

THE CONCEPT

of the European Cultural Route of Francysk Skaryna

The Concept of the European Cultural Route of Francysk Skaryna was developed within the framework of the Project “Francysk Skaryna Cultural Route (Part Polatsk – Vilnius)”, which was prepared and implemented by a group of specialists from the European Humanities University, Francysk Skaryna Gymnasium (Vilnius, Lithuania), Polatsk State University and Polatsk National Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve (Polatsk, Belarus), and financed from the funds of the Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion Programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania. The implementation of the Project is considered as the initial stage of integration of actions aimed at preserving and promoting the heritage associated with the personality of Francysk Skaryna, based on the model of the Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, which provides cooperation and synergy of a wide range of stakeholders from different countries.

The relevance of the creation of the European Cultural Route of Francysk Skaryna

The common history and heritage of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe, evidences of the movement towards enlightenment and the affirmation of universal values in the Renaissance epoch have not been fully presented to the European and world public. Nevertheless, the actualisation of tangible and intangible heritage and its presentation as a common achievement of the peoples of Europe offers great opportunities for cooperation and development. In this regard, the appeal to the personality of Francysk Skaryna – a native of Polatsk, a citizen of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and an outstanding European enlightener – opens up a unique opportunity to trace cultural links, the process of exchanging knowledge, ideas and technologies in a number of important thematic areas within the boundaries of a vast geographical area beginning from the late 15th century to the first half of the 16th century – a historical period characterised by extremely important events and achievements in the European culture.

Significant anniversaries of important events in the European history and culture attract additional attention to the highest achievements of the Renaissance. In 2017, the European community celebrated the 500th anniversary of Belarusian book printing. The first book in the Belarusian language was printed by Francysk Skaryna in Prague on the 6th of August 1517. The year 2022 marks the 500th anniversary of the beginning of book printing in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where the first book was printed in the printing house founded by Francysk Skaryna in Vilnius. The latter became an important milestone in his life and journey across the continent from Polatsk through Vilnius to the south of Europe to Padua and then back to Vilnius. The formation of the European Cultural Route ensures the perception, interpretation and disclosure to the general public of the achievements of the tangible and non-tangible culture of the Renaissance, retaining in the cultural landscapes of the European continent, by referring to the life and achievements of an outstanding historical person.

Object of the Concept

The Concept addresses Francis Skaryna’s heritage, represented by achievements in the field of enlightenment, science and culture, in particular, printing, medicine, botany, philosophy, theology and diplomacy, the totality of tangible artefacts and intangible manifestations and influences of his activities as evidence of the movement of European peoples to enlightenment during the Renaissance. In addition, the Concept also refers to those artefacts of tangible culture and phenomena of spiritual culture that had a direct impact on the formation of personality of Francysk Skaryna, as well as his life and work, and that became a

direct continuation or arose under the direct influence of his activities, achievements and ideas. At the same time, special attention is paid to the routes that connected the centres of culture and enlightenment during the Renaissance, which, besides their economic function, facilitated cultural exchange between peoples and are represented in the structure of the cultural landscapes of Europe formed by natural processes and human activities. The proposed approach to the definition of the object of the cultural route allows reconceptualising the cultural landscapes of Europe and rethinking the processes of their development as well as the possibilities to represent them.

Subject of the Concept

The Concept focuses on the scientific, cognitive, educational, cultural, social and economic potential of F. Skaryna's heritage, the possibilities of its further disclosure and sustainable use through international cooperation between the widest possible range of stakeholders – representatives of science, culture, education and business, in particular, tourism, culture and creative industries.

Geographical scope

Francysk Skaryna's work, which is an indispensable part of European culture, breaks national borders. The geography of his travels has not been sufficiently studied yet. It is possible that besides the well-known centres such as Polatsk (Belarus), Vilnius (Lithuania), Riga (Latvia), Krakow and Poznan (Poland), Venice and Padua (Italy), Vienna (Austria) and Konigsberg (now: Kaliningrad, Russia), other cities might be added to the list in the process of formation and functioning of the European Cultural Route, in particular, Copenhagen (Denmark), Wittenberg (Germany), Moscow (Russia), as well as settlements and localities along historical roads that used to interconnect cultural centres during the Renaissance epoch.

