

10TH

KUTAISI CULTURAL ROUTES ADVISORY FORUM 2021

RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL ROUTES

GEORGIA



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Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

DECLARATION OF THE

10TH CULTURAL ROUTES ADVISORY FORUM

Resilient and Sustainable Cultural Routes

30 September -1 October

Kutaisi (Georgia)



საქართველოს კულტურის, სპორტისა
და ახალგაზრდობის სამინისტრო
Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth
of Georgia



ქუთაისის მუნიციპალიტეტი
Municipality of Kutaisi



EUROPEAN
INSTITUTE
OF
CULTURAL
ROUTES





Introduction

Following the Cultural Routes Annual Advisory forum, 30 September – 1 October 2021, Kutaisi, Georgia (Online).

Thanking the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia and the Municipality of Kutaisi for hosting the 10th Annual Advisory Forum of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme.

Thanking the 35 member States of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, the 45 certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, and to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg through the European Institute of Cultural Routes, for their continued support to the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme.

Welcoming the attendance of honoured speakers and delegates representing the members of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA) and its board, the certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, and representatives of international, European, and national organisations including the Council of Europe, UNESCO, UNWTO, OECD, European Commission, BSEC and OEI.

Welcoming the online attendance of over 500 participants from 50 different countries, representing cultural routes stakeholders, universities and academic institutions, cultural entities, NGOs, experts in the fields of culture, heritage and tourism, governmental bodies, international organisations, and the general public.

Acknowledging that the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly impacted every aspect of peoples' lives and severely reshaped the landscape in which the Cultural Routes operate, confronting Cultural Routes operators to new challenges.

Taking note of the increased strain placed on cultural heritage during the COVID-19 pandemic and acknowledging its intrinsic value for citizens, as a crucial element for the construction of a peaceful and democratic society, for fostering intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity, and for the promotion of sustainable development.

Acknowledging that the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe stimulate the sustainable development of communities and regions across Europe while promoting heritage enhancement, inter-cultural dialogue and transnational cooperation.

Taking note of the outcomes and conclusions of previous initiatives launched by the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme with the purpose of assessing the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, namely a survey on "Cultural Routes' responses to the Covid-19 pandemic", a thematic report on "Major Risks and Resilience" and a cycle of webinars "Cultural Routes Dialogues: challenges and opportunities post Covid-19".

Recognising previous discussions and actions that have emerged from former editions of the Cultural Routes Advisory Forum and the on-going actions and initiatives of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe that attempt to innovate and reinvent themselves in times of crisis.

Context:

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme, launched by the Council of Europe in 1987, provides a framework for the development of thematic routes that demonstrate how the heritage of the different countries and cultures of Europe can contribute to a shared cultural heritage.



The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme embodies the fundamental principles of the Council of Europe: human rights, cultural democracy, cultural diversity and identity, dialogue, mutual exchange and enrichment across boundaries and centuries.

The Enlarged partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (EPA), established in 2010, enables closer cooperation between states particularly interested in the development of Cultural Routes and reinforces the potential of Cultural Routes for transnational cooperation, sustainable territorial development and social cohesion, with a particular focus on themes of symbolic importance for European unity, history, culture and values and the discovery of less well-known destinations.

Sustainability is a highly relevant dimension of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme. As established in Committee of Ministers Resolution CM/Res(2013)67 revising the rules for the award of the "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" certification, certified Cultural Routes are required to develop initiatives and exemplary innovative projects in the field of cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development. In this regard, Cultural Routes must:

- Take account of local, regional, national and European identities;
- Promote dialogue between urban and rural cultures, between regions in the south, north, east and west of Europe, and between developed and disadvantaged regions;
- Promote dialogue and understanding between majority and minority, native and immigrant cultures;
- Open up possibilities for co-operation between Europe and other continents through the special affinities between certain regions;
- Concern themselves, in the field of cultural tourism, with raising public awareness, drawing decision makers' attention to the necessity of protecting heritage as part of sustainable development of the territory and seek to diversify both supply and demand, with a view to fostering the development of quality cultural heritage appreciation with a European dimension;
- Seek partnerships with public and private organisations active in the field of tourism in order to develop tourist products and tools targeting all potential publics.

