



REPORT

“Assessment of the Opportunities for the Implementation of the SILCNET Certification label”

in fulfilment of activity A.T4.1: Imposition and sustainability of the SILCNET label " with result number DT.4.1.1 “Sustainability study on the SILCNET label” conducted under the contract between the University of Economics - Varna, hereinafter referred to as the CONTRACTING AUTHORITY and “FIL” Ltd., hereinafter referred to as “THE CONTRACTOR”, with the following subject: "Development of a manual for SILCNET label" / code, according to the common glossary / CPV /: 7124 1000/ under project with reference number BSB 570 “Silk Road Local Culture”, acronym SILC, financed by Joint Operational INTERREG Programme Black Sea Basin 2014-2020 through the European Neighbourhood Instrument and co-financed by Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria

by FIL Ltd. with UIC 813198547, with registered office and address: Varna, 77, Lyuben Karavelov Str., represented by George Hristov Filipov in his capacity as manager



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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms used in the Text

| | |
|--------|--|
| EHD | European Heritage Days |
| EC | European Commission |
| EU | European Union |
| ICOMOS | International Council On Monuments and Sites |
| RPSEE | Regional Programme for Cultural and Natural heritage in South East Europe |
| CIIC | International Scientific Committee on Cultural Routes |
| EICR | European Institute of Cultural Routes |
| EPA | The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe |
| HEREIN | European Heritage Network |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |



Introduction

With the following report, FIL Ltd. presents the results of the implementation of the activity A.T 4.1: Imposition and sustainability of the SILCNET label " with result number DT.4.1.1 "Sustainability study on the SILCNET label" conducted under the contract between the University of Economics - Varna, hereinafter referred to as the CONTRACTING AUTHORITY and "FIL" Ltd., hereinafter referred to as "THE CONTRACTOR", with the following subject: "Development of a manual for SILCNET label" / code, according to the common glossary / CPV /: 7124 1000/ under project with reference number BSB 570 "Silk Road Local Culture", acronym SILC, financed by Joint Operational INTERREG Programme Black Sea Basin 2014-2020 through the European Neighbourhood Instrument and co-financed by Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The implemented sustainability study on the SILCNET label is based on the specific activities performed as follows:

First, a review of existing research and regulatory framework has been made, with regards to global and European policies for the implementation and development of the process of creating and thematically linking cultural routes, including one on the Silk Road theme

Second, the main criteria for certification of cultural heritage, cultural routes and stakeholders in the field of European cultural tourism are outlined.

Third, officially certified routes and practices of cultural heritage, including those related to the Silk Road, have been identified and analysed in the European context and in the partner countries of the project

Fourth, the degree of motivation and willingness of stakeholders to participate in the SILCNET label certification process is established.

Part 1. Review of existing research and regulatory framework

The review of existing research and regulatory frameworks (European directives, regulations, resolutions, etc.), which affect European policies, strategies, financing methods and financial instruments, aims to facilitate the establishment and development of the Silk Road connection process.

From the theoretical review of the current definitions, it has been established that the institutions of the European Union have a major contribution for the formation of the "cultural route" concept. According to the definition of the Cultural Cooperation Council, a cultural route is a "Entity on the territory of one or more countries or regions, organized around topics whose historical, artistic or social interest is proven to be European, either according to their geographical origin or according to their content and significance".¹ Cultural Routes of European importance, in turn, are defined as:

- transnational (affecting several countries);

¹ [Online] Available from // http://www.culture-routes.lu/php/fo_index.php?lng=en. [Accessed 20/03/2020].



- transregional (cross-border or not);
- regional (routes within a region, the interest to which regarding historical, artistic and social perspective goes beyond the borders of the region or the respective country).

1.1. The Council of Europe's programme for Cultural Routes

The idea of developing cultural routes is based on "the growing collective attitude to Europe's most important cultural landmarks and their integration into civilizational exchange during leisure time". In response to this need, the European Institutions are looking at the opportunity to rediscover Europe's common cultural heritage through travel. In this context, all Member States need to contribute to the creation and promotion of European cultural routes.

The Council of Europe is the oldest European political organization uniting 47 countries. The Council of Europe's activities in the field of heritage are significant because it is one of the few organizations today that promote ethical and regulatory principles regarding this. The organization facilitates the exchange of information about policies and best practices and also engages civil society in these policies, providing residents with a sense of identity and belonging through the common European heritage.

The basis for the work of the Council of Europe in the fields of education, culture, heritage, sport and youth is the European Cultural Convention. A key objective of the Council of Europe in the field of cultural and natural heritage is to increase concern regarding the common European heritage and enhance cooperation for its preservation. To achieve this, the organization launches a variety of specialized programs which help cultural communities to discover and understand one another. At the same time, the programs include also opportunities for development. Southeastern European countries participate in these programs, developing cross-border cooperation networks and exchanging experience in the areas of protection, promotion, legislation and sustainable development of cultural and natural heritage.²

The Council of Europe's programme for Cultural Routes was launched in 1987 with the Declaration of Santiago de Compostela. The program is a framework for cooperation between the 47 countries that have ratified the European Cultural Convention; its rules are defined in Resolution 2007 (12).

Through its Cultural Routes Programme the Council of Europe imposes a model for cultural and tourism management. The certified routes are evaluated based on compliance with a number of criteria. Regular meetings, trainings and seminars are organized to enhance the initiation and exchange of common and innovative strategies for cultural and economic development, sustainable tourism and European civil society.

The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe /EPA/, dating back to 2010 continues the Council of Europe policy, defines the programme strategy and implements "Council of Europe Cultural Route"

² Source of information: official site of the Council of Europe.[Online] Available from // <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/home>. [Accessed 20/03/2020].



