



*Cultural Route of the Council of Europe
Itinéraire Culturel du Conseil de l'Europe
Itinerario Culturale del Consiglio d'Europa*



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE REGIONS OF THE VIA FRANCIGENA – CULTURAL ROUTE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Background

The Council of Europe cultural route of the Via Francigena is a trans-national cultural route starting from Canterbury and arriving to Rome crossing four European countries (United Kingdom, France, Switzerland and Italy). This route is based on the historic travel's diary written by Archbishop Sigeric the Serious, on 990 on his way back from Rome to Canterbury, after receiving the “pallium” from Pope John XV.

The cultural route of the Via Francigena was awarded certification as “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” in 1994 as pilgrimage and communication along this route, toward Rome have had great importance for shaping European Identity and Culture throughout the centuries.

In 2001 the European Association of The Via Francigena (EAVF) was created by a group of 34 local municipalities. It was the first step to consolidate a European network for enhancing a living route.

Since 2007, EAVF is the only body in charge for the Council of Europe for the preservation, enhancement and development of the Via Francigena, having received the habilitation as lead-network by the Council of Europe. EAVF gathers nowadays almost one-hundred local authorities among European Regions, Provinces and municipalities. EAVF plays the role of facilitator for the coordination among the actors concerned by the route, linking all institutional levels – local, regional, national and European.

In these years several municipalities and regions along the Via Francigena in United Kingdom, France, Switzerland and Italy have developed specific policies and actions to put in value the Via Francigena locally, achieving different positive results.

The Council of Europe and, more recently, the European Union have supported trans-national cultural routes for their value and ability to enhance democratic participation to Culture, enhance European Heritage and intercultural dialogue, diversify Tourism offer in Europe.

The Council of Europe Member States can participate to the cultural routes Program as Members of the Council of Europe Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA), which entered into force on 8th December 2010. France, Switzerland and Italy are Members of the above mentioned EPA¹.

¹ For relevant documents concerning the Council of Europe cultural routes Program, please see: www.coe.int/routes



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In the framework of the European project “Per Viam – Pilgrims’ Routes in Action”, co-funded by the European Commission – DG Enterprise and Industry (1.3.2012-28.2.2013), Regione Toscana, EAVF and Région Champagne-Ardenne have promoted two interregional meetings (in Florence, on 17th May 2012 and in Châlons-en-Champagne, on 24th-25th January 2013) in order to encourage exchange of experience and discuss about a coordinated and integrated approach to improve the governance of the Via Francigena at European level, while enhancing territories and heritage concerned by The Via.

At the meetings, all European regions agreed on the importance to create a **European Interregional Coordinating Committee for the Via Francigena**.

Regione Toscana, Région Champagne-Ardenne and EAVF took the initiative to propose this Committee to all European regions crossed by the Via Francigena – cultural route of the Council of Europe (Kent; Nord-Pas-de-Calais; Picardie; Champagne-Ardenne; Franche-Comté; Canton Vaud; Canton Valais; Aosta Valley; Piedmont; Lombardy; Emilia-Romagna; Liguria; Tuscany; Latium) and also to those regions involved in the cultural route South of Rome, toward Jerusalem, given the application for the extension of the Council of Europe certification to the Via Francigena South of Rome (in Italy: Region of Molise, Campania, Basilicata, Apulia).

The conclusive document of the meeting held in in Châlons-en-Champagne (“Toward the Creation of the European Interregional Coordinating Committee of the Via Francigena”) defined the main axis of cooperation of the future Committee as follows.

Regions along the Via Francigena believe that:

- Europe can be united only if encounter, dialogue and knowledge of its different peoples and cultures are ensured and are basing on respect for diversity as well as sharing of knowledge, experiences and resources,
- The Via Francigena is a trans-national axis linking ideally and concretely Northern Europe to Mediterranean Europe and for this reason can facilitate intercultural dialogue,
- The Via Francigena is an historical greenway to be discovered practicing slow and sustainable tourism in small and medium-sized towns, thanks to the involvement of grassroots networks and associations, volunteers, local and regional authorities, universities and professional organisations,
- The Via Francigena represents a strategic tool for deseasonalization of tourism as well as enhancement of minor tourist destinations in Europe, especially those located in rural areas,
- The Via Francigena is marked by high value cultural heritage – tangible, intangible and natural cultural heritage – which represent a good motivation to voyage for different kinds of potential tourists (naturalistic, sport, religious, cultural tourists, ramblers, etc.),

For relevant documents concerning policies developed by European Parliament and European Commission on behalf of the trans-national cultural routes, please see:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/index_en.htm (Eu Policy background – COM(2010)352 ; Cultural Tourism; Sustainable Tourism).

