

**Supporting the Promotion and Development of Transnational Thematic Tourism Products
Linked to Cultural and Creative Industries**

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Action plan for increasing competitiveness, service quality and successful marketing of the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route

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CONTENT

About the Route.....	3
Historical relevance of the Route on the European level	3
Common Standards along the Route.....	5
Route’s organizational and management structure	6
Route’s sub-destinations/Hubs.....	6
Product club in each hub	7
Network organization - philosophy of hub organization	8
Possible Extension of the Route	9
Marketing Mix.....	11
Product.....	11
Communication and promotion	12
Marketing channels	13
Price and prices transparency.....	14
Operative marketing plan - activity directions	14
Action plan table	18
Annex 1 RER-DWR GLOSSARY	21
Annex 2 HERITAGE SCAN	21
Annex 3 SIX KEYS TO HOSPITALITY.....	21

About the Route

The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route (RER&DWR) is listed among the 38 Cultural Routes, certified in 2015 (and re-certified in 2019) by the European Institute of Cultural Routes under the auspices of the Council of Europe. From the very beginning, the Route was created to be appeal to travelers curious to find and experience something unexpected in relatively less known areas of the Danube Region (Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria). Linking the two themes from different aspects of cultural life, archeology and wine, which have common points in the Roman era, has since been supported by this key motive - **a call to travel**.

The progress of the Route and its consistent marketing positioning depend on how much the curiosity of visitors will evoke and encourage their desire to travel and enjoy a unique cultural and gastronomic experience focused on the Roman legacy of the Empire during the 2nd to 4th centuries of the new era.

Therefore, **the operational framework of the Route** is designed to achieve following objectives:

1. Providing governing framework to the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route.
2. Developing and promoting of cultural tourism in the Danube Region, equally putting into perspective common regional and European heritage as well as unique national identity of each country involved and demonstrating how the heritage of the countries included in the Route contributes to a shared European cultural heritage.
3. Promoting of standards of tourism offer along the Route and opening access to the heritage by increasing quality of presentation of the cultural heritage in the region.
4. Identifying and supporting national and international, horizontal and vertical networking of tourism and heritage stakeholders and integrating local stakeholders/tourism service providers in the Route's supply chain, thus improving visitors' management along the Route.
5. Promoting the role of cultural tourism as a factor for sustainable economic development, European citizenship and intercultural dialogue.

The Danube Competence Center has a leading role in the development of this operational framework, with very active participation and initiative from all members and supported with series of well integrated projects funded by EU and local authorities.

Historical relevance of the Route on the European level

The Roman Emperors Route and Danube Wine Route are a series of archaeological sites and vineyards that tell the story of the expansion and defense of the Roman Empire on its northern Danube frontier. The frontier hinterlands, stretching to the Adriatic Sea, are also part of this story. From the second to the fourth centuries the emperors personally commanded the armies of Rome. Principle players in the history include well known rulers from Trajan who added Dacia (modern Romania) to the Empire and

Constantine, born in the Balkans, who made Christianity the legal religion of the Empire and changed the course of European history. Each archaeological site along the Route presents a unique story of the Roman emperors' strategy in bringing peace and prosperity to this unsettled region and how the soldiers interacted with the local peoples in their daily lives. The Roman presence in the Danube region in manifested in the actual remains of their cities and soldiers' outposts which archaeologists have brought back to life today.

The Danube and Adriatic axes of the Route have been extended to include an Illyricum Track which connects which connects the sea coast with the Danube interior. Illyricum is a geographical term that was used by the Romans in the late first century BC and early first century AD to describe the new Balkan territory which they annexed into the Roman Empire. It included the lands which extended from the western boundary of modern Greece to the Alps on the west and from the Danube River on the north to the Adriatic Sea.

Two of the best known rulers of the Empire, Julius Caesar and the first Emperor Augustus are associated with the annexation of Illyricum. The Emperor Augustus left behind in his memoirs the record of this conquest, "I advanced the boundaries of Illyricum to the banks of the Danube."

Later the territory was divided into the provinces of Dalmatia, Pannonia, and Moesia adjacent to the province of Macedonia. Towards the end of the Empire, in the 4th century, Illyricum again gains currency as an administrative term, first in the reorganization of the provinces under the Emperor Diocletian and later as the Prefecture of Illyricum under the Emperor Constantine the Great. Because they were both born in this area, usually to military families, Diocletian and Constantine along with some of their predecessors are known as "the Illyrian emperors".

Today the term Illyricum is used to designate the modern countries of the West Balkan Region

It is commonly understood that multiple aspects of the political, social, military and economic systems represented by the Roman Empire reach deep into the history of today's Europe. The Roman emperors, like modern European governments, had to deal with ethnic and religious diversity, migrations and regulation of borders and the maintenance of law and order.