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certification. In December 2013, the Committee of Ministers accepted the Resolution CM/Res(2013)66, confirming the establishment of the EPA. The agreement is open to member states and non-member states of the Council of Europe. It is aimed towards providing political support to national, regional and local initiatives to promote culture and tourism. As of 2020, the EPA has 34 member states: Andorra (2012), Armenia (2015), Austria (2011), Azerbaijan (2011), Bulgaria (2011), Cyprus (2011), France (2011), Germany (2013), Greece (2011), Hungary (2013), Italy (2011), Lithuania (2012), Luxembourg (2011), Monaco (2013), Montenegro (2011), Norway (2011), Portugal (2011), Romania (2013), Russian Federation (2011), Serbia (2012), Slovakia (2014), Slovenia (2011), Spain (2011), Switzerland (2013), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2016); Georgia (2016); Croatia (2016); Finland (2018); Poland (2017); San Marino (2017); Turkey (2018); Latvia (2019); Vatican City (2018); Sweden (2020).³

Based on the agreement between the Council of Europe and the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg since 1998, the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR), located in Neumünster Abbey in Luxembourg, is the technical agency for the implementation of the Council of Europe's Program for Cultural Routes. The Institute advises and evaluates the activities of the already certified cultural routes, supports certification of new routes, organizes trainings for cultural route managers and coordinates a university network in the field of culture and tourism.

Cultural routes preserve and highlight Europe's natural and cultural heritage as a factor for improving the environment and as a source of cultural, social and economic development. The routes promote the development of cultural tourism in its sustainable form.

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe are an invitation to travel and discover the rich and diverse heritage of Europe by bringing people and places together in networks of shared history and heritage. They convert into practice the values of the Council of Europe: *human rights, cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and mutual cross-border exchange.*

Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe offer a variety of leisure and educational activities for all citizens across Europe and beyond. They cover a wide range of topics: from architecture and landscape to religious influences, from gastronomy and intangible heritage to the major figures of European art, music and literature.

The certification “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” is a guarantee of excellence. The stakeholder networks, based on the routes, carry out innovative activities and projects relating to five priority areas of action: co-operation in research and development; preservation of memory, history and European heritage; cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans; contemporary cultural and artistic practice; cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.

³ The European Institute of Cultural Routes (Luxembourg) Available online // <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/epa-member-states> (02.04.2020)



1.2. Initiatives of the European Union and the European Commission

A special sector (Directorate-General for Education and Culture) for education and cultural policies has been set up within the European Commission. According to Article 151 of the EC Treaty, "*The population should contribute to the blooming of Member States' cultures while respecting their national and regional diversity and highlighting the common cultural heritage*". Among the European Union's cultural objectives are the preservation and protection of cultural heritage which is of European importance. In order to achieve these cultural objectives, the European Commission is taking the following actions:

First, the European Commission manages the Culture Program, which is dedicated to supporting the implementation of specific and innovative projects, multiannual cooperation agreements, organization of specific cultural events with a European and/or international dimension.

Second, through the programme "Culture", the European Commission is also cooperating with the Council of Europe, for example through joint activities concerning cultural heritage in the context of the Regional Programme on Cultural and Natural Heritage in Southeastern Europe (SEEAP), European Heritage Days (EHD) and the European Heritage Network (HEREIN).

Third, some specific programmes of the European Commission focus on cultural heritage and practices for its sustainable development: for example, the Phare program for cultural tourism.

Fourth, another very popular activity is dedicated to the European Cultural Capitals, designed to promote the gathering of European citizens. It is becoming more popular among Europeans, which is observed with the increase of its cultural and socio-economic impact among visitors it attracts.

With the help of the European Union and the Council of Europe, the HEREIN (European Heritage Network) project is being implemented, with the aim to gradually integrate all European countries into one common heritage information network.

In 1999, six countries (France, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom) created HEREIN. In the years that followed, within HEREIN 2⁴, participants increased to 34, including most of the Southeastern European countries - Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Greece, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia.

The main objective of the project is to monitor the results of the implementation of the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada, 1985), the European Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (Valletta, 1992), and The European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000). This important task is included in: the Declaration on the Cultural Diversity adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (07 December 2000); the resolutions of the 5th Conference of Ministers responsible for

⁴ INTERNATIONAL PROJECT "EUROPEAN HERITAGE NET - HEREIN 2E" (2002-2003). <http://icomos-bg.org/?p=25&l=1&id=111>. [Online] Available from // . [Accessed 17/03/2020].



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cultural heritage at the Council of Europe (Portoroz, April 2001) and the UNESCO instructions regarding ethics in the information society.

The HEREIN project is a tool for promoting cultural diversity on the background of globalization processes and a means of providing practical forms of support between UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Union. It provides real opportunities for comprehensive presentation of cultural heritage in Europe, as well as good opportunities for international support for its conservation. The project also provides access to standardized sources of cultural heritage information at national level, providing full, objective and periodic information about the cultural heritage of partner countries, their cultural policies and current legislation in this field. One of the most valuable contributions is the specifically designed professional thesaurus⁵ in 11 European languages, supplemented with explanatory texts. The HEREIN project is a modern, effective and necessary mechanism for exchange of information and practical experience between administrators, professionals, researchers, associations and non-governmental organizations for the purposes of a united Europe, through which the countries of Southeastern Europe could join forces to preserve their rich cultural inheritance.

A joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission is the South East Europe Regional Cultural and Natural Heritage Program (SEEAP). It was proposed to countries from Southeastern Europe in 2003 as part of the contribution to ensuring democratic stability in the region and has been adapted to the specific economic and transitional context of the area.⁶

Another joint program of the Council of Europe and the European Union is "Routes4U".⁷ It enhances regional development through the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes in the four macro-regions of the EU - the Adriatic-Ionian, Alpine, Baltic and Danube regions. These EU macro-regional strategies have covered 27 countries with more than 340 million people in a thirty-month period.

