NExT R⊕UTES

User **Manual**

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1. Introduction

This document serves as the **User Manual for the NEXT ROUTES gaming app** and as a guide to the **NEXT ROUTES Training Methodology**, a capacity-building initiative developed by the Breda University of Applied Sciences, and the **NEXT ROUTES Toolkit**, a collaborative compilation of best practices collected by the members of the project and assembled by Mobile Idea. The European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage (AEPJ) has been responsible for writing down this User Manual with the aim of supporting the long-term digital resilience of European Cultural Routes.

In today's globalized environment, the long-term sustainability and visibility of cultural heritage depend on strong digital proficiency. The NEXT ROUTES methodology provides a hybrid learning approach that combines theoretical knowledge with practical, ready-to-use tools, ensuring participants gain both conceptual understanding and actionable guidance for immediate implementation.

The manual is organized into two main parts. The first part presents an overview of the four core training modules—Digital Marketing, Engagement, Cultural Heritage Storytelling, and Gamification—and the resources available through the NEXT ROUTES Toolkit. The second part offers a hands-on guide to the Next Routes gaming app, showing managers step-by-step how to translate their Route's heritage into engaging, mission-based interactive experiences.

By exploring the modules and applying the tools, Cultural Route managers are equipped to prototype and implement innovative digital solutions. The practical use of the gaming app connects physical heritage assets with digital challenges such as geolocation missions, questionnaires, picture tasks, and QR codes, helping to create attractive, educational, and memorable experiences.

Together, the insights, tools, and guidance provided in this manual empower Cultural Route managers to engage audiences, enhance visibility, and ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is preserved, promoted, and experienced in meaningful and sustainable ways.

2. NEXT ROUTES Training Methodology User Manual: Your Guide to Digital Empowerment

This section serves as an essential reference for the NEXT ROUTES Training Programme, a capacity-building initiative developed to support the long-term digital resilience of European Cultural Routes.

In the current digital landscape, the visibility, accessibility, and sustainability of cultural heritage depend significantly on strong digital and creative competencies. This program provides a structured framework for developing those skills.

NEXT ROUTES is informed by research and practical experience. It aims to provide both conceptual understanding and operational tools that Cultural Route professionals can apply directly to their work.

NEXT ROUTES Training Methodology is a comprehensive training strategy that equips Cultural Routes professionals with the necessary tools and mindsets to:

- **Innovate:** Identify new opportunities for audience engagement.
- **Lead:** Guide the digital transition of Cultural Routes.
- **Sustain:** Strengthen long-term cultural management and heritage impact.

The NEXT ROUTES Training Methodology provides a structured approach to advancing the digital capacity of European Cultural Routes across marketing, engagement, storytelling, and gamification.

This manual offers an overview of key principles and the extensive resources available through the program. By applying these practices, Cultural Route managers can help ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is preserved, promoted, and made accessible in compelling and sustainable ways.

We invite all users to explore the modules, apply the tools, and contribute to the ongoing digital transformation of the European Cultural Routes network.

2.1. The Importance of Digital Skills

Digital competencies are essential for modern cultural management. Cultural Routes face increasing competition in a globalized environment, and digital proficiency directly enhances visibility, engagement, and sustainability.

Bridging the Skills Gap

Research highlights common gaps in applied digital skills across Cultural Routes. The NEXT ROUTES program addresses four priority areas where digital creativity can deliver strong results:

- **Reaching New Audiences** (Marketing & Promotion)
- **Enhancing Heritage Relevance** (Storytelling & Promotion)
- **Building Community** (Engagement & Participation)
- **Creating Memorable Experiences** (Gamification)

A Hybrid Learning Approach

The program combines descriptive knowledge with practical tools.

Component	Purpose	Examples
Descriptive Assets	Provide theoretical grounding, global trends, case studies, and best-practice analysis	Digital Marketing Trends Report
Operational Assets	Offer ready-to-use tools, templates, and practical guides	Social Media Content Calendar, Gamification Checklist

Key Insight: Participants gain not only conceptual understanding but also practical guidance for immediate implementation.