The Roman Empire and the actions of the emperors who directed it laid the foundations of urbanism, administrative structure and law for the medieval and modern European societies which followed. The Roman Empire promoted religious toleration and guided retention of ethnic identity along with a universal rule of law and rights of citizenship. Later European culture witnessed the recurring Roman influences on artistic traditions, town planning and architecture.

The Renaissance in fact can be characterized as a return to some of the cultural norms established by the Roman Empire in the Route theme regions and Western Europe.

The Roman Emperors were the leaders and guardians of a complex political structure which was built on the rule of law and limited autonomy in self-governing colonies and municipalities. The rule of law, after the Emperor Caracalla's decree of 212, included universal Roman citizenship throughout the Empire.

After the decision of the Illyrian emperors Constantine and Licinius in 313, religious tolerance was guaranteed by law. This established Christianity as the leading religion in the Empire which was to form a major underpinning for medieval and later European culture. The political effect of Christianity on human rights also cannot be ignored. The “new” religion advocated respect for individuals of both genders, regardless of social status.

Common Standards along the Route

The success of cultural heritage as a tourist attraction depends on a number of things. In the attachment is the Heritage scan, an instrument to check (and improve) the tourist potential of cultural heritage sites. This heritage scan should be developed by each destination (hub) on the RER&DWR and approved by Scientific Committee. This scan will be one of important coordinating tools on the Route. The following are important recommendations on how to develop common standards based on this heritage scan:

- **Hospitality should be on top of the list!** Make sure tourists feel welcome, give them an experience. Provide the information (in English/German etc.!) they need to discover your site and the surroundings. A course ‘Host of the Landscape’ is a very useful tool for all service providers within the hub. See annexes ‘Six keys to hospitality’ and ‘Host of the Landscape’.
- **RER&DWR is a great storyline: use it to inspire people** to step off the beaten track. See <https://www.nbtc.nl/en/homepage/collaboration/storylines.htm>. Because the distances between the POI’s¹ can be big, it is essential to create hubs (see below). Hubs need to provide a cluster of services and experiences for the tourists’ needs: museums, tourist attractions, restaurants/good food, places to stay for the night (hotels, camping sites etc.), shops for souvenirs, parking, etc.
- **Keep good relations with local government officials.** Show them your efforts, successes and international appreciation. It is important to make them see that culture and landscape has historical, social and economic value.
- **Address upcoming target groups, like tourists travelling in motorhomes.** Motorhome holidays are increasingly popular in Europe. There are over two million motorhomes registered in Europe, and that number is growing rapidly. The motorhome-owner has freedom of paramount importance and is always on holiday then travelling. The holiday feeling translates to activities, including cycling, walking, visiting shops, museums, restaurants and attractions. The average motorhome tourist is 62 years old and willing to spend a substantial amount of money: around 55 to 60 Euros per day, per motorhome (2 people). More info on <https://www.campercontact.com/en>.
- **Organize an Instameet/Instawalk** (there are businesses who can organize it for you!) An Instameet/Instawalk is a meeting and/or walk for participants with a passion for photography and

¹ POI –Point of Interest

Instagram and other social media. You often go to places where you would otherwise not (be allowed to) come. Many of these meetings are announced on Instagram. The only thing that is required of the participants is to share (part of) the photos taken during or afterwards on social media with the hashtags # specified in the invitation. This is to easily find the photos. A great way to gain low cost publicity and go viral! Example of a Dutch Instameet company: <https://www.moniqueanrochte.nl/instameetholland>.

- **Become photo-friendly!** It is obvious: the modern tourist is visually focused. Brochures with endless texts don't seduce tourists to come and visit, but images do! So:
 - Create a selfie zone;
 - Make a selfie frame with logo/image of REDWR;
 - Try to persuade tourists to post tweets, Instagram photo's etc. with your hashtag;
 - Try to persuade members of the Route to place logo and sign of RER&DWR on all their material and digital publications and signage.

It is important to find and learn from successful destinations (benchmarks) – learn from them and share their and your experience with the other stakeholders on RER&DWR. Trying to get cultural heritage in the heads and the hearts of people takes a lot of time and patience. Interesting example of a small low-budget foundation that is promoting the Roman Limes in the Netherlands is RomansNOW (RomeinenNU). See <https://www.romeinen.nu/romeinenweek> (website in Dutch). They organize a National Roman's week every year, generating a lot of publicity for Roman cultural heritage in the Netherlands.

Route's organizational and management structure

Route's sub-destinations/Hubs

The Route's sub-destination/Hub is a new strategic approach, based on the idea that Collaboration, Collaborative Promotion and Development are three pillars of future Route growth and development.