The Council of Europe's Routes4U programme emphasizes the role of the closeness and connectivity of local people with their region in identifying cultural heritage. Local involvement through the networks of the Council of Europe's Routes4U programme attracts new activities and promotes sustainable tourism, while ensuring that economic use does not endanger the heritage itself.

The project aims to promote regional development through cultural heritage policies. Among the most prominent activities are: supporting the certification of new cultural itineraries in the EU macro-regions, identifying and developing guidelines for transnational regional policies for cultural routes, developing new

⁵ It comes from the Greek word thasaurus - a treasure and has the following meanings: 1. A systematic set of knowledge that is possessed at a certain stage by society, the collective or the individual. 2. Normative vocabulary of descriptors, keywords and main connections between them in a specific area of knowledge

⁶ Culture and Cultural Heritage. [Online] Available from // <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage#TopOfPage>. [Accessed 20/03/2020].

⁷ 2017-20 | Joint Programme with the European Commission - DG REGIO | Routes4U.[Online] Available from // <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/eu-jp-2017-20>. [Accessed 20/03/2020].



competences and skills through e-learning modules and designing new tourism products through map tools for cultural routes and more.

1.3. ICOMOS Initiatives

In addition to European institutions, organizations such as ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) are also actively involved in the topic of cultural routes. In 2008, in Quebec the "International Charter for Cultural Routes" was adopted. It provides a definition for the concept and, along with that, identifies a specific classification. According to the definition, the cultural route represents "any route of communication, be it land, water, or some other type, which is physically delimited and is also characterized by having its own specific dynamic and historic functionality to serve a specific and well-determined purpose".⁸

In accordance with the goals of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), in 1998 the International Scientific Committee on Cultural Routes (CIIC) was established. It aims to promote international cooperation, the identification, study and improvement of cultural routes and their importance with respect to their basic qualities, integrity and synthesis. Equally important is their function, which is reflected in protection, maintenance and preservation of monuments, groups of buildings, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes and other sites connected through cultural values and historical links. Based on the activities of the aforementioned European institutions and international organizations, the Cultural Routes Program aims to encourage the realization of joint initiatives which interest the scientific community as well as elected representatives, executors of regional development projects, political individuals and the tourism business through the joint formation of European networks.

Part 2. Basic criteria for certification of cultural heritage, cultural routes and stakeholders

2.1. Certification of cultural heritage and cultural routes

A main task regarding the sustainability of the SILCNET label is to establish the degree of compliance of the SILC project with the requirements of key criteria for the certification of cultural heritage and stakeholders under the label of cultural routes. In this regard, it is necessary to reveal to what extent the SILC project meets the formal regulatory requirements for the creation and development of a legally established cultural route.

Therefore, as a reference regulatory framework in the field of European cultural tourism are taken into account the resolution criteria and procedures used by the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR)⁹ in Luxembourg by the

⁸ The ICOMOS charter on cultural routes, prepared by the International Scientific Committee on Cultural Routes (CIIC) of ICOMOS, Ratified by the 16th General Assembly of ICOMOS, Québec (Canada), on 4 October 2008

⁹ European Institute of Cultural Routes, [Online] Available from [https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes-and-regional-development/certification-guidelines#%2242276542%22:\[1,2\]](https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes-and-regional-development/certification-guidelines#%2242276542%22:[1,2]) [Accessed 28/03/2020]



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Council of Europe, which are based on CM / Res (2013) 67¹⁰. The resolution was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 18.11.2013 and revises the rules for issuing the “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” Certificate.

In addition to the EICR of the Council of Europe, another organization with an international presence and spectrum of action that is actively involved in cultural routes activities is the International Council for Cultural Monuments and Landmarks (ICOMOS).

ICOMOS, in collaboration with the International Committee on Cultural Routes, emphasizes on the following key features of the term “cultural route”¹¹:

- a traditional road representing a physically determined historical route
- corresponding to a specific historical function and purpose
- incorporating tangible and intangible cultural phenomena
- arising from, and at the same time reflecting, interactive human movements, as a result of a multidimensional, continuous and reciprocal exchange of goods, ideas, knowledge and values between people, countries, regions or continents over a considerable period of time
- having the need to be encouraged by the mutual enrichment of the affected cultures in the space and time that is reflected, both in tangible and intangible heritage
- integrating the historical relations and cultural values associated with its existence into a dynamic system

Meeting the requirements of CM / Res (2013) 67 is a prerequisite for a successful certification of a cultural route within the European Union. In this regard, the administration of the certification process is conducted in two stages:

- at the first stage by the European Institute for Cultural Routes (EICR)
- at second stage, final consideration and decision are made by the governing board of The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.¹²

The EICR¹³ Certification Start-up procedure is 1.5 calendar years in duration. The duration of the process is determined by the set up mechanism for control, performance of evaluation activities by designated experts and institutions, implementation of reports, meetings and discussions.

¹⁰ CM/Res (2013)67, [Online] Available from <https://rm.coe.int/16807b7d5b> [Accessed 30/03/2020]

¹¹ The ICOMOS charter on cultural routes, prepared by the International Scientific Committee on Cultural Routes (CIIC) of ICOMOS, Ratified by the 16th General Assembly of ICOMOS, Québec (Canada), on 4 October 2008

¹² The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, [Online] Available from <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/cultural-routes> [Accessed 30/03/2020]

¹³ Guidelines for certification in EICR [Online] Available from <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes-and-regional-development/certification-guidelines> [Accessed 27/03/2020]



2.2. Compliance of the SILC project with the rules for certification of cultural routes

Currently, the Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA) includes 34 partner countries from within and outside the European Union and one monitoring member since 2020 - Belarus. All countries, from which the SILC partner organizations originate, are members of the EPA, with Bulgaria and Greece being members since 2011, Romania (2013), Armenia (2015), Georgia (2016). Along with that membership, SILC project meets another important EICR criterion for initiating the certification process, which is that at least three partner organizations have to originate from countries in the European Union. In this regard, the participation of SILC partners from Bulgaria, Greece and Romania fully complies with the criterion requirement.

