REGIONE PUGLIA

DIPARTIMENTO TURISMO, ECONOMIA DELLA CULTURA
E VALORIZZAZIONE DEL TERRITORIO

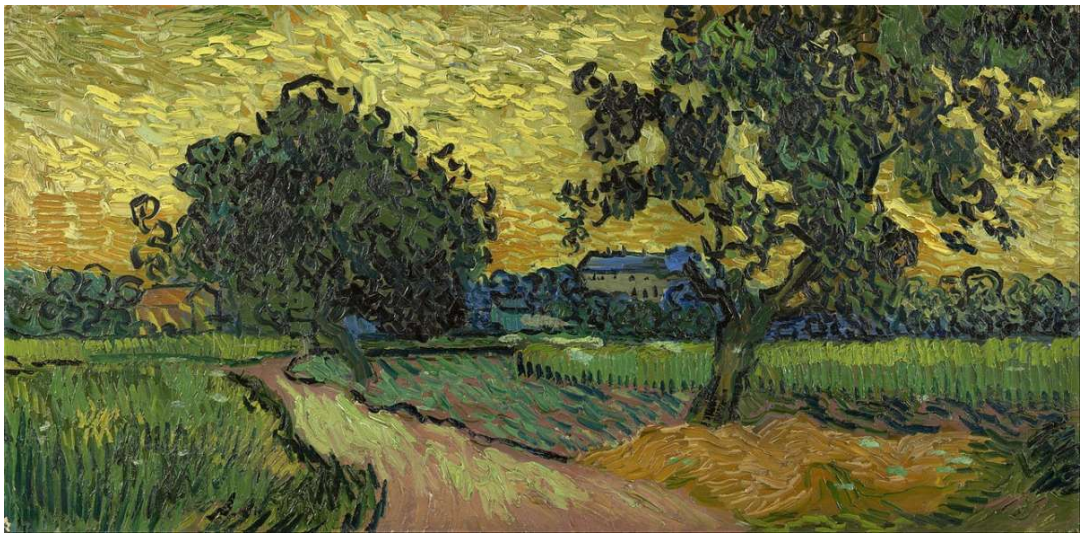
Green Pilgrimage
Interreg Europe

European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

GREEN PILGRIMAGE POLICY PEER REVIEW

Protecting and enhancing cultural and natural heritage through sustainable tourism

Executive Summary



Landscape with Chateau of Auvers at Sunset
Vincent Van Gogh, 1890 Van Gogh Museum of Amsterdam

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I. INTRODUCTION AND LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This Review was designed with a twofold purpose. Firstly it aims at providing an overview of European and regional policies in support of cultural routes, with particular reference to long-distance pilgrimage routes and cultural trails. Secondly, through the development of three different but complementary Parts, the Review aims at providing inputs and inspiration to national and local public authorities addressing methods and models to develop cultural routes as opportunities to enhance natural and cultural heritage while exploiting their tourism potential.

Cultural routes, pilgrimage routes and long-distance cultural trails in general, show to be very often an effective development methodology and an attractive solution to create and illustrate territorial tourism offer based on local cultural identity. For both residents and visitors well-being cultural trails offer several opportunities and territorial policies are adapting gradually their priorities, in line with world tourism trends. Moreover, a trans-national cultural route certified by the Council of Europe, in compliance with the Regulation CM/Res(2013)67 is nowadays considered as a "complex cultural good". This new form of cultural good combines several cultural tangible and intangible goods; its added-value is not simply the sum of all individual sites, monuments and landscapes but the new significance deriving from the unifying interpretation which legitimates their connection, while underlining the relationship between cultural and natural heritage and their surrounding territory, within a European context. In this case the trans-national cultural route illustrates through space and time the scope of a European phenomenon and provides opportunity for "glocal" development, where local and global are always interconnected.

The success of a pilgrimage route is strictly linked to the level of involvement and dialogue among local communities along the route and within each destination, taking into account at the same time tourism professionals' (public and private organizations), citizens' and visitors' needs through sustainable forms of tourism.

Part I of the Review provides an insight of international tourism scenario, with a specific focus on the role played by trans-national cultural routes and long-distance trails in order to outline the context in which national and regional policies are operating and identifying priorities of action. This Part also provides some data and good practices on cultural routes' positive impact on territories.

Part II conducts a review of six European national and regional policies related to the protection of cultural and natural heritage and funded by different typologies of financial sources, ESI funds included. The purpose of this Part is to see how these policies deal with cultural routes for territorial development. This Part will result in overall key recommendations which can address critical aspects identified in the Review and support territorial authorities expected policy improvements, to fully exploit cultural trails contribution to sustainable development.