Hub is a starting / exit points on the Route, i.e. is accessible by different transport means, with fair accommodation offer and different "good to see" attractions beside Roman heritage. Hubs on the Route are accessible by public transport and usually connected by marked cycling routes.

Therefore a Hub is an entity that has enough resources to provide a rich, diverse and geographically rounded tourist offer to attract and retain tourists. A Hub is typically geographically determined, as tourists prefer to have a concentration of attractions that makes consumption easy and reduces to a minimum the time spent on travelling between attractions within the same hub. There is no formal rule regarding which entity (municipality, district or region) the Hub should include or overlap with. In each case, a Tourism Hub establishes itself as an informal organization and appoints its own representatives in the Route management structure. What drives the size, shape and location of the Hub is the list of the

attractions that might be gathered together to create an interesting story and an integrated offer for tourists. The offer can be linked to nature, culture, heritage, sport, food etc. The common ground of all Hubs is the Danube and Roman heritage as a tourism attraction.

The list of hubs along RER&DWR is as follows:

1. Pecs, Hungary
2. Pula (Croatia)
3. Andautonia, near Zagreb, Croatia
4. Sisak, Croatia
5. Sirmium, Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia
6. Felix Romuliana, Zaječar, Serbia
7. Timacum Minus, Knjaževac, Serbia
8. Trainas Bridge and table, Kladovo, Serbia and Drobeta Turnu Severin, Romania
9. Belogradchik, Bulgaria
10. Sexaginta Prista Ruse with Camp Novae, Svishtov, Bulgaria
11. Alba Iulia with Samizegetusa, Romania
12. Histria, Constanta, Romania

The Wine regions included in the RER&DWR are as follows:

1. Baranya, Hungary
2. Baranja, Croatia
3. Ilok, Croatia
4. Fruška Gora, Serbia
5. Morava, Serbia
6. Negotin, Serbia
7. North-East and Black Sea, Bulgaria
8. North-Central, Bulgaria
9. Multenia and Oltenia Hills, Romania
10. Dobrogea Hills, Romania

Product club in each hub

Each hub gathers small number of stakeholders. Usually, in this product club there is representative of archaeological site and/or local museum that is taking care of Roman heritage. In the wine hubs, that place should fill a representative of local winery or local association of wineries, if there is number of those actors. It is also usual that in this hub representative of local tourism organization takes an active part. The other usual stakeholders are owners of local businesses: hotels and other accommodation, vineries, restaurants, transport services and very often, local educational institutions.

Product club is driving engine of the hub: they are creating its own tourist products and services; they are harmonizing their offer and motivating other service providers to join and to adjust. Product club is natural cluster of interrelated businesses and local initiatives. Their role is to promote their hub through

DCC network and the other channels of communication. Their role is also to coordinate effort on joined projects and to recruit new members of product club. Consequently, product club is in charge to collect individual contributions and pay membership fee to DCC.

Sustainability: DCC product club is organizational part of Danube Competence Center, according to the organizational chart of this non-governmental organization. DCC product club serves as the platform for communication and coordination of the RER&DWR members from different sub-destinations/hubs and is a cooperation framework for the local (hub based) product clubs.

Network organization - philosophy of hub organization

The idea behind this organizational approach is networked organization. Networked organization is based on the principles that fit to existing RER&DWR, appeared to be acceptable to stakeholders so far and should be cultivated in the future. These principles are:

1. **Product clubs inside hubs are supposed to emerge naturally.** These stakeholders live in relatively small community (geographical area) and do have common goal: to present attractiveness of their hub (destination). In that sense, they rely on Roman cultural heritage, which also makes their contact with other hubs to be reasonable.
2. **Path length in their communication is relatively short.** Information within hub can flow instantly. Also, information among DCC members (hubs) also flows relatively efficiently with intention to improve it, but anyway, much faster than in other touristic activities.
3. **This is relatively small group of specialized tourism providers** within the huge travel industry world, so they instantly understand each other.
4. **Network organization applies both to the**
 - Product clubs within the hubs (local product clubs), and
 - DCC product club which as a networking framework of all hubs along the Route.

DCC product club, as the association of hubs along the RER&DWR, is more platform than organizational structure. This organizational part of DCC is managed by a manager in charge for RER&DWR, as it is structured from the 2014, during the first certification process of the Route.

DCC Product Club is open to legal entities under private or public law (companies, associations, umbrella organizations, public institutions, ministries, regional and local authorities), entrepreneurs and other Danube stakeholders.

The governing bodies of RER&DWR (i.e. DCC Product Club's) are:

- Scientific Committee and
- Route Manager.

