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## Potential of the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius for the Development of Cultural Tourism

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# Potential of the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius for the Development of Cultural Tourism

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# Potential of the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius for the Development of Cultural Tourism

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The Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius was established in 2021 as a certified route within the program of Cultural Routes managed by the Council of Europe. The idea was to connect places with the Cyrillo-Methodian and Great Moravian traditions. The development of this cultural route is managed by the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius with a Permanent Secretariat in Zlín in the Czech Republic. The association currently has 23 members from 8 countries (CZ, SK, GR, SI, HU, BG, HR and IT). The Cultural Routes Program of the Council of Europe, which has been in development since 1987, is an expression of the basic principles of the Council of Europe: human rights, cultural democracy, cultural diversity and identity, mutual dialogue, mutual exchange and enrichment across borders and centuries. Certified cultural works are expected to initiate innovative projects in the field of cultural tourism and sustainability of cultural development. The aim of this paper is to point out how the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius can contribute to the development of cultural tourism – at international, national, regional and local level. These co-patrons of Europe are closely linked to Slovakia, specifically to the city of Nitra where the Bishopric of Nitra was established in 880 by Pope John VIII.

From a methodological perspective, this work is based on qualitative approach (excerpts from print and electronic information sources of varying provenance; comparative analysis; authors' own experiences with creation of strategic documents). The critical approach to information was supported by fieldwork and communication with stakeholders. The results of our research show that Saints Cyril and Methodius are part of everyday life in Slovakia in various forms – spiritual, landscape, cultural and economic. Religious tourism, which is also associated with their cult, significantly contributes to the visibility of several municipalities and cities and supports their development, especially in connection with the construction of infrastructure. The European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius has great potential to connect not only some of the most important European locations / points with a strong legacy of Saints Cyril and Methodius and their disciples spreading their ideas, emphasising the authenticity and uniqueness of this legacy in each of the countries involved, but also, and above all, human generations throughout the centuries.

**Key Words:** Saints Cyril and Methodius, European Cultural Route, cultural tourism, Slovakia – Nitra, regional development

## Introduction

Cultural heritage currently opens up space for multicultural and inclusive co-production, which is a participatory practice that transcends national borders. The engagement of community in cultural heritage is

a powerful tool for strengthening local communities, improving reconciliation in divided societies and promoting human rights and social cohesion. In order to engage a community, it is important to understand cultural heritage as a process of caring for the past. Understanding the importance of heritage and recognising its value is a

basic prerequisite for engaging in the protection of cultural heritage and the use of heritage for tourism in a sustainable manner. In order to promote the role of communities in the development and maintenance of cultural routes, early initiatives should be related to explaining the heritage and values linked within the relevant thematic route. When considering the involvement of local communities in the development and protection of cultural routes, it is important to first understand that perceptions of the objectives of thematic routes may differ at different levels – EU, national and local. It was for this very reason that the project on Cultural Routes as an Initiative of the Council of Europe (European Commission and Council of Europe, 2020) was first established. Travelling along the theme trails and routes, which function as cultural and religious links, has become a leading form of cultural tourism, including religious tourism (Collins-Kreiner, 2010; von Rohrscheidt, 2010; Mróz, 2014; Mróz, Mróz & Krogmann, 2019). The idea of creating a series of European cultural routes was first conceived with the aim of creating cultural tourism networks to raise awareness of Europe's common cultural heritage (Briedenham & Wickens, 2004). The aim of this paper is to point out how the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius can contribute to the development of cultural tourism – at international, national, regional and local level.

### **Theoretical - Methodological Background of the Topic**

In 1987, the Council of Europe launched the Cultural Routes Program to analyse how the heritage of Europe's countries and cultures contributes to our common cultural heritage – on a journey through space and time. In 1998, the European Institute of Cultural Routes was founded in Luxembourg. The Council of Europe emphasised the role played by culture and education in promoting the development of common values, respecting cultural diversity. The European Institute of Cultural Routes is commissioned by the Council of Europe (Zabbini, 2012). In 2010, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe approved the resolution CM/Res (2010) No.53, which established an agreement (Extended Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes - EPA), which enables a closer cooperation between countries with a special interest in the development of cultural routes. In 2013

Resolution CM/Res (2013) No.67 was adopted, which defines the rules to grant the 'Cultural Route of the Council of Europe' certification. The main aim of the Agreement on Cultural Routes is to strengthen the potential of cultural routes in cross-cultural cooperation, sustainable territorial development and social cohesion, with a special focus on themes of symbolic importance for European unity, history, culture and values, and the discovery of less known destinations. This helps to strengthen the democratic dimension of cultural exchange and tourism by engaging with local networks and associations, local and regional authorities, universities and professional organisations. It contributes to preserving the diverse cultural heritage of Europe through thematic and alternative tourist routes and cultural projects. A cultural route is a cooperation project in cultural and educational heritage and tourism, aimed at developing and promoting an itinerary or a series of routes based on a historical route, cultural concept, personality or phenomenon of transnational importance, which is important for the understanding and respecting of common European values (Resolution CM/Res (2013), No.66).

From the point of view of building the Cyril and Methodius Route, the year 2014 was important, as a product strategy was created for it within the INTERREG IV C program (CERTESS - Product strategy of the Cyril and Methodius Route, 2014). Slovakia was not a partner at that time. The document was a benchmarking process against 4 selected cultural routes of Europe focused on pilgrimage tourism (Via Francigena, Via Benedicti, Via Amerina, St. Olav's Way) and the location of Mariazell. The international strategy of the Cyril and Methodius Route was finally established in 2021 as a basis for its European certification (Špaček, 2021).

Slovakia nowadays actively participates in building, promoting and deepening cooperation within the following cultural routes of the Council of Europe: Transromanica, St. Martin's Way and, The Iron Curtain Route (Council of Europe Cultural Routes, 2021).

A European cultural route must lead through one or more countries or regions, and it is organised according to topics whose historical, artistic or social interest is directly European. An organisation or group of organisations legally registered in one or more member

state(s) of the Council of Europe, or a public institution which has a legal, financial and moral responsibility for the administration and functioning of the cultural route and represents the route to the Council of Europe, may act as its operator. By 2022, a total of 48 cultural routes of the Council of Europe have been approved with various themes to present European historical memory, history and heritage and contribute to the interpretation of the diversity of contemporary Europe. Some examples include the pilgrimage routes of Santiago de Compostela, the Via Francigena, the Way of the Olive Tree (Cultural Routes of Council Europe 2021).

