

Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Evaluation Cycle 2019-2020

Expert report

"VIA FRANCIGENA"

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VIA
FRANCIGENA

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION

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

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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**The opinions expressed in this independent expert report are those of the author, and do not engage the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Executive Summary.....	p. 3
2.	Introduction.....	p. 5
3.	Main Body Evaluation	
3.1	Cultural Route Theme.....	p. 6
3.2	Fields of Action	
3.2.1	Co-operation in research and development;.....	p.7
3.2.2	Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage.....	p. 7
3.2.3	Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans.....	p. 8
3.2.4	Contemporary cultural and artistic practice.....	p. 9
3.2.5	Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.....	p. 9
3.3	Cultural Route Network.....	p.10
3.3.1	Network extension since last evaluation.....	p.10
3.3.2	Network extension in the three years to come.....	p.11
3.4	Communication Tools.....	p. 12
3.4.1	Compliance with the Guidelines for the Use of the Logo “Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe”	
4.	Conclusions and recommendations.....	p.13
5.	Liste of references.....	p.17
6.	Annexe 1: Field visit programme	p. 18
7.	Annexe 2 : Annex 2: Expert assessment checklist.....	p. 20

1. Executive Summary

Via Francigena is the main way which, in the Middle Ages, linked the transalpine regions and Rome, one of the most important Christian pilgrimage destinations.

The Council of Europe has recognised the EAVF (European Association of the Via Francigena Ways) as a network protecting and enhancing the Via Francigena in its entirety: England, France, Switzerland and Italy.

Via Francigena preserves the theme for which it was labeled by the Council of Europe for the first time in 1994. It is a route as defined by the Santiago de Compostela Declaration. The Declaration recognised the pilgrimage theme as a metaphor of the rediscovery of the European roots and an invitation, mainly addressed to the youth, to create a basis for a society grounded in the values of the Council of Europe: tolerance, respect of others, freedom, democracy and solidarity.

The increasing number of users of the way, estimated at 48.000 units in 2018, shows the network's animation work provided by the EAVF. It consists in an coordination of activities carried out by communities and regions along the way, which has been able to develop embracing the recommendations given during the last evaluation. Indeed, it has noticeably strengthened the French section and has renewed its relation with Swiss partners. Moreover, the authorisation from the general assembly (October 2019) to proceed with the expansion of the Francigena towards the South will ensure a stronger ability to transmit the values of this pilgrimage route, as well as a key function: territorial recomposition.

When you consider the programme's fields of action, research and development cooperation, and youth exchanges are still weak points that need to be addressed by the EAVF. While the route is, considering the ensemble of the activities promoted over the years by its members, one of the programme's most efficient, all the data supporting the future actions' planning is not available. Universities along the routes, as well as those supporting the Scientific Committee, should develop two research axes: first, a study of Via Francigena's user profile and then the economic benefits of their passage on the territories. This priority is linked to a different priority: the exchanges between European youngsters should be enhanced more, although the nature of the route - a pilgrims' way - encourages this type of exchanges to develop naturally during their travel experience.

In regard to the recommendations for the years to come:

- Reinforce the relations with the Vatican and promote an increasingly strong role for religious communities with regards to pilgrims' reception.
- build a self-reporting system for new members in order to evaluate their contribution to the network and to the programme's activities;
- enhance documentary evidence in order to ease the EAVF's task with regards to activity management and coordination;
- enhance the website by integrating information about the CoE's programme;
- widen and differentiate the competences of the scientific Committee's members, building on the possible synergies with other routes heading to Rome (Romea Germanica and Romea Strata);
- invest on the creation of a University network linked to the route for both research and development, and for youth exchanges;
- identify research areas in different domains supporting the EAVF's actions;
- train the network's members in the programme's contents and take responsibility on different priority fields of actions/actions.

