



## EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR INTERREGIONAL TECHNICAL COORDINATION (CECTI)

Thursday 28 April 2020  
Videoconference

### REPORT

Present: Massimo **Tedeschi** (EAVF President); Laurette **Proment** (Valle d'Aosta Region); Gaetano **Di Blasi** (Piedmont Region); Giovanni **Cappelluzzo**, Simona **Martino** and Monica **Abbiati** (Lombardy Region); Monica **Valeri** (APT Emilia-Romagna); Francesco **Tapinassi**, Raffaele **Mannelli** and Andrea **Carubi** (Tuscany Region); Roberto **Battista**, Elisabetta **Calabri**, Dewy **Lucchetti**, Valerio **Ciampricotti** and Silvio **Marino** (Lazio Region); Alfonso **Buonaiuto** (Campania Region); Patrizia **Minardi** and Emanuele **Nicoletti** (Basilicata Region); Angelofabio **Attolico** (Apulia Region).

EAVF staff: Luca **Bruschi** (Director), Sami **Tawfik** (Project manager), Luca **Faravelli** (project assistant), Micol **Sozzi** (Secretariat and rapporteur), Giovanni **D'Agliano** (EAVF external expert).

Beginning of meeting at 9:40

### Point 1: Perspectives, promotion, and enhancement of the Via Francigena after the Coronavirus. Reflections.

**Tedeschi** refers to the Covid-19 health emergency that will bring changes in various aspects of social life, including the experience of walking along the entire Via Francigena. He invites the regional representatives to express their first assessments and suggestions in view of the restart of the transit on the Via Francigena, taking into consideration three central themes: safety and maintenance of the route; reception facilities; communication. He reports about the videoconference on the restart of tourism along the pathways in the post-emergency phase that took place on 27 April 2020, organized by Lorenza Bonaccorsi and Flaminia Santarelli (respectively Undersecretary and D.G. Tourism in MiBACT), in which Luca Bruschi participated on behalf of the EAVF.

**Attolico**, understanding the territorial differences linked to the health situation, identifies the need for ministerial directives for ordinary control and maintenance of suburban routes and new sanitation management of accommodation facilities for pilgrims and tourists. Following this, each region can adopt its own regulations and allocate funds to subsidize the activities of municipalities and associations for ordinary maintenance of the route and management of the reception facilities. He claims that slow walking tourism gives more guarantees of social distancing than other types of tourism. He exemplifies the main problems of the hospitality sector: sanitation of common areas (e.g. shared bathrooms and kitchens), costs of maintaining new sanitation standards, reduction of available beds, creation of safe spaces for social gatherings.

**Minardi** agrees with Attolico and informs about meetings between regions and MiBACT regarding the recovery of post-Covid tourism. It is agreed that the routes in general and the Via Francigena in particular can be an important element of tourism recovery, first - for domestic, family,

proximity tourists, and later - for national and international travellers. She proposes to the EAVF to prepare an open letter to be sent to politicians and tourism professionals addressing the need to include the slow tourism and routes into the recovery plan. She proposes an establishment of a regional fund to support the recovery, which should be included to the Operational Regional Programme - European Regional Development Fund (POR-FESR).

**Buonaiuto** agrees that the Via Francigena can act as a driving force for the recovery of other tourism sectors, since it can respect social distancing (unlike other types of tourism). He informs about a recent reopening of some construction sites working on safety measures along the route in Campania; he underlines the need to start a systematic and shared data collection among all the regions, in order to monitor and map walkers and better respond to their needs.

**Calabri** agrees with Attolico, Minardi and Buonaiuto about the Via Francigena being an important element of recovery and on the primary need to reactivate ordinary maintenance of the route. She also finds useful the proposal of an establishment of a specific regional fund to subsidize the routes for ordinary maintenance and adaptation of hospitality. She proposes to use virtual promotion tools (short videos, virtual tours, photos, interactive narratives, etc.) to keep users interested and curious about the Via Francigena and to facilitate their recovery at the time of reopening.

**Tapinassi** informs that Tuscany region created regional crisis teams to respond to needs of the tourism recovery. Part of the work is dedicated to the routes (in continuity with an approval on 30 March 2020 of the resolution N. 411 "Regulation implementing the regional law from 10 July 2018, N. 35. Provisions for recognition, enhancement, and promotion of regional paths"). He emphasizes the need to reflect on non-hotel hospitality (hostels, parishes, diffused hospitality structures, etc.). He reports about the request on Forms 33 and 34 of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Economic Planning CIPE for an increase of the first tranche of advance payment (from 5% to 25%) and for clarification on the role of the regions in the management of CIPE funds. Anticipating the project "Lands of the Via Francigena", he informs that he transferred the know-how of this project to Toscana Promozione Turistica. He asks for clarifications on the promotional and commercial spaces of the EAVF website, underlining the necessary distinction between the sections dedicated to public and private entities.