The objectives and results of the SILC project are coherent with the principles set out in Article 15b of the Statute of the Council of Europe, based on which resolution CM / Res (2013) 67 was adopted. With regard to the certification of cultural routes, key points of the principles of the Council of Europe are united around: achieving a greater degree of unity of the Member States through culture; jointly promoting European identity in the context of its integrity and diversity; stimulating intercultural dialogue through conflict prevention and reconciliation; sharing common values, connecting cultures and regions by understanding and promoting physical, tangible and intangible cultural heritage; implementation of cultural routes that connect and follow philosophies, stories, people, migration processes, travel, art, religion, science, technology, commerce.

In the annex to resolution CM / Res (2013) 67, three sets of certification rules are legally stated according to which an applicant project must have a theme that meets the eligibility criteria system (Part One), develop priority activities explicitly mentioned in part two and be represented by a single network of partners as required by part three.

Related to the content of the criteria of the groups from resolution CM / Res (2013) 67, SILC project has the following characteristics:

First, according to the "List of eligibility criteria for a project topic" (Group 1), it can be stated that:

- The topic of the Local Silk Road under the SILC project reflects part of European values of at least three Member States in the European Union, together with Georgia and Armenia, as associate partners of the community.

- Multidisciplinary experts from different regions of the European continent are involved in the development of the Local Silk Road topic, as project activities are managed and implemented in consensus between partners. The fulfilment of this criterion is ensured by including specialists (experts) from three universities - University of Aristotle - Thessaloniki (Greece), University of Economics - Varna (Bulgaria), the Russian - Armenian University (Armenia) and two NGOs - National Association for Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism - Tulcea (Romania) and International Center for Social Research and Policy Analysis (Georgia);



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- The topic of the Local Silk Road under SILC project actually reflects part of Europe's memory and history, while contributing to a better re-evaluation of modern Europe by recreating and resurrecting the ancient Silk Road that I located in the Balkans, and along the Black Sea basin.

- The Local Silk Road has a clear potential for the initiation and development of educational exchanges of young people in the field of cultural heritage and tourism.

- The Local Silk Road allows the development of initiatives and other similar projects in the field of cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.

- The topic of the Local Silk Road clearly states the intention for the development of tourism products, which can be achieved through a close partnership between tourism organizations, institutions, education experts and other stakeholders.

Second, regarding the assessment of the relevance of the SILC project for the criterion group "priority areas of action" according to resolution CM / Res (2013) 67, it can be argued that:

- The SILC project is entirely subordinate to the requirement for cooperation in the field of research and development. On the other hand, the SILC project plays a unifying role around highly relevant, not only in Europe but also worldwide topic for Local Silk Road and accordingly, it will prove its additional role (weight) in sharing of European values. The SILC project complies with the criteria of "improving European memory, history and heritage" especially in less familiar areas of cultural heritage. The project will not only identify and promote the specific local cultural heritage, but it will also explain its importance on a European scale. Concerning criteria 3 and 4 of the second criterion group, at this stage the SILC project indirectly affects the possibility of the development of active promotional activities by young people, as well as the development of arts related to the topic of the Local Silk Road.

- The SILC project will definitely help to promote dialogue and connectivity between urban and rural cultures, developed and less developed regions, minority communities and the ethnic majority of partner countries. In addition to the active use of the media and its adequate coverage, promotion can be done through the establishment of a network of partner organizations and entities mainly in the tourism sector, through which the SILC project is expected to contribute to the revival of European cultural heritage and the sustainable development of territories;

- The SILC project has the potential to create opportunities for co-operation between Europe and other continents by finding specific similarities and attractiveness among different regions;

- The SILC project aims to raise public awareness in the field of cultural tourism about the opportunity for sustainable development of territories through high quality forms of tourism production and consumption.

Third, regarding the compliance to the "network building criteria", the SILC project is relevant in the following directions:



- Meets the requirement for a conceptual framework which serves as a basis for collaborative research on the topic of Local Silk Road, adopted by individual network partners;
- Includes entities from several member states of the Council of Europe (in this case all 5 partners) throughout the whole period of implementation;
- Ensures that proposed projects are financially and organizationally feasible and viable;
- It is realized through contractual binding according to the principle of free participation (association) of all stakeholders in the establishment of the partner network;
- Ensures that the Affiliate Network operates on a democratic basis;
- Ensures the overall visibility and consistency of the project through its ongoing communication, the planned creation of a virtual observatory and the subsequent imposition of the SILCNET certification label.

Based on the conducted study on result 4.1.2. it can be confirmed that the SILC project fully meets the basic requirements for the development of a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe.

Part 3. Review of officially certified cultural heritage routes and practices in European context

For the implementation of this part of the study, institutionally published by 2020 information is used. This information concerns 38 officially registered Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe which are presented on the platform of the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR) and focus on the exceptional diversity of the Old Continent.¹⁴

The empirical research method is based on the use of secondary descriptive and statistical information.

The purpose of the study is to analyse the presentation of information for each individual route in its official publication on the EICR page and to systematize the way in which the SILCNET label is presented.¹⁵

3.1. Certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

European Cultural Routes are based on a number of shared values that enhance sensitivity to European cultural identity and European citizenship. They trace the history of influences, exchanges and developments that have shaped European cultures. Routes are a tool to preserve and emphasize cultural and natural heritage, as well as to improve the quality of life. The routes cross the continent and extend across Northern Africa and Asia Minor, extending cultural exchanges to neighbouring continents as well.

