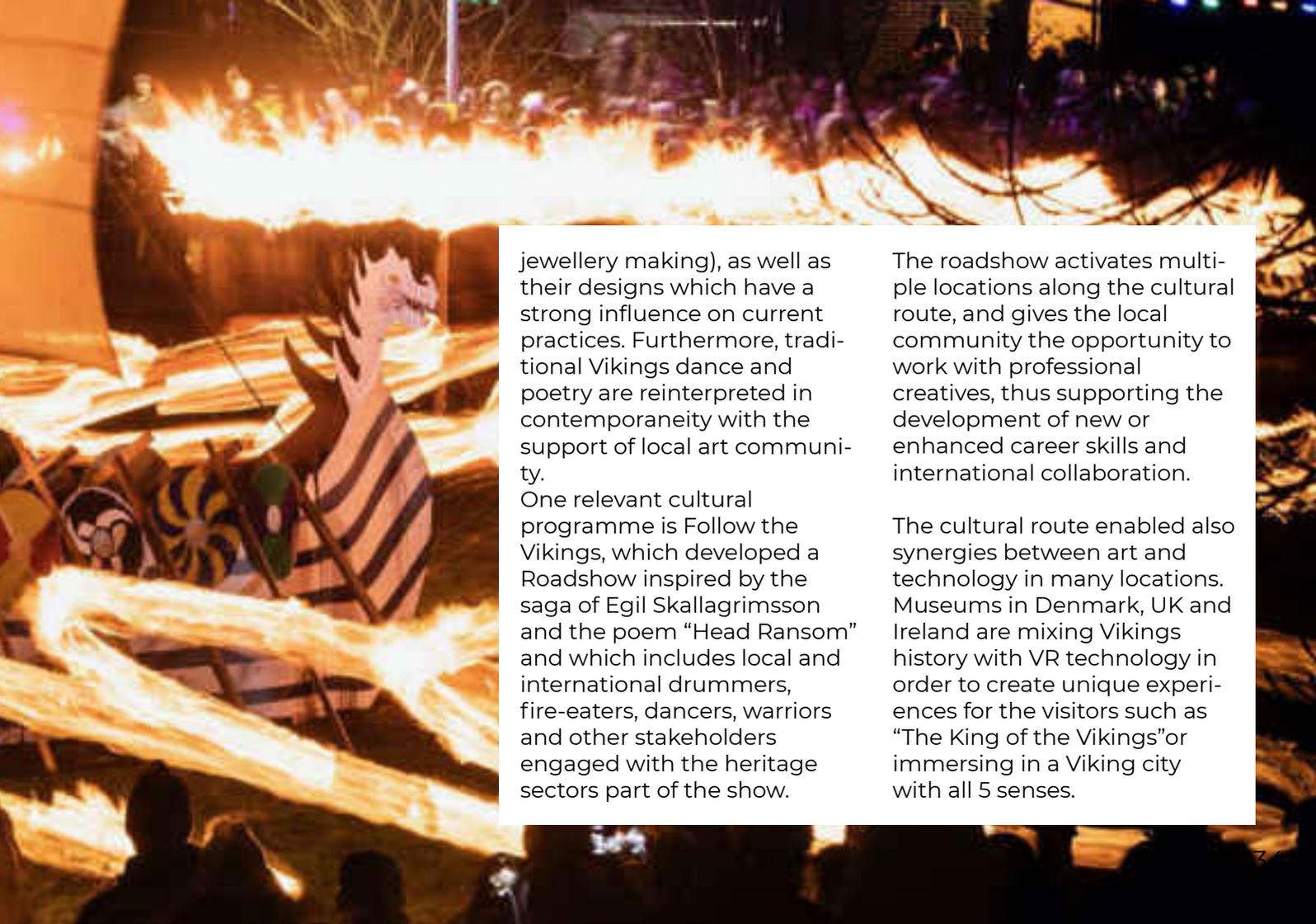
# Best practice

## The Viking Route

The Viking Route represents an outstanding collection of material and immaterial heritage which represent the shared Viking legacy of Europe and beyond. The Vikings had several important trading centers between 8-11 century, such as Hedeby (Germany), Birka (Sweden), Dublin (Ireland) or Kyiv (Ukraine). The cultural route, which was certified in 1993, contains more than 60 sites which include forts, towns, farms, quarries, ships, objects, museums or archaeological remains. Furthermore, the Vikings rich immaterial heritage of songs, poems and

stories are revived and readapted for contemporaneity through a rich collection of cultural and artistic practices in many locations along the route. The DVA network has explored several contemporary cultural and artistic practices inspired by the Vikings, by leveraging on Vikings rich tradition of crafts (metal working, knitting and