**Valeri** informs about a launch of local monitoring to understand which services can be reactivated; she informs about active participation in walking and hiking tourism even during the health emergency via multimedia content, video stories, interventions on social networks. She agrees with Calabri and proposes joint coordination of promotional activities together with national tourism agency of Italy ENIT and regional bodies in charge (APT, Explora, etc.). Concerning reception facilities along the Emilian section, she informs about an activity carried out by the regional platform [www.camminiemiliaromagna.it](http://www.camminiemiliaromagna.it) - an updated database and showcase for events and initiatives.

**Martino** informs that slow walking will be a priority of the Lombard annual planning, as it is linked to local and proximity tourism. She considers fundamental to understand territorial needs and assess a possibility to systematize them at national level, given the differences in health situations and recovery possibilities. She identifies communication as the second important point. She agrees with Valeri and Tapinassi on involvement of regional communication and promotional agencies (Explora for the Lombardy area).



**Abbiati** reaffirms an important role of provinces, both for routes' promotion and implementation of the CIPE Form 33, for which she is interested to receive the materials shared by the Tuscany Region about management of funds.

**Proment** informs about creation, also in Valle d'Aosta, of a regional table to address issues related to the recovery in various sectors. She agrees with colleagues about the adoption of common criteria, following national directives, to deal with the post-emergence recovery phase, especially in terms of accommodation. She agrees with the proposal for the AEVF to send a message to the associates to inform about possible actions to relaunch the Via Francigena and the continuation of promotional activities on social networks to keep the curiosity alive.

**Di Blasi** informs about the organization of a working table between the Piedmont Region, Local Tourist Agencies (ATL) and Destination Management Organization (DMO) for reactivation of tourism and in particular of outdoor activities and hiking. Attention was also paid to streamline bureaucratic procedures for requesting contributions and funding for municipalities and associations.

**D'Agliano** reflects on sanitation of common areas in hospitality facilities (bathrooms, refectory halls) and routine maintenance of the route to be of primary importance. It is necessary to streamline bureaucratic procedures for entrusting and restarting the work by local authorities.

**Mannelli** emphasizes offer-based hospitality facilities of religious origin, very important for the Tuscany Region. The region carried out a precise analysis in coordination with Ad Limina Petri.

**Bruschi** thanks all the participants for their contributions, important for demonstrating unity and cohesion at the regional level along the Via Francigena. On the issue of safety measures, Francigena Service Srl underlines the willingness to operate, in harmony and collaboration with the territories.

### **Point 2: Update on CECTI working groups and lead regions: Route (Tuscany), Accommodation (Aosta Valley), Communication (Lombardy).**

**Tawfik** updates on 3 working groups:

- Route: coordinated by the Tuscany Region. This subject is claimed above all in the Italian section of the route; he considers useful to conduct a comparison with the maintenance of the Swiss, French and English sections where the route maintenance is centralised.
- Accommodation: coordinated by the Aosta Valley Region (Proment). In 2016 the work of the group led to the realization of the Vademecum of European standards of the Via Francigena path. A part of the document is dedicated to the list of the minimum characteristics of the Francigena-friendly facilities.
- Communication: coordinated by the Lombardy Region. The group, among other things, contributed to the creation of the Official Guides of the Via Francigena (from Canterbury to Grand Saint Bernard Pass; from Grand Saint Bernard Pass to Rome; from Rome to Santa Maria di Leuca section is underway) and the creation of the official mobile application.

The groups are not closed, they receive stimuli and support from all the regions, which are invited to collaborate on the topics of interest.



**Attolico** informs about the work on Facebook live broadcasts that obtained good feedback from public. They prove to be useful tools to intercept Italian walkers who will not be able to travel along the Saint James' Ways this year and to re-direct them to the Via Francigena.

**Bruschi** also stresses the importance of the international live broadcasts organized by the EAVF in collaboration with local experts and walkers. He informs about the increase of international visitation of the EAVF website and social media channels (e.g. Americans, Australians, etc.) and reminds that the overall strengthening of the Via Francigena gives positive impact to the individual regional sections.

**Martino** confirms the willingness of the Lombardy region to continue the coordination of the communication group, accepting contributions from other regions. She believes it is necessary to adapt the response tools in all sectors to the Covid-19 reality.

### **Point 3: State of the art of route maintenance.**

**Bruschi** informs about the green light given by the Italian authorities for the maintenance of the Via Francigena in Italy identified by the Prime Ministerial Decree of 10 April 2020: "Following the Prime Ministerial Decree of 10 April ATECO 81.3 landscape maintenance has been authorized; obviously in compliance with safety standards".

