



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2020 - 2022

Triennial planning document
European Association
of the Via Francigena ways

Synthesis



**VIA
FRANCIGENA**
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION

Cultural route
of the Council of Europe
Itinéraire culturel
du Conseil de l'Europe



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2020-2022

The EAVF aims to double the annual number of walkers and pilgrims along the Via Francigena Ways in 3 years

This aim can be met by:

INCREASING THE APPEAL OF THE VIA FRANCIGENA WAYS FOR USERS WHO ARE MORE AWARE OF THE HISTORICAL INDIVIDUALITY OF THE ROUTE AND ITS EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL DIMENSION.

This strategic objective will be achieved through:

Seven macro-strategies:

1. Macro-strategy INFORMATION. That is, BETTER ACCESS TO INFORMATION FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO TRAVEL THE ROUTE. The information must be homogeneous and usable, both on paper and online. On the one hand, we could restyle the reference website with more organised information, on the other, we could make the official VF app more user-friendly. We will simultaneously work to increase the involvement of territories to improve promotion and provide timely and updated information on the routes and available local services.
2. Macro-strategy LOBBYING. That is, an INCREASED PERCEPTION OF THE VIA FRANCIGENA AS DRIVERS FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FROM EUROPEAN, PUBLIC AND NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS. The EAVF will attempt to minimize the consequences of a legislative reference framework, with little economic and infrastructural consistency, making the responsible organisations more aware so they can reduce these differences.
3. Macro-strategy INCENTIVE. That is, INCREASING HIKERS INTEREST IN CHOOSING THE VIA FRANCIGENA. For this strategy, working on the brand and specifically the Via Francigena claim will be essential to convey a unique, identifiable and recognisable message. The proposal to add "Road to Rome" to "Via Francigena" emerges.
4. Macro-strategy MEMBERS. That is, an INCREASED AWARENESS OF BEING AN EAVF MEMBER AND ITS ADDED VALUE. It is the EAVF's duty to invite all locations to participate more in the whole of the Association's activities, making members protagonists and spreading the individuality of the journey. At the same time, focus on pilgrims and walkers aims to encourage greater knowledge of their potential in terms of both cultural growth and exchange of experiences among them and local communities, but also in terms of economic growth and social cohesion.

5. Macro-strategy ENHANCEMENT. That is, an INCREASED ENHANCEMENT OF CULTURAL AND PANORAMIC ASSETS ALONG THE VIA FRANCIGENA. Starting with a greater knowledge of local communities along the VF and the history of their territories, local and private authorities will be expanded to ensure they are able to offer new and innovative services to enhance cultural, religious, panoramic and historical features (including the assets already classified as UNESCO World Heritage), which are drivers of sustainable local development and a strong attractor of slow and experiential tourism, which is increasing in global demand.
6. Macro-strategy SATISFACTION. That is, an INCREASE IN HIKER SATISFACTION WITH SERVICES OFFERED BY THE TERRITORY. The EAVF's active animation and promotion has increased our knowledge of hiker's specific aims, which differ from those of pilgrims. It is necessary to further analyse the needs and expectations of these two targets, on both a European and global level, to be able to offer different services which will increase overall satisfaction.
7. Macro-strategy INFRASTRUCTURE. That is, EASE OF USABILITY AND ACCESS FOR ALL PEOPLE OF THE VF. Despite a minimum level of access to the route being needed, it would also be desirable to facilitate access for disabled people. For the former, it is a question of defining the entities responsible for paths of the four national sections and providing the resources needed for a permanent structured system of ordinary and extraordinary route maintenance. Regarding the improvement of accessibility for all, we could define pilot projects involving specific stakeholders in order to identify the best practices potentially replicable along the VF.

OPERATIVE ACTIONS TO SUPPORT THE MACRO-STRATEGIES

Nine operative actions to support these macro-strategies have thus been identified, prioritised based on the following criteria: Efficacy, Feasibility, Rate of Progress, Visibility and Involvement of Members.