¹⁴ Council of Europe. Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" Certification // Available online. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/certification1> (2020.03.28)

¹⁵ The European Institute of Cultural Routes (Luxembourg) Available online // <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/about-the-eicr>, (2020.03.28)



According to the director of the European Institute for Cultural Routes ¹⁶ “a cultural route is to be understood not only in the sense of physical pathways, but as journey through space and time, demonstrating how heritage and cultures of different and distant regions of Europe contribute to a shared cultural heritage”

As of April 2020, a total of 38 Cultural Routes of Council of Europe have been certified. The topics of the routes, the year of certification, the number of countries included in the specific route and the number of SILC countries included are presented in Table 1.

A map of the locations of all routes, as well as the Council of Europe Cultural Routes brochure - January 2019 edition¹⁷, which presents the certified routes of the Council of Europe, are available at the links below ¹⁸

Currently, 3 applicants for Cultural Route of the Council of Europe certificate are subject to evaluation in the 2019-2020 evaluation cycle. ¹⁹

Table 1

Certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe as of 2020

| | Cultural route | Year | No of countries | SILC countries |
|---|---------------------------------------|------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1 | Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes | 1987 | 9 | 0 |
| 2 | The Hansa | 1991 | 15 | 0 |
| 3 | Viking Routes | 1993 | 15 | 0 |
| 4 | Via Francigena | 1994 | 4 | 0 |
| 5 | Routes of El legado andalusí | 1997 | 8 | 0 |

¹⁶ Cultural routes, a base for European identity. [Online] Available from // <https://www.vaticannews.va/bg/world/news/2018-11/kulturnite-marshcruti-bazisni-elementi-za-evropeiska-identichnos.html>. [Accessed 20/03/2020].

¹⁷ Brochure “Cultural Route of Council of Europe”. [Online] Available from // - English version - <https://rm.coe.int/en-brochure-cultural-routes-2019/168092594a>. [Accessed 18/03/2020].

- French version - <https://rm.coe.int/fr-brochure2019/1680925982>. [Accessed 19/03/2020].

- Italian version - <https://rm.coe.int/catalog-ultimo/16807b57fb>. [Accessed 20/03/2020].

¹⁸ Map of the locations of all routes. [Online] Available from // <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/map>. [Accessed 20/03/2020].

List of all routes. [Online] Available from // <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes>. [Accessed 18/03/2020].

28 routes cross the territory of the four EU macro-regional strategies. *List*. [Online] Available from // <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes-and-regional-development/coe-cultural-routes>. [Accessed 17/03/2020].

21 routes cross the territory of the Danube macroregion. *List*. [Online] Available from // <https://rm.coe.int/16808ea46f>. [Accessed 20/03/2020].

14 routes cross the territory of South Eastern Europe. *List*. [Online] Available from // https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/57321/cultural-routes-council-europe-south-east-europe-region_en. [Accessed 15/03/2020].

3 routes cross the territory of Bulgaria. *List*. [Online] Available from // <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/bulgaria>. [Accessed 20/03/2020].

¹⁹Evaluation reports on candidate networks (2019-2020 cycle) . [Online] Available from // <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/evaluation-reports-on-candidate-networks-2018-2019-cycle->. [Accessed 17/03/2020].



| | | | | |
|----|---|------|----|---|
| 6 | Phoenicians' Route | 2003 | 9 | 0 |
| 7 | Pyrenean Iron Route | 2003 | 3 | 0 |
| 8 | European Mozart Ways | 2004 | 10 | 0 |
| 9 | European Route of Jewish Heritage | 2004 | 15 | 2 |
| 10 | Saint Martin of Tours Route | 2005 | 10 | 0 |
| 11 | Cluniac Sites in Europe | 2005 | 8 | 0 |
| 12 | Routes of the Olive Tree | 2005 | 18 | 0 |
| 13 | VIA REGIA | 2005 | 7 | 0 |
| 14 | TRANSROMANICA | 2007 | 9 | 1 |
| 15 | Iter Vitis Route | 2009 | 18 | 3 |
| 16 | European Route of Cistercian abbeys | 2010 | 11 | 0 |
| 17 | European Cemeteries Route | 2010 | 20 | 2 |
| 18 | Prehistoric Rock Art Trails | 2010 | 7 | 0 |
| 19 | European Route of Historic Thermal Towns | 2010 | 15 | 2 |
| 20 | Route of Saint Olav Ways | 2010 | 4 | 0 |
| 21 | European Route of Ceramics | 2012 | 4 | 0 |
| 22 | European Route of Megalithic Culture | 2013 | 8 | 0 |
| 23 | Huguenot and Waldensian Trail | 2013 | 4 | 0 |
| 24 | ATRIUM | 2014 | 5 | 2 |
| 25 | Réseau Art Nouveau Network | 2014 | 16 | 1 |
| 26 | Via Habsburg | 2014 | 4 | 0 |
| 27 | Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route | 2015 | 5 | 2 |
| 28 | European Routes of Emperor Charles V | 2015 | 11 | 0 |
| 29 | Destination Napoleon | 2015 | 9 | 0 |
| 30 | In the Footsteps of Robert Louis Stevenson | 2015 | 4 | 0 |
| 31 | Fortified Towns of the Grande Region | 2016 | 3 | 0 |
| 32 | Impressionisms Routes | 2018 | 7 | 0 |
| 33 | Via Charlemagne | 2018 | 7 | 0 |
| 34 | European Route of Industrial Heritage | 2019 | 26 | 2 |
| 35 | Iron Curtain Trail | 2019 | 21 | 3 |
| 36 | Le Corbusier Destinations: Architectural Promenades | 2019 | 6 | 0 |
| 37 | Liberation Route Europe | 2019 | 11 | 0 |
| 38 | Routes of Reformation | 2019 | 8 | 0 |

Source: The European Institute of Cultural Routes (Luxembourg)