The Scientific Committee is the interdisciplinary advisory body consisted of the individuals with professional reputation and strong will to participate in the development of the RER&DWR. The

Scientific Committee works in two parallel but interconnected plenums: Archeology and Tourism This body is mandatory according the rules of the Council of Europe that certifies European cultural routes.

RER&DWR Route Manager is a professional, delegated by the DCC, playing the role of enabler and service provider to the members much more than a role of manager. Leaders in different areas may and should emerge from different hubs, which is happening and is welcome by other members. The Route Manager is the executive officer of DCC appointed among the employees of the DCC. The Manager coordinates all activities of the RER&DWR, including legal compliance, development and preparation of the business plan, liaison with Board of Directors and with the Scientific Committee, performs basic managerial and administrative tasks, keeps relations with stakeholders and particularly with the Council of Europe.

Possible Extension of the Route

The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route (RER&DWR), certified in 2015 (and re-certified in 2019) from the very beginning was created to follow the UNWTO approach to the cultural tourism, being defined as “learning, discovering and experiencing tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products”. This is Route for the travelers who are curious to find and experience something unexpected in a relatively less known region of the Balkan area (Croatia, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria).

Selection criteria in the process of joining new hubs have been established during the development of the RER&DWR to date, and those criteria will be valid in the coming period:

- **Linking the places which tell the story of the Roman Empire** in the Danube region and the emperors who governed it. This part of the empire, which the Romans originally called Illyricum, stretched from the Adriatic Sea to its northern border on the Danube.
- **Linking the places that became important in a period after AD 107**, when Emperor Trajan completed conquest of Dacia and when the security of the Roman frontier was maintained by the active presence of the Roman army which required the personal leadership of the Roman emperors. These circumstances led to more frequent and longer visits of the emperors. The physical witnesses of their involvement in Danube affairs are the archaeological sites which testify still today to the crucial significance of this region in the defense of the Empire.
- **Linking the two themes** from different aspects of social life and culture, i.e. **archeology and wine**. Both pillars are based on the same foundation and that is the specific Roman era. Furthermore, **combination of the two appeals, culture and wine, supports the key motive of ideal tourist of this Route- a call to travel**. Wine culture, comprising wine tasting, food tasting, learning the history of grape, wine and interrelated social and economic activities, attracts rising number of modern tourist nomads, interested in learning via experience.

- **Linking the places ready to provide experience** but also places where environment can be smoothly interrelated with the heritage site in order to provide even better experience. Tourism is seen as the vehicle to support conservation and interpretation of the monuments as well as to improve host communities. However, the Route provides guarantee to visitors the basic comfort, access and tourism offer.

Following the principles explained, the first logical extension of the existing RER&DWR would be the other arm along the Adriatic Sea, from existing point in Croatia, further to Herzegovina (BiH), Montenegro, Albania and after that to Macedonia. This arm is connecting places dating from Diocletian till the Byzantine era, falling into the same time frame as the Danube arm sites. In that way, one historical period would be completed within compact geographical scope. Some further extensions would be desirable in the future, particularly if we have Greece (Thessaloniki) on our mind, as the important administrative center of Romans in that period of time.

Also, this trace follows very exciting wine route. The Danube flow is rich in famous vineyards and their existence has generated the idea of connecting the route of Roman conquerors, famous emperors who simultaneously spread the wine culture in the newly conquered areas. One should, however, have on mind that Dalmatia, Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia are also, already famous wine regions. Albania should join this group, which can be expected, looking at geographical position of the country. Archeological sites itself, sometimes, are very close to modern vineyards and/or vineries, emphasizing that way the wine aspect of the Route. It happens sometimes that vineries or wines directly correspond to the roman heritage. Winery Stobi directly establishes a connection with the Roman heritage using a fragment of the famed local Roman mosaic (peacock) as its trademark

Well-developed tourism offer is also trademark of these regions, being it on the seaside, in protected natural areas ready to receive great number of visitors or other cultural heritage sites from different historical ages. Roman sites in this area are, mostly, ready to receive visitors. Some of them need to develop further their organizational scheme or to recruit new human resources, but all of them already handle significant number of visitors. Some of those places (like Stobi, in Macedonia) has more resources than they utilize them, badly asking for marketing support and better communication with the tourist market. All of the places that should be included in new arm of RER&DWR, must be ready to receive visitors, provide information and help in navigation and activity planning.

The extension of the Route to the western part of Illyrian region follows the basic principle that visitor can count on visiting representative archeological sites from the target period of the Roman Empire, **which allow interpretation and understanding of the way in which the inhabitants lived at that time.** These are not necessarily the most important monuments according to the criteria of archeology in a given region. What is, however, very important from the point of the Route, is that they need to have archaeological content to provide an understanding of the Roman context to the average tourists about how the users of these facilities lived, worked and entertained.