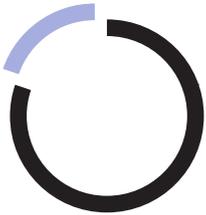


jewellery making), as well as their designs which have a strong influence on current practices. Furthermore, traditional Vikings dance and poetry are reinterpreted in contemporaneity with the support of local art community.

One relevant cultural programme is Follow the Vikings, which developed a Roadshow inspired by the saga of Egil Skallagrimsson and the poem “Head Ransom” and which includes local and international drummers, fire-eaters, dancers, warriors and other stakeholders engaged with the heritage sectors part of the show.

The roadshow activates multiple locations along the cultural route, and gives the local community the opportunity to work with professional creatives, thus supporting the development of new or enhanced career skills and international collaboration.

The cultural route enabled also synergies between art and technology in many locations. Museums in Denmark, UK and Ireland are mixing Vikings history with VR technology in order to create unique experiences for the visitors such as “The King of the Vikings” or immersing in a Viking city with all 5 senses.



## Field 5: Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development

### Why is important?

Culture is both an enabler and a driver of sustainable development, having also positive economic and social impact, contributing to the establishment and strengthening of one place identity, branding and supporting tourism revitalization when properly capitalized.

Unbalanced and unsustainable cultural tourist development can lead to overcrowded destinations exceeding physical/environmental carrying capacity or to under-visited and thus unused places which are rich in heritage values.

### What criteria a project must meet? (according to Council of Europe)

Take account of local, regional, national and European identities;

Make full use of the potential of electronic/printed 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;  
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 organisations active in the field of tourism in order to develop tourist products and tools targeting all potential publics.

# Current approaches in the cultural sector

UNESCO was the first to recognize the major role CH has in achieving sustainable development (Hangzhou international congress, 2013).

Since then, sound efforts were made in this regard and sustainable cultural tourism became one of the ten key initiatives of the European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018), thus enabling “an unprecedented opportunity to explore the relationship between CH and cultural tourism”.

According to World Tourism Organization, “tourism policies and activities should be conducted with respect for the artistic, archaeological

and cultural heritage”. Sustainable cultural tourism has a major role in boosting regional economy, while also responding to the humans inherent desire to learn about the cultural identity of other parts of the world.

In what concerns future actions in this regard, ICOMOS has launched in 2021 a Policy Guidance document that shows the great contribution CH has to achieving the UN SDGs, “in more ways that conventionally assumed, and policy makers are invited to be creative and take action for CH!

## First “take aways”

- \*Tourism policies should take into consideration artistic, archaeological and cultural heritage in order to be sustainable
- \*Sustainable Cultural Tourism contributes to flourishing regional economies and well being of both local communities and visitors
- \*Sustainable cultural tourism creates social, economic and environmental benefits for all types of stakeholders
- \*Cultural Heritage has potential for contributing in achieving all SDGs, and policy makers should be creative and innovative and explore future connections with all of them

# Policy guidelines

Blend CH management with sustainable development principles

Extend conservation and management approaches to wider planning frameworks, with particular attention to the socioecological systems

Adopt visitor management planning which encourages local tourism

Foster inclusive local economic development

Provide sustainable mobility solutions in order to assure equitable access for various cultural activities

Encourage locally-driven tourism management around CH properties

Promote sustainable economic activities related to arts and crafts, in relation with CH conservation



# Practical methods



Ensure integrate & participatory management models for CH, which monitors visitor usage, access and regional spread



Ensure that CH is taken into consideration in plans and policies related to tourism, economics, land-use, environment and social areas.

Encourage participatory approaches for governance of cultural heritage places with local community involvement.



Continue to invest in digital technology, visitor management, facilities including interpretation and infrastructure



Facilitate and encourage the creation of multi-level networks, digital partnership platforms, public & private partnerships to address the issues of carrying capacity and access at Europe's hotspots.