All five SILC partner countries are members of the Agreement (EPA) and as such participate in certified routes from the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes network. **Bulgaria** participates in 3 cultural routes - the Atrium (2014), the Roman Emperors and the Danube Wine Route (2015), the European Route of Industrial Heritage (2019) and the Iron Curtain Trail (2019). **Georgia** participates in 4 routes - European Route of Jewish Heritage (2004), Iter Vitis Route (2009), Prehistoric Rock Art Trail (2010) and European Route of Historic Thermal Towns (2010). **Greece** participates in 9 cultural routes - Phoenicians' Route (2003), European Mozart Ways (2004), Routes of the Olive Tree (2005), Iter Vitis Route (2009), European Cemeteries Route (2010), European Route of Historic Thermal Towns (2010),



Destination Napoleon (2015), European Route of Industrial Heritage (2019) and Iron Curtain Trail (2019). **Romania** participates in 9 routes - European Route of Jewish Heritage (2004), Transromania (2007), Iter Vitis Route (2009), European Cemeteries Route (2010), Reseau Art Nouveau Network (2014), Atrium (2014), Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route(2015), European Route of Industrial Heritage (2019) and Iron Curtain Trail (2019)

Southeastern Europe has been a real crossroad of civilizations and religions throughout the centuries; a mediator between the East and the West, between the North and the South, imbued with internal connections and influences associated with common historical roots. As a result, cultural corridors have formed over time in the region - transnational axes of age-old interactions - a living memory of civilizations and healthy ties between the peoples that inhabit it. Some of these cultural routes that have preserved their vitality from antiquity to the present without being institutionalized and certified are: Via Adriatica; Via Anatolia; Via Egnatia; Via Pontica; Diagonal Road; Danube Road; Western Trans-Balkan Road; Eastern Trans-Balkan Road; Sofia - Ohrid.

Historically, the Silk Road is projected into a series of cultural routes presented in table 2. The announced routes along the Silk Road are a political and marketing attempt to use the Silk Road topic to develop economic, cultural and tourist relations between the countries of the East and the West.

Table 2.

Routes along the Silk Road

| Route | Territory coverage | Period |
|---|---|---|
| 1. The Royal Road ²⁰ | Iran, Turkey | 450-420 BC |
| 2. The Persian Royal Road ²¹ | Iran, Turkey | 500-330 BC |
| 3. The Great Silk Road | Xian (China), India, Middle East, Europe | 13 century zenith 15 century decline |
| 4. The Great Silk Road | China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Middle East, Mediterranean | 2 nd century BC |
| 5. Routes of Dialogue ²² | From China to Central Asia | 2 nd century BC |
| 6. Maritime Silk Route ²³ - <i>South China Sea Route</i> - <i>East China Sea Route</i> | The marine parts of the Maritime Silk Route include waters such as: Yellow Sea; East China Sea; South China Sea; The Malacca Strait; The Indian Ocean; The Bay of Bengal; Arabian Sea; The Persian Gulf; Red Sea; | 1 st century BC |

²⁰ <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-middle-east/silk-road>

²¹ Silk Road, https://www.ancient.eu/Silk_Road/

²² About the Silk Roads, <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/about-silk-roads>

²³ Silk Road on the Sea (Maritime Silk Route)
<https://www.travelchinaguide.com/silk-road/maritime-silk-route.htm>

| | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| | The Mediterranean; | |
| 7. Northern Silk Road ²⁴ | It is divided into three: - North of Taklamatan Desert - South of Taklamatan Desert - North of Tian Shan Mountain | 1 st century BC |
| 8. Southern Silk Road (Karakoram route) | China, Pakistan, Afghanistan | 1 st century BC |
| 9. Southwestern Silk Road | China, India | 1 st century BC |
| 10. The new Silk Road "One Belt, One Road" ²⁵ | 60 countries from Asia, Africa and Europe | 2016-2030 |
| 11. Northern Silk Road | Northern China, Crimean Peninsula, Italy | 1877 |
| 12. Southern Silk Road | Iran, Turkmenistan, North Africa | 1877 |
| Silk Road Economic Belt ²⁶ | | |
| 13. The New Silk Road between Russia and China | China, Russia | 2014- |
| 14. The New Silk Road across Middle Asia | Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey | 2011- |
| 15. The New Silk Road through Turkey and the Caucasus | Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey | 2010- |
| 16. The New Silk Road and the USA | Countries from the USA, South and Central Asia | 2011- |
| 17. Western Silk Road ^{27,28} | A union between a maximum number of craftsmen, traders from small and medium-size enterprises, artists, tour guides etc. | |

Source: the table was conducted by the authors

3.2. Architecture of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

The registered Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe have similar structural and content architecture

3.2.1. Presentation of the main content

The main content of the routes is arranged in the following order:

²⁴ <http://www.silk-road.com/>

²⁵ The New Silk Road: Reality or Political Marketing?
<https://profit.bg/svetat/noviyat-pat-na-koprinata-realnost-ili-politicheski-marketing/>

²⁶ Chankov, G., The New Silk Road and the Black Sea region
<https://www.unwe.bg/alternativi/bg/journalissues/article/7755>

²⁷ Minister Angelkova participates in the 8th Meeting of the Ministers of Tourism from the Silk Road Program in Berlin
<http://www.tourism.government.bg/bg/kategorii/novini/ministur-angelkova-uchastva-v-berlin-v-8-ata-sreshta-na-ministrice-na-turizma-ot>

²⁸ Considering common travel packages along the "Western Silk Road"
<https://news.bg/tourism/mislim-za-obshti-turisticheski-paketi-po-zapadniya-pat-na-koprinata.html>



a) Common information

It presents the history of the route's creation and the organization that represents and manages it.

b) Sights

The sights included in the route are presented in a systematic way. The presentation is by country and by defined sub-thematic directions in the context of the main topic of the route. Tangible, intangible, cultural and historical sites and entire settlements of cultural and historical significance are included.

c) Tours

Various types of tours have been developed and presented on the basis of attractions included in different countries. Tours cover a wide range of attractions and sites along the cultural route. There are tours within one day and within the territory of one village, as well as tours lasting more than ten days, covering several villages in different countries. Individual and group tours are offered, as available guides on spot are indicated.

d) Useful information and news

The section includes information on stakeholders related to the cultural route, as well as newsletters for innovations in its management and implementation.

e) Mobile application

Cultural routes created and registered in recent years are also served by a developed for the needs of tourists' mobile application. For example, the cultural route The Routes of Reformation has an application (<https://reformationroutes.eu/app/>).

