



## Development and promotion of a European Cultural Route, based on religious heritage: St Paul's footsteps

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### Terms of reuse

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### Type of best practice

Sustainable Cultural Tourism

### Keywords

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*A Cultural Route highlighting the cultural values, heritage and legacy of Saint Paul's missions to Europe, to honour Saint Paul, as the Apostle of the nations, through his epistles and intangible heritage in literature, arts, history, philosophy, theology and Christianity in Europe, towards regenerating the European ideals, with sustainable cultural tourism development and promotion along the route in several countries, regions, cities, islands, local communities and tourist destinations.*

### Organisation in charge of best practice

"In the footsteps of Saint Paul, the Apostle of the nations" - Cultural Route European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)

### Location

Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Spain, Malta



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## Dates

June 2021 to date

## Description

The St Paul's footsteps Cultural Route concept is based on similar religious and pilgrimage Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, closely examined by the founding partners in the Cult-RInG Interreg Europe project during January 2017 - March 2021, such as the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes in North Portugal, Route of Saint Olav Ways in West Sweden, Via Francigena in Lazio Region. The preaching and legacy of St Paul has been very well researched and documented by several scholars, but not in terms of a comprehensive European Cultural Route. This has been done for the first time by the EGTC founding partners and their stakeholders, including relevant academics and experts, through several meetings, workshops, discussions and study visits at main sites.

Parts of the Cultural Route had been operating in terms of contemporary travelling and cultural tourism for several years, i.e. in Pafos, Cyprus since 2006, 'Cammino di San Paolo/Via Appia Antica' in Lazio Region, Italy, relevant sites in Amphipolis, Apollonia, Nea Fokea, Sithonia, Thessaloniki and Veria, in Central Macedonia Region, Greece. The Cultural Route brings together and integrates all these previous highly relevant initiatives in promoting cultural heritage and European values, by sustainable cultural tourism, pilgrimage and walking tourism activities. Further developments continue.

The Region of Central Macedonia from Greece, the Lazio Region from Italy, the Pafos Regional Board of Tourism from Cyprus, and the European Cultural Tourism Network based in Brussels, Belgium, have agreed to form a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) that develops, implements, manages, promotes and supports the European Cultural Route: "In the footsteps of St Paul, the Apostle of the nations", as a result of the Cult-RInG Interreg Europe project (Cultural Routes as Investments for Growth and Jobs, 2017-2021). The above founding members of this EGTC have signed a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation in which they have agreed to jointly develop, implement, manage, promote and support the above transnational cultural route for ultimate certification by the Council of Europe.

## Aim of the Cultural Route

- To highlight the rich cultural heritage aspects and legacy of Saint Paul's missions to the gentiles and the forming of Christianity in Europe; also through his epistles and intangible heritage in literature, fine arts, history, philosophy and theology.
- To link up sites and trails of Saint Paul's missions to Europe, in promoting European values, human rights, liberty, democracy and the rule of law.





- To develop and promote sustainable cultural tourism at the points of interest, pilgrimage and walking tourism along the Cultural Route.
- To include other relevant regions in Greece (Eastern Macedonia & Thrace, Athens-Attica, Corinth, Crete, North & South Aegean), in Italy (Sicily, Campania), as well as Malta and Spain, in the further development of the St Paul's footsteps European Cultural Route.





The legacy of Saint Paul, the Apostle of the nations, is an excellent and fundamental representative theme of European ideals closely and uniquely related to the principal values of the Council of Europe.

In both the Acts and Apostle Paul's 14 epistles there are several references of wise and divine preaching about freedom, equality, dignity, human rights, democracy and the rule of law.





## Links

<https://www.stpaul-culturalroute.eu/>

## Resources needed

Commitment by relevant partners in several countries (at least 3 Council of Europe member states). Around 6 person-months of preparatory work. Good contacts and cooperation with UNESCO World Heritage Sites, relevant museums. Support by Municipalities and Regional Authorities, Cultural Associations NGOs, Tourist Boards and DMOs along the route. Marketing, including presence at tourist fairs, relevant events, involvement of travel blogs and also digital marketing.

## Challenges encountered

Development of Sustainable Cultural Tourism products and services for religious and pilgrimage visitors along the route in Cyprus, Greece and Italy (initially, at a further stage also Malta and Spain). In particular, there are several trails of walking tourism and slow





travel that integrate UNESCO World Heritage Sites, St Paul churches and festivals in Pafos, Cyprus, Central Macedonia, Greece and Lazio Region, Italy. All of the above need to be connected in developing the European route with interregional cooperation between museums and heritage sites. Digitalisation of the route and the local trails in needed to facilitate access and awareness-raising of both visitors and residents.

### **Evidence of success**

The development of “Saint Paul’s footsteps European Cultural Route” in Cyprus, Greece and Italy by the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) “In the footsteps of St Paul, the Apostle of the nations” – Cultural Route, has won the Joint 1st Prize in the ECTN Awards 'Destination of Sustainable Cultural Tourism 2022'. The annual ECTN Awards are in partnership with Europa Nostra, European Travel Commission and NECSTouR. The 2022 edition was also in the framework of ReInHerit Horizon2020 Coordination and Support Action (CSA), also supported by the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) and Interpret Europe. The Awards ceremony took place during the ECTN annual conference in Krk, Croatia in October 2022.

### **Potential for transfer**

Cultural Routes offer a very good basis for effective cooperation between museums and heritage sites. By creating and supporting cultural routes programmes, such as the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, there are achievements of promoting, preserving and understanding history of different regions and countries through inter-regional exchange of people, ideas and cultures. Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe have been established since 1987, stressing the importance of European identities. The Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA) currently comprises 45 routes contributing to protection and development of natural and cultural heritage. Cultural Routes are used as powerful tools to promote and preserve EU’s shared and diverse cultural identities. Cultural Routes provide a better understanding of the history of Europe through interregional exchanges of people, ideas and cultures. They are a model for grassroots cultural co-operation, providing important lessons about identity and citizenship. Cultural Routes combine tangible and intangible heritage, illustrating and celebrating the exchanges, cultures and traditions that have shaped Europe over the millennia. Cultural Routes are instrumental in the European context, by promoting common European identity, deploying heritage and traversing borders for cultural tourism. In a very recent development (November 2021) the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Council of Europe work together to develop the opportunities tourism offers to local communities and to enhance the tourist experience along the European region’s Cultural Routes. The joint actions are aimed at recognizing the added value that Cultural Routes offer for sustainable tourism development, cultural heritage safeguarding and intercultural dialogue. The collaboration also further highlights the Cultural Routes’ potential for advancing social, economic and





cultural development, benefitting both Europe and its partner countries by strengthening cultural and historical ties.

### **Further Information**

<https://www.stpaul-culturalroute.eu/about/>



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