Also, it is always taken into account that the sites are accessible, that is, they are traffic-connected but also accessible on the site for people with special needs. New locations are expected to offer additional

tourist activities and already attract a certain number of tourists, thereby increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the Route.

The second logical extension of the existing RER&DWR would be towards the Upper Danube Region.

This extension will follow the “opposite” direction than how the Romanization happened in the ancient times, i.e. east-west direction. By extending the Route of the already established and recognizable cultural route along the “missing” Danube countries, the Region will have better opportunity for valorization of its Roman archaeological heritage.

Marketing Mix

In the framework of the Route growth a range of marketing activities to enhance the product development and promotion of “The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route” have already been initiated (e.g. presentation of the Route at consumer fair CMT Stuttgart, release of B2B newsletters, local product clubs, implementation of two fam trips for European tour operators). The success of these measures has shown that these should be continued and deepened to further establish the Route as a long-lasting competitive tourism product.

However, the implemented FAM trips for European tour operators have revealed some gaps and needs to further strengthen the marketing of “The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route”. They can be summarized as follows:

Product

In the process of product development, some activities are necessary, in order to overcome the problem of fragmentation: Points of interests (POIs) along the Route are partially far away from each other, which makes it more difficult to develop the whole Route as one product. Development of each hub needs to make hub interesting enough but also to raise curiosity of the visitors in other hubs to wish to come and experience it. In this product development, some recommendations are:

- **Product development opportunities along the Route are still unexploited** in terms of a broader thematic orientation with additional points of interest (besides the Roman heritage sites and wine regions, e.g. nature activities and experiences, encounters with people, local gastronomy, interaction with local culture, etc.) as well as adding more intangible experiences and authentic/unique sites
- **The potential of linkages with already existing infrastructure/ tourism products is not yet sufficiently used.** There is need to build capacity of local people to attract and handle visitors in a right way. Also, need for improved marketing is obvious.
- **An overall thematic visitor experience of the Route is missing** (so far, visitor experience is rather separately for each location). This offer great opportunity for synergy but also requires cooperation

and the willingness of stakeholders to work together and for the benefit of their locality and other localities along the Route.

- **Mostly lack of (innovative) interactive/ “hands-on” experiences at some locations.** Again, capacity building and raising of the creativity and professional skills, along with small investments in digital technology (VR, mobile Apps, touch screens, etc.) can make a difference.

Communication and promotion

Intensification of internal and external promotion of the Route in general is needed (in international markets among potential visitors, among international tour operators and incoming agencies). The global tourism is facing changing patterns on what triggers (modern) tourists to decide on where and how to travel. In last several years one can witness the change in visitors’ behavior (existing analyses and surveys also confirm this) where decision on where to travel is made primarily via social networks through peer evaluation of destination. In other words, new and emerging “sharing economy” brought a social innovation where the experience of someone who already travelled somewhere and their posts have more decisive role than ‘staged’ photography and ‘pre-defined’ tourism packages. Consequently, the external promotion should equally target individual travelers along with travel organizers.

In some cases, promotion is necessary to further support international business relationships (there is strong interest in the region and the Route) and to improve the cooperation between incoming agencies and local partners as well as the local product development. It is possible to distinguish three consecutive stages of the promotion role, in general:

1. **Awareness raising** – building presence of the destination (route) in public opinion, preparing the field for later “triggering” the decision to visit;
2. **Preference development** – image building stage in which destination (route) try to be better positioned in visitors’ mind so that gain advantage in the moment of choice making;
3. **Selling** – “Call for action” when it is time to make choice and visit one destination (route).

Although this separation of stages seems logical in theory, in real life, competitors are usually in a position to perform all three roles of promotion in the same time. However, when planning business activities, it is important to allocate resources and efforts as more focused as possible. In this period of RER&DWR development, obviously focus must be on the **awareness raising** goals and targets. However, certain preference development and selling activities are necessary, particularly “low budget” activities as it will be presented later on.

There are several key directions in the process of the further communication development:

- Overcome lack of consistent and collaborative marketing activities among local partners to increase the overall visibility of the Route and to better address visitors
- Improve limited knowledge about the Route among local partners in order to provide more background information for visitors

- Overcome lack of storytelling among some guides and local partners for an improved visitor experience (so far, they provide facts to visitors rather than “stories”)
- Invest an effort to complete partially insufficient information and promotion material for visitors at some locations

Marketing channels

It is not enough to prepare attractive and appealing offer to the visitors and to present it in an attractive way. Also it is important to prepare “consumable” package and to offer it so that visitors can see it, can discuss about it comparing this offer with some other, and finally that they can buy it. In other words, it is important to make offer accessible to consumers (visitors). Some directions of activities are:

- **Plan consistent selling activities towards tour operators** so to increase visits of organized groups. In current conditions, visits still vary across the Route mainly depending on individual tour-operator recognition of the Route potential or on the other touristic products (e.g. cruising) where trip organizers seek to make their existing offer more attractive. Pre-packed tours offered to tour operators will encourage better selling at competitive prices;
- **Prepare and run of internet selling activities** – In the digital age, it is absolutely essential for the Route to have an online presence. Individual tourists, travel organizers, partners, stakeholders and the wider external community are all expecting to find the relevant information online. Being online with information are oriented toward communication only is not enough anymore. Explicit „call for action” is a must.

