

STUDY REPORT ON ETIS IMPLEMENTATION WITHIN 7 PILOT CULTURAL ROUTES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- (1) *The Committee of Ministers Resolutions CM/Res(2010)52 and 53, CM/Res (2013) 66 and CM/Res (2013) 67 revising the rules for the award of the “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe”*

Cultural routes in Europe have long existed from the Baltics to the Mediterranean, from the Danube to the Caucasus and the Black Sea, to name a few. Yet only in the last three decades² has there been a substantial recognition of their potential value as key strength of European Tourism.

Developing **sustainable tourism activities along these routes** is a way of generating awareness of their heritage, of experiencing them, whilst providing revenue for their safeguarding and conservation. It provides economic viability to activities which otherwise could be ‘lost’, particularly those related to more traditional sectors such as agriculture or handicraft.

The **programme of the Council of Europe**, devoted to **Pan European Cultural Routes**, is began during the 1980s and in particular, the **Council for Cultural Co-operation** established **three main objectives** for the **Cultural Routes programme**³:

- ▶ *to make European citizens aware of a real European cultural identity;*
- ▶ *to preserve and enhance the European cultural heritage as a means of improving the surroundings in which people live and as a source of social, economic and cultural development;*
- ▶ *to accord a special place to cultural tourism among European leisure activities.*

The **Council of Europe** was aware that **such routes** lend themselves to long-term European co-operation programs in the fields of research, heritage enhancement, culture and the arts, cultural and educational youth exchanges, cultural tourism in Europe and sustainable cultural development. Therefore, the decision to implement the **Cultural routes program**, involving institutions and structures in Europe in a **formal operational framework**⁴, has meant that political and financial decisions were taken by a group of countries strongly committed to the promotion of Europe’s living heritage through.

This framework, named the **Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA)**⁵, enables common objectives to be pursued and guarantees the quality of the initiatives undertaken. It aims at supporting the promotion of European identity and citizenship through knowledge and awareness of Europe’s common heritage.

The **process for creating a recognized Cultural Route** (from idea to project and tangible outcomes), must follow the criteria described in the CM/Res (2013) 67 revising the rules for the award of the ‘Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe’ certification.

² 30th Anniversary of the Cultural Route Program

³ CM/Res (2010) 52, on the rules for the award of the “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” certification

⁴ CM/Res (2010) 53 establishing an Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes

⁵ CM/Res (2013) 66 confirming the establishment of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes

Within the list of **field of actions** which projects must pertain, while fulfilling the **criteria** enumerated for each of them, it is stated that networks⁶ must define and *implement indicators aimed to measure the impact of the activities of cultural routes*.

Promoting sustainable development cannot be envisaged without relying on **methods that are themselves sustainable and sustainable for the actors** and this is the reason why was required a **set of indicators to promote the sustainable development of cultural routes**, also taking into account the constraints of the routes.

(2) *Lessons learnt from the results of the Study on the feasibility of a System of indicators for the cultural routes*⁷

The **European Institute of Cultural Routes** (EICR) has received by the Council of Europe the mandate to coordinate and facilitate the itineraries approved by the Council, according to the objectives set out in the 2010 Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA). Under this mandate, the Institute implements the evaluation measures for granting or renewing 'approval'. It also organizes training sessions and exchanges of good practices between the labelled partners and the candidates.

In 2014, the Institute expressed the wish to improve its tools in order to better appreciate the activities of the itineraries and to provide them, more regularly, with comparative statistical data. The **project of feasibility study of a system of indicators for Cultural Routes** was launched, aiming at providing itineraries with a tool for collecting information on the main axes of development integrated into the label.

The project aims, as a first step, to **substitute the indicators for the certification grid**, but possibly avoiding heavy and complex database to be collected every year, considering the record of renewal of the label which is done every three years.

