



MED-Routes

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A.4.2. Promotion of eco-itineraries within
European Cultural Routes involved in the project

D.4.2.1 Transfer package of INCIRCLE school

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Abbreviations

MED	Mediterranean region
CRs	European Cultural Routes
MED-Routes	EU funded project
WP	Work package
CPCC	Castellón de la Plana City Council



Executive summary

The purpose of this document is to compile, structure and adapt the presentations and supporting materials required for the organisation and implementation of the Forums for the Promotion of Eco-Itineraries within the European Cultural Routes. The document takes the INCIRCLE School Transfer Package as its main reference framework and builds upon it by integrating selected strategic and operational elements developed within the MED-Routes project, including the Action Plans (D5.1.1), the Transnational Strategy and the project training materials.

Rather than introducing new methodologies, this document is designed as a practical and operational resource that brings together the key contents necessary to support knowledge exchange, capacity building and dialogue among Cultural Routes, public authorities, tourism operators and other relevant stakeholders. It organises the INCIRCLE School materials—previously adapted to the MED-Routes context—into a coherent set of presentations and tools specifically tailored to the objectives and structure of the eco-itineraries promotion forum.

It includes the methodology, presentation and dissemination materials aimed at supporting the promotion of eco-itineraries, facilitating participatory discussions, and showcasing good practices and territorial experiences related to circular tourism.

Overall, this document serves as a supporting tool for the implementation of the MED-Routes approach, ensuring coherence between training, promotion and knowledge-sharing activities, and contributing to the wider dissemination, continuity and replicability of the circular tourism model beyond the project's lifetime.



Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a structured support framework for the organisation and delivery of the Eco-Itineraries Promotion Forums within the context of the European Cultural Routes, building on the methodological approach and materials developed under INCIRCLE School and their adaptation within the MED-Routes project.

To this end, the document first includes an overview of the INCIRCLE School methodology, outlining the core principles, operational model and key elements of the circular economy approach applied to tourism. This overview serves to contextualise the forum contents and to ensure a shared understanding of the methodological foundations underpinning the promotion of eco-itineraries.

Secondly, the document incorporates the Transferability Framework for MED-Routes, designed to support the adaptation and application of the INCIRCLE approach across the diversity of participating territories and Cultural Routes. This framework provides criteria and guidance to ensure that the forum contents and dynamics are responsive to territorial, institutional and cultural specificities, while maintaining methodological coherence and supporting the replicability of the model.

In addition, the document presents a working methodology for the design and implementation of the forums, defining their phases, objectives, participatory dynamics and expected outcomes. This methodology is intended to foster collective learning, dialogue among stakeholders and the dissemination of good practices related to eco-itineraries and circular tourism within the European Cultural Routes.

Finally, the document is complemented by an annex compiling the resources required for the organisation and delivery of the forums, including presentations, training materials, support tools and other practical resources aimed at facilitating their implementation by Cultural Routes and partner organisations.

Overall, this document is conceived as an operational and reference tool to support the promotion of eco-itineraries, strengthen stakeholder capacities and contribute to the effective integration of circular economy principles within the European Cultural Routes framework.



Overview of the INCIRCLE school methodology

This section provides an overview of the INCIRCLE School methodological framework, which serves as the conceptual and operational reference for the design and delivery of the Eco-Itineraries Promotion Forums within MED-Routes. Rather than offering an exhaustive methodological description, this overview highlights the key elements of the INCIRCLE approach that are most relevant for understanding, communicating and applying circular economy principles in the context of the European Cultural Routes.

Tourism circularity principles

The INCIRCLE School methodology is grounded in five core tourism circularity principles—reduce, regenerate, rethink, innovate and valorise—which guide the transition towards more efficient, resilient and sustainable tourism models. These principles provide a shared conceptual language for planning, discussing and evaluating actions in tourism destinations and among tourism operators, and form the basis for adapting the circular economy approach to the specific context of the Cultural Routes.

Applied together, the five principles support the identification of improvement opportunities, the design of solutions with lower environmental and social impacts, and the promotion of management models aligned with Mediterranean sustainability objectives. Within the MED-Routes forums, they serve as a common reference framework to structure discussions, showcase good practices and frame the promotion of eco-itineraries.

- **Reduce** focuses on minimising resource use and waste generation throughout the life cycle of tourism activities, with particular attention to water and energy consumption, mobility-related emissions and material use. In Mediterranean destinations affected by strong seasonality, reduction is essential to mitigate environmental pressures and improve overall efficiency.
- **Regenerate** emphasises the recovery, conservation and renewal of natural and cultural resources. In the context of the Cultural Routes, this principle is closely linked to heritage preservation, landscape protection and the revitalisation of territories with strong cultural identity.
- **Rethink** encourages a critical review of existing tourism models and practices, questioning consumption patterns, mobility systems and promotional



approaches. For MED-Routes, this principle supports the adaptation of tourism experiences to circularity criteria, diversification of activities and stronger links between cultural heritage, local communities and sustainability.

- **Innovate** refers to the introduction of technical, organisational and social solutions that enhance system efficiency and sustainability, including new governance models, digital tools and smart resource management. Within MED-Routes, innovation supports improved itinerary management, impact monitoring and stakeholder engagement.
- **Valorise** aims to increase the economic, social and cultural value of territorial resources through their responsible use. In the Cultural Routes, valorisation strengthens the link between territorial identity and tourism offerings while promoting more equitable distribution of benefits.

Together, these principles define the operational foundation of circular tourism within INCIRCLE and guide the design and promotion of eco-itineraries within MED-Routes.

The four capitals framework

Complementing the five principles, the INCIRCLE School methodology adopts a four-capitals framework —natural, social, human and built capital— to support a comprehensive assessment of tourism systems and their impacts. This framework helps identify key territorial assets, assess their vulnerability and explore opportunities to enhance sustainability through circular economy practices.

Within MED-Routes, the four capitals provide an analytical lens to ensure that eco-itineraries contribute in a balanced way to the conservation, strengthening and valorisation of territorial resources:

- **Natural capital** refers to ecosystems and environmental resources such as water, biodiversity, landscapes and environmental quality. Its consideration is essential to ensure that eco-itineraries actively support environmental conservation.
- **Social capital** encompasses networks, organisational structures, trust and collaboration among local actors. From a circular tourism perspective, social capital underpins co-creation, participatory governance and long-term sustainability.
- **Human capital** includes knowledge, skills and capacities available in the territory. Training activities within INCIRCLE School and MED-Routes directly contribute to strengthening this capital and supporting the effective implementation of eco-



itineraries.

- **Built capital** covers infrastructures, facilities, mobility systems and technologies that support tourism activity. Its optimisation is key to reducing impacts and ensuring accessibility, functionality and sustainable mobility along the routes.

INCIRCLE school operational model

The INCIRCLE School operational model provides a structured and adaptable process to support the integration of circular economy principles into tourism planning and management. It is organised into six interrelated phases: context analysis, governance, shared vision, definition of objectives, planning of measures, and monitoring and evaluation.

Within MED-Routes, this model serves as a methodological reference to guide the development of eco-itineraries and ensure coherence across different Cultural Routes. The model supports a progressive approach, moving from diagnosis to implementation and continuous improvement, while encouraging participation, coordination and evidence-based decision-making.

Participatory processes

Participatory processes are a core component of the INCIRCLE approach and play a central role in ensuring that eco-itineraries reflect local needs, priorities and capacities. The methodology promotes the active involvement of public authorities, tourism operators, cultural organisations, civil society and other stakeholders throughout the planning and implementation process.

In MED-Routes, participation is primarily structured through cross-sectoral working groups, complemented by thematic and co-creation workshops. These spaces facilitate dialogue, collective reflection and consensus-building, enabling the co-design and validation of eco-itineraries. The use of structured participatory methods, such as the European Awareness Scenario Workshop (EASW), further supports the development of shared visions and transition pathways aligned with circular economy principles.

Circular tourism tools and KPI set

The INCIRCLE methodology is supported by a set of Circular Tourism Tools and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) designed to assess circularity levels at both destination and operator levels. These tools enable structured diagnosis, monitoring and evaluation, supporting evidence-based planning and continuous improvement.



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The KPI system covers key thematic areas such as resource consumption, mobility, waste management, heritage preservation, governance and visitor experience. Within MED-Routes, these tools provide a practical basis for assessing the sustainability performance of eco-itineraries, ensuring alignment with project objectives and supporting future certification or recognition mechanisms linked to circular tourism.



Transferability framework for MED-Routes

Why INCIRCLE is transferable to Cultural Routes

The methodology developed within the INCIRCLE project is particularly well suited for transfer to the context of the European Cultural Routes, due to the strong conceptual and operational alignment between circular economy principles and the planning, management and promotion needs of cultural itineraries. Cultural Routes are built around interconnected natural, cultural and social resources that require integrated management approaches capable of minimising impacts while generating long-term territorial benefits. The INCIRCLE framework responds to this complexity by combining environmental sustainability, heritage preservation, community engagement and resource efficiency within a single operational model.

A key factor supporting transferability is the territorial and systemic perspective underpinning the INCIRCLE approach, which understands tourism destinations as systems composed of interdependent actors, resources and governance arrangements. This perspective fully aligns with the logic of Cultural Routes, which require holistic planning processes that integrate landscapes, tangible and intangible heritage, tourism services and local social dynamics. The phases of the INCIRCLE Operational Model—context analysis, governance, shared vision, planning and evaluation—can therefore be readily adapted to the design, implementation and monitoring of the eco-itineraries promoted within MED-Routes.

Transferability is further enhanced by the transversal nature of INCIRCLE principles and tools, which are not sector-specific but applicable across diverse cultural, thematic and territorial contexts. Principles such as reducing resource consumption, regenerating assets, rethinking use models, innovating in management and valorising territorial resources fit naturally within the objectives of Cultural Routes, which seek to enhance tourism experiences while safeguarding heritage integrity and local quality of life. This flexibility allows the methodology to be applied to routes of different scales, themes and levels of development.

Another essential element facilitating transfer is the central role assigned to participatory processes. The effective governance of Cultural Routes depends on the involvement and coordination of public authorities, cultural organisations, tourism operators and local communities. INCIRCLE provides a robust participatory framework—



based on cross-sectoral working groups, thematic workshops, the EASW methodology and digital tools—that supports co-creation, consensus-building and shared decision-making. These instruments have proven effective in Mediterranean contexts and offer a solid foundation for structuring collaborative processes within MED-Routes.

