



NOMINATION OF THE

VIA FRANCIGENA AS UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

Sigeric's historical itinerary
from **Canterbury** to **Rome**



VIA
FRANCIGENA

road to Rome

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



What is the Via Francigena

The **Via Francigena** is the **oldest** and **most relevant** medieval pilgrimage route which departs from England and the countries of **north-west Europe**, going towards the **italian peninsula** and in particular to **Rome**, the principal destination of the whole route, as a centre of Christianity and an eminent place of culture, then onwards to Jerusalem and the Mediterranean.

Excluding variations to the main route, the itinerary is around **3,200 km** long, or nearly **2,000 miles**, and is a **Cultural Route of the Council of Europe** (1994), a route which links the culture and tradition of **five European countries**: England, France, Switzerland, Italy and the Vatican State.



Every year, it is estimated that there are **50,000** pilgrims coming from **70 countries** along the European route who remain on the route for an average of a week.

The **Via Francigena** links **Canterbury** (Kent, UK) with **Rome**, and continues to the **point of the heel of Italy, Santa Maria di Leuca** (Apulia, IT).

This itinerary's roots can be traced back to the then **Archbishop of Canterbury Sigeric's** diary, dated 990 A.D., written during his return voyage from Rome, after having received the Pallium from Pope John XV who consecrated him the Archbishop of the English city.

Today, the **Via Francigena** has a strong cultural importance, attracting an audience interested in trekking, food, wine, nature and history.



The **Tuscany Region** has played the role of **protagonists** since the first stages of the Via Francigena's UNESCO nomination journey.

Tuscany has always been active in this area, and as of today boasts **eight cultural sites** recognised as **world heritage**, and the Via Francigena **truly deserves** the same recognition.

We hope to reach this objective, one which will be possible only with mutual engagement, working in **close synergy** with the other six Italian Regions and the Italian Ministry of Culture.

Eugenio Giani - President of the Tuscany Region

The stages to nomination

1

On the **12th of June 2015** in **Fidenza**, local Italian politicians met to **re-launch** and **promote** the nomination.

2

On the **3rd of March 2017**, the **Memorandum of Understanding** was signed by the **Lazio, Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna, Liguria, Lombardy, Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta** regions in order to proceed together to complete the "Preliminary analysis of the Proposal to nominate the Via Francigena as UNESCO World Heritage".

3

On the **9th of March 2018**, the "**Preliminary Analysis**" was presented to **UNESCO** in **Paris**. Suggestions were received on the method and the contents, underlining the fact that the nomination must encompass the **whole Via Francigena**, from **Canterbury to Rome**.

4

On the **6th of November 2018**, in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding of the 3rd of March 2017, the **Tuscany Region** entrusted the EAVF with the task of producing the European **Framework** of the Via Francigena's UNESCO Nomination.

5

On the **24th of January 2019**, the **Management Board of the Italian National Commission** for UNESCO expressed a favourable view to including the nomination of the Italian stretch on the **Tentative List** with the "**Via Francigena in Italy**".

6

On the **28th of May** and the **24th of June 2020**, two international meetings took place with **Ministerial representatives** from **four Via Francigena countries** (Italy, Switzerland, the UK and the Vatican State) organised by the **Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities** (MiBACT), where the **Framework** was presented.

7

On the occasion of the great march to celebrate twenty years of the EAVF, the "**Via Francigena. Road to Rome 2021. Start again!**" event was held from the **15th of June** to the **18th of October 2021**, during which the topic of UNESCO was reminded of in all meetings with local institutions and associations.

8

Between **November 2020** and **February 2022**, many letters supporting the Via Francigena's UNESCO Nomination were sent to the French Ministry of Culture by six senators, three Departmental Councillors, two agglomerations of Municipalities and almost thirty Municipalities.

9

On the **6th of July** in Florence, the **Regional Council of Tuscany**, the **Italian Ministry of Culture (MIC)**, the **Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry** and the **seven regions of the Italian stretch of Sigeric's Via Francigena** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** for the continuation and promotion of the UNESCO Nomination.