After a consultation process, which took few months, carried out with the support of the Institute of Cultural Routes, network of the Universities and the project coordinators, **5 field of actions/indicators** have been selected, as listed below:

1. **Governance** (indicator whose aim is to observe the way in which the partners manage the network)
2. **Communication** (which is concerned with the means allowing the actors to exchange between themselves and with the public).
3. **Sustainable management**
4. **Indicator of cultural action** (Measuring the impact of cultural itinerary activities "is one of the criteria required by the rules)
5. **Economic impact** (indicators analyse the environmental, cultural and economic impact of the itineraries activity)

With its **5 indicators, 16 themes and 120 questions**, this project was much more comprehensive than the current "*certification grid*" which was limited to just over 70 questions and it did not include the chapter "economic impact".

The implementation of those indicators took place through various exchanges, either directly or distant, between the rapporteur, the Institute, the university network ("Knowledge Network") and those responsible for the routes.

⁶ Project initiators shall form multidisciplinary networks located in several Council of Europe member States.

⁷ Étude sur la faisabilité d'un système d'indicateurs, rapporteur Pierre FRUSTIER, Septembre 2014

As **main outcomes of this pilot test**, the following issues were raised by the cultural routes involved:

- ▶ Need to have a flexible and simple tool that does not overload the itineraries;
- ▶ Preparing ways of deepening the scientific network that should support the Development of itineraries;
- ▶ Profile the questionnaire to facilitate its transfer to an on-line survey tool;
- ▶ Preliminary sceptical approach of the routes towards this new system of data collection, because they did not want additional work;
- ▶ Importance to mobilize them in terms of collecting the data every year, in view of the labelling renewal which happens every 3-year cycle;
- ▶ Currently, no such data are available, especially the measurement of economic impact is missing;
- ▶ Positive issue of developing a new monitoring system, based on the data collection and analysis, which can be integrated with the current certification system

Methodology used for collecting the data

A simple methodology was put in place in order to encourage the cultural route to be engaged for data collection, such as:

- (1) *Self-evaluative indicators*: they can be carried out by project-oriented structures themselves;
- (2) *Indicators that require wider involvement of all participants in a route*: the coordinators of the itineraries have to mobilize their actors and to gather the answers from the surveys;
- (3) *"heavy" indicators*: they require an on-site survey and can only be set up by partner organizations of the itineraries (we think here of the Universities of the Knowledge Network).

The ETIS value added for the certification process of the Council of Europe

While most information was already known, **ETIS provide a quantitative measurement system**, which represents the value added.

Indeed, with almost **120 questions of ETIS surveys, against 70 foreseen in the certification scheme** of the Council of Europe, many of the new questions required a number of answers and have made it possible to measure the weight of certain essential elements of the itineraries: i.e. number of actors, number of tools, number and types of cultural activities.

(3) Objectives of the Joint Programme Council of Europe/European Commission 2015-2017

The Council of Europe has co-operated with the European Commission (DG GROW) in the context of **Joint Programmes**, establishing biennial cooperation with the EU on the basis of shared cultural, economic, social and environmental development objectives in Europe.

The **European Institute of Cultural Routes**, as active institution linked to the Council of Europe, is also providing advice and technical support to several transnational thematic cultural -tourist projects co-financed by the European Commission, guiding the best ones for getting the certification recognition by the Council of Europe.

In this regard, a **Report** was also prepared under the above mentioned **Joint Programme**, with **recommendations for specific indicators** of the performance of Council of Europe cultural routes.

INTRODUCTION

(1) The European Tourism Indicator System – ETIS toolkit 2016 and the cultural routes

ETIS was developed by the European Commission in 2013, designed as a tool which any destination can pick up and to use on voluntary basis, without any specific training.

ETIS is a management tool, which supports the destinations who want to take sustainable approach to destination management; it is also a **monitoring system**, easy to use for collecting data and detailed information and an **information tool (not a certification scheme)**, useful for policy makers, tourism enterprises and other stakeholders.

As pilot initiative, ETIS was implemented over 100 destinations across Europe, during 2-year testing phase (2013-2015).

With the support of **ETIS pool of experts**, the revised and improved ETIS toolkit, was published in March 2016 and it is available in the English version in the EC website:

- http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/indicators/index_en.htm

Rationale of the pilot initiative ETIS and cultural routes

In the framework of the **ad hoc grant** with the European Commission, has been request to go ahead with the combination of the **Recommendations from the Report**, making the adjustment of the **ETIS indicators** to be operational for the cultural routes and their testing by a voluntary group of routes managers and partners.