Web platform Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route – RER-DWR web platform is design to offer modern, user friendly and innovative approach to a Route’s promotion and awareness rising (following all modern UX rules). The primary target group of the web are young individuals and couples aging from 20 – 45 years old, educated (students or graduated from universities), with curious minds and adventure spirit, interested in European (Roman) history and in extending their life experiences, but also interested in leisure, nature and contemporary traditions. Secondary group are future tourist aging now 17-18 years and in 5 years will be students and ready to explore the world/Europe. Therefore, the communication language of the web is based on videos, photos and pictograms Accent is placed on video narratives that in an interesting and accessible way convince the user what they can expect if they choose to travel along the Route.

Web-based data base RER-DWR Tourism Inventory and CRM – RER-DWR Tourism Inventory is an interactive platform for the compilation and presentation of existing tourism offers along the Route. This web-based database is targeting interested tour operators, tourist agencies and other travel organizers presenting available capacities at any given Route’s sub-destination, as well as the connectivity possibilities between them. The Inventory is trying to raise interest among targeted audience to consider the Route as destination to visit and consequently help them create offers and packages with less effort and in a less time consuming fashion.

FB & Instagram profiles – Social media is one of the simplest, yet most effective ways to attract potential tourists and interested travel organizers and to create relationships with them.

Price and prices transparency

Pricing policy does not exist as the uniform standard on the Route. It is not expected that in short time standard tariffs can be achieved. However, some activities can be initiated with the aim of emitting a unique image of the route:

- **Lack of information about offered prices and products** so that visitors and tour-operators have difficulties to find either services or price for them. As a result, many individuals and professionals postpone or avoid visit to the regions and destinations on RER&DWR;
- **Lack of competition among service providers** since there is information asymmetry that obstructs price comparison and price competition.

Operative marketing plan - activity directions

Based on these observations the following marketing activities are recommended. These aim to improve the overall attractiveness and competitiveness of the Route, to increase the awareness about the Route on international markets, but also to further advance and consolidate local development processes. These activities are presented in the form of short directives “to be done ...”.

1. Fostering local product development	
Empowering local stakeholders to develop local/ regional tourism product modules considering:	
<i>Short description of proposed action</i>	<i>Illustrative example of the proposed action</i>
Development of competitive local/ regional product clusters	✓ Encourage local partners to organize themselves, to cooperate more intensively and work more on product development at a local basis.
Incorporating supplementary points of interest besides the Roman heritage sites and wine regions.	✓ Other historical as well as cultural and natural sites and activities. ✓ Linking the sites of the Route with EURO VELO 6. Linking them with cruise tourism could also be an option.
Intangible experiences	✓ Stories of local life, encounters with local inhabitants. “Hands-on” experiences, interactive and innovative site interpretations.
Potentials for individual travellers: e.g. camping tourists, self-drive, public transportation	✓ Identification of clusters with high tourism potential (e.g. locations with good transport connections, high-quality/ extraordinary points of interests, accumulation of several points of interest close to each other, proactive and motivated stakeholders).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Inventory of touristic facilities in each cluster, such as accommodations, restaurants, bicycle rentals, transport/ connections, other tourism service providers.
Authentic and unique sites (especially pointing out USPs of locations and for each country).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Conduction of inventories of sites and experiences (historical, natural and cultural sites, encounters with local inhabitants, local products etc.) by local partners. ✓Implementation of more local product clubs for relevant stakeholders (tourism and non-tourism service providers) to improve, link and develop new products based on the inventories.
Share best-practice examples of interactive and innovative site interpretations to encourage localities to reinterpret their offer in a more experience-oriented manner (also with digital solutions) and to develop “hands-on” experiences (workshops, interactions with local people).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Facilitation of regular network and knowledge exchange events to further stimulate cooperation between different stakeholders and to improve the further product development of the Route. ✓Study visits for local partners (learning from examples/ existing routes in other countries).