Communauté d'agglomération de Béthune-Bruay, Artois-Lys Romane, Pas-de-Calais Department, Hauts-de-France (FR)

The **Lombardy Region** supports the nomination of the Via Francigena, among the most evocative walks in Europe, for its historical and cultural value.

The stretch through Lombardy is a **crossroads** with other walks. They are ways of exploring the territory and the **highly appealing** cultural heritage.

If defined by the itinerary, the **space and time dimension** embrace many levels, linked to **settlements** and to **events**. Furthermore, the UNESCO nomination is a **formidable tool** for **cultural promotion**.

Stefano Bruno Galli - Councillor for Autonomy and Culture in the Lombardy Region



The **European Association of the Via Francigena ways** (EAVF) is a voluntary association of local entities in **England, France, Switzerland and Italy**, which to date has over **220 members**, and was founded in **2001** in **Fidenza** (PR, Italy) in order to promote the Via Francigena in seventeen European Regions: **Kent, Hauts-de-France, Grand Est, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Vaud, Vallese, Valle d'Aosta, Piemonte, Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Liguria, Tuscany and Lazio**, to which **Campania, Molise, Basilicata and Apulia** were added in 2019.

In **2007**, the **Council of Europe** certified the association as **carrier network** of the Via Francigena, thus giving it the role of safeguarding, enhancing, promoting and developing the route across the world.

EAVF carries out actions to add value to the route at all institutional levels: **local, regional, national and European**, and among the many projects, there are events, conferences and walks along the route to increase awareness and frequentation of the route, which are also the fundamental principles of EAVF's mission. In order to carry out this work in France, EAVF has undersigned two partnership agreements, one with FFRandonnée, which is responsible for the maintenance and management of long walking paths in France, among which we find the Via Francigena (GR®145), and the other with the French Federation of the Via Francigena (FFVF), which is a group of pilgrims' associations with the mission of helping walkers on their itinerary, as well as publicising hospitality structures for pilgrims along the French and Swiss stretches.

Many activities are aimed at agreements with private partners and companies in various sectors to offer informative and technical services, for example, the social media channels and the website: tools which are essential nowadays to promote a vast cultural resource – the Via Francigena. EAVF is the technical partner identified by the regions to create the documents necessary for the **Preliminary Analysis** and the **Framework** needed to develop the UNESCO Nomination.



*The nomination of the Via Francigena as UNESCO heritage represents a **prestigious objective**, to which EAVF has worked towards with enthusiasm and professionalism; a strength of its **multiple years of experience** in the field of promoting the important Cultural Itinerary on a European scale.*

*The itinerary undoubtedly deserves to have its **excellency** and **extraordinary peculiarity** recognised, both in terms of its cultural and natural profile.*

*The Via Francigena represents an excellent opportunity to **increase the value of material and immaterial heritage** of the areas it passes through, and all communities are called upon to contribute to achieving this ambitious goal.*

*The inclusion on the UNESCO list, as well as that of the Council of Europe **from 1994**, will allow the Via Francigena to expand its beneficial cultural influence across the world.*

Massimo Tedeschi - EAVF President

The next steps

Validation of the Framework and analysis of the single national stretches

It is important to specify that the nomination can be defined as **“hybrid”** (therefore neither **“transnational”** nor **“national”**), like that of two previous nominations: the **“Frontiers of the Roman Empire”** and the **“Silk Road”**.

Approval of the Framework is requested of the nations involved. Once this is approved, this will become a **“guideline”** to draft the national nominations; a technical document to present the Via Francigena as a **unique international asset** in terms of values and characteristics.

Once the Framework is approved, each nation can continue with the nomination of its own national stretch in accordance with its own timescale.



*For the Via Francigena, the **City of Calais** is the **Port to Continental Europe** and for many years has contributed to the fame of this European Cultural Route. In Calais, the Via Francigena route is signposted with **bronze arrows** on the ground, and the touristic and cultural attractions help to validate the Credentials of each pilgrim.*

The City of Calais is part of this dynamic that revolves around patrimony, territorial development and history and wishes to contribute, along with neighbouring places in France, England, Switzerland and Italy, to the inclusion of the GR 145 Via Francigena on the List of World Heritage.