Therefore, in order to make it possible, it's important to understand to what extend **ETIS 43 core indicators** can meet the needs of the transnational cultural routes and they can support them to have aggregated data dimension, which has to be collected at the local level.

The certification system of the Council of Europe, which is currently based on a **qualitative assessment**, can be improved thanks to be possible to integrate in the evaluation check list of criteria, also **quantitative data** coming from ETIS indicators.

One of the main outcome of this ETIS pilot test within the cultural routes (even if they are not many) is the possible identification of **additional supplementary indicators** with a transnational dimension which can be published in the current ETIS toolkit 2016 of the European Commission and the opportunity to do benchmarking activity based on a common methodology.

(2) The establishment of the ETIS task force/C&R

The previous experience done by **ETIS pool of experts**, which have been selected by the European Commission in order to provide their technical support on voluntary basis for ETIS pilot implementation (2013-2015), has been also taken into account for the establishment of ETIS task force/C&R.

In this regard, thanks to the availability of some of them, has been established in May 2016 the ETIS task force/C&R, composed by **10 experts on sustainable tourism**, coming from Europe, as listed below:

1. **Cinzia De Marzo**, EU legal advisor and expert on sustainable tourism and indicators- ETIS task force coordinator (Belgium)
2. **Professor Graham Miller**, Head of the school of Hospitality and tourism management- University of Surrey-UK (**only from May till September 2016**)
3. **Peter Lane**, senior expert on tourism indicators, (UK)
4. **Mara Manente**, economic and statistic researcher University Ca Foscari in Venice (Italy)
5. **Janez Sirse**, senior international expert on sustainable and competitive tourism– (Slovenia)
6. **Rachel Mc Caffey**, sustainable tourism, climate change and private sector expert, (UK)
7. **Francesc Romagosa**, professor and researcher at the University of Barcelona and expert in sustainable tourism and ecotourism – (Spain) (**only from May till September 2016**)
8. **Silvia Barbone**, international expert on sustainable tourism and project management – (Belgium)
9. **Stefania Mauro**, environmental engineer at the Higher Institute on Territorial Systems for Innovation and local coordinator of Cuneo Alps ETIS destination – Italy (**only from May till September 2016**)
10. **Apolonia Rodriguez**, creator and coordinator of Dark Sky Alqueva (**only from May till September 2016**)

As a little remark, since September 2016, due to the lower availability of some experts (time consuming, motivation and lack financial support), the **number of ETIS task force**⁸ has been decreased up to **5 members** until the end of the project.

Considering the complementarity among the professional profiles of ETIS experts and their different level of involvement, has been take the decision to work in sub-groups with a coordinator, related to specific tasks and deliverables such as:

- ▶ Drafting of **destination specific surveys** to address the particular requirements of the C&R covering residents, visitors, businesses and local destination management
- ▶ Provide continuing technical support to the 7 C&R/destinations via Skype, email, or visits if necessary to guide and assist them through the process.
- ▶ Draft a provision of a comparative analysis and the preparation of comparative reports.
- ▶ Presentation of the final results of the project and recommendations

(3) Objectives and main challenges of ETIS implementation within the C&R

As stated above, **ETIS is a management tool** which allows destinations to make their self-evaluation and comparison (benchmarking) among them, and it represents an additional source of information for the C&R, in terms of providing more dignity and credibility to the certification process of the Council of Europe.

In a short term perspective, **the main objectives and challenges** to deal with for this pilot initiative, are the following:

- ▶ Measurement the social, cultural and economic and environmental impacts, using a common and proven management tool (governance model);

⁸ Highlighted in red the experts which left the ETIS project in September 2016

- ▶ Value added using the same common methodology recognized at European level
- ▶ Integrity and authenticity of the territory, based on the participatory process and involvement of the local community;
- ▶ New indicators (IT, digitalization, sharing economy), to be considered as core or not, depends on the needs of the cultural routes
- ▶ Environmental impact, as transversal part of the philosophy of the cultural routes (no investment on hotel chains, but re-using existing architectures)
- ▶ Methodology for data collection, using the specific data sheet (excel file, to be revised by ETIS task force for the assessment of the results)
- ▶ Close the gap of lack of information from destination level, through the dissemination of targeted surveys addressing the local management, the residents, the visitors and the enterprises
- ▶ Economic impact in terms of more growth and jobs (sustainability of the business model)