In 2021, the Saints Cyril and Methodius Route was added to the European list. The development of this cultural route is managed by the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius Association with a permanent secretariat in Zlín in the Czech Republic. The association currently has 23 members from 8 countries (CZ, SK, GR, SI, HU, BG, HR and IT) and is actively looking for additional members and partners, especially in the area of the Danube and the Adriatic Ionian region. The memoranda of cooperation have been signed by 75 institutions (Janochová, 2022). The route is designed as a series of linear routes and an atomised network of points of interest. The above association is responsible for its management and marketing and it also supports research on cultural heritage and thematic events. The inclusion of this route, increases to 7 the number of cultural routes related to religious pilgrimage.

The Cyril and Methodius Route is a European cultural route, which is based on a strong historical story and the foundations of culture that the Thessaloniki Brothers brought to the European community. The route is envisaged to stretch from Prague through the Moravian Velehrad, the Slovak historical centres of Devín, Nitra and Bojná, the Hungarian Zalavár all the way to Bulgaria, Thessaloniki and Rome. Its construction and development are the responsibility of several regions in the territory of Moravia (the eastern part of today's Czech Republic) and Slovakia. The route connects monuments and places connected with Great Moravia that bear the legacy of the Thessaloniki Brothers. In addition to exploring the cultural-historical and natural monuments, the route can promote regional gastronomy and traditions, regional customs and local products. There is also an online story

map of the thematic route of Saints Cyril and Methodius in the Bratislava, Trnava and Nitra region. It contains information about the project, the Thessaloniki Brothers and their Great Moravian mission, the routes / trails themselves, a tour of the historically important places and the European Cultural Route. The site also includes a map application with all useful information (route length, accommodation, dining options, attractions in the area). The story map is available in Slovak and English (<https://domcentrope.sk/cyril-a-metod/>, 2022).

The influence of the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius and the development of cultural tourism, especially at the local and regional level, has been analysed by Krogmann, Kramáreková and Petrikovičová (2021); Krogmann, *et al.* (2021) and Judák (2021). The Cyrillo-Methodian mission, which took place in the territory of Great Moravia, had not only political, but also ecclesiastical significance, especially for the work of the Thessaloniki Brothers in the area of language and liturgy. The philosophical and spiritual-religious assumptions of the Cyrillo-Methodian cultural ideas and concepts include the principles of dignity and equality of individuals and nations. Both principles, supported by biblical texts and the Christian world view, were explicitly used by Cyril and Methodius themselves in their argumentation with their opponents. The subsequent effects of the original mission showed that Cyril and Methodius were true pioneers of tolerance, especially in the religious area, i.e. ecumenism (Judák, Hlad & Ďatelinka, 2022; Hlad, 2013; Hlad, 2016; Kondrla, Majda, Králik & Máhrik, 2022). The perception of the Cyrillo-Methodian cult in the modern history of Slovakia has been analysed by Hetényi and Ivanič (2017), Maturkanič, Tomanová Čerget'ová and Příbylová (2022), Maturkanič, Tomanová Čerget'ová, Kobylarek and Zimny (2022).

From a methodological perspective, this work is based on a qualitative approach (excerpts from print and electronic information sources of varying provenance, comparative analysis, authors' own experiences with creation of strategic documents). The base data for analysis comprised the lists activities of association members for individual years which are currently registered in the database of the Permanent Secretariat of the association in Zlín. The critical approach to analysis of this information was supported by additional fieldwork

and communication with stakeholders in Czechia and Slovakia, where primarily the Cyril and Methodius Route has developed since 2021. The development of this route in Bulgaria is currently at an early stage. A further step in the process was communication with the Bishop's Office in Nitra in addition to various parish administrators, Mayors of municipalities etc. This part of our research showed, that quantitative data, like participant numbers in individual activities is absent (counters are missing on active routes and the drones have not been used to count participant numbers at source points). Obtaining information on the amount of funds which have been used to support activities based on the example of Nitra City and the Nitra Region has also been problematic.

The national coordinator for the Cyril and Methodius Route in Slovakia was elected in 2021 and the national benchmarking of the route will be implemented in 2023. The authors of this article are invited to participate in this activity. The national coordinator for the Cyril and Methodius Route in the Czech Republic will be elected in 2023, national benchmarking there, is expected in 2023 or 2024.

### **Historical Background of the Cyril and Methodius Route**

Every cultural route, which is expected to become a successful tourist product, must be firmly anchored in the specifics of the territory, which are presented through the route, or it must have a real historical basis. The Cyril and Methodius Route is the first route recognised by the Council of Europe with a focus on Slavic cultural heritage, the creation of which was attributed to the natives of Thessaloniki, Saints Cyril and Methodius and their disciples. Both saints were declared co-patrons of Europe by Pope John Paul II. Their life unfolded in the 9th century when the Frankish and Byzantine Empire were the two strongest geopolitical powers in Europe at the time, and tried to extend their sphere of influence to the territories inhabited by the Slavs.

The route in question is based on the actions of the Slavic evangelists and their disciples. As Byzantine diplomats and Christian missionaries, Cyril and Methodius worked primarily in the territory of Central Europe and in a state entity known by the historians as Great Moravia, whose rulers were respected even by the rulers of the

Frankish Empire and the Pope. Prince Rastislav of Great Moravia attempted to create his own church organisation, independent of the Frankish Empire, and sent Christian missionaries to Great Moravia. After his request for priests to spread the Christian faith in the Slavic language was turned down by Pope Nicholas I, he turned to the Byzantine ruler Michael III, who complied with his request. He did this for strategic reasons and sent a mission to Great Moravia led by the Thessaloniki Brothers Saints Constantine - Cyril - and Methodius (Hetényi & Ivanič, 2012, Hetényi & Ivanič, 2013). Their mission was a pivotal point in the history of the Slavs and it had a long-lasting impact on their cultural history and cultural identity.

In this context, their mission also significantly contributed to the formation of European cultural identity (Dvornik, 1970, Ivanič & Hetényi, 2021). Although the Cyrillo-Methodian mission requested by Rastislav, the Prince of Great Moravia, failed to permanently include Great Moravia among the countries under the Byzantine sphere of influence, the creation of the Slavic alphabet, the origins of Slavonic literature and the use of a Slavic language in liturgy were some of the most efficient means to promote the Byzantine influence on the Slavic nations. The cultural legacy of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission moved to the South and the Eastern Slavs who accepted Christianity of the Byzantine tradition and became members of a large cultural community which was known in the language of Byzantium as οἰκουμένη (world) (Zozul'ak, 2019).

