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Co-ordination of the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes programme with the European Union's "European Heritage" label and encouragement of their application in Eastern Europe

Motion for a recommendation

tabled by Ms Josette DURRIEU and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Following the identification and revitalisation of the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes, on 23 October 1987 the Council of Europe launched its Cultural Routes programme. The aim was to use the paths taken in the Middle Ages by pilgrims from all parts of the continent to secure the emergence of a genuine European cultural identity. The Council of Europe cultural routes label has now extended well beyond the pilgrim ways and has been awarded to some twenty routes covering such varied themes as music, architecture, agriculture and language.

The fall of the Berlin Wall marked the start of Europe's reunification and it is clear that for 800 million Europeans an awareness of a built heritage that they all share is a practical illustration that, notwithstanding borders and other forms of diversity, they also share a common civilisation.

Resolution (98) 4 of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, adopted on 17 March 1998, formally inaugurated the "Council of Europe's Cultural Routes" programme. The routes selected must satisfy a number of specific criteria, one of the most important being that proposed projects must be the fruit of co-operation between several member states. The European Institute of Cultural Routes in Luxembourg is responsible for assessing proposals, including their financial aspects. Once the process is completed, the Council of Europe may award either the "Council of Europe Cultural Route" or "Major Council of Europe Cultural Route" label, depending on the scale of the project. No subsidies are given.

Resolution (2007) 12 of the Committee of Ministers, adopted on 10 October 2007, introduced a number of changes designed to make member states' citizens more aware of the cultural routes programme. Successful projects should secure media coverage and make a significant contribution to tourism. School groups should also be a particular target.

Nevertheless, the current list of award winning routes shows a clear bias towards Western Europe. There is now a pressing need to revitalise the cultural heritage of the former Soviet bloc countries, a region that contains numerous treasures. Steps must also be taken to counter the threat of deterioration, or even destruction that looms over this heritage.

The European Heritage label was established in March 2007 under the aegis of the European Union for sites that symbolise remembrance and creativity. It has two aims: to increase the attractiveness of the regions concerned and to foster the cultural identity of the European Union. The label has now been awarded to more than forty sites.



Clearly, the two programmes are very similar, which could be a source of confusion for potential projects and the general public. Such a duplication of labels also reduces their symbolic force.

Consideration might therefore be given to clarifying the respective procedures, the areas covered, what has been achieved and current developments.

The Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to discuss with the European Union the possibility of real co-operation between the two institutions in awarding these labels to secure maximum complementarity between them.

The Assembly hopes that such collaboration will lead to the establishment of a single body to assess applications for these labels.

It also asks the Committee of Ministers to support the full extension of the cultural routes programme to Eastern Europe to encourage conservation of the local heritage and the development of tourism in these regions.

Signed (see overleaf)

*Signed*¹:

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