2.2.   Overview of the Four Core Modules

The curriculum consists of four interconnected modules. Each can be followed independently, while together they form a comprehensive capacity-building framework.

Module Structure

Each module consists of theoretical content, case studies, and practical tools.

Module	Core Focus Area	Key Objectives
Module 1	Digital Marketing, Promotion & Education	Improve visibility and enhance educational outreach
Module 2	Engagement & Participation	Build active, participatory communities

| Module 3 | Cultural Heritage Storytelling | Develop strong narrative and digital content skills |
| Module 4 | Gamification Approaches | Create interactive and rewarding user experiences |

All referenced tools and templates are available digitally. "Actionable Tool" callouts indicate direct links to these resources.

Module 1: Digital Competencies for Marketing, Promotion, and Education

This module focuses on strengthening digital visibility and ensuring effective dissemination. The content is developed to assist and manage external communication; to reach out to a wider audience; to make the routes more visible and to make the information (really) interactive.

Learning Objectives

Participants will learn to:

- **Identify and segment audiences** (local visitors, international tourists, educators, etc.).
- Identify and apply appropriate digital tools for engaging diverse audiences.
- Manage content and social media strategically across multiple platforms.
- Design engagement strategies tailored to their Cultural Route
- Understand how to use storytelling and interactivity to build participation

Operational Assets: Multi-channel Marketing Strategy and award winning campaign

Actionable tool: Digital promotion strategy document and action list

Key components: formulating promotion challenges, identifying (possibly new) audiences, formulating KPI's, selecting key channels, budget allocation (paid/unpaid media), measurement and technologies (identifying marketing tools and methods), content planning, content creation checklist, benchmarking and impact of the communication and dissemination approach.

Actionable Tool: Branding principles guidelines and implementation

Key components: digital (AI) tools to develop visual and educational content, apply branding principles to ensure visual and narrative cohesion, using digital tools to measure the performance of promotion materials on the website and through used media channels.

Educational Outreach Strategies

Best Practice: Cross-Promotion

Collaboration between Cultural Routes can strengthen shared visibility while reducing promotional costs. Coordinated content exchanges allow Routes to reach diverse audiences effectively.

Module 2: Digital Competencies for Engagement and Participation

This module focuses on cultivating active digital communities and encouraging user participation. The content is developed to study the current community; to facilitate and manage internal and external communication within the existing community, grow the community and engage them actively.

Learning Objectives

Participants will learn to:

- Strategically balance promotion (push) and engagement.

- Defining the purpose of building a digital community

- Goal mapping for engagement

- Channel strategy matching (mix model marketing) and user generated content

- Micro campaigning

Operational Assets: Engagement Planning

Actionable Tool: Visitor journey mapping
Ensures systematic planning for engagement and interaction in the journey of the visitor/tourist

Key components: awareness of unconscious travel planning, opportunities for activation and response strategies, the art of educational, entertaining and problem solving interaction, interactive tool mapping for engagement.

Actionable Tool: User Generated Content guidelines Provides guidance on the use of user-generated content.

Key components: Optimised use of locations, keywords, hashtags and search queries, partnering up with storytellers, guides, influencers and locals, the concept of ''letting others do the marketing for you'', the creation of authentic and relatable narratives, mapping channels for interaction and engagement in text, video, online- and in person events, platform thinking, lessons from destination marketing, multiple generation approaches.

Case Study: Virtual Story Circles

A Cultural Route used online conferencing to host story-sharing sessions. With participants' consent, recorded contributions were transformed into short audio content, strengthening community engagement and authenticity.

Accessibility Considerations

- Subtitles and captions for all video content.
- Clear, simplified language for digital materials.
- Alternative text for images to support screen readers.

Module 3: Digital Competencies for Cultural Heritage Storytelling

This module covers the principles and tools required to transform heritage knowledge into compelling (digital) narratives.

Learning Objectives

Participants will learn to:

- Develop Strong Narrative Structures to engage diverse audiences.
- **Select Appropriate Digital Formats** (video, podcast, interactive map, etc.).
- Design experiences for tourists and visitors by means of storytelling.
- Include the community and the network of stakeholders around a cultural route to make their hidden stories visible and accessible.