Natacha Bouchart

*Vice-president of the Hauts-de France Region,
Mayor of Calais,
President of Grand Calais Terres et Mers*

The Via Francigena as UNESCO Heritage

Merits and comparative analysis

The aspects that distinguish the Via Francigena and that make it exceptional (**Outstanding Universal Value**) are principally identifiable in the:

- **longevity**
- **multiplicity of functions**
- **capacity of adaptation**

While maintaining the characteristic of a religious pilgrimage, there are numerous **important** and **innovative** elements along the Via Francigena with regards to social organisation and aid, in **infrastructural construction techniques** and in **models of civil and religious architecture** and finally, in **urban reorganisation** of populated centres and agricultural activities in the territories passed through.

These considerations are the result of the analysis that compared the European itinerary of the Via Francigena with “**The French Way**”, “**Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range**” (*Japan*) and “**Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor**” (*Cina, Kazakhstan, Kirghizistan*).



Nomination details

Material and three UNESCO criteria (II, IV and VI) to respect

In order to be able to be included on the **List of World Heritage**, the sites have to be characterised by an **Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)** and meet at least one of the ten selection criteria illustrated in the **Operational Guidelines** for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, of which six are **cultural criteria** (I, II, III, IV, V, VI) and four are **natural criteria** (VII, VIII, IX, X).

Characterised by its centuries-old processes, the Via Francigena represents “documents - monuments” which are one of the **most distinguished in its creation and development of European pilgrimage ways**, standing out in a specific way as a cultural itinerary and an incredible collection of material and immaterial heritage: urbanistic and landscape, architectural, technological and artistic.

This relevant repertoire of heritage, still conserved today, allows us to recognise the **importance** of the role this way has played over the course of time in the **physical and cultural development** of the cities and territories it passes through, and to understand the exceptionality of the quality and the values it represents.

CRITERION II

“To exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design”

Throughout the **Middle Ages**, pilgrimages to Rome played an **important role** in **cultural exchanges** between northern Europe and the Mediterranean, contributing to the development of **architecture, art** and **town-planning**, as well as favouring an **intercultural dialogue** with the countries passed through.

“To be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.”

CRITERION IV

Pilgrimages constitute an essential part of the **spiritual** and **cultural** life of medieval Europe. The ways that were followed were **equipped to provide material and spiritual assistance to pilgrims**. The needs associated with the passage of great numbers of pilgrims, walkers and travellers has favoured the development, along the Via Francigena, of **supporting infrastructure** to aid the pilgrimage: large and small **ecclesiastical structures** (lodgings, parish churches, oratories, monasteries and sanctuaries) as well as **civil structures** (post houses, bridges, fords), common along the itinerary.

CRITERION VI

"To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance".

The Via Francigena represents an **exceptional testimony** of the **tradition** of pilgrimages linked to **spiritual values** still alive today.