Summarizing in order to ensure the success of this pilot initiative, it is crucial to take into account important issues, such as:

- ▶ the **technical level of engagement of the managers** (Operators) of the C&R (time consuming, motivation, competences and skills),
- ▶ the **political commitment of the public authorities from the local/ regional/national and international level** in order to endorse the work to be done by the key stakeholders,
- ▶ the **financial investment** which can be supported from different financial instruments and sources (public and private).

METHODOLOGY

(1) Selection of 7 pilot Cultural Routes : Via Francigena, Transromanica, Santiago de Compostela, Jewish Cultural Heritage, Iter Vitis, Olive Tree, Saint Olav

The process for sharing the information/knowledge regarding ETIS project with all **33 official cultural Routes of the Council of Europe**, started in May 2016, through several exchanges of email sent by the ETIS task force experts.

Considering the short time frame at our disposal for the implementation of ETIS project and the difficult to motivate and to engage a huge number of cultural routes (**at least 15**), it was decided to choose the most active managing organizations, according to the experience and know-how of the European Institute of Cultural routes.

The first step of the work done by ETIS task force, was **to map ETIS destinations and to do cross check** between the COE countries and certified cultural routes, in order to verify how many of them were part of the cultural routes and to capitalize the work related to sustainable tourism indicators,

After words, **7 pilot cultural routes** were selected a listed below, because they have complied with some criteria to work on ETIS project, like being most dynamic, proactive and available for hosting the meetings with ETIS task force:

1. Via Francigena,
2. Transromanica,
3. Santiago de Compostela/Saint Jacques,
4. Jewish Cultural Heritage,
5. Iter Vitis,
6. Olive Tree,
7. Saint Olav

(2) Participatory process for involving the key players of the cultural routes (managing organizations and key stakeholders)

As a preparatory work, since end of May/beginning of June 2016, a frequent exchanges of information via email, providing supporting documents and explanations about the ETIS/C&R pilot project, has been done by ETIS task force, under the proactive supervision of the EICR. The key issue was to disseminate as much as possible the news towards the ‘Operators’ of the 7 C&R, in order to raise a sufficient level of their attention and availability, rising their motivation and commitment, engaging them for working together.

In this regard, also aiming at explaining them the project (ETIS implementation) and to introduce ETIS task force, it was necessary to organize at least **2 meetings** during the C&R **trainings Academy** which have been hosted by the EICR in **Strasbourg the 22 June 2016 and in Luxembourg the 22 September 2016**.

Those 2 meetings were considered as first step towards the start-up process of ETIS implementation.

In particularly, has been clearly explained the very welcomed step by step guide, as showed below:



(3) *Horizontal approach for the ‘Operators’ and the vertical approach for the ‘key destinations,*

With the purpose to develop a **measuring and quality control tool**, which can ensure the economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability of the cultural routes, the methodology used included the **horizontal approach (governance model)**, related to the organizations (Operators) responsible for the management of the **7 cultural routes** involved and a **vertical approach (on the ground)**, towards the ‘*key destinations*’ identified for the testing phase.

The assessment of the performances made by the ‘*Operators*’ through the horizontal approach came from the **preliminary analysis of the results of the governance model survey**, which have been kindly fulfilled on request of the ETIS task force coordinator, by the ‘*Operators*’.

Please see Annex II for the **Preliminary findings of the above mentioned assessment**, drafted with detailed figures, as power point presentation.

All the ‘*Operator*’ of the 7 Cultural routes”, has been kindly invited to select and to choose, according to their experience and knowledge the ‘*key destinations*’ along each country involved in the C&R, in order to cover the transnational dimension (following the criteria 1 destination for 1 country).