In addition, INCIRCLE includes a consolidated assessment and monitoring system based on circularity indicators applicable at both destination and operator levels. This system is particularly valuable for MED-Routes, as it provides common reference criteria to assess the sustainability performance of eco-itineraries and ensure methodological coherence across territories. The KPI framework enables the evaluation of resource use, environmental and cultural impacts, governance arrangements and visitor experience—key dimensions for ensuring consistency and guiding continuous improvement.

Transferability is reinforced by the shared Mediterranean context of both projects. INCIRCLE was developed to address challenges typical of Mediterranean regions—such as seasonality, environmental fragility, limited resources and tourism dependency—which also affect many Cultural Routes. This territorial affinity facilitates the adaptation of tools and solutions and ensures their relevance to the realities faced by MED-Routes partners.

Methodological adaptation implemented in MED-Routes

The integration of the INCIRCLE approach within MED-Routes has gone beyond the direct transfer of tools and has involved a process of methodological adaptation to respond to the specific characteristics of Cultural Routes and to the strategic framework defined by the MED-Routes Transnational Strategy (D2.5.1). This process has ensured alignment between the INCIRCLE School methodology and the objectives, governance structures and operational needs of cultural eco-itineraries in the Mediterranean context.

The Transnational Strategy has served as the primary reference framework for this adaptation, guiding the reinterpretation of the INCIRCLE Operational Model in terms compatible with Cultural Routes. Each phase—context analysis, governance, shared vision, objective definition, planning and evaluation—has been adjusted to incorporate dimensions that are central to cultural itineraries, such as heritage preservation, cultural authenticity and the relationship between visitors and local communities. As a result, the circular economy approach has been extended beyond environmental considerations to encompass cultural and social sustainability.



At the same time, the INCIRCLE methodology has been embedded within the structure of the MED-Routes Action Plans, which articulate the priorities, challenges and opportunities of each participating Cultural Route. This alignment enabled the identification of the most relevant circular economy components for each territory and their adaptation to specific thematic and geographical contexts. Participatory tools, analytical categories and circularity indicators were thus reorganised to directly support the diagnosis, planning and development of eco-itineraries.

Capacity building has been another key dimension of the adaptation process. The MED-Routes Training Package was developed drawing on INCIRCLE School materials, but restructured to address the specific competencies required for Cultural Route management. This approach strengthened human capital across participating territories and ensured a shared understanding of circular tourism principles as applied to cultural heritage contexts.

In addition, MED-Routes introduced governance and territorialisation elements that were not explicitly developed in the original INCIRCLE framework but are essential for Cultural Routes. These include coordination across administrative levels, the organisation of cultural stakeholder networks and the integration of circular practices into the narratives and identities of the routes. The methodology was therefore expanded to incorporate heritage interpretation criteria, authenticity guidelines and mechanisms to ensure coherence along each itinerary.

The methodological adaptation achieved within MED-Routes strikes a balance between technical rigour and operational flexibility. While INCIRCLE provides a solid and structured foundation for circular assessment and planning, MED-Routes introduces the necessary adjustments to ensure its applicability across diverse territories, enabling partners to apply the model progressively and in line with local contexts.



Methodological framework

1. Purpose and content of this methodological framework

1.1. Focus on Activity 4.2 of the Project

The main objective of Activity 4.2 is to promote eco-itineraries within the European Cultural Routes involved in the MED Routes project. This activity also aims to support partners and associated partners in awareness-raising processes related to sustainable tourism and the enhancement of cultural heritage through environmentally responsible travel practices. In addition, it includes the coordination of Output 4.2.1 of the INCIRCLE School transfer package, which serves as a key tool for the dissemination and transfer of good practices and knowledge acquired throughout the project.

To achieve these objectives, each partner must organize a forum within the European Cultural Route to which they belong. These forums will serve as spaces for meeting, dialogue, and knowledge exchange among project members and other partners from the European Cultural Routes. Within the framework of these forums, partners will present the developed eco-itineraries and encourage the active participation of attendees in order to gather feedback and enrich the proposals.

So far, collaborative work has been carried out on the identification and design of eco-itineraries that incorporate criteria of environmental sustainability, cultural heritage preservation, and local community involvement. Good practices and success stories have been collected from each cultural route, with the aim of inspiring replicable and adaptable models in various contexts.

This activity is part of a broader strategy for the sustainable tourism valorization of European Cultural Routes, aligned with the principles of the European Green Deal, the 2030 Agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

All input and knowledge generated are compiled and revised by the partners on each European Cultural Route and subsequently shared with the rest of the consortium for mutual feedback. The outcome of this activity is a comprehensive document containing all the reports from the organized forums (one report per European Cultural Route) describing the forum's progress.



1.2. Why this methodological framework?

To ensure the success of the MED Routes project Activity 4.2 forums, a detailed and structured methodological framework is required to describe the preparation, implementation, and collection of results. This framework ensures consistency among all project partners, while allowing flexibility to address the specificities of each European Cultural Route and the production of consistent reports.

By following this framework, the input collected will contribute to the effective and consistent promotion of the eco-routes promoted within the MED Routes project.

2. Forum preparation phase

This phase includes the steps necessary to establish the forum on each European Cultural Route, ensure the effective participation of all participants, and facilitate a productive environment for promoting eco-itineraries.

2.1. Initial coordination within the European Cultural Routes

The first phase in preparing the forums involves initial coordination among the MED ROUTES project partners who are members of the same European Cultural Route. This step is essential to establish a shared understanding of the forum's purpose, its connection to the broader goals of the project, and how collaborative work will be structured within each route. To this end, partners should hold an internal planning meeting to jointly define the specific objectives of the forum—such as the validation of the developed eco-itineraries, the collection of input from route members, and the methodological alignment with the project's overall framework and tools.

During this phase, a common timeline for the preparation and implementation of the forum should also be agreed upon, ensuring that deadlines are realistic and consistent with the wider project schedule. Tasks should be distributed among the participating members to guarantee balanced and efficient involvement across the partner group. This phase represents a key starting point to ensure that the forums follow a coherent strategy within each Cultural Route and that their subsequent implementation is based on solid, collaborative planning.

2.2. Development of invitations

Each invitation should clearly articulate the purpose, scope, and expected outcomes of the forum, emphasizing its relevance within the broader MED Routes project. It is important that the message highlights the added value of participating—such as the



opportunity to contribute to the development and validation of eco-itineraries, strengthen collaboration among route members, and exchange knowledge and good practices. The content and tone of the invitation should be adapted to reflect the specific profile, interests, and level of involvement of the different members of the European Cultural Route, in order to foster engagement and ensure meaningful participation.

Communication channels:

Maximizing reach by using diverse channels to communicate forums details is strongly recommended:

- **Institutional emails:** Personalized emails to targeted members.
- **Official letters or invitations in PDF format:** Attached to email or via project platforms. Useful for reinforcing the importance and institutional nature of the forum.
- **Social media:** Post announcements on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X to attract wider participation.
- **Official websites:** Including information on organizational websites.

2.3. Preparation of materials

The preparation of materials is an essential phase to ensure the successful development of the forums. These materials must serve to contextualize the work carried out, clearly present the eco-itineraries developed, facilitate the collection of feedback, and properly document the process. The main elements to be considered are detailed below:

- **Official invitation or call:** First, it will be necessary to prepare a formal invitation addressed to the members of the Cultural Route, specifying the purpose, structure, objectives, and relevance of the forum within the overall framework of the project. This invitation should be presented clearly and tailored to the profiles and interests of the participants, highlighting the benefits of participating and their contribution to the validation of the eco- itineraries.
- **Forum agenda:** The agenda of the forum should be prepared well in advance, detailing the planned sessions, the allocated time for each, the speakers or facilitators responsible for each section.
- **Presentation of the MED Routes project:** Among the key materials is an institutional presentation of the MED Routes project, which should provide context for the forum within the broader set of activities carried out at the European level. It should also include a summary of the work carried out by the



Cultural Route in relation to the identification, design, and justification of the proposed eco-itinerary. This presentation should highlight both the methodology used and the lessons learned or challenges encountered during the process.

- **Eco-itinerary presentation:** Each Cultural Route must present its eco- itinerary in detail. To do this, it is recommended to prepare a technical fact sheet for the itinerary, containing key information about the route, the cultural and natural elements included, the sustainability criteria applied, and the target audience. This fact sheet can be accompanied by a clear and accessible map or visual representation of the itinerary, as well as a PowerPoint presentation summarizing its key features, innovative elements, and proposed next steps for implementation.
- **Video screening:** A fundamental element will be the production and presentation of a short video introducing the eco-itinerary, in accordance with the guidelines set by the project. This video will serve as an introductory tool at the beginning of the forum and should present, in an attractive and accessible format, the landscapes, cultural and heritage assets of the itinerary, as well as its sustainable components. The video should reflect the spirit of the MED Routes project and may later be reused for dissemination purposes.
- **Evaluation questionnaires:** During the forum, an evaluation questionnaire should also be used to assess the relevance, sustainability, and applicability of the presented itinerary.
- **Signing of a letter of commitment:** Furthermore, as part of the partners' active engagement with the project, each participating member must sign a Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support during the forum. This document reaffirms the shared values of the consortium, the partners' support for the project's objectives, and their willingness to contribute to the implementation and dissemination of the eco-itineraries.
- **Standardized forum report template:** To close the event, a standardized template must be prepared for the forum report, to document the contents presented, the feedback received, recommendations and agreements reached, as well as an attendance list to justify participation.

Logistics and format

The logistics and format of the forum should be designed to facilitate effective interaction and data collection:

- **Venue selection:** Choose a location that allows for a presentation, such as a

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conference room with breakout areas. For hybrid-format forums, ensure a stable platform (Zoom, Teams) is available.

- **Technical equipment:** Ensure projectors, laptops, flipcharts, microphones, and note-taking tools are available. For hybrid-format forums, ensure facilitators are trained in managing online interactions.
- **Speakers:** Speakers should be familiar with the MED Routes project, its objectives, and the specific goals of the forums. They should also have a thorough understanding of eco-itineraries. Given the transnational nature of the project, speakers fluent in several languages will be preferred to ensure effective communication between participants from different countries. The language of the forums will be English, unless a Cultural Route opts for another language for justified reasons.