The Christianisation activities of Saints Cyril and Methodius are closely connected with the use of the Old Slavonic language in the liturgy, and thus with the translations of basic liturgical texts into this language through the newly formed *glagolika* script created by the younger of the two brothers before their arrival to Great Moravia. At the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, their pupils created the Cyrillic alphabet in the territories of the Southern Slavs in the Bulgarian Empire. Although the Glagolitic script was still used quite often in the 11th century, especially within the Ohrid Literary School, the Cyrillic alphabet and later Azbuka, prevailed among the Eastern Rite Slavs living within the civilisational and political reach of the Eastern Roman Empire starting from the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Ivanič & Hetényi, 2021).

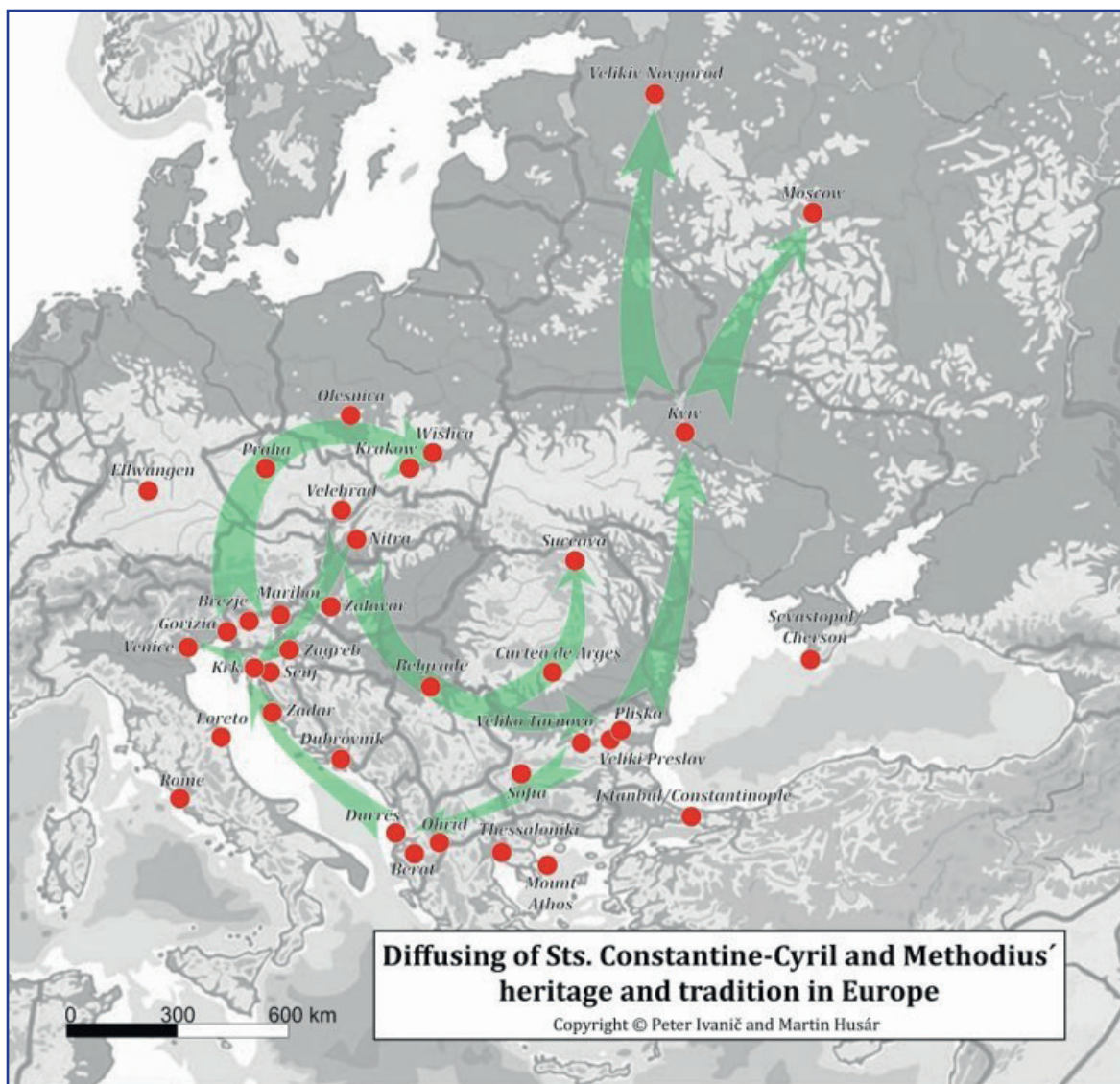
From a geographic point of view, the mission itself and the resulting cultural heritage covered a relatively large territory of Europe (Figure 1). Great Moravia spread primarily in the territory of today’s Czech Republic and Slovakia, but also Hungary, Austria and the southern part of Poland. The Slavic Lower Pannonia mainly included today’s Hungary, but also Croatia and Serbia. The lives of Sts. Cyril and Methodius before and during their mission unfolded in the regions of today’s Greece and Turkey, Germany, Slovenia, Italy, Ukraine and Russia. After the expulsion of students of Saints Cyril and Methodius from Great Moravia, the Cyrillo-Methodian cultural idea and its content spread among the Slavs living in the territory of the present-day Bulgaria, North Macedonia

and southern Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, and Moldova (Barlieva, 2020, Vukoja *et al.*, 2021).