Operational Assets: Storytelling Framework

Actionable Tool: (Digital) Storytelling Model
A planning model to structure content before production.

Narrative Strategy: The Human Hook

Emphasizing a personal story or relatable human element enhances audience engagement and accessibility.

Layered Content Strategies

Provide multiple layers of content to accommodate varying levels of user engagement:

- **Short Hooks:** 15–30 seconds
- **Summaries:** 2–3 minutes
- **In-Depth Resources:** extended archives, long-form content, or virtual tours

Module 4: Digital Competencies for Gamification Approaches

Gamification introduces game-inspired elements to enhance visitor engagement and participation.

Learning Objectives

Participants will learn to:

- **Define Gamification** in contrast to full game development.
- **Apply Basic Game Mechanics** including points, badges, and challenges.
- **Design Simple Gamified Trails** such as scavenger hunts or location-based quizzes.
- **Measure Engagement Metrics** to assess impact.

Operational Assets: Gamification Toolkit

Actionable Tool: Gamification Design Checklist
Ensures alignment between game elements and heritage objectives.

Actionable Tool: Low-Tech Gamification Examples
Provides simple QR-based or web-based activities requiring minimal equipment.

Explanation of Core Mechanics

Definitions include points systems, digital badges, leaderboards, and narrative-driven quests.

Case Study: Manor House AR Tour

A hybrid onsite-digital experience using QR codes and simple web-based AR to create interactive historical discovery.

2.3. General Digital Best Practices for Cultural Routes

Mobile-First Approach

All digital content should be designed primarily for smartphone use due to the mobility of Route visitors.

Data Privacy and Ethics

Proper data management is essential:

- **Transparency:** Clearly communicate data collection purposes.
- **Compliance:** Follow GDPR and local regulations.
- **Data Minimization:** Avoid collecting unnecessary information.

2.4. Measuring Impact and Continuous Improvement

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Goal	Indicator	Purpose
Visibility	Website traffic (organic/referral)	Measures discoverability
Engagement	Social interaction rate	Indicates content relevance
Participation	Challenge completions / UGC submissions	Measures active involvement
Impact	Time on page / dwell time	Shows depth of engagement

Iterative Development

An iterative cycle—**Plan, Execute, Measure, Optimize**—supports continuous learning and long-term improvement.

3. NEXT ROUTES Toolkit User Manual: Adapting and Implementing European Best Practices

The NEXT ROUTES Toolkit provides Cultural Route managers with practical, no-code digital tools and a curated selection of European best practices that illustrate how innovative approaches can be translated into operational results. This chapter outlines how to use the Toolkit effectively, how to adapt its resources to the specific needs of each Route, and how to draw actionable insights from existing case studies. Its purpose is to bridge the gap between strategic training content and real-world implementation, enabling Cultural Routes to experiment, prototype, and deploy digital solutions in a structured and scalable manner.

3.1. How to Use the NEXT ROUTES Toolkit within the Training Program

As was stated above, the NEXT ROUTES Toolkit complements this Training Program by providing practical, no-code tools and real case studies that enable Cultural Routes to translate strategic concepts into concrete digital outputs. This chapter explains how to make effective use of the Toolkit, how to select and adapt its tools, and how to draw inspiration from its case studies.

Purpose of the Toolkit

The Toolkit offers a curated collection of digital tools—interactive storytelling platforms, app builders, mapping tools, augmented reality solutions, and gamification applications—designed to support Cultural Routes in:

- Developing interactive and multimedia heritage content.
- Experimenting with digital formats without the need for programming skills.
- Enhancing visitor engagement through accessible, scalable digital solutions.
- Expanding communication, visibility, and educational outreach.

How to Use Toolkit Tools within the Training Modules

Each tool category aligns naturally with one or more modules of this Training Program:

Module 1: Marketing, Promotion & Education
Relevant tools: Canva, Genially, Planoly, StoryMaps, Tilda.

Use cases: Creating visual guides, promotional media, mini-websites, interactive timelines.

