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INSTITUT
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EUROPEAN
INSTITUTE
OF
CULTURAL
ROUTES

Cultural Routes
of the Council of Europe
Itinéraires culturels
du Conseil de l'Europe



Call for Papers

2nd Conference of the University Network for Cultural Routes Studies Lugano, 12–13 November 2026

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe is a long-standing programme that identifies and connects tangible and intangible heritage across borders to promote democracy, human rights, intercultural dialogue and access to culture for all. Through certified routes spanning multiple countries and themes – ranging from pilgrimage paths to craft traditions; from architecture to archaeology, from European figures to landscapes – the programme fosters cultural cooperation, cultural heritage interpretation and safeguarding, sustainable tourism, education, and local development. The routes are living networks of stakeholders committed to common values and shared European memory, aimed at strengthening social cohesion and mutual understanding; furthermore, they support sustainable, “slow” tourism, attracting visitors to lesser known, rural areas.

The University Network for Cultural Routes Studies brings together academic institutions and scholars engaged in research, education, and knowledge transfer on the cultural routes. Its goals are to:

- consolidate and advance scientific knowledge about the programme and its certified routes;
- support evidence-informed policies and practices, providing methodological rigor and usable knowledge to route managers, public authorities, and civil society;
- foster interdisciplinary collaboration among tourism, heritage, communication, digital humanities, geography, history, economics, and territorial studies;
- build capacity through shared data, comparative methods, and methodological standards that enable monitoring, evaluation, and innovation across the network.

The 1st International Conference on Universities and Cultural Routes took place on 13–14 November 2024 in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, co-hosted by the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR) and the Compostela Group of Universities.

The 2nd International Conference is organized and hosted by the European Institute of Cultural Routes in collaboration with the UNESCO Chair in ICT to develop and promote sustainable tourism in World Heritage Sites of USI – Università della Svizzera italiana, Lugano (Switzerland). Building on the first edition, it aims at:

- highlighting and discussing research and academic activities related to cultural routes;
- strengthening the University Network for Cultural Routes Studies, providing a foundation for collective action;
- fostering collaboration between academics and practitioners, shaping future research agendas and offering scientific advice to the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme;
- disseminating scientific knowledge about the cultural routes and their role in promoting an European identity.

Papers: Two types of **contributions** are welcome for presentation at the Conference:

1. *Ongoing research and already published papers*
 - These contributions will be presented during the conference to foster discussion, networking, and feedback.
 - They will *not* be considered for inclusion in the proceedings book but will enrich the scientific dialogue and help shape future research directions.
2. *Original Research*
 - These contributions must present original, unpublished research that meets high scientific standards.
 - Only these contributions will be considered for publication in a curated *Handbook on Cultural Routes*, the first of its kind, which is outlined below.

Registration, Funding & Fees: Information on registration fees, travel support (if available), and accommodation options will be provided in due time on the [conference web page](#).

Accessibility & Inclusion: in case you have any disabilities or specific access requirements, please let us know, we'll be happy to support you.

Conference Chairs: Silvia De Ascaniis & Lorenzo Cantoni

Language: papers are to be written in English

Important Dates:

- Abstract submission (max 500 words): 19 April 2026
 - Through a dedicated *easychair* platform: <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=culturalroutes2026>
 - Clearly indicating to which category the paper belongs – *Ongoing research and already published papers* or *Original Research*
- Notification of abstract acceptance: 19 May 2026
 - In the acceptance of full papers, it will be indicated if they are invited to be part of the edited book
 - Full paper submission for the papers to be included in the handbook: 13 September 2026
- Peer review feedback on the contributions for the handbook: 19 October 2026
- Conference (Lugano): 12–13 November 2026
- Revised contributions to the Handbook due: 29 November 2026
- Final acceptance decisions: 14 December 2026
- Camera-ready manuscript to publisher: 17 January 2027

Note: Authors of accepted papers are expected to **present in person** at the Conference in Lugano. Inclusion in the handbook will depend on timely submission of requested revisions.

Peer Review: reviews will be done by at least **two reviewers**; editors may request methodological checks or data access where appropriate.

Handbook “Scientific Studies on the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe: Evidence, Impacts, and Future Research”

Editors: Silvia De Ascaniis and Lorenzo Cantoni

Scope: completed studies that investigate one or more aspects of:

- the Cultural Routes Programme as a whole (governance, certification, evaluation, impacts, etc.);
- a single cultural route (its management, audiences, sustainability, interpretation, digital mediation, etc.);
- groups of routes that address a shared theme (e.g., religious heritage, industrial heritage, natural-cultural interfaces, crafts and creative industries).