2. Improvement of communication and promotion

Develop a brand strategy to define the identity of the Route and provide it to all partners (what is the brand essence of the Route?). Develop a “partner label” for promotion purposes (introducing minimum quality standards to be met by collaborating local partners for gaining the label; they can use it to advertise their offer and to show the affiliation to the Route better to tourists).

Recommend partners to link the official webpage <http://romanemperorsroute.org/>

Strengthen the communication skills of local stakeholders and the promotion of the Route in general as well as advancement of the experiential value of the Route considering:

<i>Short description of proposed action</i>	<i>Illustrative example of the proposed action</i>
Implementation of consistent and collaborative promotion activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Involve, besides of local partners, all tourist organizations at local and regional level for the collaborative and consistent promotion of the Route. ✓Unified signposting at the different localities and along the Route. ✓Exposure on suitable blogs, international tourism portals, websites etc. Linking to existing tourism portals. ✓Special promotion actions with selected media and tour operators, for example special ‘readers offers’, prize games, etc.
Provision of suitable promotion and information material for visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Elaborate a communication manual for partners with the aim to enable them to provide visitors with minimum background information about the Route (How to

	<p>communicate the Route to my customers?).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Continue to present the Route at relevant European tourism consumer fairs, e.g. CMT Stuttgart. ✓Continue to promote the Route also to visitors on social media, e.g. identify and promote “Instagrammable Spots”. ✓Product promotion on digital media to professional and individual visitors accompanied with call for action (selling proposals).
Improvement of knowledge and information transfer among all involved stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Advise partners to use the marketing logo on promotion/ information material (online and print). ✓Propose partners to have English promotion/ information material (online and print). ✓Advise partners to establish tourist information boards about the Route at central points, e.g. at Roman heritage sites, tourist information offices (same design etc.). ✓Provide social media trainings for local partners to support professional self-marketing aiming at to attract more individual visitors for the Route. ✓Provision of trainings and/ or information material regarding “The Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route” for local stakeholders to strengthen their knowledge about the local/ regional Roman heritage and wine culture, the corresponding touristic offer and the entire Route. ✓Implementation of story-telling trainings for local stakeholders (guides, employees at tourist information offices, restaurants and accommodations etc.) to advance their competence of knowledge transfer in a more appealing way (How can I communicate the Route/ my offer in an experience-oriented way?). ✓Provide trainings for local partners to empower professional and long-term establishment of contacts with tour operators.
Linkage of visitor experiences along the Route.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Applying creative and innovative story-telling to provide information about the locations/ the Route.
B2B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Identify priority markets and niche markets and products. Identify suitable partner

	<p>incoming agencies along the Route.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Facilitate B2B networking/ matchmaking between international tour operators and incoming agencies, e.g. at trade fairs, during fam trips etc., but also between local partners and incoming agencies. ✓Provide a sales guide for international tour operators with maps, text blocks, photos, support information for distribution, contact information). ✓Continue to release regular newsletters with interesting news about new tourism products, and other interesting news about the Route. ✓Packaging products and services for the tour operators and preparation of components of the package so that tour operators can easily pick them and make their own package. ✓Product promotion followed by selling proposal among incoming agencies and international tour operators.
Improved marketing channels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Creative workshops with experts organized in order to prepare new attractive tourist packages on the Route, based on two proposed packages for “upper” and “lower” part of itinerary. ✓Creative workshops with experts organized in order to generate components of the itinerary to be offered to visitors (individual and professional) so that they can plan own travel agenda. ✓Joined selling visits to the fairs, professional meetings and other events where tour operators are available. ✓Joined web selling activity.

Improvement of price transparency	
Adoption of “Standard Selling Policy” that will enable to different members of the Route to sell for predetermined percent services of the other members of the Route considering:	
<i>Short description of proposed action</i>	<i>Illustrative example of the proposed action</i>
Standardization of prices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓Standard pricing structure of all members, publishing retail price and price for tour operators. ✓Standard pricing currency, publishing prices in local currency and EUR so that it can be easily included in international itinerary.
Making prices public and transparent to all	✓Public highlighting of unit prices and prices for

interested parties.	service packages. ✓ Adopting standard discounts, rebates and other price allowances as a part of “Standard Selling Policy”.
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Action plan table

The activities of the RER&DWR network (DCC Product Club) are derived from the above presented analysis and suggestions how to improve working process in different areas. Activities were discussed on the meeting at Pecz. Each activity should have same components defined:

- a) who is in charge, i.e. **who** is responsible person or institution for planning activities, taking care while running activity and report on the activities realized;
- b) **when**, i.e. what is time-frame of the activity to start, to finish or at least how long it will take;
- c) **how much** certain activity will cost, either in money or in kind activities that can be performed by members or donors;
- d) **why** activity is performed and what result (outcome) should arise from that activity.