Support and encourage cultural heritage sites and practices to develop off-season activities.

# Best practice

## Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes

Known as the Way of St. James-Camino de Santiago , Santiago de Compostela is a network of pilgrims' ways or pilgrimages leading to the shrine of the apostle Saint James the Great in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela located in north-west Spain, where legend holds that the remains of the saint are buried.

It is the longest and the most famous pilgrimage and cultural route in Europe, constantly developed by the authorities of the Catholic Church, governments and non-government organizations, as well as numerous enthusiasts of the Way of St. James.

Countries with network members are: Belgium, France, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain.





Because the route is not only of interest to pilgrims; religious or secular buildings with historic and cultural value are promoted by EU and Spanish government for tourism development.

The scenic route itself has been an attraction point for both pilgrims and secular visitors seeking physical challenge, wellness or reflection, being developed as a route-based tourism destination with a diverse set of offerings and travel purposes: walking, hiking, or cycling through natural environments and landscapes (mountains, vineyards, untouched landscapes, medieval towns, bridges, castles and churches, sustainable hostels etc)

The European project "Cosme Creative Loci Iacobi" requested by the Federation and completed in 2019, meets the demand of contemporary travellers, usually connected to smartphones or tablets.

Its aim was to promote and improve visibility of the Santiago de Compostela routes, and the UNESCO sites located along this route in Europe and encourage and support the development of innovative, competitive and targeted transnational tools for travellers in order to improve their experience.

New technologies as CCI technologies (geolocalisation, interactive map, 3D images, augmented reality, multilingual, 360° video, smartphone applications, multimedia tools, etc.) were proposed in order to support the initiative.

# Stakeholders



- **Research institutes in the field of culture, cultural heritage, social and economic sciences, territorial development, urban and landscape design, ecology, tourism -industry)**
- **Local/regional authorities**
- **Artists and craftsmen**
- **Thematic institutions (museums, art galleries, natural reservations, etc)**
- **Urban and territorial planners**
- **Regional development agencies**
- **Tourism agencies**
- **Educational centers**
- **NGOs**
- **Local communities**

By leveraging on the nearmentioned stakeholders, multidisciplinary and transnational networks should be created, as initiators for a cultural route. According to CoE guidelines, they should make a joint effort for:

- Defining a conceptual framework based on research carried out into the chosen theme
- Creating a comprehensive programme and specify its objectives, methods, partners, current and future participating countries and the overall plan for the short and the long run.
- Defining and implementing indicators aimed at measuring the impact of the activities of cultural routes.

# Financial mechanisms

- Explore European funded research programs such as HORIZON2020 for research and innovation projects (which invests €100 million euros in CH-related research projects; for 2021-2027, they have a Pillar entitled: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Societies ), Interreg (for cross-border cooperation projects), Creative Europe (€2.24 billion for projects on cultural diversity, culture in the following period)

- For cohesion and better quality of life at European level, Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus and the Life Long

Learning Programme (in collaboration with Creative Europe) are supporting educational activities in the field of culture and cultural heritage, especially on the immaterial CH, on topics such as digitalization, governance, traditional skills and the disappearing professions, with a funding of around €3.4 billion)

- Seek for public-private partnerships for joint research and efforts for capitalizing on CH and enabling contemporary and artistic practices around CH assets

Join effort with others: as a CH-related network of stakeholders around Europe (professional, association-based or civil society), you can also access funding!