2. Introduction

In 2001, in Fidenza, 34 local organizations along the Italian route of the Via Francigena, have signed, based on the diary of the archbishop Sigéric (990 A.C.), the constituent act of the European Association of Via Francigena (EAVF), which was given its current name in 2008. The Association counts 156 European municipalities, provinces and regions from 4 different countries (figures as 30/09/2019).

The route of Sigéric, long-forgotten, was rediscovered during the 1990s thanks also to the international dimension pushed by the cultural routes programme of the Council of Europe. The 79 stages mentioned in the Archbishop's "road book" lead from Canterbury to Rome and in 1994 obtained the certification "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe".

Via Francigena is the main way which, in the Middle Ages, linked the transalpine regions and Rome, one of the most important Christian pilgrimage destinations. As a long-distance route between Rome and the North-Western Europe, the Via Francigena – through its various functions during the Middle Ages (military, commerce, pilgrimage) – brought into contact various cultures and traditions of which it represented an important vector of transmission from one part of Europe to another.

The EAVF (European Association of the Via Francigena Ways) has been recognised by the Council of Europe as a network protecting and enhancing the Via Francigena in its entirety: England, France, Switzerland and Italy. Since 2015, historical studies have been taken up to lead to the recognition of the Via Francigena as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Driven also by the changes in lifestyles and patterns of leisure time, the number of users of these routes (both pilgrims and simple hikers) is constantly growing, even if at different speeds, based on the quality of the routes developed and the reception services in the regions crossed.

The strengths of this report remain those identified by Pierre Frustier during the last regular evaluation:

- a now well-identified and technically supported by official bodies itinerary;
- an increasingly complete network of institutional actors (regions) who support the project and are able to make the necessary investments to secure the routes and their use also by persons with reduced mobility;
- a network of local actors who animate the path and encourage cultural and heritage projects in accordance with the areas desired by Europe: human encounters, promotion of art and sustainable development;

In addition, the extension of the route from Sigéric to the via Francigena in the South is now a reality and the quality of the signposting and signposting activities of the route is ensured and supported by the technical coordination conference of the regions concerned as well as, with regard to the monitoring activities, by local civic committees.

Nevertheless, the study of the documents, the interviews and the field visits have made it possible to highlight some focal points that the route will have to consider for the future.

3. Main Body Evaluation

3.1 Cultural Route Theme

Via Francigena preserves the theme for which it was labeled by the Council of Europe for the first time in 1994. It is a route as defined by the Santiago de Compostela Declaration. The Declaration recognised the pilgrimage theme as a metaphor of the rediscovery of the European roots and an invitation, mainly addressed to the youth, to create a basis for a society grounded in the values of the Council of Europe: tolerance, respect of others, freedom, democracy and solidarity.

To traverse the Via Francigena is, in the intentions and statements of the managers of the network: "rediscover and recover the memory, the history, the cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, in every corner of the route". In recent years, the first groups of pilgrims have been joined by users of the route who have different motivations, thanks to the intense work of route planning, trail marking and the development of the most varied reception services. The construction and enhancement of this network of local actors is one of the most important achievements not only of the Via Francigena, but of the cultural routes programme of the Council of Europe as a whole.

The increasing number of users of the way, estimated at 48.000 units in 2018, shows the network's animation work provided by the EAVF. It consists in an coordination of activities carried out by communities and regions along the way, which has been able to develop embracing the recommendations given during the last evaluation. Indeed, it has noticeably strengthened the French section and has renewed its relation with Swiss partners. The route is very short in England, but it is nevertheless connected to other clusters of roads and paths, contributing in particular to inter-religious dialogue, also in consideration of the fact that the Catholic religion is a minority in Great Britain. As Pierre Frustier had already pointed out, the majority of activities and shares (as well as members of the EAVF) are in Italy. This places on the shoulders of the head of the network both the responsibility for each field of action and the preservation of the theme of the route. For this reason, consideration should be given to a more balanced distribution of responsibilities among the members of the Association, while respecting the available capacities and resources.