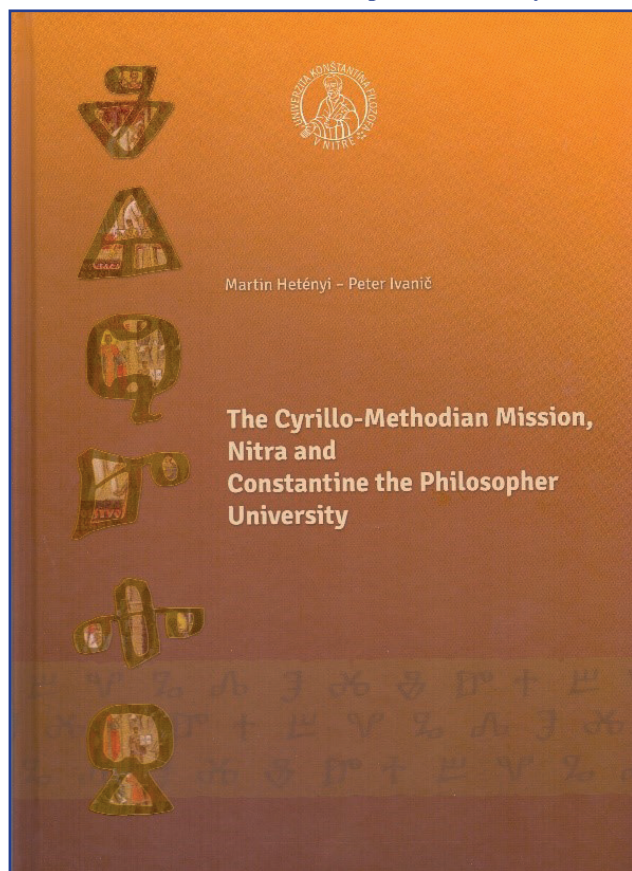
The 20<sup>th</sup> century is characterized by frequent and significant changes in the history of Slovakia. The establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic brought new possibilities and a new symbolism. For example, in Slovakia, the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition was a categorical imperative for the Catholic and Lutheran churches. The religious veneration of the holy brothers was becoming a matter of course. Finally, they are perceived as the patrons of Slovakia and their holiday is celebrated every year on July 5<sup>th</sup> (Hetényi & Ivanič,

**Figure 1 - Growth of the Heritage and Tradition of Saints Constantine-Cyril and Methodius in Europe**

(Note: Cherson was the ancient city located on the shore of the Black Sea on the outskirts of present-day Sevastopol on the Crimean Peninsula)

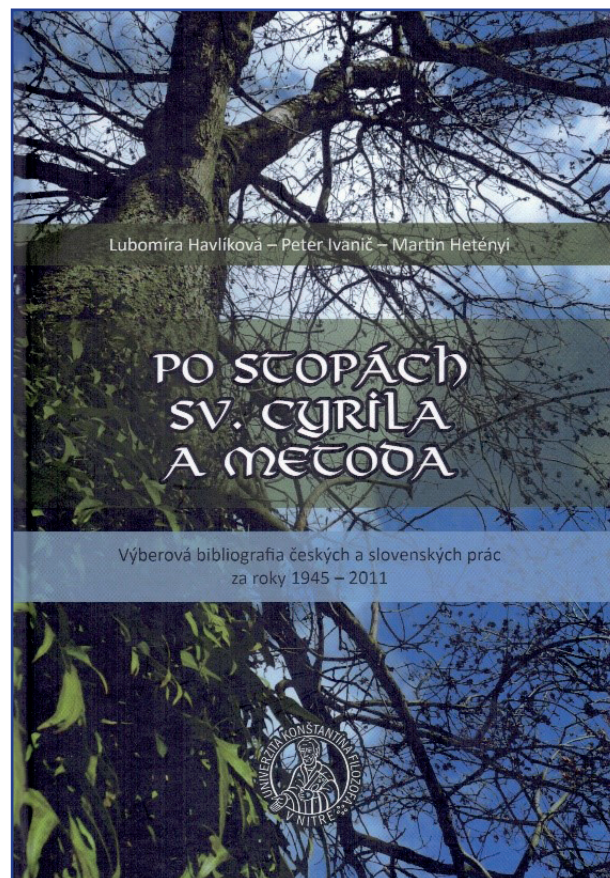


**Figure 2- The Cyrillo-Methodian Mission, Nitra and Constantine the Philosopher University**



(Hetényi, Ivanič, 2013)

**Figure 3 – In the Footsteps of Saints Cyril and Methodius – Selected Bibliography of Czech and Slovak works for the years 1945 – 2011**



(Havlíková, Ivanič, Hetényi, 2013)

2018). Christians in Europe also remember Saints Cyril and Methodius on other dates. In Orthodox churches, it is on May 11<sup>th</sup> according to the Julian calendar, i.e. May 24<sup>th</sup> according to the Gregorian calendar. The Roman Catholic Church currently commemorates them on February 14<sup>th</sup>, as does the Anglican Church. Lutheran Churches remember Saints Cyril and Methodius on February 14<sup>th</sup> or May 11<sup>th</sup> and Byzantine Rite Lutherans remember them on May 24<sup>th</sup> (Vukoja *et al.*, 2021).

Although the Latin cultural and liturgical tradition prevailed in this territory, the Byzantine-Slavic tradition finally found its application again in the environment where it originated thanks to the colonisation based on Wallachian Law. The sources written in Cyrillic, which belong to Slovak culture from a linguistic point of view and the place of their origin, are evidence of the development and formation of the Byzantine-Slavic culture and tradition in Slovakia and in the environment of the Slovak ethnic community. They reflect the contribution of the Slovak cultural environment. Even

the liturgical Church Slavonic language is perceived in the traditional Byzantine Church in Slovakia as a manifestation of the continuum of the oldest church traditions (Žeňuch, 2016).

The core of the Cyrillo-Methodian cultural legacy has immaterial and material aspects. The immaterial ones primarily include the literary variants of the Old Slavonic language, as well as Glagolitic and Cyrillic. The material aspects primarily consist of a corpus of texts written in specific languages and scripts associated with the Cyrillo-Methodian legacy, but also a number of archaeological and historical monuments from the period of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission, as well as monuments testifying to the respective stages of the subsequent development of Cyrillo-Methodian cultural heritage (Vukoja *et al.*, 2021).

The significance of the teachings of the Thessaloniki Brothers is also reflected in the patronage of sacred objects, urban names, and heraldic symbols. The



names of schools that are dedicated to them is very common (Nemčíková *et al.*, 2020), as well as organised events of a sacred and secular nature. This has been scientifically documented e.g. in the publication entitled *The Cyrillo-Methodian Mission, Nitra and Constantine the Philosopher University* (Hetényi & Ivanič, 2013 – Figure 2) and a Cyrillo-Methodian bibliography of Czech and Slovak works in the years 1945-2011 (Havlíková, Ivanič & Hetényi, 2013 – Figure 3), which contains 2,180 bibliographic records, and in a specialised scientific journal *Constantine Letters* (<http://www.constantinesletters.ukf.sk/>), which is indexed in SCOPUS and WoS.

However, the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition also crosses the borders of Europe. In the United States of America and Canada, their cult developed so rapidly and intensively in the migrant environment of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that it became one of the hallmarks of Slovak immigrants at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is evidenced by churches, public buildings, schools and even medals and / or awards from various institutions that bear their names (Škvarna & Hudek 2013:63-65).