- Make use of the finance and expertise of the European Investment Bank

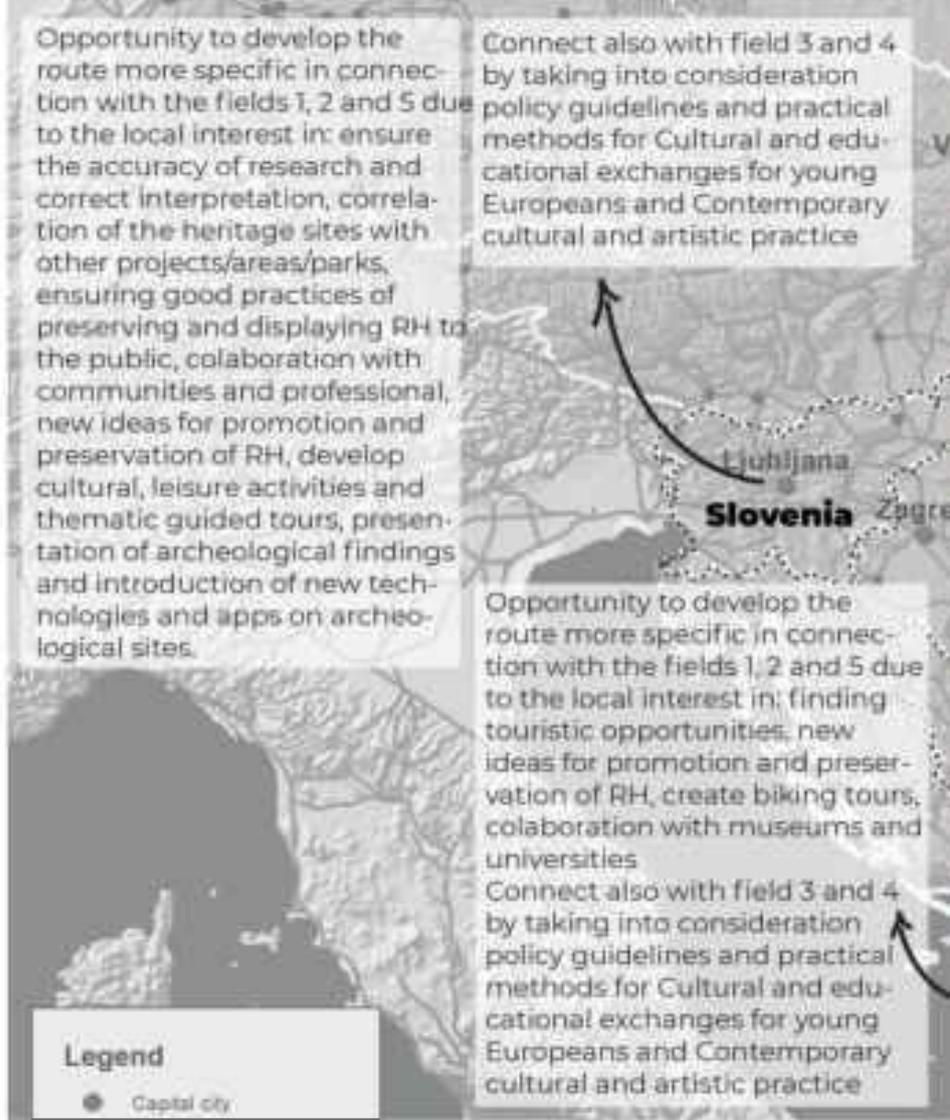
- Introduce or consolidate incentives (grants, tax concessions, etc.) for the preservation and management of cultural heritage