Module 2: Engagement & Participation
Relevant tools: Actionbound, Izi.TRAVEL, Glide, NotebookLM.
Use cases: Building participatory activities, designing feedback loops, creating audio guides, structuring community-sourced storytelling.

Module 3: Storytelling
Relevant tools: StoryMaps, ThingLink, CoSpaces Edu, CapCut.
Use cases: Producing immersive heritage stories, 360° tours, videos, or interactive maps.

Module 4: Gamification
Relevant tools: Kahoot!, Actionbound, AR-based apps (Artivive, L'Aquila Rinasce model). Niantic SDK (location-based game plugin)
- Unity (game engine)
- Niantic Wayfarer app (3D modelling)
- Python (programming language)

Use cases: Creating quizzes, scavenger hunts, hybrid physical–digital learning experiences.

This alignment supports progressive, modular development: participants apply training concepts using ready-to-use tools and tutorials.

3.2. Working with Case Studies

The Toolkit presents numerous best practices from Cultural Routes and related heritage initiatives. These examples illustrate how no-coding tools and creative digital methods can be applied in real contexts.

When using case studies:

- **Identify the core objective:** education, visibility, participation, interpretation, or gamification.
- **Extract the methodology:** tools used, narrative structure, visitor flow, interactivity level.
- **Assess transferability:** which aspects can be adapted to your Route's themes, audiences, and capacities.
- **Start with small prototypes:** replicate a single feature (e.g., a StoryMap, a QR-based challenge, a simple app) before scaling up.

Case studies such as *MemoryLanes*, *Torviscosa on Minecraft*, *Father and Son*, or the *Faroe Islands Remote Tourism* initiative demonstrate different pathways to creative, accessible digital transformation.

3.3. Practical Workflow for Using the Toolkit

1. **Define your goal:** What experience, content, or communication need do you aim to address?
2. **Select a tool category:** Storytelling, AR/VR, Maps, Interactive Guides, Gamification, etc.
3. **Review tutorials:** Each tool is accompanied by a step-by-step guide.
4. **Develop a prototype:** Use no-code functionalities to build an initial version quickly.
5. **Test with small groups:** Gather feedback from visitors, colleagues, or partners.
6. **Refine and publish:** Adjust content based on usability, accessibility, and engagement indicators.
7. **Integrate with training modules:** Link your prototype to one of the four core competencies.

When to Use the Toolkit within Your Project Cycle

The Toolkit is designed to be used at multiple stages:

- **Conceptual phase:** explore possibilities and align tools with Route needs.
- **Production phase:** create digital content and interactive experiences.
- **Implementation phase:** deploy apps, maps, tours, or gamified routes.
- **Evaluation phase:** review impact using the KPIs described in Chapter 2.4.

3.4. Added Value for Cultural Routes

Using the Toolkit enables Cultural Routes to: - Accelerate digital transformation with minimal technical barriers. - Strengthen interpretative storytelling through multimedia and interactivity. - Improve visibility through professional digital outputs. - Engage communities and younger audiences. - Prototype innovative experiences before investing in larger projects.

The NEXT ROUTES Training Program provides a structured approach to advancing the digital capacity of European Cultural Routes across marketing, engagement, storytelling, and gamification.

This manual offers an overview of key principles and the extensive resources available through the program. By applying these practices, Cultural Route managers can help ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is preserved, promoted, and made accessible in compelling and sustainable ways.

4.   The Next Routes App: Hands-On User Manual for Cultural Routes Managers

This chapter provides a step-by-step guide to navigating the main functionalities of the App, ensuring that users can make effective and informed use of its tools. By combining operational guidance with illustrative examples, the manual aims to facilitate smooth adoption, promote consistent data management practices, and strengthen coordination across the wider European Cultural Routes framework.

4.1.   Setting the Foundations

Before creating any content within the Next Routes App, it is essential to establish a clear conceptual and operational framework. This includes defining the target audiences, identifying the core narrative of the Route, mapping the physical or thematic elements to be included, and determining the intended user journey. By clarifying these foundations early on, managers ensure coherence across all digital components and create a solid basis for subsequent design and interaction features.