Therefore, thanks to the collaborative approach of the C&R ‘*Operators*’ and their kind support, a list of ‘*key destinations*’ also with contact details for the local coordinators, has been drafted. Please see Annex III for the list (excel file) of the ‘*key destinations*’.

In this context, during October/November 2016, all the ‘*key destinations*’ have been contacted by the coordinator of ETIS task force, in order to understand their availability to host the kick off meetings

with the ETIS task force, to be considered as start-up of the work for ETIS/C&R implementation. Unfortunately, **only 4 out of 7⁹ C&R** were able to organize those meetings before the end of 2016.

By the way, the level of communication and interaction with most of them either via email or either by phone (very rarely) or via skype, was very difficult and it seemed that their interested to be engaged into the project, was not so high.

(4) Revision of the surveys, targeting specific needs of the cultural routes

The real implementation of ETIS toolkit within the ‘key destinations’ (in line with the vertical approach, is based on the data collection, a process of bringing a various sources of information together which can be sourced by conducting surveys, to be adapted in order to suit the destination’s needs.

This was the case for the C&R, because the standard survey forms available at the European Commission website¹⁰ in the European have been integrated and slightly revised by ETIS task force, with more focus on cultural heritage and cultural related field.

In line with this approach, 4 specific surveys such as for local coordinator managers, residents, tourist/visitors and enterprises, have been drafted and distributed towards the key destinations of the 7 pilot C&R.

The most important thing is to start collecting data and the local destination coordinator

⁹ The organization of other kick off meetings (even virtually via skype call), is still ‘o going’ for Iter Vitis, Jewish heritage and Olive Tree.

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/indicators/index_en.htm

ETIS START UP IMPLEMENTATION

(1) Kick off meetings with the ‘Operators’ of the Cultural routes’ and the ETIS experts

Since the preliminary phase of exchanges of information via email between the representatives of the Cultural routes, the EICR and the ETIS task force, it was clear that **the number of 15 C&R foresee in the ad hoc Grant with the European Commission** for ETIS testing implementation, needed to be decreased, in order to be realistic and to streamline the concrete outcomes.

Therefore, after a consultation with the EICR, the current number of pilot C&R has been reduced up to 7 and, in order to facilitate the exchanges of point of views and technical advices by ETIS task force, 2 kick off meetings have been organized with them by the EICR.

The first took place in **Strasbourg the 22 June 2016** and the second one in **Luxembourg the 22 September 2016**, during the C&R training academies.

(2) The assesement of the surveys ‘governance model (preliminary results)

The criteria to allow benchmarking among the 7 ‘Operators’ if the C&R were mainlu focusing on Strengthening local culture and identity (valorization of traditions, old customs, cuisine, etc.): projects supporting the promotion of local culture and identity can give a contribution to a better understanding of European tangible and non-tangible culture and then stimulate positive impacts at cultural level on the areas along the Cultural Route and in general in Europe. The more active the Cultural Route organization is in financing these projects, the greater the cultural benefits can be.

Hereafter a short summary about the benchmark analysis

- ▶ According to the management survey governance model, a score from 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum) was assigned for every criteria to each of the Cultural Routes’ organisation. For each impact category (economic, social and cultural) a final score was calculated, as the average of the scores in the related criteria.
- ▶ The score then expresses how likely the Cultural Route is able to generate positive impacts at economic and socio-cultural levels.
- ▶ This is a first evaluation that should be further improved through the surveys addressed to residents, companies, visitors and destination managers in the pilot destinations considered in the analysis.
- ▶ In addition the evaluation suffers from a limitation: the interviewers didn’t answer all questions included in the survey.

For a more detailed results, please see the ANNEX II.

(3) *Follow up of the kick off meetings with the key destinations of Via Francigena and Transromanica*

- **Via Francigena C&R** – contact person Luca Bruschi – ETIS task force – (Cinzia De Marzo, coordinator).

The kick off meeting with the key destinations of Via Francigena C&R took place in **Bard-Aosta (Italy), the 12 November 2016**. Although if only 3 (Orsieres, Aosta, Champlitte) out of 6 key destinations (YVERDON-LES-BAINS Région -ADNV- Pavia, Siena) attended the meeting, it was very interactive and successful.