Part III provides concrete examples of European good practices which could allow benchmarking on fundamental methodological aspects, such as sustainable planning and networking, European quality trail standards, monitoring tools, trail maintenance policies, to develop competitive and sustainable cultural trails.

II. OVERALL OBJECTIVES

This policy Review aims at examining how territorial policies - funded by ESI, national or regional funds - are supporting cultural routes development to safeguard and promote natural and cultural heritage and increase their tourism potential. This analysis takes into account international and European scenario on sustainable tourism and the contribution given by pilgrimage and cultural routes for the development of sustainable cultural tourism.

The overall objectives are:

- Providing information on the international tourism scenario and policies on cultural routes while putting in light information and data available about the economic and heritage value of cultural routes and their contribution to international policies implementation
- Informing on recognized economic and heritage value of cultural routes and stress if policies recognise this in any way
- Examining if territorial policies refer to pilgrimage or long distance trails
- Highlighting the value given by the examined policies to religious, rural and natural heritage in their respective territories
- Examining the policies objectives related to cultural and natural heritage, their development methodologies and how the planned actions can have a positive impact on pilgrimage routes cultural trails development
- Analysing whether the examined territorial policies drive investments in any way towards pilgrimage and walking as economic drivers or ways to protect natural and cultural heritage
  Identifying those good practices which can be drawn by territorial policies that can be replicated for the sustainable development of pilgrimage routes and trails and their related territories

III. RELEVANT DATA ON TOURISM TRENDS AND CULTURAL ROUTES CONTRIBUTION

Figure 1 *UNWTO Tourism Highlight, 2017 Edition; **1st UNWTO International Congress on Pilgrimage and Tourism, 2014.

IV. METHODOLOGY OF THE POLICY REVIEW

A set of regional and national European policies are analysed to examine their approach toward European pilgrimage routes, long-distance trails and cultural routes in general as a means of enhancing cultural and natural heritage and their related tourism potential for territorial development. The policies examined are very different each other in terms of geographical location and their consequent specific territorial assets and cultures, population figures, level of overall development, eco-friendly models level of development, authenticity of natural heritage and traditions, sources of funding (structural funds, regional or national funds, etc.), etc. Moreover, levels of responsibility and competence in tourism are different in the concerned countries. Nevertheless, the Review is based on the awareness that very often national and regional policies are interconnected with each other and usually national authority takes into consideration regional and local policies and vice versa when it comes to planning territorial development strategy. Moreover, European policies and international trends represent the common frameworks in which all the examined policies operate.

The **6 European policies reviews** started with an overall analysis of the tourism offer promoted by the DMO of each concerned territory in order to check if and how the long-distance trails and cultural routes are already part of the cultural tourism offer. An introduction to territorial pilgrimage history and religious heritage aimed at understanding the potential that can be developed through sustainable tourism.

The review of the policy documents has analysed what strength they give to natural, rural and religious heritage and how natural and cultural heritage features can be protected through policies. The review examined whether the chosen policies refer to pilgrimage or long distance walking, and if they drive investments in any way towards pilgrimage and walking as economic drivers or ways to protect natural and cultural heritage. "**Policy learning points**"-labelled boxes have been identified for each policy in order to stress the most distinctive aspect that could inspire the other policies.

In parallel with documents analysis, a discussion was held between the author and the six concerned territorial contact persons on their respective policy improvement objectives, policy improvement indicators and policy current status.

In the end of this Part, final remarks were outlined by the author in order to support targeted development of green pilgrimage ways and long-distance cultural trails, in line with territorial policies improvement objectives.

V. POLICY LEARNING POINTS

South-East Local Enterprise Partnership concerning Kent County recognizes the value of voluntary and community sectors. Volunteering will be thus supported to develop skills and improve access to opportunities for young people and adults in search of employment. This aspect included in the policy for its employment opportunities for the disadvantaged could also be exploited within the context of a pilgrimage route development strategy for its social value and its indirect impact on local economy. Beside developing skills and knowledge, volunteering and community activities can also provide opportunities for social integration or social benefits offering activities in contact with nature, art, history, cultural heritage, community, etc. At the same time this would contribute to strengthen the trail identity and experience for tourists. This aspect particularly fits pilgrimage routes as they are associated to faiths and their solidarity values.

The situation assessment that Östergötland Regional Tourism Strategy is based on stresses that *Östergötland needs to create more competitive and attractive products working in a themed way, the product development will be based on the visitors' interests and motives instead of Östergötland's administrative boundaries.* Cooperation among actors of the tourism system is also crucial to make strategic difference. These remarks are particularly coherent with thematic cultural trails or pilgrimage routes which crosses several territories and motivates tourists/pilgrims to travel.