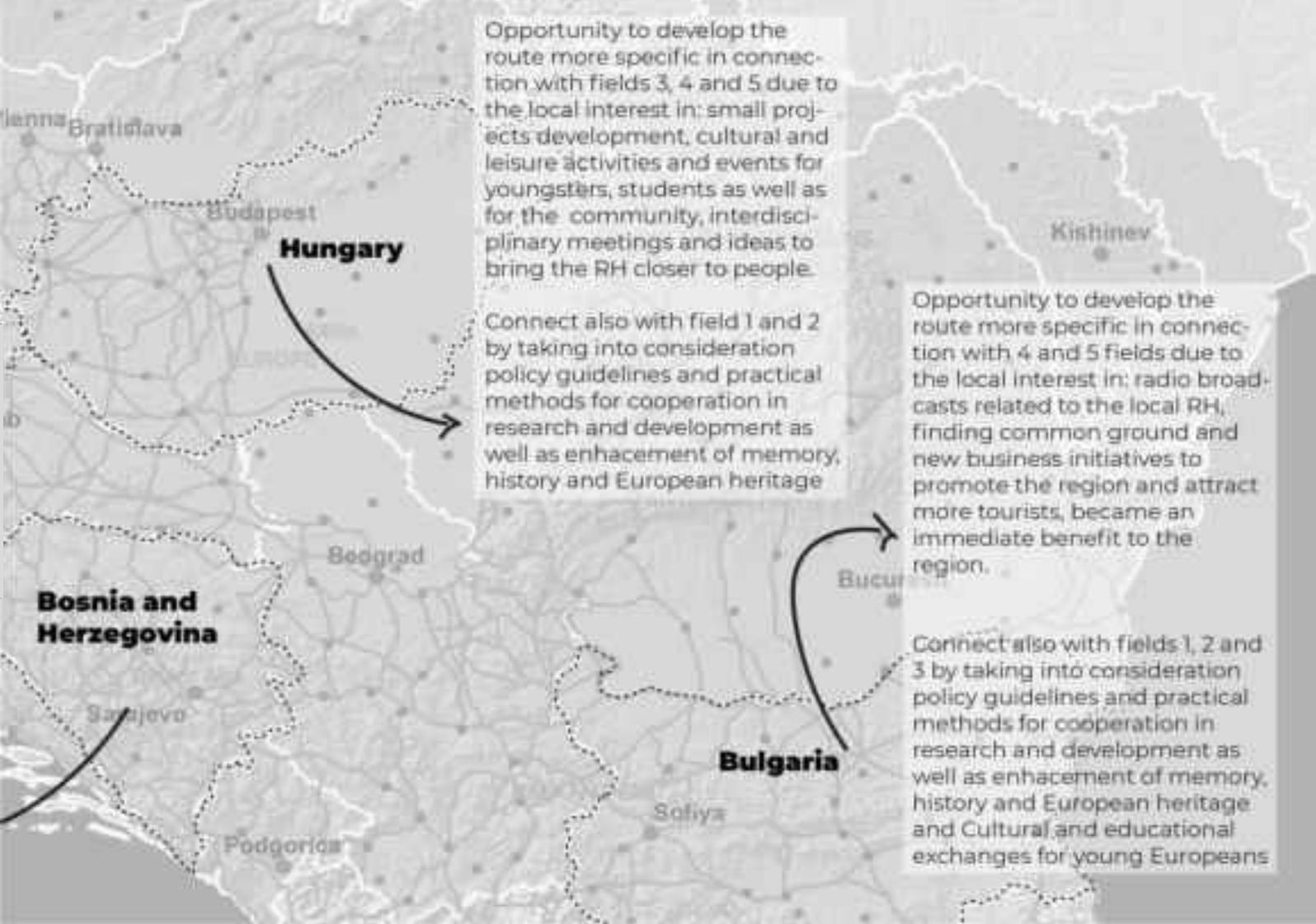
- Access national, regional and local public financing!

# Recommendations

The recommendations are specific for each country, part of ISTER project and are based on the results and findings of the first round of capacity building workshops (D.T2.3.1) in relation with the documentation made for each field of action established by the Council of Europe.

Through these recommendations the countries involved in the project can exploit the existing potential of the territory, tackling all action fields and establishing new common approaches towards Roman eco-cultural routes development, which can be further materialized in a set of local policies specific for each context with the support from local stakeholders.





Opportunity to develop the route more specific in connection with fields 3, 4 and 5 due to the local interest in: small projects development, cultural and leisure activities and events for youngsters, students as well as for the community, interdisciplinary meetings and ideas to bring the RH closer to people.

Connect also with field 1 and 2 by taking into consideration policy guidelines and practical methods for cooperation in research and development as well as enhancement of memory, history and European heritage