The EAVF has also been able to diversify its activities on the basis of key interlocutors and actors along the territories crossed by the route. From the plains to the mountains, through urban areas and small villages, the Association's action has been aiming at promoting an understanding of the programme's values, while ensuring a high-quality travel, cultural and spiritual experience. Commercial initiatives, aiming at allowing the territories crossed to benefit from the passage of the pilgrims, did not distort the deep meaning of the route, but opened to a wider public the possibility of discovering it. In addition, these activities showed administrators the benefits of membership.

Since the last regular evaluation, the number of partners has increased to 168 municipalities (data dated 18/10/2019, date of the last general assembly), although for the most part in Italy and in France, the increase of effective members and friend associations of the network testifies to the vitality of this route and the continuous work of animation and territorial recomposition.

3.2 Fields of Action

3.2.1 Co-operation in research and development;

Research is a recent theme for the Via Francigena. Although the scientific committee (SC) has met regularly for the past three years, this was not the case during the previous evaluation period.

Most of the research activities are similar to those carried out by the members of the SC, which was set up on the basis of the EUNeK network, resulting from a project funded by the COSME programme. Periodically, the research results are published within the scientific journal *Alma Tourism*, which, being *open access*, ensures the diffusion of the knowledge produced by the CS and the universities with which the route has opened collaboration lines on specific topics (Parma, Milan, Bari, but also Lille, Toulouse and Besançon).

The composition of the SC has changed from year to year, as membership is voluntary. Her Coordinator, Professor. Fiorella Dallari, worked through her own relationships within the scientific community, trying to expand the skills' range. However, as the coordinator herself has noted on several occasions, there is a need to move towards a broader representation of both skills and nationalities within the SC. To achieve this goal, a broader collaboration of network members with universities along the way would be desirable. In addition, one option could also be a periodic coordination with the CS of the other route projects to Rome (Romea Germanica and Romea Strata) on specific common issues.

All in all, cooperation in the field of research and development remains the priority on which the EAVF should invest more, in particular with regard to the analysis of route users and the economic benefits of their passage through the territories.

The interviews with the members of the network revealed that the countries most concerned by the research activities are currently France and Italy. Switzerland is still lagging behind in its contribution to the route as much on this aspect as on others, probably also because of the contemporary presence for several years of the International Association of the Via Francigena (IAVF) in the lower Valais, which has created a certain confusion. During the last general assembly on 18 October 2019, IAVF put in the hands of the EAVF all the developed contents and activities, allowing for an easier aggregation of new partners and the development of research relations with unique interlocutors.

3.2.2 Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage;

The festival is the event on which the EAVF has invested the most in the last ten years. It is on this occasion that all the initiatives of the network's members have the most visibility at European level. Every year the initiatives are developed on the basis of a common theme: Via Francigena and women, the volunteering along the way, the expansion to the south, etc. Members are free as to the type of activity to be organised during the festival, but they must respect the year's theme. To these events are added those for which Francigena grants the logo and those to which members are invited as witnesses of the activities of the route.

The preparation by the EAVF of a transnational application file for the UNESCO World Heritage Route also aims at supporting the territories in the enhancement of their heritage in a transnational vision. In the framework of this project, the EAVF was able to finance a systematic study of European scale for the identification of heritage sites in Francigena, which led to a list of 540 sites from Canterbury to Rome.

In addition, the route has tested local projects with the intention of exporting them on an international scale: this is the project "Sosta e Gusta", aimed at making passers-by aware of the tradition and the culture of typical products and territory of the regions crossed by the route. It is also through the means of food and the tradition linked to it that the pilgrims took during their journey that European knowledge and culture can be transmitted. Following this approach, the EAVF is in the process of organizing exchanges and contamination between flagship products, such as Parmigiano and Champagne.

It is through locally-tested initiatives and models that transnational sharing takes place along the way, thanks to the many opportunities for meetings and the work of the European Committee for Technical Interregional Coordination. For example, the "I love Francigena" initiative, launched in Italy and aimed at enhancing pathways for residents and people close to the route, has been replicated successfully in France, thus capitalizing on the educational function of active citizenship experiences.