3. Forum implementation phase

The forum implementation phase constitutes a key step in the MED Routes project, aimed at fostering internal dialogue, validation, and knowledge exchange among members of each European Cultural Route involved. During this phase, each route organizes a dedicated forum with its project partners to present the eco-itineraries developed, discuss their alignment with sustainability criteria, and collect feedback to strengthen their relevance and applicability. These forums serve as structured spaces for reflection, mutual learning, and collaborative planning, ensuring that the outputs of the project are both locally grounded and aligned with the shared goals of the consortium.

3.1. Institutional opening and welcome

The forum should begin with a formal welcome from the host partner or the main coordinator of the Cultural Route. This opening serves to create a shared space of trust and cooperation among the participating project partners. A brief overview of the forum's agenda should be provided, along with a reminder of the purpose of the meeting: to collectively reflect on and validate the eco- itineraries developed within the MED Routes project. The opening also offers an opportunity to emphasize the strategic value of this phase within the broader objectives of the project.

3.2. Presentation of the MED Routes project

This section is dedicated to presenting the overall framework of the MED Routes project, allowing participants to situate the forum within the wider European context. The



presentation should cover the project's main objectives, partner network, work packages, and key milestones. Special attention should be given to Activity 4.2, which focuses on the promotion of eco-itineraries and their role in fostering sustainable cultural tourism. The link with the INCIRCLE School transfer package can also be highlighted, demonstrating how shared knowledge and tools are being transferred and adapted by each route. The aim is to ensure that all members have a common understanding of the project's structure and how their local efforts contribute to its overall success.

3.3. Detailed presentation of the eco-itineraries

The core of the forum focuses on the presentation of the eco-itineraries developed by the route. Each itinerary should be presented in a structured and accessible way, including:

- A technical fact sheet with key details (location, length, points of interest, services, sustainability features, etc.).
- A visual map or diagram of the route.
- A PowerPoint presentation summarizing the itinerary's highlights, innovative aspects, and implementation potential.

This phase ensures that all members of the route understand the scope, structure, and objectives of the proposed itineraries.

3.4. Screening of the eco-itinerary video

To complement the technical presentations, each partner must screen a short video created to introduce the eco-itinerary. The video should be visually engaging and clearly illustrate the key features of the itinerary: landscapes, cultural landmarks, sustainability components, and any community involvement. This audiovisual element serves both as an internal communication tool and as potential promotional material for external audiences in future phases. After screening, a brief moment can be dedicated to initial reactions and impressions.

3.5. Signing of the Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support

An important moment of the forum is the formal signing of the Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support by all participating members. This letter reaffirms each partner's support for the MED Routes project, their alignment with its principles, and their willingness to contribute to the dissemination and future implementation of the



eco-itineraries. The signing can be introduced by briefly reading the letter's content and purpose, followed by individual or collective signature, either in physical or digital format.

3.6. Completion of the evaluation questionnaire

Before concluding, participants should be invited to complete an evaluation questionnaire. This tool is designed to gather structured feedback on:

- The organization and content of the forum.
- The clarity and quality of the presentations.
- The perceived value of the proposed eco-itineraries.
- Suggestions for improving the forum format.

The results of this evaluation will be included in the forum report and used to inform future activities.

3.7. Forum closure and next steps

To conclude, the host or moderator should summarize the key outcomes of the forum, including the main feedback points, agreements reached, and any necessary adjustments identified. Participants should also be reminded of the next steps, such as finalizing the itinerary based on input, submitting the forum report using the common template, and contributing to the cross-itineraries exchange of outputs.

4. Post-forum reporting phase

4.1. Systematization of collected materials

After the forum concludes, the first step is to gather and organize all materials generated during the session. This includes the presentations delivered, the fact sheets and maps of the eco-itineraries, the videos shown, and any supporting documentation used. It also involves collecting the evaluation questionnaires completed by participants and any additional comments submitted. This systematization process ensures that no information is lost and that all input is readily accessible for analysis and reporting.

4.2. Analysis of participants feedback

Once all materials have been compiled, the project team should carry out a structured analysis of the feedback and suggestions provided by the forum participants. This includes reviewing the completed questionnaires and identifying key themes, such as the perceived relevance of the eco-itineraries, their alignment with sustainability



principles, and their feasibility for implementation.

4.3. Drafting of the forum report

Once all materials have been compiled, the project team should carry out a structured analysis of the feedback and suggestions provided by the forum participants. Each European Cultural Route must prepare a detailed report following a standardized format:

- **Introduction / General information:**

This section includes the basic details of the forum: the name of the European Cultural Route, the coordinating partner, the date of the forum, the format (in-person, online, or hybrid), and the list of participants. For each participant, include their name, organization, and role within the route. It is recommended to attach a signed attendance list as an annex to ensure proper documentation.

- **Objectives of the forum:**

Briefly describe the specific objectives of the forum within the framework of MED Routes Activity 4.2. The forum should aim to present, validate, and improve the eco-itineraries developed by the route, reinforce internal collaboration among members, and ensure alignment with sustainable tourism principles and cultural heritage valorization. This section can also reference the connection to the INCIRCLE School transfer package, where relevant.

- **Forum agenda:**

Provide the full agenda of the forum, including time slots, session titles, content focus, and responsible persons for each activity. The agenda should reflect a balanced structure that combines content delivery (presentations and video screenings) with interactive components (discussion, feedback, and signing of the commitment letter).

- **Materials presented:**

List and briefly describe all materials shared during the forum, including:

- The institutional presentation of the MED Routes project.
- Technical sheets of the eco-itineraries.
- Maps or visual representations of the routes.
- The eco-itinerary video(s).
- Tools used for feedback collection or participatory discussion (e.g. digital



boards, printed templates).

- The Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support signed by the participants.

Please ensure that photos of the event, screenshots (if virtual), and any other supporting materials are stored and archived properly. These assets are important for justification, dissemination, and project reporting purposes.

- **Summary of presentations**

Summarize the key content of the presentations delivered during the forum. This should include the rationale and methodology used in the design of the eco-itineraries, the main cultural and natural assets involved, innovative or sustainable elements, and any specific features that make the itinerary unique or relevant within the route.

- **Evaluation questionnaire results**

Summarize the results from the final evaluation questionnaire completed by participants. Key areas to analyze include:

- Overall satisfaction with the forum.
- Clarity and usefulness of the content presented.
- Perceived quality of the eco-itineraries.
- Suggestions for improving future forums or project activities.

- **Signing of Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support**

Confirm that all participants signed the Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support, which expresses their collective endorsement of the MED Routes project, shared values, and willingness to contribute to the implementation and dissemination of the eco-itineraries. The signed document should be scanned and included in the annex.

- **Conclusions and next steps**

Provide a general assessment of the forum, highlighting its successes, challenges, and outcomes.

- **Annexes**

Include all relevant supporting documents:

- Signed attendance list.
- Presentation files (PDF or PPT).
- Technical sheets and maps of the eco-itineraries.

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- Video file(s) or link(s).
- Signed Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support.
- Full evaluation questionnaire results.
- Event photos, screenshots, or other visual documentation.

5. Expected results to be gathered

Each European Cultural Route forum must aim to gather the following results:

1. Stakeholder validated eco-itinerary proposal: A finalized and collectively validated version of the eco-itinerary developed by the Route, integrating feedback and suggestions collected during the forum.

2. Signed Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support: A formal document signed by the participating members of the Route, expressing their shared support for the MED Routes project and their commitment to promote, implement, and uphold the values of the eco-itinerary.

3. Forum report document: A complete report summarizing the forum's development, including the agenda, list of participants, materials presented, key feedback gathered, conclusions, and annexed supporting documents, following the standard structure defined by the project.

4. Communication and dissemination outputs: Tangible outputs related to the communication and dissemination of both the eco-itinerary and the MED Routes project, such as social media posts, news articles, website updates, visual materials, or local press coverage—demonstrating efforts to raise visibility and awareness among broader audiences.

5. List of recommendations and next steps: A set of conclusions and actionable recommendations arising from the forum discussions, outlining next steps for improving or finalizing the eco-itinerary, strategies for implementation, and alignment with other MED Routes activities.



Conclusions

This document provides a comprehensive and coherent framework for the organisation and implementation of Eco Itineraries Promotion Forums within the European Cultural Routes ensuring strategic alignment methodological consistency and operational clarity across the MED Routes project By building on the INCIRCLE School methodology and adapting it to the specific characteristics of Cultural Routes the document translates circular economy principles into a practical and operational reference that supports knowledge exchange capacity building and collaborative governance.

Rather than introducing new methodologies the document consolidates and structures existing materials action plans and training resources developed within INCIRCLE and MED Routes into an integrated tool tailored to the objectives of the eco itineraries promotion forums This approach facilitates a shared understanding among Cultural Routes public authorities tourism operators and other stakeholders and ensures coherence between training promotion and knowledge sharing activities.

The application of the five tourism circularity principles together with the four capitals framework provides a holistic basis for the design and assessment of eco itineraries allowing environmental sustainability cultural heritage preservation social cohesion and economic valorisation to be addressed in a balanced and integrated way These elements help ensure that eco itineraries contribute positively to territorial development while respecting local identities and resource limits.

The methodological framework places strong emphasis on participatory processes and collaborative governance positioning the forums as key spaces for dialogue validation and collective learning The active involvement of multiple stakeholders strengthens ownership of the eco itineraries enhances their relevance and feasibility and supports long term commitment to circular tourism practices within the Cultural Routes.

The transferability and flexibility of the INCIRCLE approach as adapted in MED Routes allow the framework to be applied across diverse territorial and thematic contexts while maintaining a common structure and shared criteria This balance between adaptability and consistency supports replicability comparability and scalability of results across the European Cultural Routes network.



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The focus on concrete outputs such as validated eco itineraries signed letters of mutual commitment structured forum reports and communication and dissemination actions ensures that the forums generate tangible and measurable results This orientation towards continuity and long term impact reinforces the integration of circular tourism principles into the strategic development of the European Cultural Routes beyond the project lifetime.



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Annexes



ANNEX 1. INVITATION TEMPLATE

This draft invitation includes essential information and emphasizes the importance of the participants' role in contributing to the forums and the project, ensuring that the forums are well-attended and productive.