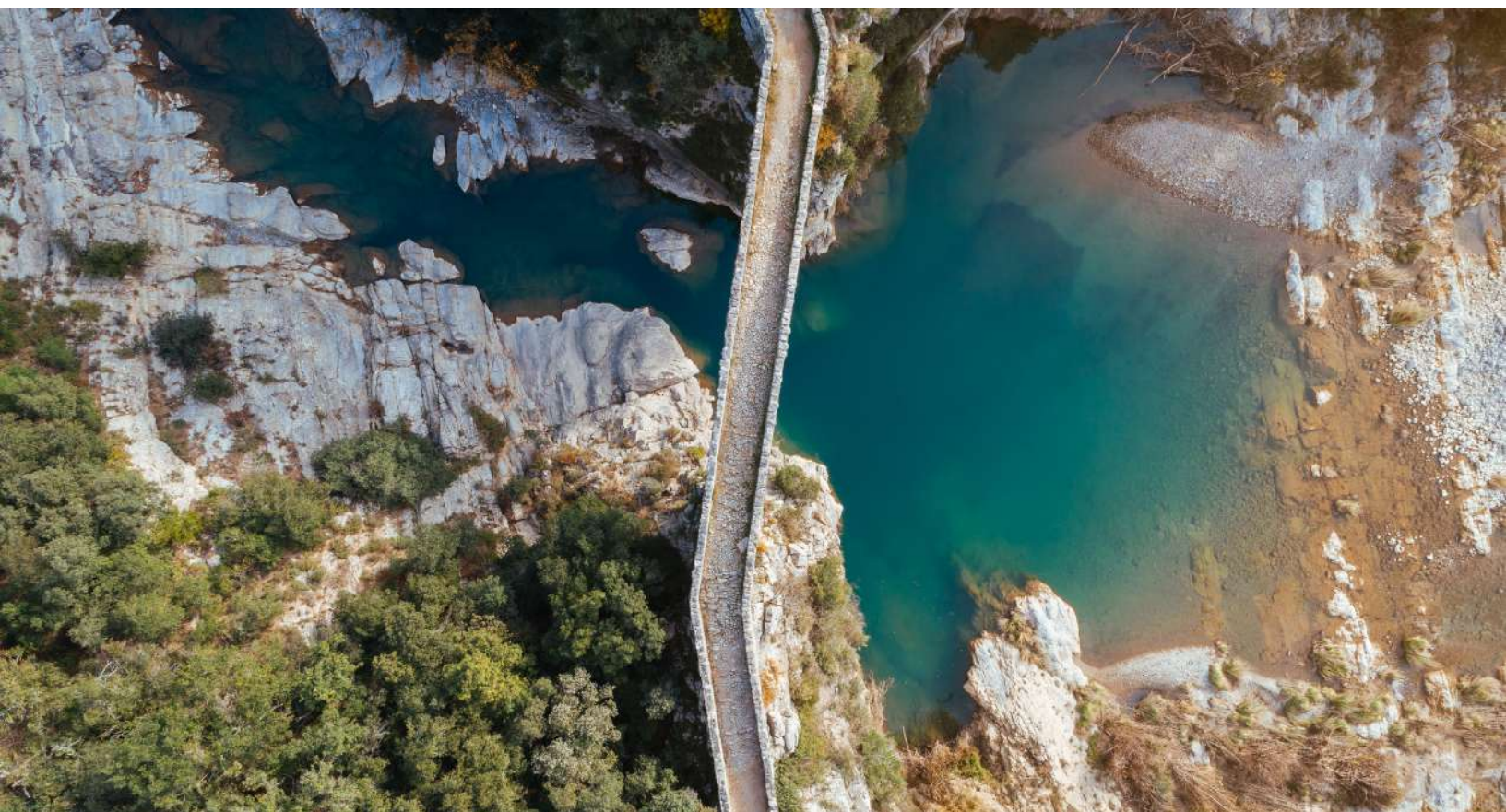


You contacted us not long ago to inform us that you would be honouring us by coming to meet us in our small village of 80 inhabitants.

*We were happy, happy, happy: I wouldn't know how to express our delight! For us it was important because it was a meeting of human beings from all nationalities and religious beliefs. We are extremely happy about this **"human"** voyage.*

Mme Thérèse Lens

*Mayoress of Donnemont - Aube Department, Grand Est (FR)
on the passing of **"Road to Rome 2021"***