Finally, the journal de la Francigena is distributed to the European associates and it is the means used for the diffusion and the enhancement of the culture throughout the route.

3.2.3 Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans

As was pointed out in the recommendations of the previous evaluation, the route should invest more in this aspect: it should be noted that it is only very recently that the EAVF has launched initiatives aimed at the youngest public. This field of action had been included by Pierre Frustier, who recommended the strengthening of scientific action with technical partnerships on practical subjects - he had suggested the development of student/teacher exchanges to foster mutual knowledge of different cultures. Creating relations with universities seems to be the easiest route, because it allows local authorities to approach a target audience by engaging it through practical experiences.

In the framework of the collaboration with the Higher Institute of Tourism, Hospitality and Food of the University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès (ISTHIA), a two-week workshop was organized, aimed at engaging students in the assessment of the route's tourist impact in France. Students were divided into groups and each group worked on a priority area: economic, sociological or cultural impact. Following this experiment, a formal agreement is being signed with this university. This is not an exchange, but an activity to build skills and engage young people on the route and its values.

Following the closing of the regular evaluation's report, EAVF was notified of the funding of an Erasmus + project "Forrest-New skills for experiential tourism". EAVF is the LP of the project which aims to train young students from 13 high schools in 5 Italian regions at the end of their study course, by allowing them to be trained for two months in England, France and Spain. The high schools were selected among those of the small town halls along the route of Via Francigena. In this case too, it is not a matter of exchanges but of opportunities to strengthen the cultural capital of young people through Via Francigena.

Finally, for several years EAVF has welcomed students on traineeships and the next cohort will have Champlitte and Luxembourg as the site of the traineeship. The possibility for the Council of Europe routes to organise exchanges is limited to the projects and funding that members can mobilise for this purpose. This is why, once again, the competences and institutional capacities of each member of the network should be implemented, by promoting the inclusion of schools and other institutions with youth exchanges in their mission.

3.2.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practice;

The most significant project among the many carried over in the evaluation report is a project financed by the Lazio region with 2 million EUR for the enhancement of Contemporary art on the Francigena and the footpaths. The project gives young artists the opportunity to participate in theme competitions and residential schools, and attracted many international artists of land art. The route also gave its patronage to a series of concerts and also a special report which was transmitted on BBC. Once again, this is the result of EAVF's work, which was able to suggest to the region a themed use of the funds available for culture.

The Tuscany region contributes with a literary contest "Intanto parto", consisting of two different sessions, one for children and one for those under 25.

As part of Besançon-Montfaucon "Histoires en musique" there is a section reserved for the Via Francigena and other routes.

In the territory of Fidenza, a series of theatre performances has been organized and will also be offered outside the Emilia-Romagna region, with the aim of raising awareness in the local community and bringing it closer to the route,

This priority field of action sees a predominance of activities carried out in Italy, followed from a distance by France. The involvement of the other nations of the route is very difficult for all the activities (because of different reasons), but appears even more complicated on the arts and contemporaneity domains. The difficulty for EAVF, beyond maintaining the archive of the initiatives for which the route gives its patronage, is the following: sometimes it lacks the quality framework of the actions carried out by the members and their correspondence with the criteria of the program.

3.2.5 Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.

The international network's activities on the theme of cultural tourism are several. This field of action is the one on which EAVF demonstrates at best its capabilities and experience of several years as well as a very strong specialisation of its scientific committee. International commercial partners and the countries along the route mostly have sustainable or responsible tourism labels. As for environmental sustainability, the practice of walking, cycling or horse riding is among the least polluting. Via Francigena has also invested in social sustainability, making paths accessible for users with reduced mobility.

