

## 11TH TRAINING ACADEMY ON CULTURAL ROUTES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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*Each year, in late May or early June, a Training Academy for the Cultural Routes managers and partners is organised in close collaboration with one of the [certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe](#). The Training Academy aims to provide training on current issues in cultural heritage management and tourism promotion to Cultural Route operators. The Training Academy offers hands-on approaches to the selected topic through the participation of academic or professional experts with whom the Cultural Routes operators can have some exchange of views.*

The 11th edition of the Training Academy on Cultural Routes was hosted by the [Via Francigena](#), a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe since 1994. In medieval times, thousands of pilgrims took the ‚French Pilgrims’ Road’ to Rome from Western Europe, and many continued their journey from the ports of south Italy (Bari, Brindisi, and Otranto) to the Holy Land. Building on this historical background, the Via Francigena hosted the Training Academy of Cultural Routes and, with the support of the Province of Puglia, the Municipality of Brindisi and the Brindisi and Ancient Routes Association, welcomed more than 80 representatives of 37 certified routes from 21 countries to a fascinating and informative event over several days, with accompanying events and study trips.

The central theme of the training was “European Cooperation and Sustainable Development,” with a special focus on the tourism potential of cultural heritage. During the training, a series of keynote speeches and roundtable discussions provided an opportunity to learn about the operational models and good practices of the routes’ different thematic and organisational structures.

The opening presentation of the first day was given by David Ward-Perkins, Senior Associate at TEAM Tourism Consulting, Professor of Marketing and Tourism at Skema Business School (France) and expert at the Cité Européenne de la Culture et du Développement Durable, who synthesised the Council of Europe’s almost 40-year success story of the Cultural Routes programme, based on the example of the routes that can be toured on foot (*Fig. 1*). In addition to a synthesis of respective literature, he also drew on his own personal experience, having been actively involved in various thematic routes for several decades. In the next thematic block, routes were presented that exploit the opportunities of European tenders along synergistic models and have a good overview of the EU-funded heritage tourism tendering system. The rest of the day was devoted to the cooperation between the different service provider sectors and the roads, with presentations from representatives of both sides.

On the second day, the Director of the European Institute of Cultural Routes, Stefano Dominioni, and his colleagues presented the latest guidelines and opportunities (*Fig. 2*) and the [13th Annual Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe](#) in Visegrád, to which Eszter Csonka-Takács invited all attendees online. After a presentation by Matteo Nardin, Marketing Manager of the European Travel Commission,



*Fig. 1. Presentation by David Ward-Perkins*

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Fig. 2. Opening speech by Stefano Dominioni

in an area barely affected by the hustle and bustle of urban life, with natural values under local protection. Several late medieval and modern forts, which once secured southern Italy from the sea, are now protected monuments in this environment.

The event's four days provided ample opportunity for networking and building international contacts, which will give the Iron Age Danube Route further opportunities for cooperation, joint programmes, advocacy, and participation in tenders for developing cultural heritage tourism.

the morning was devoted to the situational analysis of the working group on the "Tourism Potential of Cultural Routes", in the making of which representatives of the Iron Age Danube Route participated as committee members. The results of the working group on "Sustainability" were then presented by Stefanie Bischof, manager of the Hanza Road. The afternoon concluded with a discussion among representatives of the roads, during which several challenges, problems, suggestions for solutions, and calls for cooperation emerged. The official programme of the Academy was concluded with a guided tour at a short section of the Via Francigena Pilgrimage Route. The route follows the coastline