The Interreg VA France (Channel) England Cooperation Programme provides examples of actions which fulfill selection criteria of the investment priority, such as the development of cross-border products and services supporting eco-tourism; implementation of cross-border routes referring to common historical and natural heritage assets; training initiatives for natural and cultural heritage stakeholders. This policy explicitly refers to cross-border cultural routes as a means to achieve the Programme goal of realizing the potential of the common natural and cultural assets.

Puglia Region OP 2014-2020 recognizes Culture to function as a transversal leverage for territorial development, thus as a tool to generate local and regional development, urban regeneration, rural development and employment, while promoting creativity and innovative processes. This policy aims at exploiting local culture potential for territorial development.

A similar role is given to natural resources and activities in the aim of stimulating sustainable development, landscape preservation, citizens life quality, territorial attractiveness and environmental education.

The Value Creation Program of the Ministry of Environment of Norway was launched in 2006 and included the Pilgrim Pilot project (2006-2010), thus recognizing the importance of this segment for the overall benefit of the country. The Strategy takes into account the multi-level governance associated to a pilgrimage routes development and considers the role of each level of responsibility as important interrelated components of a common project. A National Pilgrim Center and Regional pilgrim centers are established within the framework of this Strategy and with the support of the Government in order to

facilitate and stimulate the route development in cooperation with State, regional and local authorities, Church, NGOs and other cultural actors involved.

The Romania Regional Operational Program ERDF 2014-2020 states that states that operations to be financed are to be consistent with the relevant sectoral strategic documents (Strategy for Culture and National Heritage — 2014-2020 RDP, local strategy, the national sustainable development strategy, EUSDR).

VI. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND SET OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEVELOP COMPETITIVE GREEN PILGRIMAGE ROUTES

By the time of this Review partners consider challenging modifying their policies in the next future. However constant and coherent actions feeding policies and their management authorities with data and experiences as well as networking with local stakeholders and other bodies, could lead to useful policy change for the current or future programming period. The policy Review has provided a wide range of information which can be usefully included in policies to increase effectiveness of investments on pilgrimage routes and cultural trails as a means of enhancing cultural and natural heritage.
More specifically, the Review has shown that all examined territories, excluding Romania and Puglia, have developed a set of territorial trails, itineraries, bike routes, fulfilling **common quality standards** agreed at national or regional level. The same territorial administrations have also created a thematic set of **communication and promotion activities** devoted to this specific segment of the national/regional tourism offering. These aspects are of particular significance to assign the same importance to cultural trails as other more traditional tourism segments (MICE, wealth, mountain, lake, sea, etc.) and to assure a coherent and quality product around pilgrimage routes and long-distance hiking trails. However, developing a track is not sufficient to develop a tourism product and create a tourism destination around it. More integrated actions among territorial cultural and natural assets and the trails are needed to fully exploit trail capacity to meet current tourism trends. Puglia Region policies in Tourism and Culture fields have been defined basing on an in-depth participative work with local administrations, industry and stakeholders and in synergy with relevant national strategies. Conversely, Östergötland Region has developed its regional Tourism Strategy. Concerning targeted strategies on pilgrimage routes, Norway national pilgrimage development Strategy takes into account the **multi-level governance** associated to a pilgrimage route management and clarifies the role of each level of responsibility although more specific information should be given on how the different parts should work together on an operational level. Among the policies examined, Interreg VA France (Channel) England Cooperation Program is the only policy co-funded by EU structural funds which indicates explicitly **cross-border routes referring to common historical and natural assets** as quality ways to enhance territory attractiveness. This aspect is very much important to concentrate investments on specific key culture and tourism segments and work on long-term results. Norway's Strategy directly associates modern travel through nature and culture along pilgrimage routes as a significant experience for human existence and for the promotion of quality national tourism destination. Conversely, Östergötland Region Tourism Policy include Pilgrimage in the **"Peace and quiet" thematic area** for those in search of spiritual relaxation, from pilgrimage trails to spas and recognize the "Peaceful" theme contribution to protect natural and cultural territorial assets. Kent policy underlines the importance of rural tourism for regional economy but could better **stimulate the development of tourism services** (e.g. along

pilgrimage routes) given that its primary aim is to reinforce workforce skills. Both Interreg VA (Channel) England Programme (priority 3) and the Östergötland Regional Tourism Policy assign high importance to green infrastructure, green itineraries and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage for the **living quality of citizens and tourists**. Sustainability of investments with respect to natural and cultural heritage is a key need for many of the policies examined, Östergötland and Norfolk policies appearing to be the most interested on this subject. Developing tools **to monitor sustainability** could mitigate risk of negative impact of economic activities on natural and cultural resources. In all examined policies, **international dimension** is mostly considered as the framework in which territories should find individual solutions to be more competitive or adapt their standards rather than a space of cooperation to increase opportunities and effectiveness of their investments. Other common needs raised in all policies are: support to new jobs generation, particularly for young people; boosting local community initiatives around local culture and natural resources, in particular through the use of cultural and creative industries; retaining people in rural areas; diversifying tourism offer and meeting new specialized tourism demands; better exploiting the opportunities given by ITC tools for culture and tourism sectors, etc. In the next months partners should inform each other on the results of the meetings they will have with local stakeholders to increase opportunities to learn from each other and address common issues in the best way for local needs.