Aim: The handbook collects and synthesizes the scientific knowledge currently available on the cultural routes and sketches a forward-looking research agenda. By doing so, it aims to show how science and academia can effectively support the development of the Programme, strengthening its contribution to the Council of Europe’s core values and helping stakeholders reach their goals, including cultural participation, human rights awareness, social inclusion, sustainable development, and cross-border cooperation. The handbook underscores particularly the pivotal role played by sustainable tourism in achieving these objectives. Beside its huge economic importance, tourism can help promoting cultural understanding, dialogue, and mutual respect, which are key drivers to foster human rights awareness, while enabling sustainable regional development, infrastructure improvements, and cultural exchange through cross-border cooperation.

Perspectives: contributions by all relevant disciplines are welcome, including, but not limited to: Tourism, Communication, Management, History, Geography, Education, Arts and Humanities, Political Sciences. The different contributions shall be inspired by key questions concerning the Cultural Routes program:

- How do/can cultural routes promote the Council of Europe core *values* – democracy, human rights, intercultural dialogue, and access to culture for all?
- How do/can cultural routes support *sustainable tourism* across all sustainability dimensions – economic, environmental, social and cultural?
- How do/can cultural routes support *territorial and rural development*?
- How do/can cultural routes contribute to a *shared and living European cultural heritage*?

Structure:

1. *Introduction:* Historical notes on the Cultural Routes Programme, its development, key milestones, and the current state of the art
2. *History, values and heritage:* e.g. contested heritage, memory politics, citizenship education, European identity, heritage safeguarding, community curation, intangible heritage transmission, transnational narratives, conflict transformation, memory reconciliation
3. *Management and economics:* e.g. local economies, SMEs and crafts, creative tourism, seasonality management, inclusion, accessibility, participation models, youth engagement

4. *Communication and digital media*: e.g. digital inclusion, brand awareness, audience development, communication strategies, digital storytelling, wayfinding and signage, visitor experience design, media analysis, educational outreach, creative industries
5. *Sustainable tourism and geography*: e.g. mobility/connectivity, landscape stewardship, depopulation challenges, regional clustering, impact measurement, co-creation with communities
6. *Conclusion – A Way Forward*: synthesis across sections, methodological standards, shared indicators, gaps and priorities for a research agenda to accompany the Programme's future development.

Cases: each section will be accompanied by case-studies (about three per section), which will help to elaborate the issues and topics covered in the section or will present best practices.

Audience:

- Academic and research communities: scholars and graduate students in tourism studies, heritage studies, territorial and regional development, management, communication/media studies, history, geography, digital humanities, cultural policy, sociology, anthropology, and European studies.
- Stakeholders of the Cultural Routes Programme: route managers and associations, municipalities and regional authorities, tourism organizations (local, national, and international), cultural institutions, NGOs, and policy makers at multiple governance levels.
- Journalists and active citizens: engaged citizens seeking to better understand the roots, diversity, and unifying aspects of Europe, including educators and cultural practitioners.

Contribution Types

1. Research Chapter
 - Length: up to 10,000 words (including references, notes, tables, and figures).
 - Content and structure: complete original research with robust methodology and full documentation of data and analysis.
 - Structure: the article shall follow the traditional structure of a scientific paper, namely: introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions. Where applicable, include policy/practice implications and replicability details (e.g., instruments, codebooks, pseudo-code for computational pipelines).
2. Case Study
 - Length: up to 5,000 words (including references, notes, tables, and figures).
 - Content: a study conducted on a specific cultural route, or an activity/project/event realized by a cultural route (or one of its members) that can be considered a best practice or provide insights into specific issues.
 - Structure: the article shall include the following sections: introduction, body, conclusion. In the body, it shall provide a description of the cultural route, illustrate the problem/issue/situation that required/inspired the intervention, describe the activity/event/project that was realized, discuss the outcomes of the intervention and the lessons learnt.

Publisher: the editors are in conversation with Edward Elgar Academic Publishing, with which they already published De Ascaniis, S., & Cantoni, L. (Eds.). (2022). **Handbook on Heritage, Sustainable Tourism and Digital Media**. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788970082>

A final decision will be taken in due time.

Submission Guidelines

Language: Submissions are in English (Please ensure clarity and consistency; authors may use professional editing support where needed).

Originality: Submissions must be original and unpublished, not under review elsewhere. Any use of genAI should be clearly declared and justified.

Formatting:

- File formats: DOCX (preferred) or LaTeX (with PDF for review and source upon acceptance).
- Referencing style: APA 7th.
- Tables/Figures: provide editable tables and high-resolution figures (300 dpi), with captions and sources/credits where applicable.
- Anonymization: for peer review, please prepare a blinded manuscript and a separate title page with author details.

Ethics & Data: Where human participants or sensitive data are involved, ethics approval has to be received by relevant bodies. We encourage data and materials availability statements and, where feasible, FAIR data sharing (e.g., anonymized datasets, instruments, code).

Keywords: Provide 5–7 keywords aligned with the handbook sections and methods used.

Editorial Criteria: Relevance to the handbook scope; methodological rigor and clarity; originality; contribution to evidence base; policy/practice relevance; quality of writing.