1. REDEFINITION AND REPOSITIONING OF THE VIA FRANCIGENA BRAND.

This reflection, also born from the difficulty of interpretation/pronunciation of the word Francigena outside Italy, leads to the need to integrate the term, which could become: *Via Francigena. Road to Rome*. This redefinition (based on the model of Santiago de Compostela), which highlights the destination regardless of the place of departure, must however spring from a participatory process, reflecting the identity of the whole Francigena. The decision also impacts the very nature of the EAVF, which from an association uniquely focused on Sigeric's route, broadens its activity on a global level, becoming the centre of a system of European historical routes, their rediscovery in cultural terms and the touristic and economic development of the territories.

2. ENHANCING HIKER EXPERIENCE THROUGH STORYTELLING.

This action, following the first, will aim at realising a new Francigena story, which will begin with the renewed claim and the consequent updating of EAVF communication strategies and tools. This new story must be strongly based on the cultural and emotional component of the journey, while maintaining a necessary element of territorial marketing. For this, work on the web portal and app will be fundamental, with the aim of making them more user-friendly tools and in dialogue with official social media channels.

3. COLLECTION AND STUDY OF HIKER DATA.

In the short to medium-term this study is fundamental to understanding the phenomenon of routes, to identify the best communication strategies, improve services offered and communicate with the private world, which is very interested in our profile. The work will be coordinated by the EAVF and its member entities; giving responsibility to local associations, universities, research institutes and tourist information offices. In this context, the Pilgrim Passport plays a key role as a means of obtaining information on the characteristics and habits of walkers, as well as the app, the digital tool that receives information about the user during their journey.

4. ENHANCING THE VIA FRANCIGENA ON A GLOBAL LEVEL. UNESCO.

In the next five years the candidacy of the Francigena as UNESCO World Heritage will be the most important challenge to strengthen the tangible and intangible value of the Francigena, while improving its governance. This additional certification, following the European recognition of Cultural Route of the CoE (1994), would take the Francigena to a global level.

5. PROMOTION OF THE VIA FRANCIGENA AS DRIVER OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FOR MEMBERS OF REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN ORGANISATIONS. This activity is influenced by the necessary reinforcement/specialisation of the EAVF operating structures. The development of the "Terre della Via Francigena" project is fundamental to the new positioning of the Francigena as a driving force for the

promotion of the territories bordering the Via of Sigeric. If pursued correctly, even in commercial terms – still lacking today – this strategy could be implemented quickly, bringing great visibility to the Francigena.

6. LOBBYING IN RESPECT OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS ON THE ENHANCEMENT OF ROUTES. This activity is functional to the previous one and is more effective the more work is conducted towards increasing the already good capacity of EAVF, through collaboration with the public entities involved in the project. It is necessary to identify area representatives within the EAVF staff who can better define relationships with members, identifying specific needs relating to different areas. The same approach must be maintained and encouraged with associations, universities and private entities.

7. DISCLOSURE OF GOOD PRACTICES, GOVERNANCE MODELS AND MANAGEMENT OF A REPLICABLE AND SUSTAINABLE ROUTE.

As a result of the previous two points, this activity allows the strong involvement of the entities involved, with the aim of promoting the Francigena's territorial governance model. This activity is the starting point for positioning the Way as a model, both in the context of cultural routes of the CoE and the emerging system of routes, a new opportunity for the development of sustainable tourism in its territories. It will also be important to standardise route management, both in terms of maintenance and accessibility on a European level.

8. EXPAND INTERNAL AND MEMBER TECHNICAL AND PLANNING KNOWLEDGE.

Internal EAVF staff training must be accompanied by a periodic training model for the technical representatives appointed by each member entity to follow the Via Francigena. An action could be to request that the members carry out a basic recurring training on the theme of routes and the governance model of the Francigena.

9. IMPROVEMENT OF THE ORGANISATIONAL WORKFLOW IN LINE WITH THE IDEA OF PROJECT PARTNERSHIPS.

The renewed internal organisation of EAVF work will lead to the association becoming a reference point for the identification and promotion of national and European projects. The ability of the EAVF to represent active subjects along the route will translate into the ability to create a network to draw on primary funding channels.