### **Establishment and Aims of The European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius Association**

The Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius originated as a project in the Zlín Region in the Czech Republic. The underlying idea was created in the Zlín Region in 2011 and was developed by the East Moravia Tourist Board from 2014 and it was originally focused on the development of pilgrim tourism.

The idea was to connect places with the Cyrillo-Methodian and Great Moravian traditions. International network of partners (originally mainly from the Czechia and Slovakia) was established in 2013 as an interest association of legal entities in the endeavour to promote and preserve this unique European heritage and the authentic story of Cyril and Methodius and their mission. The year of establishment of the Association was symbolic, as the jubilee of the arrival of the Thessaloniki Brothers to the territory of medieval Great Moravia was celebrated at the same time. The city of Thessaloniki has been a member since 2015, however, the permanent

secretariat of the association is still based in Zlín (Peterka, 2016). more recently (i.e. in April 2022), the Regional Tourism Organisation of the Nitra Region was elected as the national coordinator responsible for building this cultural route in Slovakia.

The European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius Association has the following aims (<https://www.cyril-methodius.cz/about-us/>):

**networking** - creation of a network of members and partners;

**(co)organisation of events** - for members and general public - general meetings, professional conferences, traveling exhibitions, workshops and hiking along the Cyril and Methodius trails;

**communication** - presentations on websites, social networks, creation of newsletters, calendar of events, personal promotion at events, etc.;

**creation of a database and promotion of the cultural heritage of Saints Cyril and Methodius** - database of tangible and intangible monuments, database of best practice, etc.;

**creation of a network of Trails of the Cyril Methodius Route** - mapping and marking of footpaths and cycle trails on the Cyril and Methodius Route;

**project activity** - preparation and implementation of development projects of the Cyril and Methodius Route from local to international level;

**drafting of conceptual documents** - creation of a development strategy, marketing strategy, action plans of the Cyril and Methodius Route, etc.

### **Spatial Dimensions of the Cyril and Methodius Cultural Route in the Context of Relevant Activities**

When building cultural routes, it is necessary to take their themes and focus into consideration. The first group is represented by linear cultural routes (e.g. pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela, Via Francigena, St. Olav's Way) built on marked routes and pilgrimages along these routes. The second group is virtual cultural routes, which represent certain places associated with a certain theme (for example, ATRIUM - Architecture of

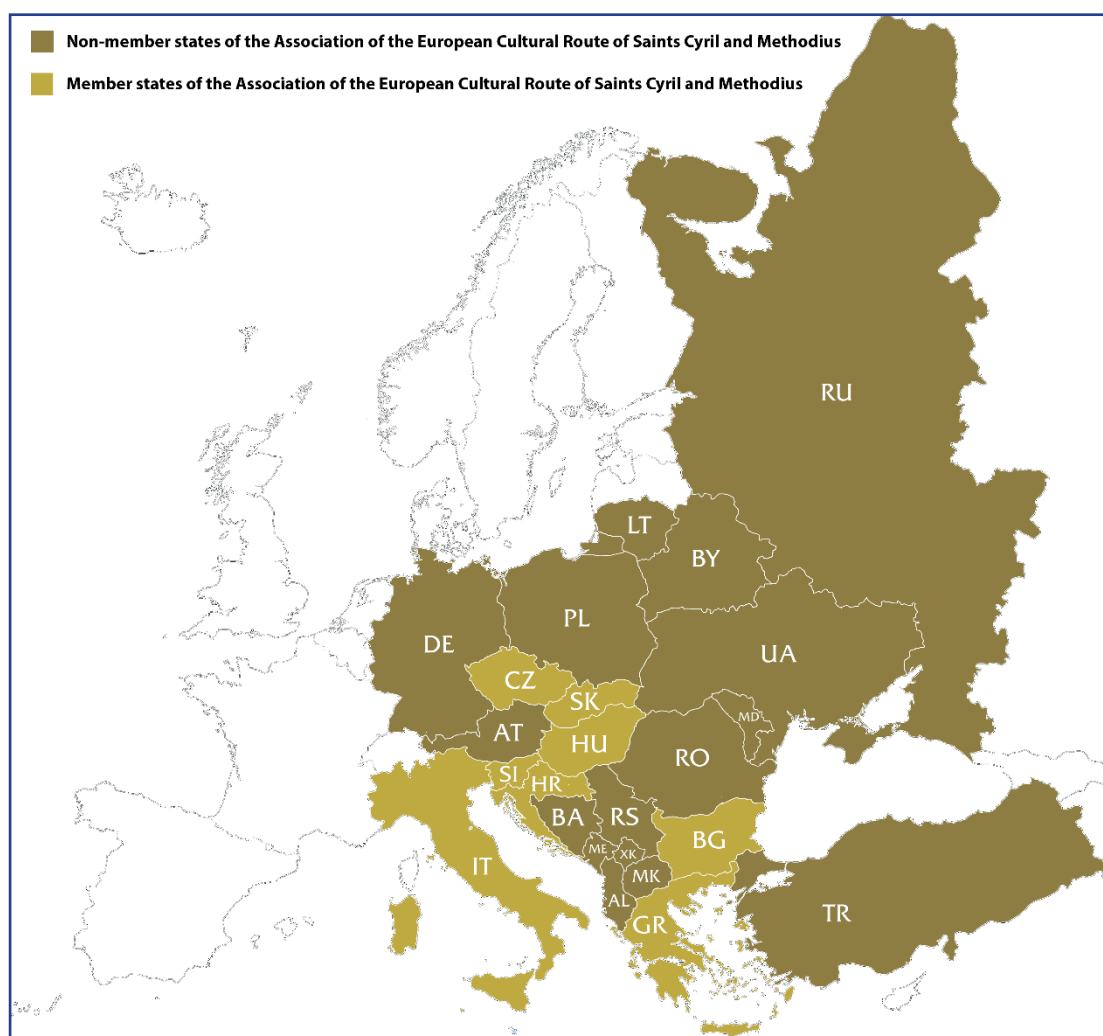
Totalitarian Regimes in Europe's Urban Memory). The last group is the combined cultural routes, i.e. linear and virtual. This means that the monuments or sites associated with a particular theme are also connected by marked routes. They include e.g. the Cyril and Methodius Route, which has been under construction since 2013.