3.2.2. Presentation of the sights

In various registered Cultural Routes each of the included attractions and sites are presented with different amounts of information. In its most complete and comprehensive form, the presentation is made in a certain chronological order and consists of specific information as follows:

a) History of the attraction or site

The story of the establishment of the attraction is told. Emphasis is placed also on its contribution and importance to the topic of the route.

b) Map of the sight

A geographical map with exact location of the site is presented.

c) Address information for the sight

Information is provided for:

- Post address;
- Telephone;
- Internet site;
- Tourist Information Centre
- Profiles in Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and etc.);
- Tripadvisor rating;
- Social media sharing links (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, email).

d) Tourist service

Comprehensive information is provided about:

- Suggested duration of visit;
- Duration of guided tour;
- Entrance - with fee or without fee;
- Access for persons with disabilities;
- Infrastructure for Children;
- Catering;
- Visitor Center on site;
- Gift and book shop on site.

e) Opening hours

Information about the opening hours of the site during different days of the week and different seasons is provided.

f) Different types of guided tours

Information is provided on the availability of different types of guided tours and gallery talks, optional or obligatory; multilingual guides and talks, children guides and talks and others.

g) Thematic connection to the route

Indicates which thematic directions of the route correspond to the respective attraction or site.

h) Biography and history

Biographies of world-famous or nationally known historical and cultural figures related with the topic of the route are presented. Stories of interesting historical events related to the attraction and topic of the route are also presented.

i) Documents for downloading

The opportunity to download promotional materials (leaflets, brochures, films, etc.) is provided.

3.3. Institutional framework of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

All 38 registered Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe are represented and managed by established and legally registered associations and foundations in the form of non-profit and non-governmental organizations. Most of the associations are open to accepting new members. Some associations set eligibility criteria for new applicants. The criteria are grouped as main criteria, essential criteria and desirable criteria.

The founders and members of the organizations that manage the registered cultural routes are of different nature, both individuals or legal entities. Participants are state authorities (ministries), regional administrations, municipalities, museums, tourism companies, cultural figures, teachers and students.

Associations are supported primarily by membership fees and donations. Membership fees vary widely across organizations and depending on their legal status and size. It starts from 50 euros a year for individuals and reaches several thousand euros for large regional and municipal administrations.



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3.4. Conclusions for sustainable route classification of the SILCNET label

From the analysis of the Council of Europe's certified Cultural Routes it can be concluded that a systematization of the content of the cultural-historical route "Local culture along the Silk Road (SILC)" can be suggested, based on the example of Bulgaria and Varna region as it is shown in fig.1.

