

14TH ADVISORY FORUM OF THE CULTURAL ROUTES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, CAPPADOCIA, TÜRKİYE 22–24 OCTOBER 2025

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The 14th Advisory Forum of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe took place between 22 and 24 October 2025 in Nevşehir, Cappadocia, Türkiye. The event was organised by the Council of Europe's Extended Partial Agreement (EPA) on Cultural Routes, the European Institute of Cultural Routes, the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the Turkish Tourism Promotion and Development Agency. This year's theme was The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and Landscapes: Promoting Heritage through Cultural and Sustainable Tourism.

The Forum, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Council of Europe's Landscape Convention, provided an opportunity for dialogue and the exchange of experiences on sustainable, community-centred tourism through cultural routes, promoting the preservation and promotion of Europe's cultural heritage and landscapes. This topic is particularly relevant to the objectives of the Iron Age Danube Route (IADR), which aims to preserve archaeological heritage, educate future generations, and present and promote prehistoric monuments in a sustainable manner, hidden in the landscape. From 2025, we welcome two new members to the IADR Association: the Savaria Museum and the *Vicus Teuto* Heritage Protection Foundation. This addition enhances our network of Hungarian partners, which already includes the Hungarian National Museum, the Archaeolingua Foundation, the Sopron Museum, and the Department of Architectural History and Heritage Conservation at the BME Faculty of Architecture, as well as the János Bánffy Archaeological Foundation.

The Annual Advisory Forum attracted over 300 participants, including representatives from EPA member states, certified cultural route leaders and managers, newly applying cultural route leaders, the University Network of Cultural Routes, international organisations, and professionals in tourism, heritage, and culture. The Netherlands and Ireland joined the extended partial agreement on cultural routes in 2025, marking their first participation in the event as new EPA member states. The growing interest in the programme is reflected in the fact that three newly registered cultural routes – the Romea Strata, the Pyrenean Freedom Routes, and the Saint Francis' Ways – received the Cultural Route of the Council of Europe certification this year, which was announced at the opening ceremony. The three-day Forum featured numerous presentations and roundtable discussions in several sections. Topics emphasised various approaches of the innovative and inclusive heritage interpretation, like improving public awareness and visitor experience along cultural routes and in cultural landscapes. Balancing tourism and cultural heritage preservation in Europe's cultural landscapes: opportunities for cooperation through the Council of Europe's cultural routes; Cultural routes as a means of preserving and promoting European cultural heritage; Improving public awareness and visitor experience along cultural routes and in cultural landscapes; Cultural routes as culinary journeys: reviving local food traditions; The living heritage of landscapes: the role of cultural routes in sustainable cultural development and community building; Beyond the destination: rethinking cultural tourism through the Council of Europe's cultural routes.

As the main outcome of the event, independent expert Ayşegül Yilmaz and Rui Gomes, Executive Secretary of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, summarised the forum's conclusions and recommendations on preserving European landscapes and their rich cultural heritage. The recommendations emphasised strengthening the role of local communities and promoting sustainable tourism practices.

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Fig. 1. Participants of the forum

One of the highlights of the closing day was the ceremonial announcement of the renewal of the Cultural Routes certification. We are delighted that the Iron Age Danube Route has been awarded the certificate for another five years, and Szilvia Fábián, President of the Iron Age Danube Route, received congratulations from Sergio Ortega Muñoz, Chair of the EPA Board of Directors. During the closing session, the 13th Training Academy of the Cultural Routes of Europe was announced, which will be held in Pécs (Hungary) and Osijek (Croatia) in June 2026. This event is being primarily organised by the Roman Emperors and the Danube Wine Route. Gordana Plamenac, the President of the Route, presented the preparations in Pécs and Osijek, highlighting the Zsolnay Cultural Centre, which will serve as the main venue for events in Pécs.

The presentation of six new routes applying for certification was moderated by Eszter Csonka-Takács, Director of the Intellectual Cultural Heritage Directorate and currently Vice-Chair of the EPA Board of Directors. Hungary was also represented at the Forum by the main organiser institutions of the previous Annual Forum held in Visegrád, Hungary. On behalf of the Ministry of Culture and Innovation, which is responsible for Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in Hungary, Máté Vincze, Deputy State Secretary for Public Collections and Cultural Development, and Miklós Eszenyi, Cultural Development Referent, participated in the international event. The 'Skanzen' Open-Air Ethnographic Museum in Szentendre was represented by Miklós Cseri, Director General of the Museum, and Anita Horváth, Head of Marketing and Communications. On behalf of the Intellectual Cultural Heritage Directorate, Krisztina Tompos, Cultural Routes Referent, was also present. Lia Bassa from the Metropolitan University of Budapest represented the Hungarian members of the University Network for Cultural Routes Studies.

The Annual Advisory Forum and the colourful cultural program provided a lively platform for member states, representatives of cultural routes, international organisations, local and regional authorities, civil society organisations, foundations, and heritage and tourism organisations to exchange ideas, learn about best practices, and, last but not least, build new relationships in the field of cultural heritage protection and presentation.