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## Italy Greece and Turkey on Foot Project

### A1.5 Management Committee Meeting Report:

#### The subject of the meeting was:

- evaluate the survey results and coordinate the application dossier of the Via Eurasia cultural route the Council of Europe
- establish the governance of the route.

**Meeting Venue:** Gümüştepe, Misi, Bursa

**Meeting Date:** 23-24 July 2019

#### 23 July 2019 Tuesday, visit to the Mysia Ways - organised by Nilüfer Municipality.

The group departed by minibus from Aloft Hotel to the centre of Misi village. Here we were introduced to the village muhtar and the heads of the three NGO's which are responsible for social activities in Misi. They introduced us to their activities and shared fresh fruit and locum, a local pastry. The village has benefitted greatly from their co-operation with the Municipality. Many old houses have been restored; a silk workshop, library and ethnographic museum were established; there are delightful restaurants set in the stream bed and pleasant souvenir shops. The womens' society provided us with fruit and picnic lunches and we took a short bus ride to the start of the walk. Most of the Mysia Ways follow the western slopes of Uludağ with extensions to Gölyazı, on a peninsula in a lake. There are walking, bicycle and now horse-riding routes, and the network is being expanded to the North and West.

After a breezy walk and a lakeside picnic, we finished at Görükle, where we met another active group of women who belong to Atlas Village Women Association and have established a bakery in former school buildings. After yet more fruit and tea, we travelled to Görükle for a meal at a pleasant restaurant run by local women of Gör-Kad.

The day was very productive, as all members participated in lively discussions on the problems and solutions on their sections of the route. Arrangements for future cooperation were made between the Sultans Trail and Hiking Istanbul, and Izmit Municipality offered support for a conference.

#### 24 July 2019 Wednesday, The Management Committee Meeting.

The committee members were transferred by bus from the Aloft Hotel to Misi Village, and welcomed to our meeting by the Deputy Mayor of Nilüfer Municipality, our Project associates.

**1. Kate Clow of the Culture Routes Society** gave a presentation about establishing the route and the material to be collected for the application to register the route as a European Cultural Route. Three important points were raised:

a. According to the suggestions of the Secretary General of the Institute, Stefano Dominioni, we should maintain each section of the route as a separate node, with a specific theme relating to the overall theme: the history of roads. So, for example, for the scientific report for the Lycian Way section, we would highlight three things:

- the route itself and the parts which are under legal protection or are eligible for protection
- the place of the route in the network of Lycian roads
- specific characteristics of Lycian road construction.

The same information would be duplicated as far as possible for other parts of the network. For this purpose, Kate has made available the .kml tracks of the whole route and the information about conserved areas supplied by the Conservation Councils.





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The second two points are covered in Jeremy Alan Pine's (head of the scientific committee) presentation below.

b. It seems that due to the changes in conditions for application to the EICR; our application will not be ready for submission this year. For that reason, it will be completed in Sept 2020, and at this point all the available scientific evidence on each node (or route) will be rolled up into one document.

c. The EICR suggested that the VEa Foundation should not be set up in the Czech Republic. Therefore Kate had asked Luca Bruschi (the Italian Project coordinator) and Theodoros Trachanidis (T, the Greek Project coordinator) for remarks on the possibility of establishing the foundation in Italy or Greece. Set-up in Turkey is difficult due to the permissions required and restrictions on transfers of funds. (pls see below)

#### Follow-up:

*Kate and Furkan Yavuz/Deniz Badem from Tolerance Way will add to the route information and convert files where required. CRS will prepare one sample route for the Scientific report submission according to the criteria above and Jeremy's notes below.*

**2. Eirini K. Yalçın from the Nilüfer Municipality** gave an interesting presentation on the Mysia Ways and the way the system was established and is now being further developed for trekkers, bikers and horse riders. She mentioned various activities which have taken place to promote the routes. The routes often follow roads used in Roman or Byzantine times, especially along the slopes of Uludağ, but these roads were rebuilt and others established during Ottoman times. Since Bursa was for many years the capital of the Ottoman Empire, it was an important trading hub and the number and quality of the roads reflect this. The team managing the routes includes archaeologists who are now establishing the conservation status of the various routes. The chair of the local societies would like to work with this team to place more areas, especially remains of old monasteries, under conservation.

The network is being extended to the north towards the Marmara sea, where it could be connected to the Via Eurasia via Tekirdağ.