Nevertheless, the long-period control of the quality of the reception of pilgrims and visitors represents a challenge for EAVF. The hostels, restaurants and bed and breakfast as well as the churches that adhere to the Via Francigena sign an ethical card, but the network has no means of control over the quality of the visit and the services. To try to face this issue EAVF is organizing courses in order to make the tourist operators aware of the values of the route and the minimum reception standards that hikers and pilgrims think they will find along the route.

Obviously EAVF can only give a guideline and offer suggestions, but in no case it can intervene, for example on the maintenance of routes by municipalities. The discontinuity in the adhesion of the municipalities also reflects the discontinuity of the quality of the arranged routes. Finally, a final problem is that of services related to the pilgrim's passport, which has evolved over time into a "card service". EAVF would also like to guarantee the possibility for hikers to purchase a travel insurance, but for the moment this project is at a standstill.

Unfortunately, one point of contention remains that of the welcome along the route, which is almost non-existent in England, for which the brevity of the way is the main cause; very weak on some sections in France, where it is very difficult to engage the parish priests, for example, who are less and less numerous and difficult to bring together. The network leader in Champlitte wants to create a system of sensitization of parishes and monasteries with one leader per country.

In Italy the situation seems to be better, but, ironically, the religious organizations are the least committed. During the two field visits to Orio Litta and in the plain of the hundred-year-old olive trees near Ostuni (southern Francigena), it seemed obvious how civil society seeks to overcome the lack of religious organizations: in Orio Litta it is the town hall with the Pro Loco (the association for the promotion of local tourism) who support volunteers working for the religious structures of reception. In Ostuni, a network of very wide interest (regional coastal dune park, town hall, cooperative of management of the Albergabici, a youth hostel active for two years, the region and civic committees) provides reception for pilgrims in transit.

3.3 Cultural Route Network

3.3.1 Network extension since last evaluation

In his evaluation, Pierre Frustier reported 93 members of the network, including 75 municipalities, 9 provinces, 2 mountain municipalities and 7 regions.

Since then, the number of members of La Francigena has almost doubled: 158 members identified in the report submitted for the regular evaluation and dated September 30, 2019, but these data are rising, as, after the general assembly of October 2019, the number of member is higher (see next paragraph).

What is noteworthy is the great work that has been done on the French section since the last evaluation, where the number of municipalities reached 20 and others began the adhesion process. This is one of the most remarkable results since the evaluation conducted by Pierre Frustier, who deserves credit (as well as the French partners of EAVF too) for having given a precise indication on this point in his report.

3.3.2 Network extension in the three years to come

After the Bari General Assembly on 18 October 2019, the following additions were made to the 158 members:

13 town halls whose membership was voted during the GA:

- Town Hall of Buonalbergo (Benevento, Campania)
- Town Hall of Sant'arcangelo Trimonte (Benevento, Campania)
- Town Hall of Celle San Vito (Foggia, Puglia)
- Town Hall of Faeto (Foggia, Puglia)
- Town Hall of Ortona (Foggia, Puglia)
- Town Hall of Stornarella (Foggia, Puglia)
- Town Hall of San Marco in Lamis (Foggia, Puglia)
- Town Hall of Margherita di Savoia (Barletta-Andria-Trani, Puglia)
- Town Hall of Trani (Barletta-Andria-Trani, Puglia)
- Town Hall of Polignano a mare (Bari)
- Town Hall of Ruvo di Puglia (Bari, Puglia)

Town Hall of Molfetta (Bari, Puglia)
Town Hall of Brindisi (Puglia)

3 municipalities have now perfected their membership and they will be officially included in the itinerary during the next GA in Canterbury (Kent, UK) on 14 May:

Town of Martigny (Valais, Switzerland)
Municipality of Evionnaz (Valais, Switzerland)
Municipality of Orsières (Valais, Switzerland)

7 institutions have undertaken the administrative procedure to join the network:

Department of Doubs (Bourgogne-Franche-Comté)
Municipality of Sembrancher (Valais, Switzerland)
Municipality of Bourg-Saint-Pierre (Valais, Switzerland)
Town Hall of Bolsena (Viterbo, Lazio)
Town hall of San Lorenzo Nuovo (Viterbo, Lazio)
Mairie de Canosa di Puglia (Puglia)
Mairie de Terlizzi (Puglia)
Town hall of Lecce (Puglia)

This very positive context sees an increase of the local communities associated with the route, which can guarantee for the future maintenance and the marking of the routes as well as an enlargement of the public and civil society engaged around the Via Francigena.

