

## **Best practice 9: “European Association of cities along the Via Francigena”.**

**Scale:** Transnational

**Stage of tourism development:** Mature

**Main objective:** Regional development/ Destination promotion

Categories of effects:

### **Effects on urban governance**

- Cultural tourism strategy
- Regional cooperation
- Network of cities
- Stakeholder participation
- Sustainable partnership

### **Effects on quality of life**

- Built heritage diversity
- Cultural practices and representations
- Urban economies
- Social life, local values and traditions

The Via Francigena is a historical route, a major road once walked along by thousands of pilgrims on their way to Rome. The history tells that Sigeric, the Archbishop of Canterbury, on the way back from Rome, where he went to visit the Pope John XV in the year 900, wrote a detailed description of the itinerary, which was known as “Via Francigena” and was to become one of the most important medieval pilgrim routes. On 9 December 2004, ten years after being recognized as a Culture Route, the Via Francigena was acknowledged a Major European Culture Route by the Council of Europe. In particular, the part of the route that concerns Italy is an example of a network of cities working together in enhancing their heritage, and historical links. This is a network of more than 100 cities in Europe, from Canterbury to Rome, many of which small and medium-sized, like Canterbury, Chalons-en-Champagne, Reims, Lausanne, Altopascio, Aosta, Fidenza, Lucca, Pavia, Siena or Vercelli. The network has successfully managed to set up a sign-posted route, supported by a well-structured website. It is an example of how local authorities cooperate together, and more concrete, on how they have successfully worked together in the areas of culture and tourism, traditionally divided. Hence, they have cooperated towards creating a common cultural strategy, and have even had influences at a national level, where both ministries (of culture and of tourism) have been integrated into a single ministry.

**Source:** European Institute of Cultural Routes, 2006.

### **Links:**

[www.associazioneviafrancigena.it](http://www.associazioneviafrancigena.it)

[www.culture-routes.lu](http://www.culture-routes.lu)