- Via Francigena has accumulated a remarkable potential for cultural-tourism, territorial growth and social cohesion worth being further exploited for encouraging employment, cultural and creative industry, sustainable development and cultural tourism.

Regions of the Via Francigena Agree

- To promote the European values of human rights, cultural democracy, cultural diversity in Europe.
- To cooperate for identifying a shared methodology and agree shared solutions for common issues, through coordinated dialogue and exchange of practices,
- To ensure a coordinated dialogue with AEFV, ministerial authorities, local authorities and all concerned associations in order to put into practice an holistic and integrated approach,

Commit themselves to

Create the “**European Interregional Coordinating Committee of the Via Francigena**”, which is open to the regions crossed by the itinerary Canterbury-Rome (Kent; Nord-Pas-de-Calais; Picardie; Champagne-Ardenne; Franche-Comté; Vaud; Aosta Valley; Piedmont; Lombardy; Emilia-Romagna; Liguria; Tuscany; Latium) as well as to the regions South of Rome (in Italy: Region of Molise, Campania, Basilicata, Apulia). The Committee will be comprised of two representatives of every Member region.

The Committee will have the following objectives:

1. Enhance tangible, intangible and natural cultural heritage along the Via Francigena and encourage the development of cultural and creative industries in order to raise awareness about the authentic identity of the Via;
2. Develop the tourist potential of the Via Francigena through a sustainable approach;
3. Emphasize the human and social value of the Via Francigena;
4. Formulate the definition and approve the « Euroepan Master Plan of the Via Francigena », from Canterbury to Rome and from Rome to Apulia with the following objectives :
 - ensure safety for pedestrians and bikers along the Via and maintenance of infrastructures,
 - strengthen signposting relating to the official Via Francigena (the one certified by the Council of Europe) in order to avoid misunderstanding and confusion with the other routes to Rome, and with other national or local routes,
 - strengthen coordinated information, communication and promotion on a European level, via joint activities, i.e. maps and georeferentiation of the route, web portal of The Via Francigena, European Festival of the Via Francigena, etc.
 - create a harmonized system of info points along the Via,
 - strengthen volunteering services providing support to hospitality and to travel experience,



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- ensure a chain of hospitality for pilgrims, and ramblers along the Via every 15/20 km (or in every stop) along the Via,
- promote the generation of business opportunities, facilitating thematic and geographic clustering in order to develop local economy thanks to the Via Francigena,
- encourage cooperation with the other pilgrimage routes certified by the Council of Europe.

This Memorandum is to be considered valid as soon as at least three European regions from at least three different European countries concerned by the Via Francigena will formally enter the Committee.

Once validated, this agreement is to be considered permanent. An annual plan of action will be defined each year by the Members in order to define priorities and common actions to be undertaken.

Each Member shall be able to withdraw by the Committee by forwarding a 6 months prior written notice to that effect to European Association of the Via Francigena. European Association of the Via Francigena will then acknowledge receipt of the notice and inform the other Members of the Committee.



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THE EUROPEAN INTERREGIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE VIA FRANCIGENA ADHESION FORM

(NAME of the REGION)

Commits, after approval by its regional assembly (or relevant regional decision-making body), to becoming a Member of the European Interregional Coordinating Committee of The Via Francigena, and to adhering to its Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Hereby, **(NAME of the REGION)**,

also declares to commit to put into practice the above mentioned MoU in order to strengthen the established cooperation among the Members of the Committee for the benefit of all the actors involved in the Committee.

Name and role of the legal representative:

Address:

Signature:

For any further information, please contact:
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