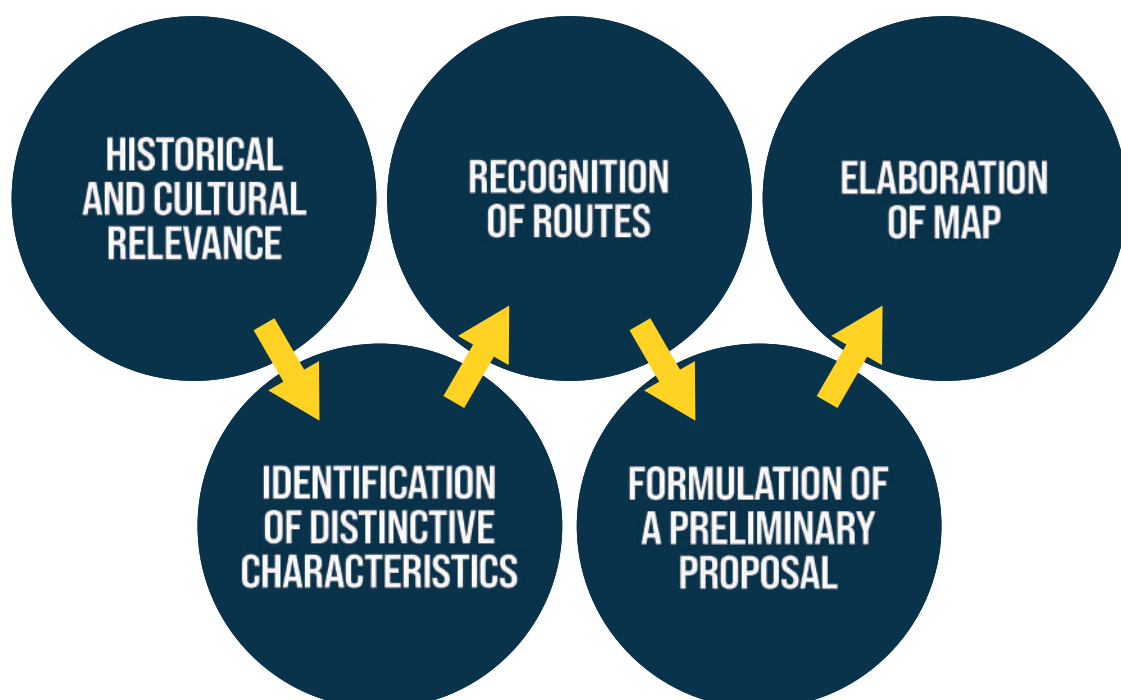
What is the Framework

Method of selection and number of assets divided by European Region

The Framework of the whole European route covers the important aspects of the nomination, including:

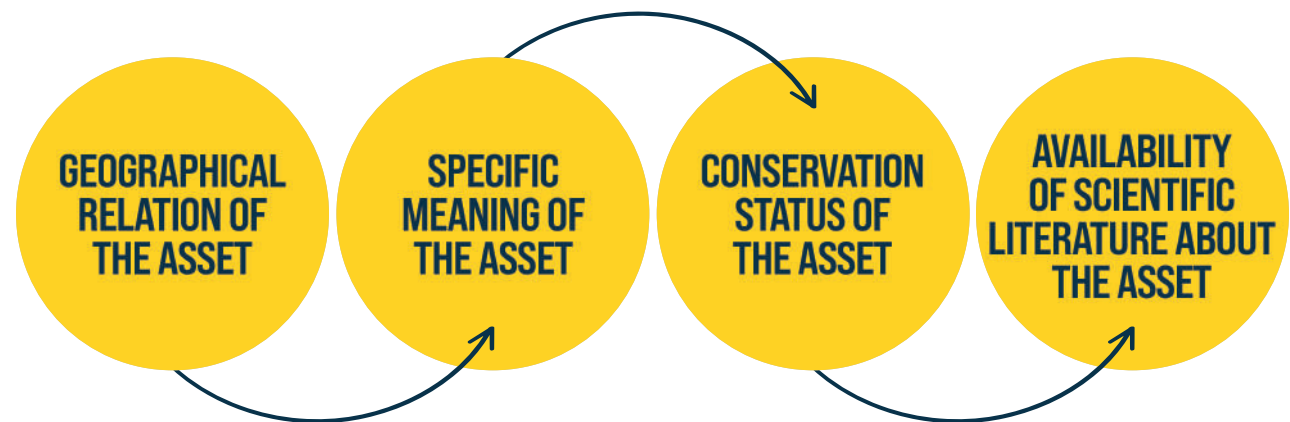
- the **historical and cultural relevance** of Sigeric's Via Francigena route within the context of medieval European pilgrimage route and its distinguished recognition as a European route;
- the **identification of distinctive characteristics** of the route and its principal geographic and historical elements;
- the **recognition of routes** within each of the European countries it passes through (The United Kingdom, France, Switzerland and Italy) and the identification of heritage in each country and the values it represents;
- the **formulation of a preliminary proposal** to outline the Outstanding Universal Value represented by the Via Francigena and its comparative analysis with similar sites, which are European and non-European, as well as sites granted World Heritage status or not;
- the **elaboration of maps** to localise the paths in the different countries and in relation to the heritage previously identified.