Subject: Invitation to Participate in the MED Routes Forum on Eco-Itineraries – [Name of the Cultural Route]

Dear [Name of invitee / Members of the Cultural Route],

We are pleased to invite you to participate in the upcoming MED Routes Forum, which will take place on:

Date: [Insert date]

Location / Online platform: [Insert venue or platform link]

Time: [Insert time, incl. time zone]

Format: [In-person / Online / Hybrid]

About the forum

This forum is organised within the framework of the MED Routes project, co-financed by the Interreg Euro-MED Programme, and aims to promote sustainable cultural tourism through the development of eco-itineraries along European Cultural Routes.

The main objectives of the forum are to:

- Present the eco-itinerary developed by the [Name of the partner/s] under the MED Routes project.
- Discuss its content, sustainability components, and implementation potential.
- Collect feedback and suggestions from the route's members.
- Strengthen cooperation among partners through the signing of a Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support.

Your participation is essential to ensure the quality and representativeness of the final eco-itinerary, and to reinforce the shared identity and sustainability goals of our Route.

Agenda highlights

- The MED Routes project and Activity 4.2
- The eco-itineraries: vision, rationale and features. Presentation and video screening of the proposed eco-itineraries



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- Open feedback
- Signing of the Letter of Commitment
- Evaluation questionnaire

A detailed agenda will be shared shortly. Please confirm your participation by **[Insert RSVP deadline]** by replying to this email or contacting:

[Insert contact email]

[Insert phone number, if applicable]

We look forward to your valuable contribution and active participation in this key milestone of the project.

Warm regards,
[Name and surname]
[Role]
[Organization]



ANNEX 2. LIST OF MATERIALS FOR PARTICIPANTS (indicative)

Before the forum

- **Invitation:** Formal invitation with event details and objectives.
- **Agenda:** Forum schedule, goals, and an explanation of the session's structure.

During the forum

- **Agenda handout:** Printed copies of the agenda to keep participants informed about the structure and timing.
- **Evaluation form:** To gather feedback on the forum experience and how useful participants found it.

All the above **SHOULD COMPLY WITH VISIBILITY RULES**



ANNEX 3. QUESTIONNAIRE TEMPLATE

A detailed structured and semi-structured questionnaire template for the forum, focusing on gathering comprehensive feedback from all participants is presented below, combining multiple-choice, rating scales, and open-ended questions to maximize the insights collected from each target group.

1. **Participation in the forum**
 - In person
 - Online
 - Both
2. **Please, rate the following aspects of the forum (1=very low / 5=excellent)**

	1	2	3	4	5
General organization of the forum					
Content of presentations					
Relevance of the information					
Usefulness of shared information					
Opportunities for collaboration					

3. **What aspects of the forum would you highlight positively? (Open response)**
4. **What benefits do you observe to gain from implementing eco-itineraries? (Open response)**
5. **What are the main challenges in developing eco-itineraries in your context? (Open response)**
6. **Are you interested in joining a network for exchange on eco-itineraries among cultural routes?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - Maybe
7. **What priority topics should be addressed in the future collaborative initiatives?**
 - Good practices and success stories
 - Funding and sustainability
 - Responsible tourism
 - Co-creation with local communities
 - Technical training and capacity-building
 - Other_____
8. **Would you like to share any additional comment, proposal or experience? (Open response)**



ANNEX 4. LIST OF LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS (indicative)

Estimated number of participants: 15-20

This number ensures a manageable and effective forum.

Venue (for in-person forum)

- **Room size:** A medium-sized room that can comfortably accommodate 20 participants seated in a circle or semi-circle to facilitate interaction.
- **Seating arrangement:** Roundtable or U-shape setup for visibility and ease of discussion.
- **Audio-visual equipment:**
 - Projector and screen for presentations.
 - Microphone system if the room is large.
 - Laptop with presentation software (PowerPoint, etc.).
 - Wi-Fi access for participants if necessary.

Technical logistics (for Hybrid format forums)

- **Virtual platform:** Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or other video conferencing tools.
- **Screen sharing:** For sharing research, presentations, and other documents.
- **Technical support:** One person assigned for technical support during the session.

Materials and supplies (SHOULD COMPLY WITH VISIBILITY RULES)

- **Participants log:** For in-person forums with compulsory signatures attesting presence.
- **Printed agendas:** Handouts with the forum's schedule and key objectives.
- **Note-taking supplies:** Notepads, pens, or digital tools for participants.
- **Refreshments:** Coffee, tea, water, and light snacks, if necessary.

Facilitation

- **Speaker / Facilitator:** Facilitators/speakers to lead the session.
- **Note-taker/Recorder:** One person to document insights.



ANNEX 5: DRAFT AGENDA FOR FORUM TO PROMOTE ECO-ITINERARIES

Event title: Forum to promote eco-itineraries within the European Cultural Routes

Date: [Insert date]

Time: [Insert time]

Location: [Insert venue or virtual platform link]

Host: [Organizations]

Agenda

10:00 – 10:15 AM | Welcome and opening remarks

- Reception of participants.
 - Welcome speech by the host organisation and introduction of forum objectives.
-

10:15 – 10:35 AM | Presentation of the MED Routes Project and Activity 4.2

- Overview of MED Routes objectives, partners, work packages, transferability guidelines and Action Plans.
 - Focus on Activity 4.2: Promotion of eco-itineraries and support for European Cultural Routes.
-

10:35 – 11:15 AM | Presentation and video screening of the eco-itineraries

- Detailed presentation of the eco-itineraries.
 - Highlights of sustainability features, cultural and natural points of interest, and expected benefits.
 - Screening of the official eco-itinerary video.
-

11:15 – 11:30 AM | Open feedback session

- Questions and answers.
-

11:30 – 11:45 AM | Signing of the Letter of Mutual Commitment

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and Support

- Brief explanation of the letter's purpose.
- Formal signing by participating members.

11:45 – 12:00 AM | Closing remarks

- Summary of key points and next steps.
- Acknowledgements to participants.



ANNEX 6. CRs INDIVIDUAL REPORT TEMPLATE

Each European Cultural Route will submit a report on the outcomes of their forum. The report should follow a standardized structure for consistency across the consortium.

1. Introduction

- **Forum context and objective:** Explain the purpose of the forum, its relevance to the project, and the key goals.
- **Date and location:** When and where the forum took place (or virtual platform details).
- **Participants:** List of participants.

2. Objectives of the forum

- Briefly describe the specific objectives of the forum within the framework of MED Routes Activity 4.2.

3. Forum agenda

- Briefly describe the specific objectives of the forum within the framework of MED Routes Activity 4.2.

4. Materials presented

- List and briefly describe all materials shared during the forum, including:
 - The institutional presentation of the MED Routes project.
 - Technical sheets of the eco-itineraries.
 - Maps or visual representations of the routes.
 - The eco-itinerary video(s).
 - Tools used for feedback collection or participatory discussion (e.g. digital boards, printed templates).
 - The Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support signed by the participants.

5. Summary of presentations

- Summarize the key content of the presentations delivered during the forum.

6. Evaluation questionnaire results



- Summarize the results from the final evaluation questionnaire completed by participants

7. Signing of Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support

- Confirm that all participants signed the Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support.

8. Conclusions and next steps

- Confirm Provide a general assessment of the forum.

9. Annexes

- Include all relevant supporting documents:
 - Signed attendance list.
 - Presentation files (PDF or PPT).
 - Technical sheets and maps of the eco-itineraries.
 - Video file(s) or link(s).
 - Signed Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support.
 - Full evaluation questionnaire results.
 - Event photos, screenshots, or other visual documentation.



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Commitment Charter – MED-Routes Project

Within the framework of the Interreg Euro-MED – MED Routes project, whose objective is to promote the design and enhancement of eco-itineraries in the European Cultural Routes, the undersigned entities express our interest in and commitment to its principles and objectives.

The MED Routes project represents a unique opportunity to move towards a sustainable, responsible, and innovative tourism model in the Mediterranean and European area, highlighting both the cultural heritage and the natural heritage of our territories.

Aware of the need for tourism to contribute positively to local development and the preservation of resources, we commit to:

- **Support the objectives of MED Routes** as a European cooperation initiative that fosters sustainable tourism through eco-itineraries.
- **Explore and promote new forms of mobility, experiences, and sustainable practices** within the framework of our Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.
- **Disseminate the values of sustainability, inclusion, and environmental respect**, associated with eco-itineraries, among visitors, local communities, and stakeholders.
- **Share and cooperate with project partners and other members of the Routes**, contributing to the exchange of good practices and innovation in sustainable cultural tourism.
- **Give visibility to MED Routes** as a reference project in promoting tourism aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the priorities of the European Union.

This commitment reflects our strong willingness to walk alongside MED Routes in building a cultural and sustainable tourism model that benefits communities, visitors, and our shared heritage.