The Cyril and Methodius Route leads through a series of trails historically associated with the life and mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius where the travellers can discover and learn about important relics. The first trail is connected to the territory of Great Moravia – today's Czech and Slovak Republics – where Cyril and Methodius carried out their most important activities. The second trail leads to the southeast (Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania,

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Turkey, Greece and Ukraine), symbolising the continuation of the legacy which the teachers bestowed upon their students. The third trail leads to the southwest (Austria, Bavaria, Slovenia and Italy) and it symbolises their journey to Rome where they tried to have the Christian liturgy recognised in Old Slavonic. The fourth branch of the trail leads to Lesser Poland and Eastern Silesia where the teachings and liturgy of Cyril and Methodius were also divulged. The countries influenced by Cyrillo-Methodian Heritage are shown in Figure 4.

The efforts of the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius Association to achieve European certification of this cultural route culminated in 2021. When staking the route out in the field, the Association

**Figure 4 - European Countries with Cyrillo-Methodian Heritage**



Martin Peterka, Association European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril & Methodius, 2022

tried from the very beginning to include the marked pilgrimage trails of the Cyril and Methodius Route in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. In both countries, the association closely cooperates with the Club of Czech Tourists and Club of Slovak Tourists who are in charge of marking the hiking trails. There are currently several trails marked with the logo of the Cyril and Methodius Route on tourist sign posts in both countries. This connects important pilgrimage sites, e.g. Velehrad in the Czech Republic or Skalka near Trenčín in Slovakia, natural and cultural monuments, such as churches or archaeological sites from the period of Great Moravia. Information on the individual trails can be found at <https://www.putujmebezhranic.cz/>. This portal, which welcomes visitors to the route with more than 800km of marked and well-maintained hiking trails, also provides, for example, information about the trail length, estimated time of arrival at individual destinations, and information about the terrain. In the Czech Republic, the most recent addition is the marked trail from Velehrad to Prague. Currently, new trails are being built in Slovakia in the Bratislava Region, Nitra Region and Trnava Region, which pass through the economic and political centres of the Nitra Principality and Great Moravia from the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, such as Bratislava, Devín, Bojná and / or Nitra.

The transnational dimension of this cultural route has its basis in several projects. In 2020, as part of the Routes 4U project implemented by the European Institute of Cultural Routes, a Feasibility Study of the Cyrillo-Methodian Route in the Danube Macro-region was conducted by professor Slavia Barlieva from the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The study focused on the monuments, temples, libraries and archives, holidays in honour of both saints, folk traditions and customs. With this focus, important places were identified in each country of the Danube macro-region, and the database of the areas of interest was extended and enriched (Barlieva, 2020). Dr. Vida Vukoja from Staroslavenski Institut in Zagreb (Croatia) and her team prepared the publication *The Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius' Scholarly Basis* (Vukoja et al., 2021).

On this basis, the *Development Strategy of the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius, 2030*, was drafted in 2021 (Špaček, 2021) as a basic strategic

document for the management, communication and cooperation in the development of the route. Its aim is the comprehensive and sustainable development of an international partner network and an international tourism product in the sense of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

The European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius Association uses several sources of funding to support the development of this route - contributions from members of the association; subsidies from the Zlín Region; EU subsidies, national and regional subsidies for the implementation of development projects; returnable financial resources of the Zlín Region for the implementation of development projects; donations and subsidies from other entities (municipalities, non-profit organisations) for the implementation of development activities.

Funded projects are also important for the development of this cultural route in Slovakia. For example, the INTERREG *Central Europe Cross-border Cooperation Projects* and CERTESS (*Cultural European Route - Transfer Experiences, Share Solutions*) in 2012-2014 were particularly important (CERTESS - led to the development of a *Product Strategy* for the Cyril and Methodius Route (2014).

These endeavours were the starting point in the beginnings of the Cyril and Methodius Route. The aim was to create and share a common methodological framework for the development, management and strengthening of cultural routes of European importance. The partners thus combined the use of documented best practices and management tools and formulated 11 implementation plans, all of which were aimed at supporting sustainable cultural tourism in their and neighbouring areas. It was thanks to the collection and presentation of Best Practice that the *Implementation Plan* of the Cyril and Methodius Route was developed, thanks to the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius Association in 2013, who also prepared the first *International Product Strategy of the Cyril and Methodius Route* in 2014.

Thanks to the Training Academy organised by the European Institute of Cultural Routes in Luxembourg, the Cyril and Methodius Route has had the opportunity

to meet many representatives of certified Cultural routes of the Council of Europe. The Cyril and Methodius Route has participated in this event three times since 2015. In 2022, thanks to the Training Academy, the Cyril and Methodius Route became a strategic partner of the rur-Allure project, the aim of which is to improve the economic situation of the countryside by means of pilgrimage in a rural environment. As part of this project, the Cyril and Methodius Route has again been gaining valuable experience and will have access to technological tools and promotional strategies that are created as a part of this project.

Cooperating and drawing inspiration from other cultural routes is key for the further development of the Cyril and Methodius Route, so it does not miss participating in projects and activities prepared by other cultural routes or by the European Institute of Cultural Routes, which implemented the Routes4U project as a part of the INTERREG Europe program in 2017-2020. Thanks to this project, the Cyril and Methodius Route became a priority cultural route in the Danube Macro-region.

We will mention two of the currently ongoing projects:

***Cyril and Methodius Route – Living Cultural Heritage***  
(INTERREG SK-CZ).

Outputs: year-round tourist game ‘Let’s travel without borders in the footsteps of our Slavic heritage’ with the aim to collect cards from 32 locations in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, solve a crossword puzzle in Glaholic, a mobile application and website <https://stopy.cyril-methodius.cz/>;

***Cyril and Methodius Route – Culture and Education without Borders*** (INTERREG SK-CZ).

Outputs: study trips in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, involvement of lecturers and artists, cooperation with students - workshops (Czech Republic, Slovak Republic), creation of methodological sheets and worksheets, traveling exhibitions, conferences.

One of the main presentation centres of the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius is the Great Moravian Monument – the Cyrillo-Methodian Centre in the Old Town in the district of Uherské Hradiště in Bohemia, which showcases the archaeological finds from the region and the life of the Slavs. Since 1969,

it is a national cultural monument, converted to a modern museum with spaces for depositories and a new exhibitions dedicated to Saints Cyril and Methodius within which the Association will be presented, together with the trails and monuments located on the trails dedicated to Cyril and Methodius (<https://www.kudyznudy.cz/aktivity/pamatnik-velke-moravy-vestarem-meste-na-uherskohr>).