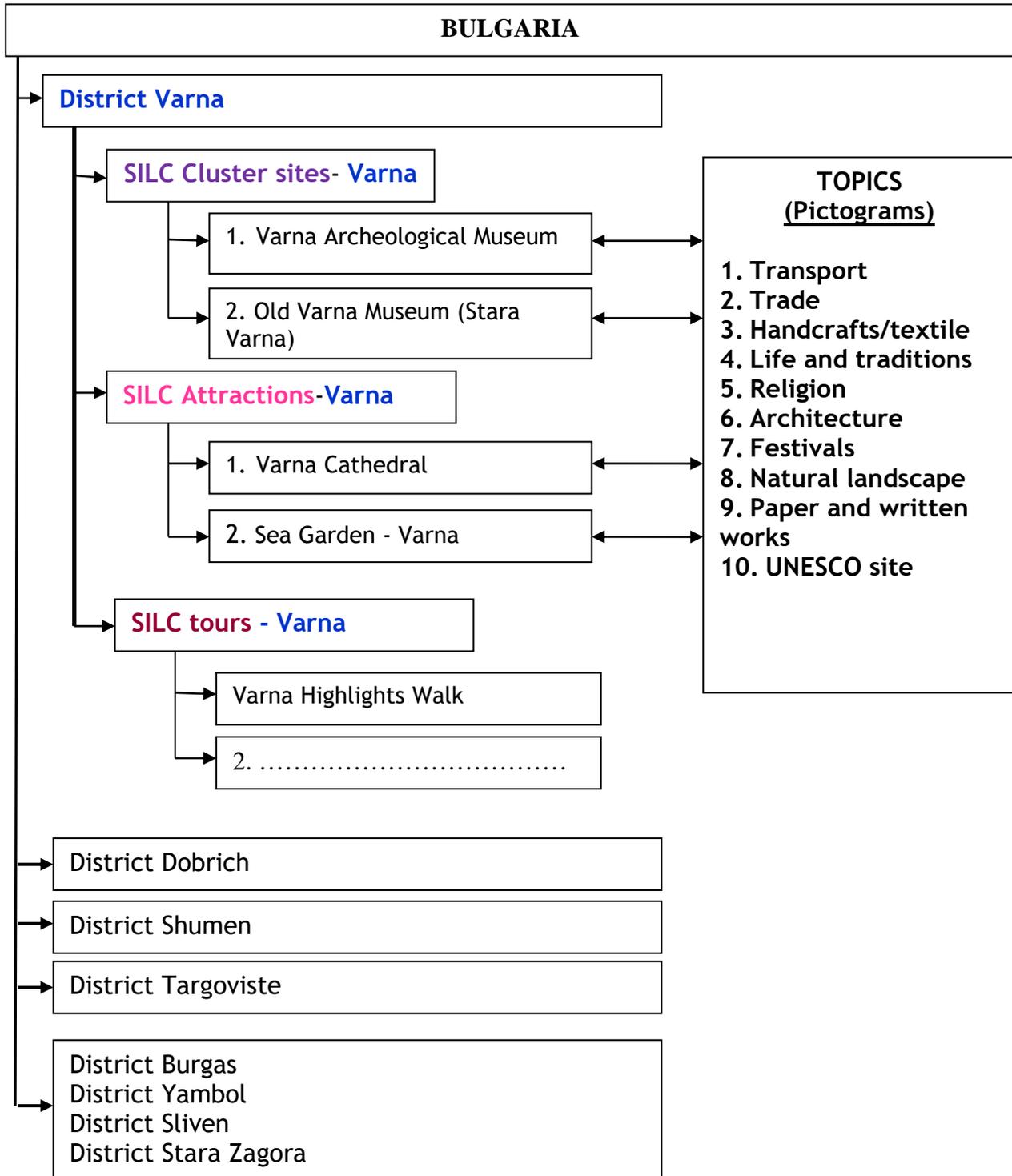
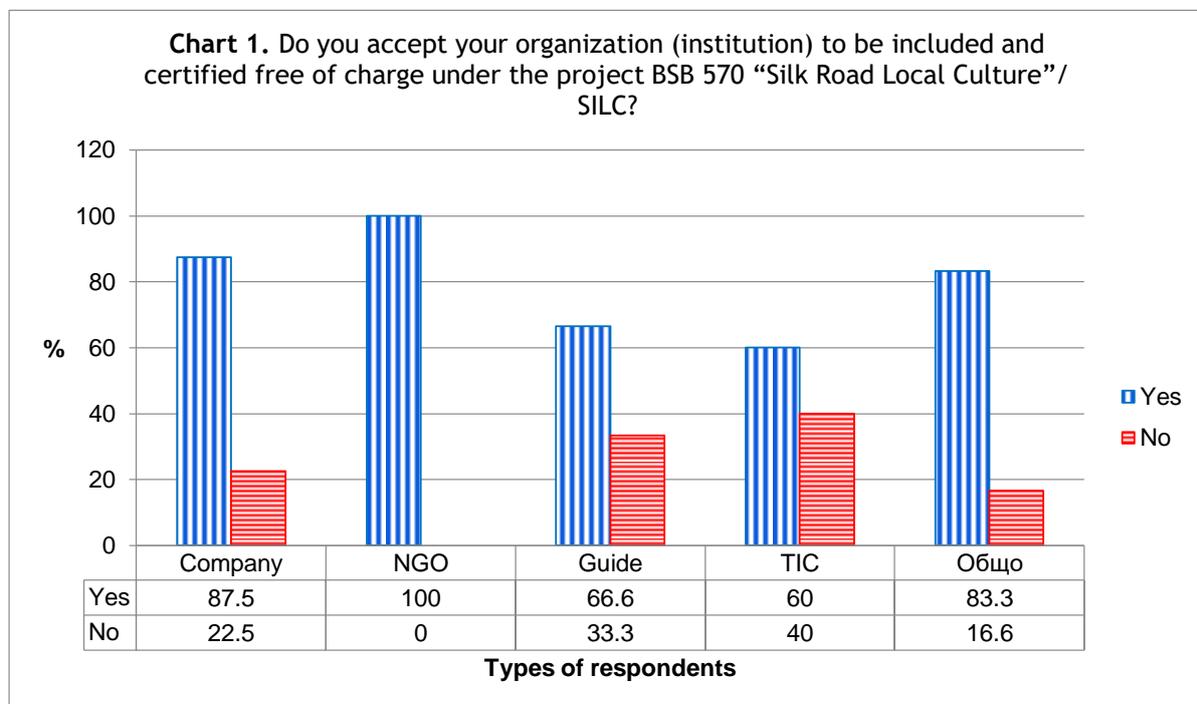


Fig 1. Exemplary systematization of the content of the cultural-historical route "Local culture along the Silk Road (SILC)"

Part 4. Stakeholder motivation and willingness to participate in the SILCNET label certification process

Conclusions on the motivation and willingness of stakeholders to participate in the SILCNET label certification process can be made on the basis of data from a survey conducted regarding the SILC project. As the survey continues, accumulated data between January and 31st March 2020 is used in this report.

As it can be seen from Chart 1, the dominant part of the respondents answered positively to the question: Do you accept your organization (institution) to be included and certified free of charge under the project BSB 570 “Silk Road Local Culture” / SILC?



Source: Data from own research for the SILC project

Intermediate data shows that in NUTS II North-Eastern Region (BG33) and South-Eastern Region (BG34) of Bulgaria, 87.5% of the surveyed representatives of tourism companies (hoteliers, tour operators, restaurateurs) express their willingness to participate in the BSB 570 certification process “Local culture along the Silk Road”. All of the interviewed representatives of NGOs express consent, as well as 66.6% of the surveyed guides and 60% of the representatives of the tourist information centers. Overall, 83.3% of all respondents indicated their willingness and consent to participate in the BSB 570 certification process “Local culture along the Silk Road”.



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Conclusion

The preliminary study on the implementation and sustainability of the SILCNET label draws the following conclusions:

First, there is a well-established system for the evaluation and certification of cultural tourist routes in Europe, developed and put into practice by the Council of Europe through its Executive Agency, the European Institute for Cultural Routes (EICR). The cultural and tourist value of a particular cultural route is enhanced and multiplied by its certification by the EICR and its inclusion in the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes network.

Second, according to the preliminary assessment, the nature and content of the BSB 570 "Local culture along the Silk Road" project and its implementation through the SILCNET certification label meet the certification requirements for its inclusion in the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes network.

Third, preliminary data from the consultation with stakeholders in NUTS II North-Eastern Region (BG33) and South-Eastern Region (BG34) of Bulgaria indicate a predominant tendency and willingness to participate in the SILCNET label certification process under BSB 570 "Local culture along the Silk Road" project.

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