As main outcomes of the discussion, has been decided that the local coordinators of the 3 destinations will start as soon as possible with the involvement of their local community (following the 7 steps guide of ETIS toolkit), wishing that also the missing key destinations will do the same.

In order to collect the data from the surveys (especially from the visitors), it has been decided to respect the deadline for sending those to ETIS task force, **by end of August 2017**

In the forthcoming months, ETIS task force can help and support the key destinations for possible clarifications (replying to emails, short skype conferences, technical support) and they can make the **final assessment of data collection**, wishing in case the ETIS pilot project will be further developed in 2017.

- **Transromanica C&R**– contact person Christine Pange – ETIS task force (Janez Sirse)

The kick off meeting with some **key destinations from Transromanica C&R**, took place in Kartoffelhaus, the 16 November 2016. During the very fruitful meeting, with the s, have been presented and explained: ETIS methodology, the 7 steps guide including the 43 core indicators and also the 4 Surveys which will be used to collect data.

There was also exposed that clear benefit and use of results should be communicated to destinations/sites as there will be a work to be done on voluntary basis.

It was also suggested to contact Universities that might help conducting surveys with students, as well as to see if tourist organizations can include questions from ETIS surveys in their regular surveys, but still more communication and explanation is needed.

- It was agreed at the end of the meeting, to select "smaller" destinations (not Saxony Anhalt or Carinthia as a region) as a pilot sites of Transromanica CR;
- it was suggested to choose these smaller sites from the point of view of more easy cooperation and understanding (establishment of stakeholder group) and accessibility of data to collect
- to identify and to agree on the cooperation model/manner with main stakeholders or tourism organization in destination/site
- to inform broader community (stakeholders) in destination/site about ETIS CR testing implementation

All these should be realized until 20. December 2016 and only from 15 January 2017 experts will start with the dissemination of the 4 survey towards the 4 targets of stakeholders.

The **on-going process for ETIS implementation will take at least 9 months to achieve the final results**, which includes the assessment of the overall surveys and the analysis of the data collection, aiming at identifying common, useful and proven specific indicators for the cultural routes and at improving the quality check of the Council of Europe certification system.

Considering that the start-up phase at destination level (the vertical approach at the key destinations selected by the 7 pilot cultural routes) **began only after the summer 2016**, due to the current short time frame, the final results concerning the assessment of data collection ‘with a bottom up approach’ **will not be available by the end of this year**.

Therefore, the ‘key destination’s involved so far from **Transromanica, Via Francigena and Saint Olav cultural route**, will need to complete the implementation ‘on the ground’ in the forthcoming months.

The other C&R such as Olive Tree, Iter Vitis, Santiago hopefully will follow this model in the forthcoming weeks.

The **12 December 2016**, the ‘Operator’ of **Saint Olav C&R** will organize a kick off meeting with the **key destinations in Oslo (Norway)** and they invited the ETIS task force coordinator to attend the meeting, on their own charges/expenses.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) Possible development of ETIS/Cultural routes model within the EU macro regional strategies

Since 2008 the European Union developed the macro regional strategies aiming at strengthen cooperation within the area, leading to deeper economic, social and territorial cohesion, making smarter use of the financial resources available, maximising the effectiveness of EU regional policy investment.

There are currently 4 EU macro regional strategies (Baltic, Danubian, Adriatic and Ionian and Alpine), which include countries or regions facing common challenges, inside and out with the European Union.

In this respect, considering for i.e. the Adriatic and Ionian macro region EUSAIR¹¹ and its Action Plan which is based on **4 thematic pillars** (*Blue Growth, Connectivity, Environmental quality and Sustainable tourism*), having regards to the Pillar 4 sustainable tourism, it is interesting to observe that is foreseen within the **Topic 1 - Diversified tourism offer**¹² (*products and services*), the development of macro-regional cultural tourism route and, within the **Topic 2 - Sustainable and responsible tourism management**¹³ (*innovation and quality*), the implementation of ETIS.

It is also a challenging issue, to take into consideration the macro regional dimension, according to the existing EU macro regional strategies (i.g. Baltic, Danubian, Adriatic and Ionian, Alpine), which involves the civil society as well.