For the future it will be necessary to continue this work of promotion of the route and its activities in France and Switzerland, but also to ask for a stronger commitment of the Vatican regarding the role of parishes and religious centers along the way.

3.4 Communication Tools

3.4.1 Compliance with the Guidelines for the Use of the Logo "Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe"

The route complies to the guidelines related to the use of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe" logo and ensures, through a standard grant and sponsorship procedure, that members follow the same guidelines. Members were informed about the programme of the cultural routes of the Council of Europe, but for this purpose the sending of brochures in the languages of the route (French, English and Italian) by the Institute or EPA would be desirable.

Nevertheless, a recommendation remains to be made regarding the Council of Europe label, its role in promoting the activities of the route and the visibility of the values of the programme, not only for the Via Francigena, but globally for the routes of the programme.

Considering that, for a general public, the difference between the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Council and the Council of Europe remains obscure, it can be stated without too much being mistaken that also for the average of the members (representatives of the town halls, friends of the routes etc.) of the networks that carry the cultural routes, the framework is not clear.

If we try to take the analysis a little further and ask the interest bearers at the local level, what are the characteristics and principles of the cultural routes program and what are the

responsibilities to which the members of the networks commit themselves with their membership, the risk of silence in response is very high.

This is also the case for the Via Francigena. Although the performance and efforts of EAVF are very high, with a capillary distribution of brochures and information materials to the associates, those who work in the field (reception of pilgrims and organisation of meetings and activities) often lose sight of the need to communicate what the Council of Europe label means. It is only through the use of the label that its reputation and intrinsic value would be enhanced.

In this sense it is necessary to note that, in the website of the Via Francigena, although the label is used correctly, the explanation of what it is the program of the cultural routes, its values and its fields of action are not presented in the home page, but are put as links in secondary pages (tab "About us" at the bottom of the page). The narration of Via Francigena often remains self-referential because of the very high number of activities and services that the site must provide to users, not allowing visitors to the site to frame these multiple actions in the program of the Council of Europe.

Therefore a recommendation is that the menu at the top of the page should include, alongside the "Contacts" and "About us", also the possibility of accessing more easily a page dedicated to the Council of Europe's routes programme, with precise indication of the activities that the route brings as a contribution to the various fields of action. To facilitate this task and also to have a framework of the action capacities of each member, the EAVF could consider asking the new associates to fill in a form in which they indicate on which part/field of the program they intend to invest.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

I. *List of eligibility criteria for themes;*

Since the last evaluation, the cultural route "Via Francigena" has been able to maintain the values for which it has been considered eligible, in particular: the theme of the pilgrimage to Rome remains representative of the values of Europeans, as the network and the members of the route in the countries concerned have been able to associate to the project regions, local communities and local councils as well as civil society; several expert groups have worked to increase the baggage of knowledge around the theme of the route over time and have ensured its dissemination by multiple means; the practice of pilgrimage on the route of the Via Francigena allowed the users to approach the various cultures along the way, also by means of special projects for the appreciation and exchange of views on the traditions and habits of the peoples adjoining; the practice of walking on foot has become a habit more common among the younger generations, on this aspect the network has managed to work to promote the reflections as well as the development of professional capacity in specific; the latter especially in the field of sustainable tourism, open to the most disadvantaged social strata; the EAVF has been more and more able to interpret the program in its business purposes, allowing territories to have opportunities for innovative social and economic development.