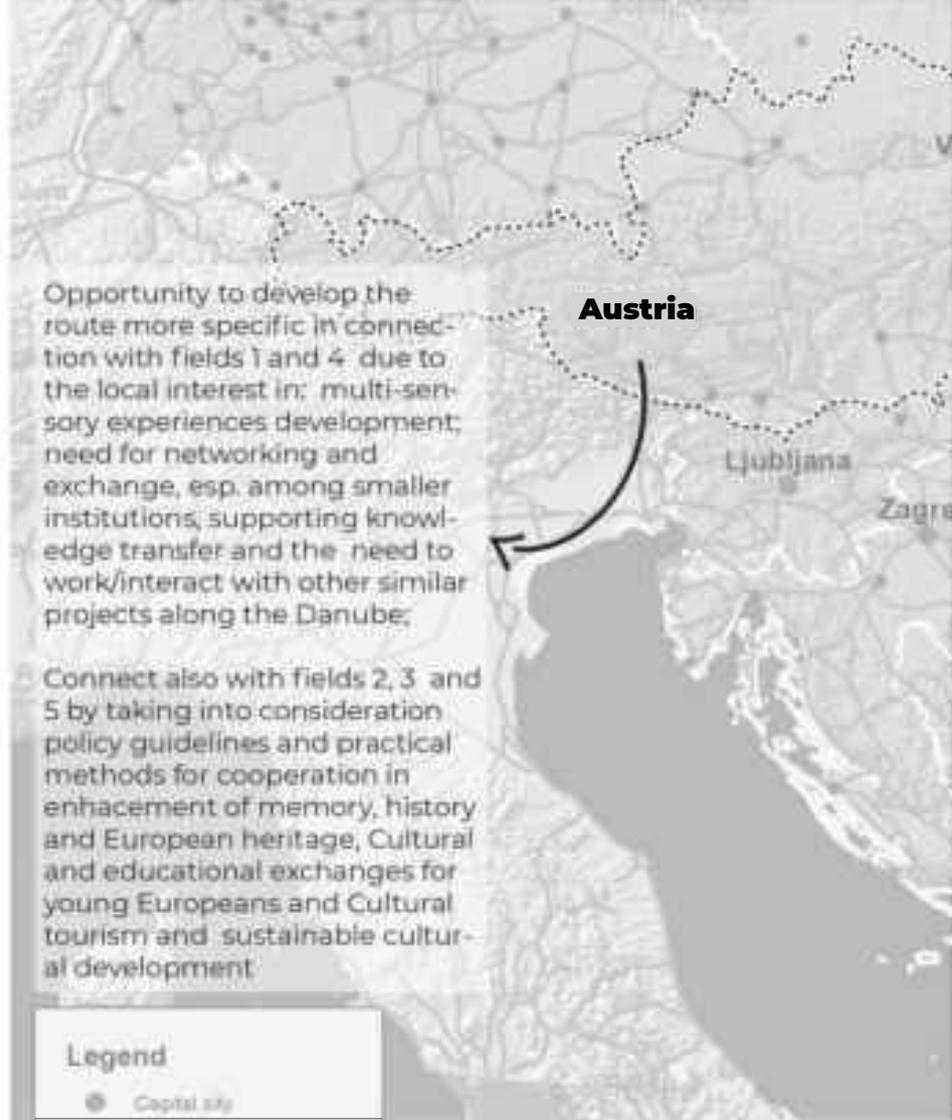
Opportunity to develop the route more specific in connection with 4 and 5 fields due to the local interest in: radio broadcasts related to the local RH, finding common ground and new business initiatives to promote the region and attract more tourists, became an immediate benefit to the region.

Connect also with fields 1, 2 and 3 by taking into consideration policy guidelines and practical methods for cooperation in research and development as well as enhancement of memory, history and European heritage and Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans

# Recommendations

The recommendations are specific for each country, part of ISTER project and are based on the results and findings of the first round of capacity building workshops (D.T2.3.1) in relation with the documentation made for each field of action established by the Council of Europe.

Through these recommendations the countries involved in the project can exploit the existing potential of the territory, tackling all action fields and establishing new common approaches towards Roman eco-cultural routes development, which can be further materialized in a set of local policies specific for each context with the support from local stakeholders.



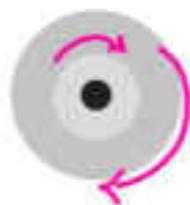
Opportunity to develop the route more specific in connection with fields 1, 2 and 5 due to the local interest in: collaboration with other similar projects and initiatives, raising awareness, ecological development, involvement of different and wide spectre of stakeholders, explore connections with other existing cultural routes, thematic events, festivals and interesting ways of promotion as well as digital tools for better presentation of the culture.

Connect also with fields 3 and 4 by taking into consideration policy guidelines and practical methods for cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans and contemporary cultural and artistic practices

Opportunity to develop the route more specific in connection with fields 4 and 5 due to the local interest in: the implementation of a velo trail between the localities that will include the main cultural attractions, develop other attractions that could also help the economical development, find funds, that could also ensure the preservation of what was done, develops short routes which could be done over a weekend, with clear information for the visitors regarding the services and activities and explore connections with other local routes.