(2) Next steps towards the final results and outcomes

In view of the **the International Year of sustainable tourism development in 2017**, the issue of measurement and monitoring the social, cultural, economic and environmental impact of the cultural routes, using a common tool and criteria (i.e. the European Tourism Indicator System), it is crucial.

In order to raise awareness and to gather information and knowledge about sustainable and cultural tourism management, it can be further developed.

Indeed the **International Year of sustainable tourism development**, also in line with **Resolution CM (2013) 67** who states that '*raising public awareness, drawing decision makers attention to the necessity of protecting heritage as part of sustainable development of the territory, with a view to fostering the development of quality tourism with a European dimension*', is a unique opportunity aiming at:

¹¹ COM (2014) 357, which involves 4 EU countries (Italy, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia) and 4 non EU countries such as Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina

¹² **Action - "Sustainable and thematic tourist routes"**. This action focuses on development and branding of macro-regional tourism routes, through mapping and further promoting existing routes, (i.e. cruise, motor bike, walking/hiking, cycling, sailing). In addition, one should also explore creation of new routes building on the assets and diversity of the Adriatic-Ionian Region. This will include developing strategies for attracting new niche markets, especially for cultural, luxury and business tourism. The action should build on knowledge, skills and heritage assets, which would connect and promote lesser-known destinations of the Region.

¹³ Action - Development of an Adriatic-Ionian Charter to encourage sustainable and responsible tourism with a set of principles and guidelines, It could promote implementation of the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) for Sustainable Management of Tourist Destination, allowing measuring of destinations' performance, to enable their sustainable development and improvement.

- raising awareness on the **contribution of sustainable tourism**;
- developing joint initiatives among public and private sector decision-makers and the public;
- mobilizing all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change.

Nevertheless, there is a **great potential for the Cultural routes to improve the management of the C&R in a more structured and systematic way**, developing most advanced cultural-tourism strategies and promotional activities (**small wins**) at destination level.

It will be possible if they will follow ETIS tool, recognized at European which allows self-evaluation and comparison (benchmarking activity) based on a common integrated methodology, establishing a fruitful **collaborative process**.

The formal **ETIS/C&R task force**, wherever will be available, could also provide a **quality check assurance** for this strategic process.

In particular they should work on the **revision of the destination datasheet for data collection**, according to the new set questions targeting C&R needs, which have been introduced in the **4 type of surveys** for ETIS implementation at the «key destinations' level (vertical approach).

The final results of the study/assessments of this ETIS/C&R pilot project, can be presented during the **7th Cultural Routes Advisory Forum**, to be held in **Lucca (Italy) in October 2017**.

As for the Council of Europe, a clear value added is linked to the opportunity to improve its current **qualitative evaluation process** of the Cultural Routes (certification system), with **quantitative measurement ETIS criteria**, in order to ensure sustainability development

In line with this methodology, it could be covered the lack of information in specific fields such as *accessibility and/or youth involvements and/or economic value* namely for SMEs.

There is also a possible identification of **additional supplementary indicators** with a **transnational dimension**, which can be integrated within the current publication of ETIS toolkit of the European Commission.

To conclude, looking forward to the **European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018**, seems a great opportunity also for the C&R of the Council of Europe, to play a strategic role, aiming at:

- ▶ work together to develop a stronger and more integrated approach to cultural heritage;
- ▶ **promote and protect Europe's cultural heritage**, and maximise its intrinsic and societal value, and its contribution to jobs and growth.

To conclude, taking into account the implementation of the **Vilnius Road Map**¹⁴, which is based on a set of actions focused on 2 major themes (Expanding geographic coverage and partnerships and **Developing new themes and topic**), developing specific issues such as the **macro regional dimension**, as well as international and national (Theme 1), and also of measurement the cultural impacts using a ETIS indicators as part of the certification scheme of the Council of Europe (Theme 2) will be quite challenging for the Cultural Route Program.

¹⁴ 6th Advisory Forum Expanding the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe: challenges and opportunities 26-27 October 2016, Vilnius, Lithuania.