A long-distance hiking trail or a pilgrimage route is a complex territorial project which requires an integrated approach and active participation by the different stakeholders (public authorities, universities, associations, enterprises, etc.), in order to achieve the best results on a long term for sustainable territorial development. Religious pilgrimage is characterized by an intrinsic respect for environment as it is part of God's creation and should therefore be protected and conserved at least for "reverence purpose". The contribution of religious community on environment-friendly actions should thus be taken into consideration (Odira, 2013). Environment-respectful approach and sustainable use of cultural and natural resources are also recommendations diffused by secular organizations. The 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Global Code of Ethics for Tourism commit all institutions, grassroots organizations and citizens to a collective ownership and active participation "to shift the world into a sustainable and resilient path"[1]. Considering the above stated and the single policies reviews, a set of 8 overall key recommendations is provided here below.

PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE MODEL	Like a chain or a necklace of pearls, a pilgrimage route and a hiking trail cannot work if a "ring of the chain" is broken. Likewise when a part of the cultural route works well the whole product profile will take advantage of that. The cooperation among local stakeholders should thus be supported by territorial policies so that it can be systemic and participated in a structured way. Cooperation should clarify the best way to interpret the cultural route on the territory and how to deliver it as a tourism product. Cooperation should be based on clear common priorities and division of responsibilities and should encourage the diversified contribution every stakeholder can give (associations, universities, private companies, public authorities of different level of responsibility, etc.). Joining up efforts will allow your route to achieve the best results exploiting economies of scales.

[1] United Nations Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, p. 1.

COOPERATION	Have a long-term vision and connect your route with other thematic European and international routes and networks which are granted recognized-value labels and which are coherent and respectful of local identities. This action requires qualified and long-term efforts and can give more visibility to your territory and improve its attractiveness and outreach.
PLANNING	Include expressly pilgrimage routes and trans-national cultural routes development among your policy priorities of actions and financial instrument selection criteria as a tool to ensuring active protection and enhancement of cultural and natural heritage, developing sustainable tourism products which meet new tourist demands, while respecting local pilgrimage traditions. Similarly, long-distance cultural trails should be included in a territorial register (at national or regional level) for long-distance cultural trails establishing a cultural route-respectful buffer-zone. This action would allow to recognize the public value of a cultural trail, safeguard its authentic surrounding landscape and plan its sustainable development.
TARGETED QUALIFICATION	Be consistent with and adopt formally quality standards identified at European or international level to develop the trail and its related services (accommodation, guiding, hospitality, information, etc.) which should meet specific criteria for pilgrimage routes and long-distance trail travellers. This aspect also include the consequent training programs for enterprises, associations and administrations.
SOCIAL AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES	Enhance the peaceful, environment-respectful and culturally enriching experience gained on pilgrimage and cultural routes to diffuse the democratic values of cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and mutual respect through tourism products, cultural-tourism initiatives and in the tourism campaigns among the population and visitors. The value of sharing with other pilgrims, tourists and local community is the most distinctive aspect featuring the most important pilgrimage routes. Volunteering is a relevant dimension of trails and pilgrimage trails management. It should be thus recognized, supported and enhanced.
DIGITALISATION	Promote investments for the development and use of new information technologies to diffuse knowledge and provide innovative services on local culture, resources, practical information (map, app, website, digitalization of cultural heritage, etc.) to assist traveller along the cultural route without preventing him from keeping contacts with local community and surrounding landscape.
ADVERTISE	Advertise the uniqueness of the travel experience along long-distance cultural trails and practical information about this segment of your territorial tourism offer (bike routes, hiking trails, pilgrimage routes). The trans-national dimension of a long-distance trail or of a cultural route adds competitiveness to the product and motivate travel choice. Create a regional and national branding policy associated to this tourism segment in order to make people aware of your diversified tourism offer.
MONITORING SUSTAINABILITY AND DEMAND	Monitoring is an essential aspect of the project development to assess the change the cultural route development project has brought to territory from the initial situation, with respect to the planned objectives. Indicators on sustainability of tourism activities

PROFILE and tourism demand profile should thus be outlined including quantity and quality data.