10th Cultural Routes Advisory Forum: Resilient and Sustainable Cultural Routes

Societies are experiencing unprecedented times as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is felt across the world. The imposition of restrictions on travel and in-person events has increased the urgency of building resilience and engaging with the digital transition. Tourism and culture are at a crossroads and the current responses to today's challenges are going to reshape tomorrow's scenario. In this framework, the need for sustainable and resilient development models and smart digital solutions becomes evident.

More than ever, the importance of culture and creativity for society is clear as millions of people are turning to the appreciation of cultural heritage and "slow tourism" as a source of comfort, well-being and connection. In this context, Cultural Routes can become an ideal tool to link the concepts of cultural heritage and sustainable cultural development, to maintain and thrive local employment and to protect the natural and cultural resources of the territories crossed.

Despite the difficulties imposed by the pandemic, the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe have shown a high innovative and resilient capacity to adapt to a changing environment, encouraging sustainable initiatives and increasing their positive impact on communities and the environment.

In order to ensure their long-term sustainability in the post-pandemic scenario, Cultural Routes need to be creative, agile, inquisitive and innovative. Adapting to new demands and new audiences, implementing new operating models, incorporating new technologies, and developing innovative products and services becomes imperative for building resilience.



Thus, following the occasion of the Cultural Routes Annual Advisory forum, 30 September – 1 October 2021, Kutaisi, Georgia, this Declaration reaffirms that:

1. *Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe play an important role in contributing to **UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030**, in particular through supporting quality education, reducing inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, gender equality, and good health and well-being.*
2. *Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe play a key role in disseminating and testing **innovative models of heritage management**, by promoting a democratic participatory approach and inclusive access to heritage for all.*
3. ***Digitalisation** offers a means of building the resilience of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and allowing rapid adaptation, in times where unpredictable threats are continually engendered by crisis.*
4. *Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe provide opportunities for rethinking culture and tourism for the future, becoming tools for innovation and drivers for **new sustainable development models**.*
5. ***Sustainability** remains a priority development area for the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme. Cultural Routes are able not simply to respond to the calls for sustainability but to position themselves at the vanguard of the mission for sustainability.*

The 10th Cultural Routes Advisory Forum Declaration recommends:

1. *To **ensure that culture and heritage remain at the centre of national policies, strategies, and recovery plans**, given the increasing relevance and value of cultural heritage for citizens, in particular in Covid-19 pandemic times.*
2. *To pursue active engagement of member States for the implementation of **policies and funding schemes to support recovery**.*
3. *To strengthen cooperation between member States, international organisations, Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, and public authorities with the purpose of developing joint **crisis management mechanisms and strategies to support recovery**.*
4. *To reinforce cooperation between the **Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention** in order to support common work in World Heritage sites along the Cultural Routes.*
5. *To strengthen cooperation between the **Council of Europe and the European Union** in the field of Cultural Routes to stimulate common strategies and synergies for the further development of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme.*
6. *To encourage the **digital transition** of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe as a means to **build resilience, innovate and foster new sustainable development models**.*
7. *To encourage the use of **digital technologies** by Cultural Routes networks as a means to leverage the **democratisation of access to heritage**.*
8. *That smart solutions applied by Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe shall aim at **addressing current challenges while preparing for future scenarios**.*
9. *To prioritise the development of digital tools and products for **enhancing cultural experiences and engaging diverse and larger audiences**.*
10. *To encourage the development of creative ways of **managing and promoting community heritage assets with active civil society involvement**, ensuring that communities are the main beneficiaries and have a leading role in this process.*



11. *To encourage Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe initiatives aimed at **supporting SMEs and local economies**, by paying particular attention to engaging and empowering local populations and providing opportunities for sustainable local development.*
12. *To further promote **alternative cultural tourism modalities** along the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, as conscious and responsible forms of access to heritage that both benefit local population, protect the environment, and enhance the tourist experience.*
13. *That the Annual Cultural Routes Advisory Forum and the Cultural Routes Training Academy continue to be privileged tools for fostering **education, training and capacity building, exchanges of good practices and skills development**.*

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme makes full reference to this Declaration and makes it available through its website and related social media so as to promote the values of sustainability and innovation to all its stakeholders.