The **Framework** has, for the first time, allowed for an identification of elements **not only of unity**, but also of **difference**, along the whole route and in particular, within the different countries it passes through, thus providing an **essential base** for shared decision making on the best **nomination strategy** to adopt.



The identification and selection of historical and cultural heritage assets along the route (as well as nearby assets with a direct historical, topographical and functional relation to the route) was carried out according to the following general criteria:

- **geographical relation of the asset** to the Via Francigena and its variants. Priority was given to heritage located within 4-5 km of the official route, with some exceptions made surrounding particularly interesting or relevant monuments or urban locations;
- **specific meaning of the asset**, including in a symbolic manner, in relation to the route. In this regard, priority was given to heritage with a function clearly related to the route (sanctuaries and churches; hospitality infrastructure; checkpoints along the way; infrastructure) and its significance, as well as being mentioned in medieval documentation, in particular in Sigeric's travel journal;
- **conservation status of the asset**. Only those mentioned in documentation that have no material existence have been excluded, as well as assets with an imprecise location, and relics that present few remains, or are difficult to identify or read;
- **availability of scientific literature about the asset**.



Total number of artefacts or cultural sites identified in the first phase: **530**



in **England**
Kent



in **Switzerland**
Vaud **20**
Vallese **6**



in **France**
Hauts-de-France **73**
Grand Est **38**
Bourgogne-Franche-Comté **9**



in **Italy**
Valle d'Aosta **27**
Piemonte **107**
Lombardia **27**
Emilia-Romagna **37**
Liguria **7**
Toscana **99**
Lazio **66**

Analysis of the heritage carried out and topographic material created

The EAVF working group, coordinated by the scientific director Professor **Paola Eugenia Falini**, has gathered the following information to structure the chapters of the Framework:

- introducing the Study with an **analysis of the Medieval European pilgrimage routes**;
- analysis of **identifying characteristics** of the Via Francigena, describing the general **chronological** and **geographical** context, dividing the entire European itinerary into **twelve section**;
- examined the itinerary and proposed a **selection method for heritage**, as indicated in the previous pages;
- demonstrated the **outstanding value** of the Via Francigena through the chosen UNESCO criteria and developed a comparative analysis with other routes of similar magnitude and importance;
- created **technical, descriptive mapping** of the whole route and the exact location of the **530 heritage assets** identified.



*Owing to the multitude of sites that characterise it, the Via Francigena is a **complex heritage asset** whose nomination to the World Heritage List requires **accurate research** and **definition of the values** represented according to the specific UNESCO criteria. To this end, it was necessary to create a **Dossier** with detailed information on **each asset**, the creation of **detailed cartography**, and above all the elaboration of a **Management Plan** which, for the purposes of conserving the values of the nomination, was made obligatory by the **World Heritage Centre** in 2002 for all new nominated sites.*

Paola Eugenia Falini - *Coordinator of the Scientific Dossier*

The Route

What is a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe and how does EAVF promote it

The Cultural Routes programme was founded by the **Council of Europe** in 1987 with the Declaration of **Santiago de Compostela**.

The **Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe** are an invitation to travel and discover rich and varied European cultural heritage. Their aim is to create a **network of people and places linked together** thanks to a **common history and heritage**.

The Cultural Routes put the values of the Council of Europe into practice: **human rights, cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and exchange**.

Being certified "**Cultural Route of the Council of Europe**" is a **guarantee of excellence**. The European Association of the Via Francigena ways carries out **innovative activities and projects** with the framework of the following five priority actions:

- **cooperation** with **research** and **development**;
- **valuing memory, history** and **European heritage**;
- **cultural** and **educational exchanges** for **young Europeans**;
- **contemporary artistic** and **cultural practices**;
- **cultural tourism** and **sustainable cultural developmen**.







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