In [city], on [date]



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Signature: _____

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60–90 MIN



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MED–Routes project

Enhancing MED sustainable cultural tourism through the
creation of eco-itineraries inside European Cultural Routes



PLACE, DATE



LOGOS

Mission 4: Enhancing Sustainable
Tourism

5 MIN



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Index

- *Presentation of the MED-Routes project*
- *Key aspects of the eco-itineraries*
- *Eco-itineraries within the Cultural Route*
- *Conclusions and lessons learned*
- *Evaluation questionnaires results*
- *Commitment charter (signature)*



LOGOS

15 MIN



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The MED-Routes project

- *Short introduction of the Interreg Euro-MED programme*
- *General objectives of the MED-Routes project*
- *Main work packages (highlighting promotion of eco-itineraries)*
- *Role of the partners in the project*



TO DEVELOP ISSUES

PICTURE

LOGOS

10 MIN



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Key aspects of the eco-itineraries

- *What is an eco-itinerary?*
- *Core principles: sustainability, responsible tourism, inclusion, cultural and natural heritage*
- *Expected benefits for territories and local communities*



TO DEVELOP ISSUES

PICTURE

LOGOS

15 MIN



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Eco-itineraries within the Cultural Route

- *Title of the eco-itinerary and location (map, region, route)*
- *Short description (duration, distance, points of interest)*
- *Innovative or distinctive features (digital tools, accessibility, sustainable mobility, etc.)*
- *Pictures and the video presentation*

TO DEVELOP ISSUES

PICTURE

LOGOS

10 MIN



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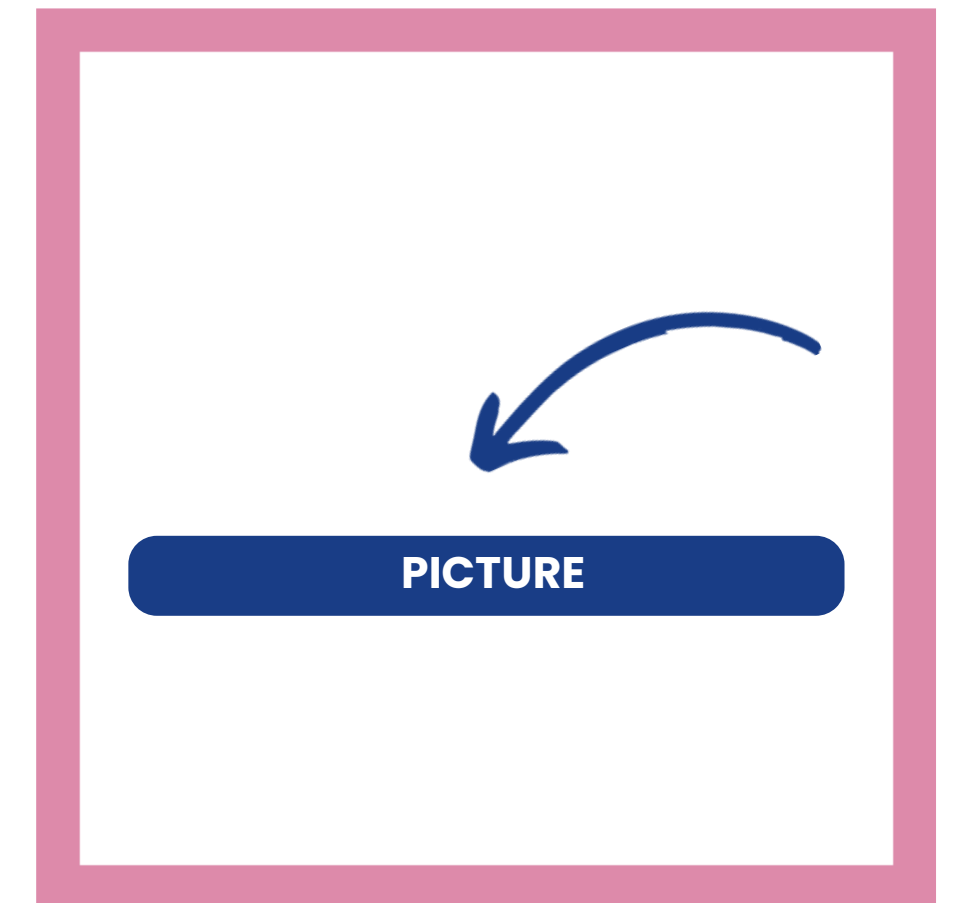
Co-funded by
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Conclusions

- *Main results achieved*
- *Added value for the Cultural Route involved*
- *Expected impact (territorial, touristic, environmental, social)*
- *Call to action: transfer of lessons learned to other members of the Cultural Routes*



TO DEVELOP ISSUES



PICTURE



LOGOS

5 MIN



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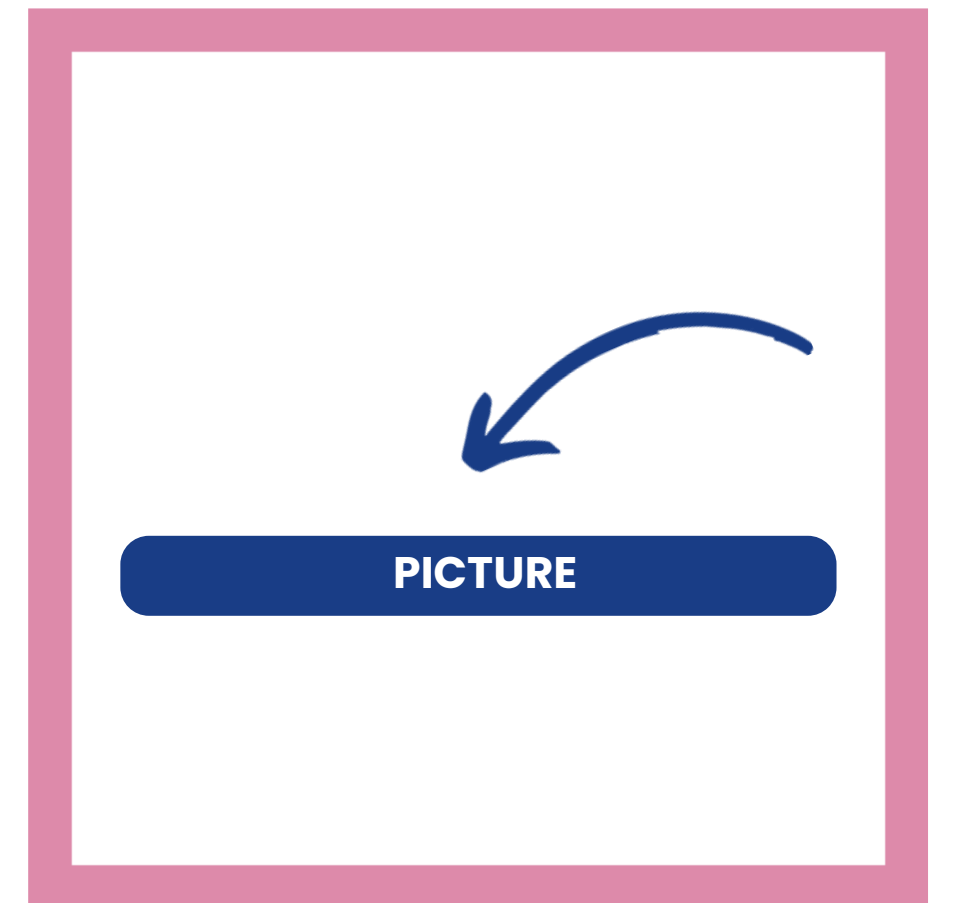
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Evaluation questionnaires

- *Key areas to analyze include:*
 - *Overall satisfaction with the forum.*
 - *Clarity and usefulness of the content presented.*
 - *Perceived quality of the eco-itineraries.*
 - *Suggestions for improving future forums or project activities.*



TO DEVELOP ISSUES



PICTURE



LOGOS

10 MIN



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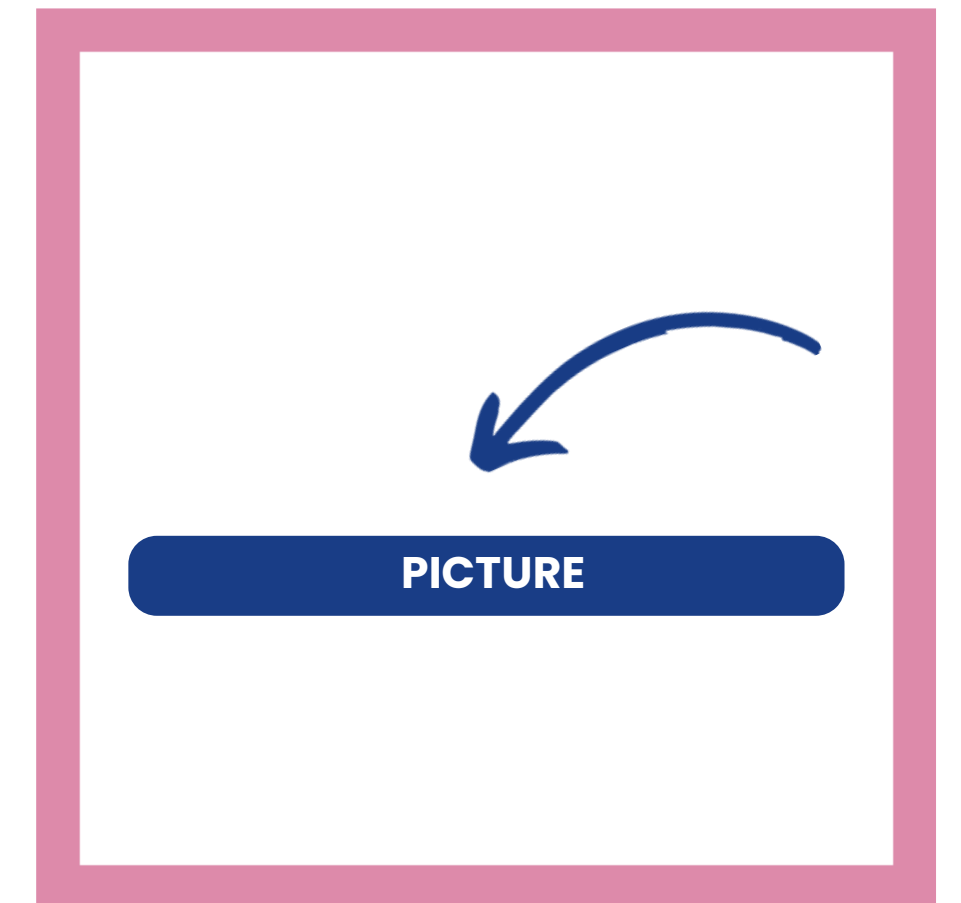
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Commitment charter

- *Brief explanation of the objective of the charter*
- *Symbolic moment of signing the Commitment charter by members*
- *Suggested photo opportunity for closing*



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LOGOS



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MED-Routes project

Enhancing MED sustainable cultural tourism through the
creation of eco-itineraries inside European Cultural Routes

Thank you



PLACE, DATE



LOGOS

Mission 4: Enhancing Sustainable
Tourism





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DATE, 2025

REPORT OF THE FORUM TO PROMOTE ECO-ITINERARIES WITHIN EUROPEAN CULTURAL ROUTES INVOLVED IN THE MED-ROUTES PROJECT

A.4.2. Promotion of eco-itineraries within European Cultural Routes involved in the project

<https://med-routes.interreg-euro-med.eu/>





Project acronym	MED-Routes
Project title	Enhancing MED sustainable cultural tourism through the creation of eco-itineraries inside European Cultural Routes
Project mission	Enhancing Sustainable Tourism
Project priority	Greener Med
Specific objective	RSO2.6: Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy
Type of project	Transfer project (Thematic Project)
Project duration	01/01/2024 – 31/03/2026 (27 months)
Deliverable title	Report of the forum to promote eco-itineraries within European Cultural Routes involved in the project
Deliverable number	n/a
Deliverable type	n/a
Work package number	Work package 4
Work package title	Transfer of eco-itineraries in policy-making structures
Activity name	A.4.2. Promotion of eco-itineraries within European cultural Routes involved in the project
Activity number	n/a
Partner in charge (author)	Castellón de la Plana City Council (CPCC)
Partners involved	All partners

Document history

Versions	Date	Document status	Delivered by
Version 1.0	DD/MM/YY	Draft, v2, final...	Partner name



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Abbreviations

MED	Mediterranean region
CRs	European Cultural Routes
MED-Routes	EU funded project
WP	Work package
CPCC	Castellón de la Plana City Council



Project overview

Cultural Tourism is a key asset in MED economies; however, it has a strong, mutually detrimental relationship with climate change when tourism industries do not effectively incorporate sustainable practices. The MED area therefore needs to strategically re-shape its cultural tourism offer by matching its focus on local cultural heritage with greater sustainability. The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (CRs) represent a key instrument to sustain and promote cultural tourism all over Europe, from mainstream destinations to small-scale local contexts. The **MED Routes project** overall objective is therefore to establish and disseminate a local-based, low-impact model of sustainable tourism across CRs in the MED area, in particular, to establish a specific model of Mediterranean "slow tourism" rooted in the common heritage of 4 CRs.