The European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius Association participates in the co-organisation of several events. Traditional events take place in July including: the *Days of Good Will* in the Czech Republic in Velehrad, and in Slovakia it is the largest city event Nitra; Dear Nitra together with; the one-day Cyrillo-Methodian Pilgrimage, and the Cyril and Methodius Days in Terchová. In addition to the individual pilgrimages in each republic, joint Czecho-Slovak pilgrimages in Velehrad – Šaštín and Velehrad – Skalka have been held in the last two years despite the pandemic. In 2022, the great Velehrad - Trenčín - Nitra *Summer Pilgrimage* took place (6/27 - 7/4) and the new *Cyril and Methodius Bike Trail* was opened between Nitra and Trnava (7/3 at the Nitra Castle).

In addition to the events for pilgrims and tourists, the association also hosts scientific events for the general public. The first event of this type was the Cyrillo-Methodian Traditions Conference in Modern Czechoslovak History, which was held in Zlín, Czech Republic, in 2018. In the same year, an art competition for primary and secondary schools was held in cooperation with the Slovácke Museum in Uherské Hradiště and the Centre for Slavic Archaeology with the topic ‘*In the Beginning was a Word*’ and ‘*The legacy of Cyril and Methodius (not only) in today’s world*’. Hundreds of works of art from Czech and Slovak schools were submitted for the contest, the winners were awarded, and several artworks became part of a travelling exhibition.

The Association is also engaged in building Infopoints, i.e. information points where information and promotional materials are available to all interested parties. There are currently 40 Infopoints, mainly along marked trails in the Czech Republic, and several can be found in Slovakia (Skalka near Trenčín, Cultural Information Center in Trenčín, Tourist Information Centre in Nitra

**Table 1: Financing of the Cyrillo-Methodian activities by the Nitra Self-Governing Region in 2018 - 2022**

Years	Membership fee paid to ZKCSCM <sup>1</sup> in Zlín (Czech Republic)	CMS and CMP <sup>2</sup> support in Nitra (Slovakia)	Support for EKCSM <sup>3</sup> entities in Nitra (Slovakia)	Total
2018	€5,000	€20,000	-	€25.000
2019	€5,000	€20,000	-	€25.000
2020	€5,000	€20,000	-	€25.000
2021	€5,000	€20,000	€28,000	€53.000
2022	€5,000	€20,000	€28,000	€53.000
Total	€2,5000	€100,000	€56,000	€181.000

Source: Nitra Self-Governing Region, 2022

Legend:  
 ZKCSCM<sup>1</sup> – Association Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius  
 CMS and CMP<sup>2</sup> – Cyril and Methodius Festivities and Cyril and Methodius Pilgrimage  
 EKCSM<sup>3</sup> – European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius

and Terchová).

The Cyrillo-Methodian activities at the regional and local level in Slovakia are financed from EU resources (e.g. cross-border cooperation projects INTERREG V-A SK-CZ), but primarily from the resources of regional and local governments. An example is the breakdown of the funds support the Cyrillo-Methodian activities by the Nitra Self-Governing Region and the City of Nitra in the years 2018 - 2022. The Nitra Self-Governing Region paid its annual membership fee to the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius Association based in Zlín, it supported the Cyrillo-Methodian festivities and pilgrimage in Nitra, and provided support to the entities of the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius. For the period 2018-2022, it provided a total of €181.000 EUR (Table 1).

The Nitra city festival, *Dear Nitra*, is the biggest event in Nitra. Under this poetic and symbolic name, they combine the traditional Nitra Days with a Pribina Festival and Cyril and Methodius Festivities, and events are dedicated to important personalities in Nitra's history and at the present, who influence(d) Slovak and European history in an exceptional way. Each year, events are designed with an emphasis on the popularisation of scientific facts and important archaeological finds. An important implementation factor is the broad cooperation between the self-governing authorities, spiritual, scientific, professional and amateur entities and stakeholders, universities and primary schools, civic associations and

individual enthusiasts.

The festivities have been held since 1990, and in recent years they have acquired a transnational character, as they have become an important stopover on the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius. The portfolio of festivities consists of the National Pilgrimage of Cyril and Methodius, the Open Day at the Bishop's Palace at Nitra Castle, the presentation of historical / heritage conferences, seminars and lectures for the general public, exhibitions (including children's artwork), the Pribina's Nitrawa historical festival, musical performances, night theatre performances, historical parades and processions, and pilgrimage on the Cyril and Methodius Route. A standalone stage for the cultural program was erected in the pedestrian zone of the city, and in 2022 Literary Nitra, music concerts, theatre performances, creative workshops and educational activities were all part of the *Buzz on the Promenade* program.

As part of the exhibitions on the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius, meetings of the representatives of institutions, cities and municipalities involved in the route project and screenings of films about the route, etc. have been held. In 2022, pilgrims from Velehrad were welcomed at Nitra Castle by the Bishop, Prefect and Mayor of Nitra. A living logo of Cyril and Methodius was created for the first time. The presentation videos capture the atmosphere of the Cyril

Figure 5 – Presentation Video of the Nitra, Dear Nitra Festivities in 2022



Source: Municipal Office in Nitra, 2022

Figure 6 – Spiritual Atmosphere of Nitra, Dear Nitra Festivities



Author: Peter Ivanič, 2022

Figure 7 – Participation in the Nitra, Dear Nitra Festivities is on National Level



Author: Peter Ivanič, 2022

and Methodius Days (Figure 5, 6, 7).

The festival program changes every year, it is dynamic, adapts to the times and responds to the current requirements, interest of the residents of Nitra, tourists and the general public. The event involves all age categories – ranging from the youngest to the most experienced generations, and it takes into account the preservation of historical legacy. At the same time, it also supports the current offer in the cultural sphere by involving musical and dramatic bodies and individuals in order to satisfy

the demand of its participants.