### **Point 4: Update on the Francigena Friendly regional accommodation lists and related visibility on the EAVF website and App.**

**Proment**, referring to the communication to the regions sent on 31 March 2020, informs that the update of hospitality structures is still based on pre-Covid criteria; the questionnaire may be updated and adapted following future national and local provisions on hospitality. She reaffirms the importance of updating hospitality data - an essential condition for online publication of information (site, app, ...).

She reminds that the possibility of appearing in the Francigena Friendly lists will be provided free of charge to all facilities that by answering the questionnaire respect the criteria of the Vademecum of the European standards of the Via Francigena path.

To further distinguish the institutional service of Francigena Friendly facilities from the commercial promotion of Visit Via Francigena facilities, a new web display was prepared on [www.viefrancigene.org](http://www.viefrancigene.org) (see attachment). This way two lists can co-exist without creating confusion to users. Within the Francigena Friendly page various images group regional lists. In these lists the first screen will present essential data such as a municipality, a name of a facility, an address, a website, an e-mail address, a telephone number, "€" symbol to identify a price range, services offered (laundry, meals and catering, wi-fi, luggage transport, number of beds). Minimization of essential data will also facilitate greater agility in viewing the App (further reduction to a municipality, a name of the facility, an address, an email and a telephone).

**Battista** thanks for the work done by the Aosta Valley Region; he renews the willingness of the Lazio Region to collaborate in various working groups, starting with the one dedicated to the route. He underlines the importance of monitoring walkers: knowing the quantity of walkers would serve to set more targeted actions.

**Tawfik** summarizes the differences between the Francigena Friendly and Visit Via Francigena lists: the first one is a tool accessible to all facilities that, in response to the questionnaire sent by the

regions, respect the criteria of the Vademecum, the visibility provided is free; the second one is a commercial project linked to paid membership. It is commercially managed by Francigena Service Srl (EAVF operating arm) and Sloways (EAVF tour operator and expert partner). The greater visibility of the Visit consists of personalized pages with photos and description of hospitality structures; insertion in the interactive map of the route ([viefrancigene.org](http://viefrancigene.org) website and the app); advertising to online buyers of the pilgrim passport. The costs of Visit membership are as follows: free for pilgrim structures (hostels and parishes), facilities with less than 20 beds and with a rate lower than 20 € per night; € 99 per year + VAT for structures with up to 40 beds; € 150 per year + VAT for structures with more than 40 beds. To facilitate membership, free insertion periods were offered (e.g. in 2016-17 to facilities along the Italian section from the Great Saint Bernard to Rome, in 2018-19 to Swiss structures, in 2020 to French structures and to the southern part of the Via Francigena). He also informs that along the sections in England, France and Switzerland a possibility of implementing the Francigena Friendly lists will be provided, being added to the Visit. He recalls that for the edition of the Via Francigena guide from Grand Saint Bernard Pass to Rome a selection of hospitality facilities was conducted in collaboration with the regions and Terre di Mezzo publisher on the basis of the Francigena Friendly lists with a price limit of 35 € per person per night reflecting walkers' needs for affordable accommodations. However, reference to the website [www.viefrancigene.org](http://www.viefrancigene.org) was included in the guide for consultation of the complete lists.

To **Tapinassi's** question, **Tawfik** replied that the structures included in the guide from Grand Saint Bernard Pass to Rome, published by "Terre di Mezzo", did not pay for their presence in the guide.

**Bruschi** adds that from this year dedicated webinars will be added to additional services provided to Visit structures.

**D'Agliano** reminds that free publicity of public facilities by public bodies (e.g. sharing institutional stands at international fairs) is not mandatory.

**Valeri** thanks **Proment** for her work and suggests an update of the Vademecum dated 2016 and implementing provisions to be adopted in the post-Covid-19 phase. She also recommends mentioning the regional sites as reference for the paths within the Francigena Friendly (e.g. for Emilia-Romagna [walkinmiliaromagna.it](http://walkinmiliaromagna.it)). Further study on offer-based and religious facilities is also required.

**Mannelli**, in reference to the double classification (Visit / Friendly), suggests considering a single online item which could include both lists.

**Buonaiuto** confirms the availability of the Campania region to join various working groups.

**Proment** informs that the deadline for the delivery of updated files by the regions will be extended to 30 May 2020.

**Bruschi** informs about collection of good practices along the Via Francigena that will be brought to the General Assembly; he informs about the European Via Francigena map made in a poster format for fans, as well as in a technical version for member organizations. He speaks about territorial maps design launched by the EAVF and Francigena Service in collaboration with the publisher Guidotti (already 8 maps created) and of the European Francigena Day hypothesized in September 2020. Finally, he recalls that the conclusions of CECTI will be reported to the Executive Board convened on May 28, 2020.