To tackle the project general objective, MED Routes' approach is rooted in a TRANSFER rationale:

- transfer mechanisms are put into place to cross-reference the most relevant, field-tested outputs from INCIRCLE and EMbleMatic projects for the design of eco- itineraries.
- transfer mechanisms are further encouraged in application to MED Routes experience through capacity building and institutional networking, especially in WP4. By exploiting Cultural Routes' plural and transnational dimension, MED Routes will encourage the diffusion of its eco-itinerary model in the context of other CRs and by the initiative of similar institutional actors transnationally.

The combination of all these elements defines transfer and capitalization as the core assets in MED Routes' approach in an innovative perspective for sharing the main outputs:

- Transnational Strategy for sustainable tourism and eco-itineraries in the MED area
- Green Label of Mediterranean CRs for the certification of eco-itineraries
- MED Routes Action Plans outlining key actions to apply the Transnational Strategy into CRs' agenda

Programme priority / Specific objective: RSO2.6: Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy.

Project overall objective: Establish and disseminate a local-based, low- impact model of sustainable tourism across Cultural Routes in the MED area.



Introduction / General information

This section includes the basic details of the forum: the name of the European Cultural Route, the coordinating partner, the date of the forum, the format (in-person, online, or hybrid), and the list of participants. For each participant, include their name, organization, and role within the route. It is recommended to attach a signed attendance list as an annex to ensure proper documentation.

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Objectives of the forum

Briefly describe the specific objectives of the forum within the framework of MED Routes Activity 4.2. The forum should aim to present, validate, and improve the eco-itineraries developed by the route, reinforce internal collaboration among members, and ensure alignment with sustainable tourism principles and cultural heritage valorization. This section can also reference the connection to the INCIRCLE School transfer package, where relevant.

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Forum agenda

Provide the full agenda of the forum, including time slots, session titles, content focus, and responsible persons for each activity. The agenda should reflect a balanced structure that combines content delivery (presentations and video screenings) with interactive components (discussion, feedback, and signing of the commitment letter).

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Materials presented

List and briefly describe all materials shared during the forum, including:

- *The institutional presentation of the MED Routes project. o Technical sheets of the eco-itineraries.*
- *Maps or visual representations of the routes.*
- *The eco-itinerary video(s).*
- *Tools used for feedback collection or participatory discussion (e.g. digital boards, printed templates).*
- *The Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support signed by the participants.*

Please ensure that photos of the event, screenshots (if virtual), and any other supporting materials are stored and archived properly. These assets are important for justification, dissemination, and project reporting purposes.

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Summary of presentations

Summarize the key content of the presentations delivered during the forum. This should include the rationale and methodology used in the design of the eco-itineraries, the main cultural and natural assets involved, innovative or sustainable elements, and any specific features that make the itinerary unique or relevant within the route.

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- Ut enim ad minima veniam, quis nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis suscipit laboriosam, nisi ut aliquid ex ea commodi consequatur?



Evaluation questionnaire results

Summarize the results from the final evaluation questionnaire completed by participants. Key areas to analyze include:

- *Overall satisfaction with the forum.*
- *Clarity and usefulness of the content presented.*
- *Perceived quality of the eco-itineraries.*
- *Suggestions for improving future forums or project activities.*

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Signing the Charter of Commitment

Confirm that all participants signed the Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support, which expresses their collective endorsement of the MED Routes project, shared values, and willingness to contribute to the implementation and dissemination of the eco-itineraries. The signed document should be scanned and included in the annex.

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Conclusions and next steps

Provide a general assessment of the forum, highlighting its successes, challenges, and outcomes.

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Annexes

Include all relevant supporting documents:

- *Signed attendance list.*
- *Presentation files (PDF or PPT).*
- *Technical sheets and maps of the eco-itineraries. o Video file(s) or link(s).*
- *Signed Charter of Mutual Commitment and Support.*
- *Full evaluation questionnaire results.*
- *Event photos, screenshots, or other visual documentation.*

Annex 1 – Annex title (title 2)

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Sources, tables and figures

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30th September, 2025

PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR THE FORUMS

A.4.2. Promotion of eco-itineraries within European Cultural Routes involved in the project

<https://med-routes.interreg-euro-med.eu/>





Project acronym	MED-Routes
Project title	Enhancing MED sustainable cultural tourism through the creation of eco-itineraries inside European Cultural Routes
Project mission	Enhancing Sustainable Tourism
Project priority	Greener Med
Specific objective	RSO2.6: Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy
Type of project	Transfer project (Thematic Project)
Project duration	01/01/2024 – 31/03/2026 (27 months)

Deliverable title	Practical information for the forums
Deliverable number	n/a
Deliverable type	n/a
Work package number	Work package 4
Work package title	Transfer of eco-itineraries in policy-making structures
Activity name	A.4.2. Promotion of eco-itineraries within European cultural Routes involved in the project
Activity number	n/a
Partner in charge (author)	Castellón de la Plana City Council (CPCC)
Partners involved	All partners

Document history

Versions	Date	Document status	Delivered by
Version 1.0	30/09/1025	Final	CPCC



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Abbreviations

MED	Mediterranean region
CRs	European Cultural Routes
MED-Routes	EU funded project
WP	Work package
CPCC	Castellón de la Plana City Council



Project overview

Cultural Tourism is a key asset in MED economies; however, it has a strong, mutually detrimental relationship with climate change when tourism industries do not effectively incorporate sustainable practices. The MED area therefore needs to strategically re-shape its cultural tourism offer by matching its focus on local cultural heritage with greater sustainability. The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe (CRs) represent a key instrument to sustain and promote cultural tourism all over Europe, from mainstream destinations to small-scale local contexts. The **MED Routes project** overall objective is therefore to establish and disseminate a local-based, low-impact model of sustainable tourism across CRs in the MED area, in particular, to establish a specific model of Mediterranean "slow tourism" rooted in the common heritage of 4 CRs.

To tackle the project general objective, MED Routes' approach is rooted in a TRANSFER rationale:

- transfer mechanisms are put into place to cross-reference the most relevant, field-tested outputs from INCIRCLE and EMbleMatic projects for the design of eco- itineraries.
- transfer mechanisms are further encouraged in application to MED Routes experience through capacity building and institutional networking, especially in WP4. By exploiting Cultural Routes' plural and transnational dimension, MED Routes will encourage the diffusion of its eco-itinerary model in the context of other CRs and by the initiative of similar institutional actors transnationally.

The combination of all these elements defines transfer and capitalization as the core assets in MED Routes' approach in an innovative perspective for sharing the main outputs:

- Transnational Strategy for sustainable tourism and eco-itineraries in the MED area
- Green Label of Mediterranean CRs for the certification of eco-itineraries
- MED Routes Action Plans outlining key actions to apply the Transnational Strategy into CRs' agenda

Programme priority / Specific objective: RSO2.6: Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy.

Project overall objective: Establish and disseminate a local-based, low- impact model of sustainable tourism across Cultural Routes in the MED area.



Presentation of the MED-Routes project

The Interreg Euro-MED Programme

The **Interreg Euro-MED Programme** supports cooperation across Mediterranean regions to jointly tackle key challenges such as climate change, the transition to a circular economy, the protection of cultural and natural heritage, and strengthening territorial resilience. Its mission is to foster a **greener, more resilient, and sustainable Mediterranean**, by connecting institutions and territories through transnational projects.

Objectives of the MED-Routes Project

The project **MED-Routes – Enhancing MED sustainable cultural tourism through the creation of eco-itineraries inside European Cultural Routes** aims to reshape the way cultural tourism is designed and practiced in the Mediterranean. Its **main objectives** are to:

- **Reinforce sustainable cultural tourism** in the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, promoting a Mediterranean “slow tourism” model that values heritage while reducing environmental impact.
- **Design and implement eco-itineraries** within four Cultural Routes (European Route of Ceramics, Phoenicians’ Route, Routes of the Olive Tree, and Federation of Napoleonic Cities), integrating principles of circularity and efficient resource use.
- **Develop a Green Label for Mediterranean Cultural Routes** to certify the quality, authenticity, and sustainability of eco-itineraries.
- **Produce a Transnational Strategy** for sustainable tourism, complemented by tailored Action Plans for each Cultural Route to ensure their integration into local, regional, and national agendas.
- **Strengthen local capacities** by providing training and capacity-building for institutional actors, tourism operators, and SMEs, supporting their transition to more sustainable and innovative practices.
- **Foster transfer and capitalization of experiences**, by building on the results of previous projects (such as INCIRCLE and EMBLEMATIC), ensuring knowledge-sharing and replicability across Mediterranean regions.