For the period 2018 – 2022, the Nitra Municipal Office provided a total of €225.555 to support the municipal festivities (Table 2). Figure 8 documents the structure of expenses broken down into 3 categories. It is obvious that, on average, most financial resources went to the ‘Other’ category (materials, services ... etc.) with the exception of 2019 and 2022, when most went to artistic performances and promotion. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic left its mark on the financing and only a limited number of activities were funded. In 2022, most financial

**Table 2 – Financing of Cyril and Methodius Nitra Celebrations (Dear Nitra) by the Nitra Municipal Office 2018-2022**

Years	Promotion		Performances		Other (material, services...)		Total	
2018	€ 6.173	12.9%	€ 12.351	25.8%	€ 29.417	61.4%	€ 47.942	100%
2019	€ 6.614	10.7%	€ 29.449	47.6%	€ 25.794	41.7%	€ 61.857	100%
2020	€ 2.498	11.0%	€ 7.378	32.4%	€ 12.895	56.6%	€ 22.772	100%
2021	€ 8.686	18.2%	€ 17.729	37.1%	€ 21.310	44.7%	€ 47.725	100%
2022	€ 5.889	13.0%	€ 27.950	61.8%	€ 11.419	25.2%	€ 45.259	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 29.860</b>		<b>€ 94.857</b>		<b>€ 100.835</b>		<b>€ 225.555</b>	

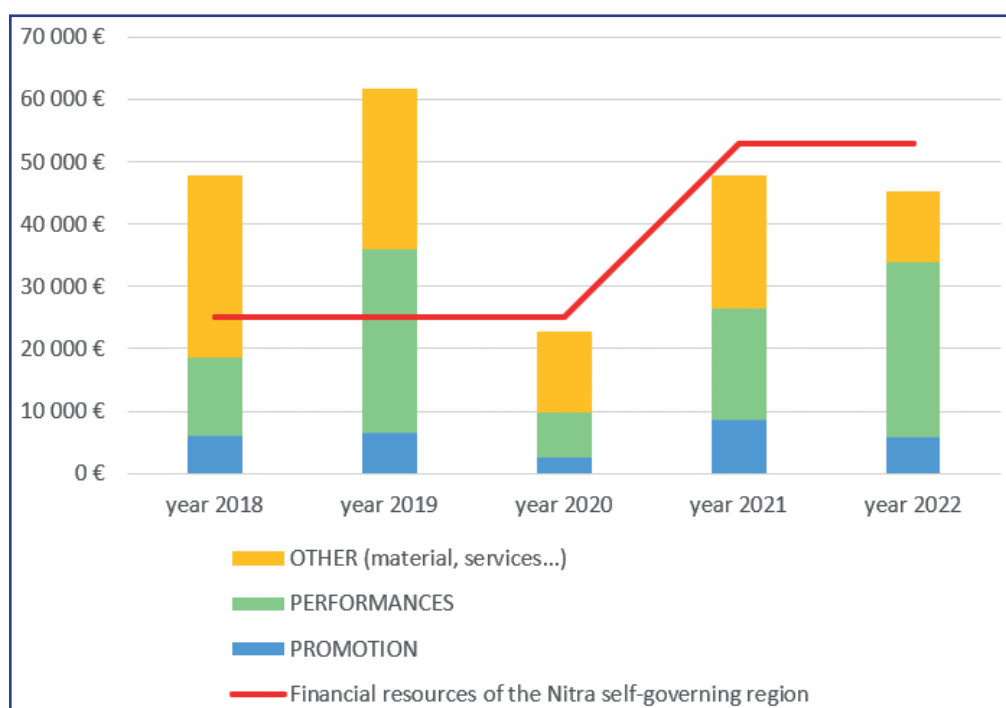
Source: Nitra Municipal Office, 2022

resources went to the ‘Performance’ category, which was evidence of a rich spectrum of activities.

Even though the heritage of Cyril and Methodius primarily strengthens spiritual and cultural belonging, it also contributes to the promotion of small businesses, crafts or financial benefits (e.g. in the form of parking fees, payments for food and souvenir stalls) at the level of towns and villages. It is in the interest of villages and parishes for the tourists / pilgrims to stay in their area for more than one day (Oremusová *et al.*, 2022). Slovakia offers a rich and varied environment not only culturally and historically, but also in terms of its natural

environment. The tourist locations allow for a close contact of tourists / pilgrims with nature and visits to cultural and historical monuments (churches, chapels, etc.) provide another opportunity for an intensive connection and fusion of the secular and spiritual world. The potential for further development of municipalities is provided not only by the Cyril Methodius Route itself, but also by connecting with other cultural routes (e.g. St. Jacob’s Way, Marian Way) or sightseeing trails (educational trails, hiking trails) and cycling trails. These trails are currently attractive not only for believers, but also for tourists who prefer culture, knowledge or sports.

**Figure 8 – Financing of the Cyril and Methodius Celebrations Nitra, Dear Nitra**



Source: Nitra Municipal Office and Nitra Self-Governing Region in 2018 – 2022

The position of regional development, which contributes to economic and territorial development, is being strengthened in the globalisation process and it is becoming an integral part of sustainable territorial development. This includes tourism (religious and non-religious), which helps to increase the competitiveness of the area while making a better use of its potential (*Slovakia's Tourism Development Strategy until 2020*). However, in many cases this requires the construction of necessary infrastructure and the support of projects by local and regional authorities. It is uplifting to note that positive examples exist in this area and people are keenly sharing them.

The city of Nitra is an example of synergy in activities between the municipal office, the office of the Nitra Self-Governing Region, the Diocese of Nitra and other entities and stakeholders, leading to the cultivation of a community life and enriching the lives of visitors.

## Conclusion

Saints Cyril and Methodius are extremely important personalities for those Slavic nations that build their national identity on the cultural traditions of earlier periods of their history. Both saints were the bearers of Byzantine values, which also had an impact on the development of the Slavic cultural environment. The veneration of these apostles among the Slavs has undergone a series of transformations. One of the recent changes is the presentation of their heritage in European countries through the Cyril and Methodius Route.

The Cyril and Methodius Route is a comprehensive cultural and tourist route in Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. It is currently being built in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria. It is aimed at supporting cultural tourism and pilgrim tourism. It is focused on the unique cultural and historical legacy of Saints Cyril and Methodius as the co-patrons of Europe, uniting Eastern and Western nations. The Cyril and Methodius Route can become a basis for the development of several European regions that will actively participate in its functioning. As a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, the Cyril and Methodius Route contributes to the sustainable development of cultural tourism at various levels. International cooperation between individual

partners is developing through European projects such as INTERREG. Educational institutions are actively involved in the challenges of related ERASMUS programmes. The cultural heritage of individual states connected by a cultural route becomes visible. In the case of the Czech and Slovak Republics, the linking of marked pilgrimage routes is being actively addressed, and bilingual promotional documents (e.g. publications, videos) are being created. Cooperation between individual entities from different regions is developing at the national level. Tourism products are created which contribute to development with an emphasis on the European dimension. At the regional and local level, pilgrimage connects communities and contributes to the local economy. This Route is facilitating a new horizon for cooperation in research and regional development.

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