### **Point 5: Project "Lands of the Via Francigena"**

**Tawfik** informs about an update of the Technical Regulation for the project "Lands of the Via Francigena", following the comparison with some regional representatives (see attachment). He briefly summarizes aims of this territorial project: visibility enhancement of areas adjacent to the Via Francigena, important for Via Francigena landscape, offering walkers and tourists an opportunity to visit and explore surrounding territories. The project provides a strong synergy between the EAVF and the regions concerned. He clarifies that "Lands of the Via Francigena" does not aim to divert from the main itinerary of the Via Francigena but starting from the Francigena brand, to draw attention to other territorial peculiarities (example: involvement of the Parmigiano-Reggiano dairies in the province of Parma) and provide visibility to tourist attractions of member entities. It is a useful tool to promote proximity tourism. He informs that municipalities not located on the official route involved in "Lands of the Via Francigena" project will not be able to become ordinary members, in order not to create confusion with the main route. He asks regional representatives to provide feedback to the Technical Agreement, prior to sharing it with the Executive Board and the General Assembly. To **Proment's** question, **Tawfik** replies that the promoter of the project can be both local authorities and regions directly.

**Carubi** suggests a better definition of the CECTI representatives for each region, to ensure that all areas are well represented.

**Mannelli** requires that signs of "Lands of the Via Francigena" project differ from the main route signs in order not to create confusion. He fears that the extensive interpretation of the project could damage the work done on the main path.

**Battista** applauds the project, since it can also involve territories bordering the Via Francigena, an action planned and supported by regional planning guidelines for territorial tourism enhancement.

**Buonaiuto** believes that the project provides a tool to involve territories not included in the main route of the Via Francigena.

**Attolico** agrees with **Buonaiuto** and still believes it is essential to keep the main official path distinct, which visibility should be structured and increased, in particular the southern route which has recently been ratified.

**Valeri** expresses interest in the project, also in perspective; she shares colleagues' ideas on maintaining the distinction from the main route not to create confusion. She also stresses that we must pay close attention to different regional rules on definition of tourist itineraries and to various organizations that already operate on territories (example: Emilia-Romagna Tourist Destination).

**Cappelluzzi** agrees with the colleagues on the need to keep a clear distinction between the European cultural route Via Francigena and territories affiliated to "Lands of the Via Francigena" project.

### **Point 6: Software for walker flow calculation linked to the Via Francigena pilgrim passport.**

**Bruschi** underlines the importance of having quantitative and qualitative data on Via Francigena "users" in order to provide the best services and solutions and prepare an adequate response. He



introduces a proposal, sent to the EAVF by the Aulab company, about a dedicated software (see attachment); he invites the regions which have further suggestions to send them to the EAVF.

**Tawfik** informs that the data currently used by the EAVF come from the number of pilgrim passports sold and from the questionnaires collected at stopover points and accommodation facilities along the route. Difficulties persist in analysing and cross-referencing the data: from receipt and partial return of forms to paper format to be transferred digitally; therefore, he is convinced that the adoption of an adequate software could be a necessary improvement to overcome these limitations. He briefly illustrates the proposal: the walker makes the first online registration while purchasing the pilgrim passport; subsequently, along the way, at a reception structure a pilgrim will simply provide the numeric code of his pilgrim passport, always maintaining compliance with the rules on privacy.

**Attolico** informs that this software collects both quantitative and qualitative data and the monitoring will not only be initial (during the pilgrim passport purchase) and final (at the Testimonium delivery) but also intermediate (thanks to the hospitality facilities – antenna points). This will allow to have aggregated data that can provide important data for further planning.

**Battista** applauds the project and believes that a more stringent definition of intermediate points to enter the data is necessary (also in compliance with the privacy legislation).

**Tawfik** informs that initially current distribution points of pilgrim passports and a list of selected hospitality structures along the way will be involved. He announced that the price of the software and data management is around € 25,000 plus an annual hosting fee (variable based on the number of antenna points chosen).

**Bruschi** suggests publishing a call, an expression of interest to select the best proposal so that the project can start by the end of the year.

To **Mannelli's** proposal to offer basic insurance services, **Tawfik** recalls that during various meetings of the Executive Board in 2019 proposals of combining a pilgrim passport and insurance were discussed, however, no conclusion has been reached yet.

### **Point 7: Official guides update and territorial promotion strategies to be shared with the regions.**

Postponed to the next meeting.

**Bruschi** invites all the regions to participate in the next video call meeting of the EAVF Executive Board, to take place on Thursday 28 May 2020 at 9.30.

**Tedeschi** concludes by recalling that the discussion and the proposals that have emerged will be transferred to the representatives of six regions of the Via Francigena north of the Alps (Valais; Vaud; Bourgogne-Franche-Comté; Grand Est; Nord-Pas-de-Calais; Kent) for their further considerations and feedback.

He thanked the participants for their contributions, underlining that the post- Covid-19 recovery cannot be based only on routes, however, they cannot be ignored.

### **The meeting ends at 13:30**