Activities that stem from former text will be listed, sometimes as single task and sometime as a group of tasks that somebody in charge need to rank and get the first thing to do out of crowd. In Table, activities are presented in shorter form sometimes, while full text and explanation can be found in text. These activities in next period shall be as follows:

Table 1. ACTION PLAN TABLE

The activity list is based on priorities identified during project workshop in Pécs, September 2019. It is also based on the premise that some activities can be implemented without additional financing (A) and that for some additional project funding is needed (F).

Activity or group of activities	Responsible	Time frame	Budget	Output	Type
1. Fostering local product development: Encourage local	<u>Project</u>	By the	20.000	1. Toolkit – how to develop local product,	A

partners to cooperate. Identify clusters with high tourism potential. Share best-practice examples. Facilitation of regular network and knowledge exchange events.	<u>Coordinator</u>	end of 2020	EUR	relationships with visitors, relationships with other hubs, etc. 2. Inventories of sites, touristic facilities and experiences. 3. Study visits for local partners.	
2. Improvement of communication and promotion: Develop a brand strategy to define the identity of the Route and provide it to all partners (what is the brand essence of the Route?) targeting local partners: Involve, besides of local partner, local tourist organizations.	<u>Project Coordinator</u> <u>Project Partners</u> <u>Consultants</u>	By the end of 2020	25.000 EUR	1. International tourism fairs. 2. Better management of social media. 3. Brand strategy. 4. Communication manual for partners	A
3. Develop standards for Info center – Set of standards, discussed and adopted. Visual standards for Info center. Raise awareness of local decision makers on cultural heritage.	<u>Project coordinator</u> <u>Consultants</u>	By the end of 2020	25-30 Working days	1. Web Toolkit & Manual for officers Info center. 2. Networking workshops. 3. Uniform itineraries for different visitor's segments (what to see in 15 min; 30 min; 60 min).	F
4. Extending the RER&DWR – forming new Illyricum arm; Recruit new members from Upper Danube; Publish new volume of RER for you;	<u>Project coordinator</u> <u>Scientific committee</u>	Q2 2020	3.000 EUR	1. New profile of the trail at the RER DWR website. 2. Creation of a new pocket guide.	A/F
5. Operational and management (legal and financial) issues related to the functioning of the Route: General assembly conferences; Scientific committee meetings; Project development; DCC services.	<u>Project coordinator</u> <u>Scientific committee</u>	GA – 2 annually ScMee- annually ProjectD – DCC service - permanent	12000 EUR	1. DCC documents 2. Action plan 3. Progress report 4. Project proposals 5. General Assembly of the Route	F
6. Improving marketing channels: Creative workshops to prepare new attractive tourist packages and itineraries.	<u>Project coordinator</u> <u>Project partners</u>	By the end of 2020	1.000 EUR 15 working days	1. New web portal 2. RER-DWR Tourism inventory 3. FB and Instagram	A/F
7. Improving pricing transparency: Standard pricing currency. Public highlighting of unit prices and prices for service packages. Adopting standard discounts, rebates and	<u>Scientific Committee</u>	By the end of 2021		Standard pricing structure.	A

other price allowances					
8. Education and training courses devoted to specific topics in respect to the Route: Trainings; Exchange of members; Internships – exchange of scholars.	<u>Project coordinator</u>	By the end of 2022	15.000 EUR	1. Organisation of trainings 2. Organisation of members / students exchange	F
9. Research and development: Data inventory – collection and maintenance of data base; Dissemination of data and produced information; Publishing activities	Scientific committee	By the end of 2022	15 working days per year	Book on the Route extension	A
10. Improvement of communication and promotion - <u>targeting individual tourists:</u> Advise partners to use the marketing logo on promotion/information material (online and print). Propose partners to have English material. Recommend partners to link the official webpage. Advise partners to establish tourist information boards about the Route. Exposure on suitable blogs and portals.	<u>Project Coordinator</u> <u>Project partners</u>	By the end of 2022	50.000 EUR	1. Unified signposting. 2. “Partner label” for promotion purposes; 3. Social media campaigns. 4. Consumers’ fairs portfolio. 5. Special promotion actions with selected media and tour operators. 6. Workshops and trainings on social media for local partners, story-telling for local stakeholders.	F
11. Improvement of communication and promotion - <u>targeting international tour operators and incoming agencies:</u> Identify priority markets. Identify suitable incoming agencies.	<u>Project Coordinator</u> <u>Consultants</u>	By the end of 2022	10.000 EUR 15 working days per year	1. Sales guide. 2. Regular newsletters. 3. B2B fairs portfolio.	A/F

Annex 1 RER-DWR GLOSSARY

Annex 2 HERITAGE SCAN

Annex 3 SIX KEYS TO HOSPITALITY

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