
AlmaTourism

Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development

National Master Plan the Via Francigena

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In Orio Litta, a small town in the province of Lodi (Italy), hosted the meeting of EAVF's members coming from Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Liguria, Tuscany, Lazio and Puglia. Institutional representatives, associations and walkers from all over Italy were present to discuss the future planning of the Via Francigena.

The number of walkers and pilgrims is exponentially growing, making local authorities and communities aware of their responsibilities in order ensure the protection of the trail, the signposting and the hospitality. The project Via Francigena itself contributes to the rediscovery of the cultural identity of the territories and to the development of a sustainable local economy on both regional and national levels.

The core of the meeting was the presentation of a very important proposal that has strong impact on a national and regional level: The National Master Plan on the Via Francigena. In the near future this plan could also be extended to Switzerland, France and England, leading the way for a project of management of large European green way from Valle D'Aosta (and later from Canterbury) to Puglia. This project is the result of the successful experience of the " Master plan on the Francigena in Tuscany " approved by the Region in 2009 and now fully realized with European Structural Funds and regional own resources. A regional model that becomes national and European and may be adopted by other European Cultural Routes.

The Assembly discussed with great satisfaction the important letter of the Under Secretary to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Ilaria Borletti Buitoni,

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addressed to the Presidents of the Italian Regions crossed by the Route, in which she reaffirms the strategic importance of the project in view of Expo Milano 2015. The Assembly has also seen the participation of Amedeo Badini Confalonieri, a member of the staff of the Under Secretary, to certify the total support of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage that now includes also Tourism.

Giuseppe Costa, the manager of the Culture of the Lombardy Region, stressed the opportunities that EAVF could have, in view of the building of a stronger relationship for common actions with its Region. In this way EAVF can use its wide network of towns and their cultural and environmental heritage. Giuseppe Costa explained the projects under way, asking for a close cooperation with the territories crossed by the Via Francigena.

During the Assembly was also launched a walk event from Aosta to Rome organized by Radio RAI to be held from May 5th to June 15th 2014 in 42 stages together with several European radio stations. Sergio Valzania, Deputy Director of Radio Rai, asked for the cooperation of EAVF, municipalities and associations.

Professor Giovanni Cattanei presented the project "Via Francigena di Montagna" pilot experience started in the province of Piacenza in collaboration with the Emilia-Romagna Region , Province of Piacenza, 26 towns, several local associations and the Diocese in order to promote the cultural product Via Francigena and to enhance the protection and promotion of the trail.

The next General Assembly will take place in Foggia, Saturday the 19th of October as part of the event "VIE SACRE 2013". This event will be preceded, on Friday October 18th, by an important coordination meeting between the 18 European Regions crossed by the Via Francigena, the Kent (UK), Nord-Pas -de - Calais , Champagne -Ardenne, Picardie, Franche -Comté (F), Vaud, Valais (CH), Valle d'Aosta, Piedmont, Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Liguria, Tuscany, Lazio, Campania, Molise , Basilicata, Apulia.