II. *List of Priority Fields of Action;*

In relation to the fields of action, as already stated, the route has very recently started the actions related to the research and development of knowledge around the theme and this remains one of the elements of weakness of the Via Francigena. The network of universities could be strengthened by seeking input from the academic institutes along the way. Nevertheless, several activities have been developed on areas other than those of the main route, which makes it possible to read the route as a project of territorial recomposition on a transnational scale.

On the enhancement of the memory, the history and the European heritage, the Via Francigena remains a leading example of what the program of the routes, through the local initiatives, is able to put in place in terms of intercultural dialogue and construction of a shared European identity. The work of drafting the application file for UNESCO World Heritage certainly goes in this direction. In addition, during the field visits, the key role of the route as a force driving the decisions of local elected representatives on the choices of urban regeneration and spatial planning was evident. In a small town like Orio Litta, the route of the Via Francigena has made it possible to renew, thanks to European funds, both an old oratory of a secondary church along the Po, and a vernacular building in the centre of the village, preserving memory and traditional landscapes.

Exchanges between young Europeans are currently limited to traineeships and work experience opportunities for young people. These can not be considered real exchanges, but opportunities to improve knowledge of European culture and to acquire quite remarkable skills. Nevertheless, this remains a priority on which the route should try to invest more in the future.

On the contemporary practice of culture and arts, the route has been able to make work its network of members, relying on the regions that had the availability of funds and specific financial components, which were bent to the theme of the route. It is to be remarked that

there is a high concentration of the actions in the Italian territory, which consequently lowers international participation in the activities. Getting the larger regions or territorial aggregations of the other countries to work on the example of what has been developed in Italy and partly in France, could contribute to improve the already very good performances of the route in this field.

The field of action on which the Via Francigena remains an example and an incessant source of good practices to be replicated is that of cultural tourism and sustainable development. From mark-up activities by engaging local authorities, to the promotion of major products like Parmesan or Champagne, from accessibility for all to applications of geo-informatics to guides in several languages, the route presents a complete set of services for the end user, which goes well beyond what the program asks for, or the representatives of ministries within the EPA could help support through their administrative actions.

III. List of criteria for networks

The EAVF is a well-established administrative and operational machine, which has recently acquired a commercial arm that allows to ensure profits that are reinvested directly in the costs of the staff working for the network in Italy as well as in France. During the interviews, the members and representatives of the different countries have stated that the current governance of the route is satisfactory and that allows several connection and information-transfer meetings every year. The GA takes place every six months in a different country and in a different locality, which allows the broadest participation of town halls and associations whose contribution to the network could be limited by transport costs. All criteria are supported by the route management in order to ensure information sharing. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, small improvements can be envisaged in order to facilitate activity coordination.

Therefore, Via Francigena is a very strong route, the difficulties of which are the same of several other networks labelled by the CoE. From an international perspective, these administrative, political and economic difficulties are often linked to the intrinsic weaknesses of the programme and not to mismanagement on the part of the network.

Finally, as already written and justified throughout this report, the recommendations for the coming years are the following:

- Reinforce the relations with the Vatican and promote an increasingly strong role for religious communities with regards to pilgrims' reception.
- build a self-reporting system for new members in order to evaluate their contribution to the network and to the programme's activities;
- enhance documentary evidence in order to ease the EAVF's task with regards to activity management and coordination;
- enhance the website by integrating information about the CoE's programme;
- widen and differentiate the competences of the scientific Committee's members, building on the possible synergies with other routes heading to Rome (Romea Germanica and Romea Strata);
- invest on the creation of a University network linked to the route for both research and development , and for youth exchanges;
- identify research areas in different domains supporting the EAVF's actions;
- train the network's members in the programme's contents and take responsibility on different fields of actions/actions.