Work Packages

The project is structured around four **Work Packages (WP)**:

- **WP1 – Assessment and transferability:** identifying best practices and circular economy patterns in cultural tourism.
- **WP2 – Creation of eco-itineraries:** co-design and launch of eco-itineraries across the four Cultural Routes, along with the development of the Mediterranean Green Label.
- **WP3 – Capacity building:** training programmes, knowledge transfer tools, and local workshops aimed at authorities, operators, and businesses.
- **WP4 – Policy transfer and capitalisation:** integration of strategies and action plans into policy-making structures, ensuring endorsement by the Council of Europe and replication in other Cultural Routes.

Project partners

The MED-Routes consortium includes **8 active partners** and **4 associated partners** from across the Mediterranean:

Active partners (project partners):

1. Unione della Romagna Faentina (Italy) – *Lead Partner (LP)*
2. Castelló de la Plana City Council (Spain)
3. Pafos Regional Board of Tourism (Cyprus)
4. Libertas International University (Croatia)
5. INSULEUR – Network of Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the EU (Greece)
6. DUNEA – Regional Development Agency of Dubrovnik-Neretva County (Croatia)
7. Municipality of Vila Franca de Xira (Portugal)
8. BATTI – Bulgarian Association for Transfer of Technology and Innovation (Bulgaria)

Associated partners:

1. Associazione Strada Europea della Ceramica (Italy) – European Route of Ceramics
2. Cultural Foundation “Routes of the Olive Tree” (Greece) – Routes of the Olive Tree
3. La Rotta dei Fenici (Italy) – Phoenicians’ Route



4. Fédération Européenne des Cités Napoléoniennes (France) – Federation of Napoleonic Cities

The **MED-Routes partnership** brings together a balanced consortium of eight active partners and four associated partners from across the Mediterranean. The **Unione della Romagna Faentina (Italy)**, as Lead Partner, ensures overall coordination, financial management, and leads the transfer of results into policy-making while co-developing the eco-itinerary for the European Route of Ceramics together with the **City Council of Castelló de la Plana (Spain)**, which also drives the promotion of eco-itineraries across the Cultural Routes and engages local stakeholders.

The **Pafos Regional Board of Tourism (Cyprus)** coordinates the work package on eco-itinerary creation (WP2), organises design workshops, co-develops the itinerary for the Phoenicians' Route, and plays a central role in designing the Green Label toolkit. It works closely with **Libertas International University (Croatia)**, the academic partner leading the capacity building work package (WP3), which develops training materials, guides, and workshops, while also supporting the Phoenicians' Route eco-itinerary.

The **INSULEUR network (Greece)** coordinates consultation labs with stakeholders, leads training for local operators, co-develops the Routes of the Olive Tree itinerary with **DUNEA – Regional Development Agency of Dubrovnik-Neretva County (Croatia)**, and is also responsible for the project's communication and dissemination strategy. DUNEA contributes with its expertise in strategic planning, leads the elaboration of Roadmaps for implementation, and supports tailored strategies for eco-itinerary promotion. The **Municipality of Vila Franca de Xira (Portugal)** leads the development of the four Action Plans, ensuring that the MED-Routes strategy is embedded in the agendas of the Cultural Routes, and coordinates the eco-itinerary linked to the Napoleonic heritage.

Finally, **BATTI – Bulgarian Association for Transfer of Technology and Innovation (Bulgaria)** acts as the technical partner in charge of assessment and transferability (WP1), providing expertise in circular economy, mapping best practices, and monitoring the project's carbon footprint.

The consortium is strengthened by four Associated Partners: the **European Route of Ceramics (Italy)**, the **Cultural Foundation "Routes of the Olive Tree" (Greece)**, the **Phoenicians' Route (Italy)**, and the **Federation of Napoleonic Cities (France)**. These Cultural Routes play an advisory and dissemination role, ensuring that the eco-itineraries, strategies, and Green Label developed by MED-Routes are adopted and transferred across their wider European and Mediterranean networks.



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State of implementation of MED-Routes

Since its launch, **MED-Routes** has already achieved significant milestones. The consortium has carried out a comprehensive **assessment of circular economy practices** relevant to cultural tourism, mapped existing sustainability-oriented initiatives in partner regions, and developed the methodological framework for the creation of eco-itineraries. Through **stakeholder consultation labs** and transnational workshops, partners have engaged local authorities, tourism operators, and community organisations, collecting valuable input for the design of small-scale eco-itineraries.

Progress has also been made in defining the concept and branding elements of the **Green Label for Mediterranean Cultural Routes**.

In the next phases, partners will focus on **finalising and launching the four eco-itineraries** within the European Cultural Routes involved, completing the **Green Label toolkit**, and delivering the **Transnational Strategy** and **Action Plans** to guide long-term adoption. The remaining work will concentrate on embedding these results into policy frameworks, securing endorsement from the Council of Europe, and ensuring the wide **dissemination and transfer of outcomes** to other Cultural Routes and Mediterranean regions.



Key aspects of the eco-itineraries

What is an eco-itinerary?

An **eco-itinerary** is not merely a tourist route, but a **comprehensive model of sustainable and experiential tourism** that combines cultural heritage, local identity, and environmental responsibility. It is framed within the logic of **Mediterranean slow tourism**, which proposes travelling at a slower pace, valuing the authenticity of places, minimising the ecological footprint, and generating tangible benefits for host communities.

Unlike a conventional itinerary, an eco-itinerary is designed under the principles of **circular economy and sustainability**, integrating measures such as efficient water and energy management, waste reduction, low-emission mobility (walking, cycling, public transport, electric vehicles), and the consumption of local products. This approach ensures that tourism activity contributes to regenerating resources rather than depleting them, consolidating a **resilient and replicable model**.

Eco-itineraries are inspired by the **Ecojourneys model** developed in the EMbleMatiC project and adapted by MED-Routes. This means that the route not only connects cultural and natural points of interest but also interprets and contextualises them through tools such as interpretation centres, QR-coded signage, digital applications, or immersive experiences (craft workshops, local gastronomy, traditional festivities). In this way, visitors are guaranteed an **educational, sensory, and responsible journey**.

Furthermore, eco-itineraries are conceived as **emblematic tourism products**, in the sense that they express the uniqueness of the territory and reinforce its Mediterranean identity. In them, **nature and culture converge**: visitors explore protected areas, observe biodiversity, take part in local cultural events, and taste traditional products, all under criteria of inclusion, accessibility, and respect for the carrying capacity of destinations.

In short, an eco-itinerary is a **sustainable travel proposal** that:

- **Protects the environment**, reducing emissions and promoting renewable energy.
- **Valorises cultural and natural heritage**, integrating both tangible resources (monuments, landscapes, crafts) and intangible ones (legends, music, gastronomy).
- **Empowers local communities**, ensuring that economic and social benefits are distributed fairly.
- **Educates and raises awareness among visitors**, fostering greater consciousness of sustainability and Mediterranean identity.



Within the framework of **MED-Routes**, eco-itineraries are therefore **strategic tools** to transform Mediterranean tourism into a driver of the transition towards sustainability, with the potential to be replicated in other Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and beyond.

Core principles of eco-itineraries

The eco-itineraries developed within the MED-Routes project are grounded in a set of fundamental principles that guide their design, implementation, and long-term sustainability. These principles ensure that eco-itineraries go beyond being simple travel routes to become strategic tools for promoting sustainable tourism, strengthening local communities, and safeguarding Mediterranean cultural and natural heritage.

- **Sustainability**

Sustainability is the cornerstone of the eco-itineraries designed under MED-Routes. They are conceived as models of circular tourism that integrate environmental responsibility at every stage: from efficient waste, water, and energy management to the promotion of renewable energy and eco-friendly infrastructures. Local sourcing is a defining element, encouraging the consumption of Mediterranean products and gastronomy while strengthening local economies and reducing transport-related emissions. Eco-itineraries are also certified through the **MED-Routes Green Label**, a tool that guarantees compliance with strict environmental and ethical standards and provides travellers with a transparent benchmark of quality and responsibility. This approach ensures that tourism not only minimizes its ecological footprint but also contributes to regenerating resources and promoting long-term resilience in Mediterranean destinations.

- **Responsible tourism**

Eco-itineraries embody responsible tourism by ensuring that visitor activities respect ecological limits, cultural integrity, and the social well-being of local communities. They are explicitly designed to avoid overcrowding, distributing visitor flows across different sites and seasons to prevent pressure on fragile ecosystems and heritage sites. Seasonality is addressed by promoting off-peak visits and alternative itineraries that diversify tourism benefits throughout the year. Moreover, responsible tourism practices are embedded in visitor education: wildlife is observed without intrusion, local traditions are interpreted respectfully, and tourists are guided in behaving appropriately in culturally sensitive contexts. This ensures that benefits reach the host communities directly, fostering fairness and ethical engagement.

- **Inclusion and accessibility**

Inclusivity is both a social commitment and a design principle of eco-itineraries. Routes are adapted to diverse profiles of travellers, including families, students, adventure-seekers, and



seniors, with infrastructures that meet the needs of people with disabilities through adapted trails, signage, and facilities. Accessibility also extends to culture and information: content is offered in multiple languages, supported by digital tools such as apps, QR codes, and online maps, allowing broad participation. Beyond the visitor experience, inclusion involves local communities in the planning and implementation of eco-itineraries, ensuring that women, youth, and marginalized groups become active contributors and beneficiaries of sustainable tourism. This participatory dimension reinforces ownership and strengthens the social impact of eco-itineraries.

- **Cultural and natural heritage**

At the heart of eco-itineraries is the valorisation of Mediterranean heritage. Routes are designed to showcase emblematic landmarks — from archaeological sites and historic cities to sacred landscapes — while also giving visibility to hidden gems that diversify the offer and reduce pressure on saturated destinations. Cultural heritage is understood holistically, encompassing both tangible assets (monuments, landscapes, crafts) and intangible traditions (festivals, gastronomy, music, legends). On the natural side, eco-itineraries integrate biodiversity hotspots, national parks, and protected areas, always with an emphasis on conservation and interpretation. Visitors are encouraged to experience Mediterranean culture not just as observers but as participants, engaging in craft workshops, traditional events, and gastronomic experiences that connect them deeply with local identity.

