

The 4th Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue organized by the Phoenicians' Route

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Final Report

The 4th Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue organized by the Phoenicians' Route – a cultural itinerary of the Council of Europe –, took place in Sicily from the 27th to the 30th of March 2009 with the presence of numerous participants from ten countries in Europe and the Mediterranean (Italy, France, Malta, Tunisia, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Luxembourg, Greece, and Spain). The purpose of this annual conference is to bring together all the participant countries in order to discuss the promotion and development of the route. The program this year focused on the presentation of the situation of the Route, country by country, in order to share experiences and homogenize them when creating and developing projects that are now being planned. The time is indeed ripe, for both private and public initiatives, to systematize the existing cultural offer, including best practices and methodology. Additionally, having a long period for the programming of projects in Europe (2007 - 2013), makes it easier to develop strategic guidelines sector by sector the activities between partners.

In order to present past action, the presentations focused every day on different themes:

On March the 27th, the integration between cultural tourism and eno-gastronomy was discussed through the archaeo-gastronomical workshop called “At the table with the Phoenicians: the bread of Astarte”. Guided by archaeologist Rossana de Simone and with the collaboration of the hospitality school IPSSAR “V. Titone” and the Pane Nero Association of Castelvetrano, the participants attempted to recreate the votive bread dedicated to Astarte in the Admeto Hotel in Selinunte. In antiquity, this bread was offered in the temples consecrated to the Phoenician goddess of fertility venerated in many places throughout the Mediterranean: it is possible to find traces in numerous archaeological sites in Tunisia, Malta, and Sicily. The unleavened bread has a diameter of 10 centimeters and is made with flour, oil, honey, and occasionally, dried fruits. The ingredients were identified according to archaeological research, but until now, the proportions were not known and the bread had not been made for centuries.

Thanks to this proposal, the bread of Astarte was given a new life as an ambassador of the Phoenicians' Route to visitors interested in the Mediterranean. Through these initiatives, it is possible to promote traditional local products, as was the case in this occasion with the black bread of Castelvetrano and the Nocellara Olive from the Belice Valley.

On Saturday the 28th, after visiting the archaeological park of Selinunte and the historical centre of Castelvetrano, the participants were welcomed by its Municipal

Administration, which supported the event. Later in the afternoon, the participants were hosted by the Menfi Commune at Palazzo Planeta, where the Documentation Centre of the Cultural Itineraries of the Council of Europe was inaugurated. Also in Palazzo Planeta, a Seminary on the Mediterranean Diet took place with the participation of Elisa Tripoli and Vittoria Sepporta from the Faculty of Pharmacy of Palermo University, Emanuela Panke, responsible for the cultural itinerary ITER-VITIS – *les Chemins de la Vigne et du Vin*, and Margherita Venezia from the Department of Agriculture and Forests of the Sicilian Region. The seminary was moderated by Martino Ragusa, gastronomic writer and responsible for the websites *Il giornale del cibo* and *Turisti per caso*. Agricultural entrepreneurs were also present and collaborated with testimonials and reflections. At the end of the conference, the participants of the 4th Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue were offered some of the products of the Mediterranean diet from Western Sicily. The List of Gastronomic Heritage was also presented. The List consists of a selection of Mediterranean dishes that can serve as ambassadors throughout the world. The List, chosen by 120 international experts, will increase every year with other representative dishes with the intention of giving them their deserved recognition. Sunday the 29th was dedicated to the presentation of case studies and the programming of activities for the years 2009-2010. The Orestyadi Foundation in Gibellina hosted, within its museum's Mediterranean atmosphere, the partners of the Phoenicians' Route. In the presence of Michel-Thomas Penette, director of the European Institute of Cultural Routes, the delegates agreed on the main topics of the itinerary and the importance of intercultural dialogue.

Furthermore, the participants discussed diverse forms of promoting the different cultural itineraries and their activities within their regions. Among the common initiatives, the collaboration with the magazine "Welcome" published by ITS, Malta was confirmed. Other communication strategies consisted in assisting the Master of Journalism program of the University Institute for Modern Languages from Milan University in the making of a documentary about the contemporary Mediterranean through the Phoenicians' Route. Finally, a preview of a 3-D computer animated film about Hannibal was presented by the Tuoro sul Trasimeno Commune, leader of the *Coordinamento delle Città sul Cammino di Annibale* as part of an innovative landscape route based on Hannibal's Battle on the Trasimeno Lake.

After a brief lunch buffet and a visit guided by Mr. Enzo Fiametta, its director, to the Mediterranean Roots Museum of the Orestyadi Foundation, work continued with the presentation of heritage educational activities developed by partners of the Phoenicians' Route in their respective territories. They then proceeded to planning joint interventions and the development of new projects.

At the same time, the Phoenicians' Route and the Orestyadi Foundation jointly hosted the preparatory meeting of the GEIE - Cultural Routes Europe, the organization that brings together the most significant experiences of the cultural itineraries recognized by the Council of Europe. In addition to the Phoenicians' Route, the Via Francigena, Al Andalus, and Saint Martin, were admitted on this occasion, the European Jewish Heritage Itinerary and ITER-VITIS (the latter *sub condicione* because it's recognition by the Council of Europe is pending). This

meeting continued On Monday, March the 30th, within the superb setting of the Norman Palace in Palermo. In the Red Room, formerly the headquarters of the great works of Frederick II, defined not randomly "Stupor Mundi", a meeting of GEIE - Cultural Routes Europe took place. After the reception by the President of the Sicilian Regional Assembly, they. Francesco Cascio, delegates of the Phoenicians' Route were able to visit the magnificent Palace. In the afternoon, together with the Superintendence of the Sea of the Sicilian Region in the Mirto Palace, a meeting was held with a select group of journalists.

During the meeting, the Director of the European Institute of Cultural Routes, Michel Thomas-Penette noted that the Phoenicians' Route is an important sea route, as well as an itinerary of culture and intercultural dialogue, emphasizing the importance of the Cultural Itineraries Program of the Council of Europe, which celebrates its 22nd anniversary in 2009. The great European themes are history, memory, and heritage that the different itineraries develop and valorize despite numerous economic, operational, and structural difficulties.

The Phoenicians' Route and other itineraries of its kind, including Al Andalus, also face intercultural issues and other related topics, for instance the sharing of culture and its applications, such as cultural tourism, which can provide solutions and joint proposals.

In his welcoming address, Sebastiano Tusa, Superintendent of the Sea of the Sicilian Region, said that the Phoenicians were a link in the entire Mediterranean as much as between north and south, east and west. He also recalls that Sicily is at the heart of the Mediterranean and is closely linked to the sea and its culture. The sea has been an element of union between different peoples, hence the importance of harbors.

Michel Thomas-Penette also presented some data on cultural itineraries: there are 47 members in the Council of Europe, 10 of these, coordinate itineraries; 175 NGOs, 1000 communities, 16,000 km of routes, 10 millions Euros of budget, and 16 million visitors also participate. There is even more potential yet to be developed.

The 4th Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue organized by the Phoenicians' Route was a success both in relation to the activities developed by the itinerary as well as with the addition of new partnerships. The Phoenicians' Route portrays itself to the public as an increasingly important model, as demonstrated by the success obtained in the different events where it has been presented; the last one was the 4th International Conference on Archaeological Tourism which took place recently in Peru.

The importance of this dialogue was therefore reflected in the exchange of ideas, sharing of knowledge and experiences to make the Phoenicians' Route an instrument in bringing together cultures and peoples of the Mediterranean, different and similar at a time.