#### Follow-up:

*Eirini will provide relevant info for the Mysia Ways booklet. The extended network will be added to the new Culture Routes Society map of routes in Turkey.*

**3. Theodoros Trachanidis from Trace Your Eco** spoke about the interest in the Via Egnatia in Greece. He has traced several organisations which have worked on shorter sections of the route but not one that is active on the whole route. He especially mentioned those active in Eastern parts of the route, including an organisation called Diazoma, which wants to use the Via Egnatia to link ancient theatres. A body called FuoriVia is walking the entire length of the Via Egnatia and will this year complete their route to Istanbul in August. Kate will make contact and may be able to arrange to meet them there. Theodoros spoke on the possibility of setting up an international NGO for the VEA Federation in Greece; it seems that it would be possible to do this in Thessaloniki. He asked that everyone should write down questions and he would do his best to research the answers.

#### Follow-up:

*Theodoros will try to meet with the member of Greek central government (George Kalamantis) responsible for cultural routes. He will also meet with local Greek Municipalities about the Roadshow.*

**4. Luca Bruschi from the European Association of Via Francigena** spoke briefly about the activities undertaken to establish the Via Francigena del Sud. A team of 10 people from the municipalities and the route worked on establishing the exact route. It is now well-developed and supported, particularly by Puglia municipality. The EAVF has now founded a private company to handle some of their business work such as sales of books, maps and the carnet. Luca went on to discuss the possibility of founding the Via





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Eurasia Foundation in Italy. He mentioned the Thermal Towns model as a possible solution. They were initially established in Italy but now are registered in Brussels, in spite of the fact that none of the founding members was based there. This is a good base for lobbying for funds.

#### Follow-up:

*More notes on the Italian and Greek model will be included in the constitution documents. See below.*

**5. Rea Leka, from Tirana Express**, represented Albania in our meeting. She described the work of Tirana Express, which was founded as an arts and cultural centre, and now occupies a meeting place in the centre of old Tirana. It offers space for music, both amateur and professional, activities such as art and crafts and a sociable atmosphere for young people. In recent years, they have started the development of the network called Tirana Trails; with the support of the Municipality they are clearing and signing a network of old paths and roads around Tirana. When complete it will consist of 180km of trail, waymarked and signposted and supported by a map, website and mobile app.

Volunteering is a new activity in Albania, so they are building up a group of reliable volunteers. They have been supported by a mapping course run by Paths of Greece, a partner of the CRS. They have excellent contacts with the main outdoor travel agency in Albania.

Part of Tirana Trails extends to the Via Eurasia and we expect them to play an important part of our route development and a partner in future projects. Rea is also an expert on Social Media so we hope to learn from her about ways to publicise and promote our activities.

#### Follow-up:

*Rea will inform Andrei Ibrahimaj about the project and Tirana Express will decide if they want to make a formal working agreement with CRS so they can jointly apply for future EU funding.*

**The group adjourned for a pleasant lunch at the nearby open-air restaurant.**

**6. Elena Dubinina, head of the Management Committee of the Via Eurasia**, gave a summary of the activities of the Project to date and the future activities. These include the study visit to Puglia, the road shows in Turkey and Greece. She described the social media tools and visibility criteria already developed, a publication in the EAVF magazine. She then went on to give a good analysis of the questionnaire which 80% of members have completed. Based on the survey results; Our target route user is a curious, independent explorer with cultural/historical awareness. The Via Eurasia route has the following advantages:

- 20 UNESCO sites and 13 tentative sites
- 6 UNESCO intangible heritage practises
- 67 museums along the route (3 routes cooperate with 6 museums)
- Several organisations promote their routes well, but there is little cross-promotion between them.
- The routes are very sustainable and can demonstrate this through their practises
- Working with children/young people and volunteers is reasonably good/sufficient
- The routes on the whole cooperate well with the tourism industry on the product of hiking and heritage. We need to encourage our tourism operators to badge up their products with our logo etc.

BUT:

- Accessibility is a weak point which we could overcome by creating displays in the museums.
- So far we have no common activity. A common hiking activity with local food and music would be popular.
- Planning is a very weak area – we need to demonstrate more joint financial and strategic planning. This also includes use of indicators to measure if we have reached our goals.

#### Follow-up:





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To sum up Elena's recommendations:

- Consolidate actions along the route (road shows, museums, etc)
- Develop a common plan, constitution
- Collect research and develop scientific committee
- Organise a common event
- Common marketing and promotion
- Stable management and budget
- Application for certification in September 2020

The CRS will make work plans in all these areas and ask management committee members to contribute information or activities to assist us in preparing for Sept 2020, when the dossier is submitted.