Time scope

The Concept is not limited to the artefacts, events, ideas, intangible manifestations and influences of Francysk Skaryna's work that can be directly attributed to the time limited to the period of his life. At present, the exact dates of F. Skarina's birth and death are unknown. According to various hypotheses, the estimated date of his birth is somewhere between the years 1470 and 1490. It is also assumed that he died no later than January 1552. In accordance with the definition of the object of the Concept, the formation and functioning of the cultural route requires attention to all territories, artefacts, phenomena and events associated with the personality of Francysk Skaryna, as well as his activities and travels, regardless of time and origin, existence or manifestation. This also includes the modern era. In addition, it is important to note that the formation and functioning of the cultural route is oriented towards the future in order to meet the needs of future generations, to remain open to new knowledge, events and initiatives.

Cultural route as a set of objects of tangible heritage and sites

The Francysk Skaryna Cultural Route is a unique opportunity to take a fresh look at the cultural landscapes of Central and Eastern Europe that are an invaluable result of co-creation by men and nature, retaining traces of various historical eras and events. They are permeated not only by numerous spatial connections between stunning localities and objects, but also by temporal ties through all the historical epochs of the development of the peoples of Europe and even the geological periods of the formation of the continent. This is an opportunity to see traces of the great historical epoch – the Renaissance, and the period of life and work of an outstanding representative of this epoch in modern landscapes of settlements and inter-

settlement areas, in natural places of interest, in preserved man-made immovable and movable objects available for acquaintance.

Cultural route as a set of phenomena of intangible culture and ideas

The Francysk Skaryna Cultural Route is a set of phenomena of historical intangible culture associated with the personality of Francysk Skaryna and his epoch. In addition, just as importantly, it is also a set of phenomena of contemporary and future intangible culture. The cultural route is considered as a means of reviving the perished phenomena of intangible culture, as well as maintaining the resilience of the preserved and stimulating the new phenomena of intangible culture that are of interest and value to the general public.

Cultural route as a network of stakeholders

The Francysk Skaryna Cultural Route is an opportunity to establish new and maintain established professional and interpersonal contacts with colleagues and like-minded people in various countries, as well as to establish exchange of information and ideas in various thematic areas. It is a structure that represents all subjects that are directly or indirectly interested in the study, preservation, development, promotion and sustainable use of the heritage associated with the personality of Francysk Skaryna and his epoch, including central and local authorities, various organisations, research centres, museums, educational institutions, libraries, business entities, public associations, religious communities, informal social groups, individual experts and enthusiasts, and etc. Such network should involve both formal and informal participation and interaction of stakeholders.

Cultural route as a basis for cooperation

A cultural route is an opportunity for cooperation, combining and multiplying efforts and resources, generating common ideas and stimulating joint initiatives. Cooperation is supposed to be built both on thematic areas, determined in accordance with the peculiarities of F. Skaryna's heritage and his epoch, and on types / sectors of social and economic activity that are directly focused on preservation, promotion and use of such heritage or refers to such heritage indirectly. Non-exhaustive list of thematic areas of cooperation includes:

- enlightenment, education, dissemination and exchange of knowledge
- book printing, technology development and transfer
- fine arts, decorative applied arts and design
- travel and intercultural communications
- medicine
- botany, plant systematics, garden design
- philosophy, theology, diplomacy.

Non-exhaustive list of sectors of intra- and intersectoral interaction within the framework of the cultural route includes:

- research and development, including education
- culture, natural and cultural heritage (tangible and intangible)
- social development, promotion of social initiatives
- economic development, industries of tourism, culture and creativity.

The development of cooperation within the framework of the cultural route involves interaction both within the framework of individual thematic areas and sectors / types of social and economic activities, and between them.

Cultural route as an information product

The Francysk Skaryna Cultural Route is an open, up-to-date, and developing information system that aggregates relevant scientific, educational, leisure and entertainment, commercial and other information, including information about

- Francysk Skaryna personality and epoch
- the relevant tangible cultural and natural heritage located on the routes of his travels, as well as about the cultural heritage associated with Francysk Skaryna personality that is located in other places
- research projects and scientific information
- cultural and public initiatives and events
- products and services in the field of leisure, tourism and cultural and creative industries
- academic and educational opportunities.

Cultural route as a development resource

The European Cultural Route of Francysk Skaryna, which represents a set of objects of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, natural places of interest, a network of stakeholders, a platform for cooperation and relevant, up-to-date information, should serve as a resource for the development of science, education, leisure industries, tourism, culture and creativity, various social and business initiatives.

The Concept remains open for additions, clarifications and specifications during the process of planning and creating the European Cultural Route of Francysk Skaryna and taking into account the interests, knowledge and ideas of stakeholders and new participants.