- **Continuous improvement and monitoring**

An eco-itinerary is not a static product but a dynamic and evolving model. MED-Routes integrates systems of continuous monitoring aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), using clear environmental, social, and economic indicators to measure progress. Visitor feedback, local consultations, and environmental impact assessments are systematically collected to ensure transparency and adaptability. This principle ensures long-term sustainability and positions eco-itineraries as transferable and replicable models for other Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

Expected benefits for territories and local communities

Environmental benefits

Eco-itineraries embed **circular economy principles** into the tourism experience, turning each route into a living laboratory of environmental responsibility. Their contribution to sustainability includes:

- **Reducing carbon emissions through sustainable mobility:** By encouraging walking, cycling, and the use of public or electric transport, eco-itineraries provide alternatives to



car-dependent tourism models. This shift not only lowers greenhouse gas emissions but also enhances visitor experience by offering slower, more immersive ways of travelling through landscapes.

- **Efficient use of resources:** Eco-itineraries promote infrastructures that reduce water consumption (e.g., refill points, greywater reuse systems) and adopt renewable energies in accommodations and services along the route. They actively discourage single-use plastics and prioritise composting and recycling schemes, creating a visible culture of responsibility that visitors can adopt and replicate at home.
- **Biodiversity conservation and education:** Many routes intersect with **Natura 2000 sites, national parks, and marine protected areas**, transforming them into open-air classrooms. Visitors are invited not only to observe nature but to understand its fragility, participate in conservation initiatives (like clean-up campaigns or tree planting), and contribute financially through entrance fees or donations.
- **Eco-certification and monitoring:** Through the MED-Routes **Green Label**, eco-itineraries commit to measurable sustainability criteria. This ensures transparency and credibility while also incentivising continuous improvement. Certification aligns local tourism services with international sustainability benchmarks, reinforcing long-term resilience of destinations.

In essence, eco-itineraries become **models of regenerative tourism**, where travel activities contribute to restoring resources rather than exhausting them.

Socio-Cultural benefits

The socio-cultural impact of eco-itineraries is profound, as they are designed to put **people and heritage at the centre** of the tourism experience.

- **Empowerment of local communities:** Residents play an active role as guides, artisans, storytellers, and organisers of cultural activities. This involvement strengthens local pride, supports identity, and ensures that visitors connect with authentic voices rather than generic tourist narratives. Communities feel ownership over the itineraries, making them partners in decision-making rather than passive beneficiaries.
- **Safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage:** Eco-itineraries valorise monuments, archaeological remains, historic towns, and sacred landscapes while also celebrating traditions such as gastronomy, music, crafts, rituals, and oral legends. This holistic interpretation of heritage allows visitors to engage with Mediterranean culture in all its dimensions, reinforcing intergenerational transmission and cultural continuity.
- **Inclusive and accessible experiences:** Routes are designed with universal accessibility in



mind — barrier-free paths, adapted signage, and multilingual information ensure that diverse groups (families, seniors, schools, people with disabilities) can participate. Digital tools, like mobile apps and QR codes, also expand access by making cultural and natural information readily available.

- **Community co-creation and shared responsibility:** MED-Routes promotes participatory governance by involving local stakeholders in the planning and management of eco-itineraries. This builds trust and a sense of shared responsibility, ensuring that tourism development is aligned with community aspirations and social well-being.

In this way, eco-itineraries serve as **vehicles of social cohesion**, bridging communities and visitors through authentic, inclusive, and respectful interactions.

Economic benefits

From an economic standpoint, eco-itineraries act as **catalysts for resilient and diversified local economies**, particularly in rural and peripheral Mediterranean regions.

- **Strengthening local value chains:** Eco-itineraries prioritise family-run businesses, local gastronomy, artisanal workshops, and small accommodation providers. By directing visitor spending towards these services, they ensure that tourism revenue stays in the territory and directly supports the livelihoods of local actors.
- **Job creation and diversification:** Tourism demand along eco-itineraries creates opportunities for guides, mobility service providers, hospitality workers, artisans, and cultural entrepreneurs. This diversification of employment is particularly valuable for women and young people, who often face limited opportunities in rural areas.
- **Mitigating depopulation and seasonality:** By offering experiences linked to heritage, gastronomy, and nature across different seasons, eco-itineraries attract visitors year-round, counteracting the negative effects of seasonal tourism booms and busts. This contributes to stabilising rural economies and discouraging outmigration by providing consistent sources of income.
- **Attracting sustainable tourism markets:** Through the promotion of the **Green Label**, eco-itineraries position themselves in the growing market of eco-conscious travellers, increasing international visibility and competitiveness. This not only raises revenues but also strengthens the reputation of Mediterranean destinations as leaders in sustainable cultural tourism.

Thus, eco-itineraries ensure that **economic growth is aligned with social equity and environmental responsibility**, creating a tourism model that is fair and future-oriented.



Eco-itineraries within the Cultural Route

Each partner involved in the creation of the MED-Routes eco-itineraries is invited to prepare a **detailed presentation of their route** following a common structure. This ensures coherence across the project while highlighting the unique identity of each territory and Cultural Route. The description should include:

- **Title of the eco-itinerary and location**
 - Provide the official name of the eco-itinerary.
 - Indicate the exact **geographical scope**: region, municipality, and its connection to the Cultural Route.
 - Include a **map** showing the itinerary and its main points of reference, as well as its integration into the wider Mediterranean network.
- **Short description**
 - Summarise the main characteristics: total **duration**, approximate **distance**, and type of route (walking, cycling, mixed, etc.).
 - Identify the main **points of interest** along the route, such as historical sites, cultural landmarks, natural areas, or local services that visitors can enjoy.
 - Keep this description concise and accessible for a wide audience.
- **Innovative or distinctive features**
 - Highlight what makes the eco-itinerary different or exemplary. This could include:
 - Use of **digital tools** (apps, QR codes, virtual guides, interactive maps).
 - **Accessibility measures** for people with disabilities or multilingual information for international visitors.
 - Integration of **sustainable mobility options** (walking, cycling, public transport links).
 - Initiatives related to **circular economy** (local product consumption, eco-labels, waste reduction).
 - Any **community-driven activities** (local guides, cultural workshops, gastronomy experiences).
- **Pictures and video presentation**

Practical information for the forum to promote eco-itineraries within European Cultural Routes involved in the project



- Provide a set of high-quality **photographs** that showcase the itinerary's main landscapes, cultural and natural highlights, and community involvement.
- Prepare a short **video presentation** (1 minute, 30 seconds) that introduces the eco-itinerary in a dynamic and engaging way, suitable for both internal project events and external promotion on social media or cultural networks.

By following this structure, each partner will ensure that their eco-itinerary is presented in a way that is **clear, attractive, and comparable** across the MED-Routes project. This will also facilitate the communication, promotion, and eventual replication of the itineraries in other territories.



Conclusions and lessons learned

Since its beginning, the **MED-Routes project** has achieved important milestones that demonstrate its capacity to transform cultural tourism into a driver of sustainability and community development. Among its main results, the project has produced a **shared methodological framework for the design of eco-itineraries**, inspired by the Ecojourneys model and adapted to the specific needs of Mediterranean territories. It has identified and mapped **good practices in circular economy and sustainable tourism**, which serve as transferable examples for partners and stakeholders.

A key achievement has been the creation and testing of the **MED-Routes Green Label**, a certification system that ensures eco-itineraries and related services comply with rigorous environmental and ethical standards, thereby strengthening their credibility and attractiveness to visitors.

In addition, partners have co-designed and launched **four pilot eco-itineraries** within the European Cultural Routes – the European Route of Ceramics, the Phoenicians' Route, the Routes of the Olive Tree, and the Napoleonic Cities – each highlighting emblematic sites, hidden gems, and community-based experiences that embody Mediterranean identity while reducing environmental impacts. Capacity-building programmes, consultation labs, and awareness-raising actions have further reinforced local skills, inclusive governance, and social participation, ensuring that communities are at the heart of the project.

The added value of MED-Routes for the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe is clear. The project enriches their strategies by embedding **sustainability as a core principle**, diversifying tourism offers through authentic and responsible experiences, and reducing dependency on mass tourism models. Eco-itineraries help to **tackle seasonality**, to distribute visitor flows more evenly, and to bring attention to less-known cultural and natural assets, relieving pressure on over-visited sites. They also provide new tools – from the Green Label to tailored Action Plans – that can be directly integrated into the management of the Routes, improving their competitiveness and international visibility. Most importantly, they reinforce the relationship between the Cultural Routes and the communities that sustain them, turning each Route into not only a cultural and touristic network but also a **platform for local empowerment and sustainable territorial development**.

The expected impact of MED-Routes is multidimensional. On a **territorial level**, eco-itineraries strengthen regional resilience and cohesion by creating synergies between culture, nature, and sustainable economy. From a **touristic perspective**, they attract eco-conscious visitors, foster innovation, and diversify offers in line with global trends towards responsible travel. The



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environmental dimension is reflected in the measurable reduction of tourism's footprint, the promotion of sustainable mobility, resource efficiency, and biodiversity protection. Finally, the **social dimension** ensures that communities gain pride and ownership, that inclusivity is guaranteed, and that cultural continuity is safeguarded through participatory approaches.

For all these reasons, MED-Routes is not only a project but a **call to action** for the entire network of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. The lessons learned – from the methodological tools and participatory governance models to the Green Label certification and the Action Plans – can and should be transferred to other Routes and territories. By adopting and replicating the MED-Routes approach, Cultural Routes can amplify their role as **laboratories of sustainable cultural tourism**, ensuring that Mediterranean heritage continues to inspire, educate, and empower future generations while contributing to the broader green transition.



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Evaluation questionnaires results

In each project forum, it is highly advisable to provide participants with a **feedback questionnaire** in order to gather insights and suggestions that can help improve future activities. This questionnaire should address key aspects such as **overall satisfaction with the forum**, the **clarity and usefulness of the content presented**, the **perceived quality of the eco-itineraries** showcased, and **suggestions for enhancing future forums or project activities**. The information collected will serve as an essential feedback tool to strengthen the quality, relevance, and impact of MED-Routes across all partners and territories involved.



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Commitment charter (signature)

At the end of each forum, participants should be invited to sign the **Letter of Mutual Commitment and Support**, through which they can collectively express their **endorsement of the MED-Routes project**, their adherence to the **shared values** it promotes, and their **willingness to actively contribute to the implementation and dissemination of the eco-itineraries** across the involved territories. This document represents a formal commitment that strengthens transnational cooperation and ensures coherence in the development of the project's actions.



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