Connect also with fields 1, 2 and 3 by taking into consideration policy guidelines and practical methods for cooperation in research and development as well as enhancement of memory, history and European heritage and Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans

# Appendix



ROTATE

Action Fields

Criteria to be met

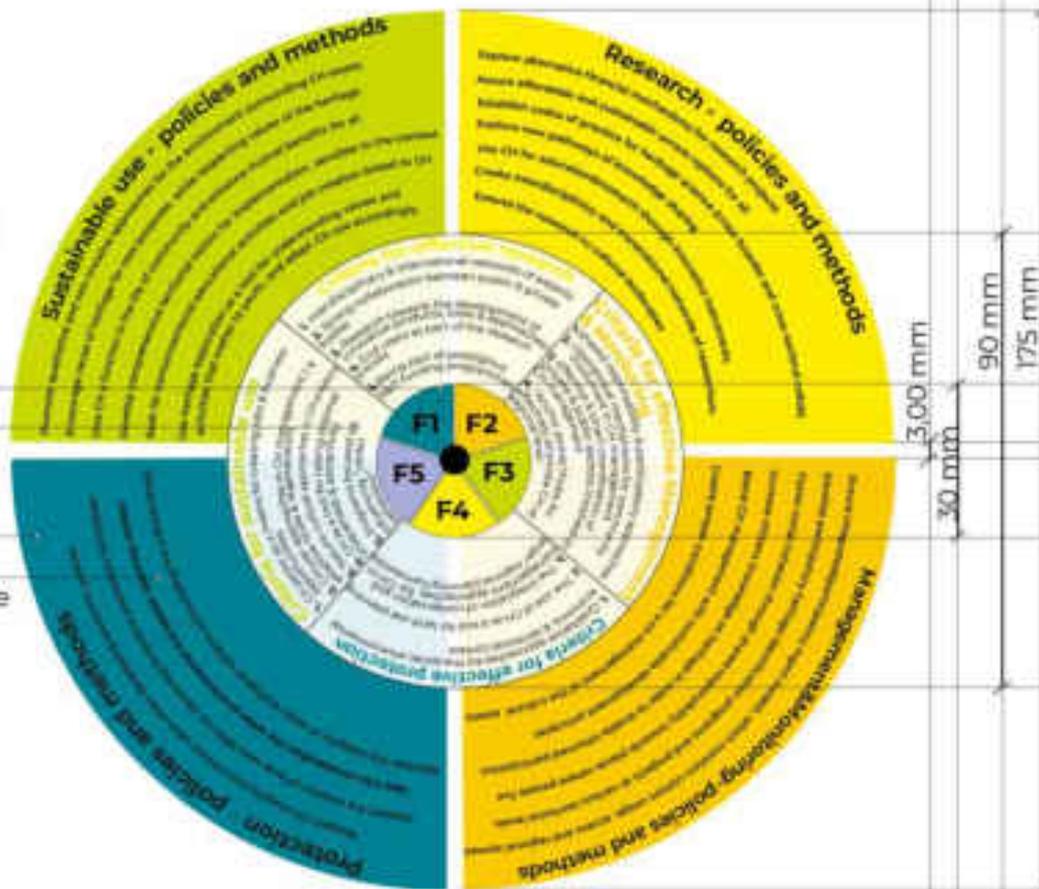
(Identify **what** is your current situation)

Stages of CH valorization

Thoroughgoing study

(Identify **how** you can improve your route)

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	#FACA00
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## Theme 1

### Pictures

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## Theme 2

### Pictures

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ISTER aims to revive a 2000 years old heritage, by putting the “Roman roads” back on the map and developing a pedestrian-friendly route by following the traces of the Romans. The route aims to revive the local rural economy, to connect communities with the heritage and to transform neglected areas into focal, vivid points on an eco-cultural corridor along Danube regions. ISTER will become a slow-motion pedestrian road which will connect us to roots, culture and communities.

This Benchmarking toolkit provides a set of technical guidelines and successful practices which can support policy and decision makers in evaluating their territories' potential for developing cultural routes, as well as establishing new common approaches towards eco-cultural routes development, use and valorisation.



Project co-funded by European Union funds (ERDF, IPA)