Summary of recommendations as well as those of the expert during the previous evaluation of the route:

Criteria		Recommendations Previous Evaluation 2015-2016	Has the route addressed the recommendation since the last evaluation?		Recommendations current evaluation 2019-2020
			YES	NO	
I. Cultural route theme		Continue actions on social networks to target young people.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A more balanced distribution of responsibilities among the members of the Association.
		Universities need to provide studies more regularly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
II. Priority fields of action	Cooperation in research and development	Find the research on a dedicated area of the website	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Periodic Coordination with the SC of other road projects going to Rome
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Study of the users of the road and the economic impact of their passage on the territories
	Enhancement of memory, history and European heritage	Documentation and online route information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans	Trainees in regional coordination	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Development of student/teacher exchanges across universities
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Act on the skills and institutional capacities of each member of the network to develop exchanges.
	Contemporary cultural and artistic practice	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rebalance the distribution of actions in the various nations
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Cultural development	Transfer of the Italian expertise to the other regions.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Engage religious communities in welcoming people along the way
III. Cultural Route Network	None		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Communication Tools	None		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Put the programme's information in the home page.
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

5. List of references

All documents required for the evaluation were submitted by the route and analysed by the expert in addition to interviews and field visits.

Books and journals:

Luciano Callegari, Roberta Ferraris, Simone Frignani, *La Via Francigena, Guida ufficiale della via Francigena a piedi. 2018 (in different languages)*.

Alma Tourism Vol 8, N.6 (2017)
<https://almatourism.unibo.it/issue/view/606>

Other sources: ^[L]_[SEP]

<http://www.viefrancigene.org/fr/> (official website of the association) ^[L]_[SEP]

<http://www.visit.viefrancigene.org/fr/> (information website for travellers) ^[L]_[SEP]

<http://www.festival.viefrancigene.org/it/> (Collective Project Festival's website) ^[L]_[SEP]

<https://www.facebook.com/viefrancigene/?fref=ts> (Facebook page of ^[L]_[SEP]the EAVF) ^[L]_[SEP]

6. Field Visit Programme

Visited places:

Fidenza – 25/11/2019

Meeting with the leaders of the network to clarify certain points of the report and to set up the facilitation of the following field visits, as well as the contacts with the members of the network.

Visit of the headquarters in Fidenza of the Via Francigena.

Meeting Participants:

Luca Bruschi, Massimo Tedeschi, Sami Tawfik, Luca Faravelli, Elena Dubinina, Micol Sozzi

Luca Bruschi, Sami Tawfik and Massimo Tedeschi have also been contacted on more than one occasion by telephone since October 2019

Ostuni and The Plain of centuries-old Olive Trees– 10-11/12/2019

Meeting with Angelo Fabio Attolico and Gianni Sportelli from the culture and Tourism Department of the Puglia region;

field visit in the area of Ostuni, Torre Canne, Pozzo Guaceto;

meetings:

- Angela Milone, director of the coastal dunes Regional Park;
- Marialucrezia Colucci, Serapia Cooperative (Albergabici management);
- Enzo Lavarra, vice president of Federparchi;
- Gianfranco Ciola, director of the GAL Altosalento

Orio Litta – 16/12/2019

Visit of the hostel "Corte" and of the hostel Cascina S. Pietro called "La grangia" in Orio Litta;

Meetings:

Fede Costa, Provincia di Lodi, Turismo, contact Via Francigena province of Lodi and Francesco Ferrari, Mayor of Orio Litta and EAVF's Vice president

Interviewees:

Fiorella Dallari, CS coordinator
By phone several times since October 2019

Angelofabio ATTOLICO, Regione Puglia
EAVF technical manager for Southern VF
By telephone on 4/12, on-the-ground on 10 and 11 December 2019.

Martine GAUTHERON, member of the Council of Champlitte (Bourgogne Franche-Comté).
EAVF's Vice President, France
By phone on 11/12/2019

Leslie MAUSSANG
EAVF office of Champlitte (Burgundy and Franche-Comté), France
By phone on 13/12/2019

Velia Ann COFFEY
Former Canterbury City Council and EAVF's ex Vice President, England
By phone on 17/12/2019

Gaëtan TOURNAY
EAVF's Vice President, Switzerland
By phone on 18/12/2019