

Fidenza, 20.12.2024

Prot. no. 1979/2024

Dear Members and Friends,

The end of another complex and challenging year is nearing. During 2024 we have experienced some very difficult moments, such as the untimely death of our great President, Massimo Tedeschi, on 22 June. During his 23 years as President, Massimo always believed in the Via Francigena as a European project of extraordinary historical, cultural and social value, emphasising the importance of always looking ahead and thinking big.

His teachings continue to guide us today, and, together with the Vice-Presidents, the Bureau, and the entire EAVF team, we have worked with unceasing commitment to achieve the objectives of the **2023 - 2025 Strategic Plan**. Numerous events were organized to celebrate the **30th anniversary of the recognition of the Via Francigena as a "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" (1994 - 2024)**, and equally important was the consolidation of our national and European planning capacity, in collaboration with our subsidiary *Francigena Service S.r.l.*

Among the many activities in 2024, I would like to mention:

- **three well-attended General Assemblies:** in **Vevey** (Vaud, Switzerland) on 26.04.2024, in **Fidenza** (Emilia-Romagna, Italy) on 30.07.2024 and in **Monte Sant'Angelo** (Apulia, Italy) on 18.10.2024. I take this opportunity to thank the organisers, members and friends, for your presence. I invite you all to attend the next General Assembly, which will be held on **16 May 2025 in Troyes (France)**, and inform you, as of now, that the 2025 Autumn Assembly will take place on **7 November in Rome**.
- EAVF, in cooperation with the Region of Apulia, the Municipality of Brindisi and the Association Brindisi e le antiche strade, organized, in coordination with the European Institute of Cultural Routes in Luxembourg, the 11th edition of the **Council of Europe Training Academy on Cultural Routes** on 4-7 June 2024.
- EAVF also received, on the occasion of the 13th Council of Europe Cultural Routes Annual Advisory Forum (25-27 September 2024, Visegrád, Hungary), **the five-year renewal of its certification as a Council of Europe Cultural Route**.
- The work of strengthening the EAVF's European **governance** also continued, in collaboration with **national governments, local member authorities, friends' associations and private partners**. Without forgetting the role of the EAVF **International Scientific Council**, which is fundamental in view of the continuation of the **candidacy process of the Via Francigena as a UNESCO World Heritage Site**.
- At the General Assembly in Monte Sant'Angelo, the **Via Francigena Britannica** route was approved, connecting the City of London to Canterbury, km 0 of the Via Francigena.

- In the field of European planning, I would also like to highlight the launch of the **DETOUR project** (*Developing Resilient Tourism Ecosystems along Mediterranean Routes*), financed by the European Union through the COSME programme. With a total budget of two million euros and a duration of three years, it aims to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector to improve the ability to compete, innovate and grow by exploiting funding opportunities and digital tools.

These results push us optimistically towards the upcoming events planned for the **Jubilee Year 2025**, a significant moment to strengthen our shared mission, as many pilgrims, walkers, and cultural tourists will make their way along the Via Francigena toward Rome.

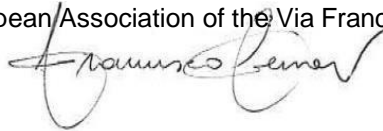
Thank you very much for your affection, attention and constant support for EAVF.

I send you my sincerest wishes for a Happy New Year, filled with peace and happiness.

Francesco FERRARI

President

European Association of the Via Francigena





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