**6. Kate and Elena talked briefly about the Via Eurasia Federation and the constitution.** In view of Stefano's comments, we need to make various small changes to the constitution, which has already been circulated. Elena presented the highlights of what is currently intended, but there are possible alternatives to this:

- A federation with focal points (founding and ordinary members) in each country
- Network will consist of NGOs and associations
- 4 founding members – TR, GR, IT + NT
- Ordinary members: Albania and N. Macedonia are expected to join
- Maximum number of founding/ ordinary members: 6
- Associate members (NGOs, local authority, public institution) join the network under the umbrella of the founding/ ordinary members
- 3 Municipalities in TR and 1 region in IT
- Honorary members

Participants expressed views on different forms of constitution and voting methods. Luca provided an example of the voting system in Via Francigena del Sud. It was agreed that the Management Board should be an executive board, which should carry out the wishes of the General Assembly. Therefore the meeting and voting system for the GA was most important. It was suggested that some organisations could participate in the GA without voting rights, or by delegating their votes to their country representative. Some municipalities will want to become members of the Federation, others may wish to join their national organization. Both these systems need to be taken into account.

#### Follow up:

Kate will re-circulate the constitution with various amendments and suggestions and ask for views.

Theodoros T. will investigate the possibilities of setting up a civil not-for-profit in Thessaloniki with a foreign membership. As soon as the constitution is finally established, we will make further enquiries to see if it will match with Greek law. Points to be investigated include:

- Can the official meetings and administration take place outside Greece?
- Are there rules on the number of meetings and number of attendees?
- Can bodies constituted in different countries be founder members/ordinary members?
- Can non-Greeks be members of the boards, executive officers and members?
- What are the legal liabilities of the society? (Tax, financial reporting, public liability, etc)
- What accounts does the society have to keep? Does it have to have an accountant and a lawyer?
- Is VAT registration a problem? (EU grants do not cover VAT)
- Are there any rules on moving money in and out of the bank accounts/country?
- How could the society be opened and closed?
- Which documents have to be translated to Greek?





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**7. Jeremy Pine of the Scientific Committee** showed a short film demonstrating the theme of the Via Eurasia and showing the difference between the construction and uses of the roads along it. This is the film, which we presented to Stefano Dominioni from the EICR, and which was favourably received.

He continued with a slide show outlining the theme and describing the attributes of the route from the point of view of the scientific committee. Apart from the data described by Kate (above), the scientific report should contain:

information about the road system of which the route is a part. For example, the Sultan's Trail in Turkey is part of a route from Istanbul to Vienna.

Specific characteristics of the road system (e.g. the system of menzils, the bridges and rebuilding of the road itself which enabled the army to use the Sultan's Trail) This information is generally to be found in scientific research papers; additional information will be provided by the Scientific Committee.

Finally, Jeremy showed a description of the work of the Scientific Committee chairman, a draft agreement for the committee members, a possible schedule of their activities over a three year period and a list of possible members. Those present discussed the list and made one or two suggestions as to other candidates.

Three important points emerged:

- the scientific committee has to accept the theme of the route
- the ideal chairman would be one who edits a scientific journal
- a secretary is required who can coordinate activities of the committee

#### **Follow-up:**

*Suggestions for further members of the Scientific committee should be forwarded to Kate.*

*Jeremy will place a list of papers on a google drive together with the papers themselves and we will add to these as the project continues.*

*Kate will speak to various possible members and chairman on the scientific committee and report back.*

**8. Hüseyin Eryurt of CRS** spoke briefly about our remaining activities. He plans to be in touch with individual committee members about their contributions to these. The next major activity is the mobile roadshows, and for this we especially need the cooperation of the municipalities and local walking clubs. Other activities are: making/updating the signposts, mobile phone app, website, and guide-booklets (pls see the activity plan). İzmit Municipality expressed an interest in hosting the closing conference.

Hüseyin explained that Jeremy would shortly be leaving the project; members would be notified of his replacement. He also said that, apart from the project, the CRS was ready to finance a staff member who would operate in two fields – to maintain contacts with the membership, especially municipalities along the route, and to act as a secretary to a scientific committee.

#### **Participants for the management committee:**

Elena D. (Chairperson of the management committee), Jeremy P. (chairperson of the scientific committee), Luca B. (EAVF), Hüseyin Eryurt (project coordinator, CRS), Kate C. (CRS), Theodoros T. (TYE), Holger De B. (VEF), Rea Leka (Tirana Express), Gözde S. (Edirne Municipality), Şevket V. (İzmit Municipality), Furkan Y. (Tolerance Way), Eirini K.Y. (Nilüfer Municipality), Songül S. (Phrygian Way-CRS), Caroline F. (EÇW-HI-CRS), Oytun G. (HI-CRS), Max Smiths (STF), Mehmet Güven (İzmit Mun.), Rakıf Yel (İzmit Mun.)