Choose a sort of topics or a specific topic that the activity will address

Selecting a meaningful theme or topic is the foundation of the activity. The chosen subject should connect directly with the heritage space, whether it highlights historical events, architectural details, local traditions, or hidden stories. A well-defined topic ensures the experience feels purposeful and relevant, providing a guiding thread for participants as they explore and learn.

Define a storytelling that can bring a specific message

Storytelling is the vehicle through which knowledge becomes engaging. The narrative should be designed to communicate a clear message, weaving together facts, emotions, and imagination in a way that captures participants' attention. A strong storyline transforms abstract information into a compelling journey, helping players connect with the heritage on both an intellectual and emotional level.

The narrative must be insightful, consist of a learning process

The activity should provide participants with more than entertainment—it must foster discovery and reflection. Each step of the journey should encourage learning, offering insights that deepen understanding of the place and its cultural value. By structuring

the activity as a learning process, participants are invited not only to play but also to leave with new knowledge and perspectives.

4.2.   Designing an Engaging Experience

Designing an engaging experience involves translating the Route's cultural assets into intuitive and meaningful interactions for users. This stage focuses on structuring content in a way that is accessible, visually appealing, and aligned with the interpretative objectives of the Route. Elements such as visual hierarchy, clarity of instructions, narrative pacing, and mobile-friendly layout all contribute to ensuring that visitors can navigate the App smoothly and remain motivated to explore its full potential.

Must be attractive, in order to hook participants all along the experience, seeking for a positive impact both regarding enjoying and learning

To sustain engagement, the activity should be designed to entertain while educating. This means introducing dynamic challenges, interactive elements, and creative storytelling that continuously spark curiosity. When participants are captivated by the experience, the dual goals of enjoyment and meaningful learning can be achieved, ensuring a positive and memorable impact.

Must be connected to specific locations, in order to ensure participants can identify where to go and understand what to expect from each place

Each stage of the activity should correspond to a particular spot within the heritage site. Linking content to physical locations allows participants to explore the space in a tangible way, reinforcing their sense of place and history. Clear instructions should guide them to each location, where contextualized content helps them anticipate and interpret what they encounter.

Must establish a coherent sequence between the locations, to ensure it establishes an itinerary to be tracked

The activity should unfold through a logical and coherent route that leads participants from one location to the next. This creates a structured itinerary that not only supports navigation but also builds a progressive storyline. A thoughtful sequence ensures continuity, maintains suspense, and gives participants a sense of progress as they advance through the experience.

Define complementary ways to get the appropriate content, based on the available on-site contents' gaps

Not all heritage spaces will provide complete or accessible information on-site. To fill these gaps, the activity should integrate complementary resources such as digital reconstructions, archival materials, or oral histories. Offering multiple formats ensures that participants have access to rich and varied content, regardless of what is physically present at the location.

4.3. Working with Missions

The Next Routes gaming app offers different types of missions, each with its own unique strengths. Choosing the right combination of mission types is key to designing a dynamic and immersive experience.

Missions form the core interactive component of the App, guiding users through tasks, locations, or thematic challenges that encourage active engagement with the Route. When defining missions, managers should consider the balance between informational depth, user effort, and reward mechanisms. Each mission should clearly communicate its purpose, steps, and expected outcome, ensuring that all tasks support the overarching narrative and educational goals of the Route.

Geolocation Missions

Geolocation missions require participants to physically move to a specific spot, anchoring the activity to a real location and creating full immersion in the heritage space. They are particularly effective for encouraging exploration and fostering a sense of discovery, while strengthening the connection between the digital game and the physical environment.

When designing these missions, it is advisable to avoid large open areas such as parks, squares, or riverfronts, where GPS accuracy can make pinpointing the right location

confusing. Instead, choose concrete landmarks – such as buildings, monuments, or distinctive architectural features. Because geolocation places the target within a margin of approximately ±5 metres, selecting clear, easily identifiable locations ensures smoother navigation and a more satisfying experience for participants.

Likewise, when you wish to direct participants to a specific space such as a street, make sure to provide clear indications to help them identify the exact geolocated point, such as a street corner or the distinctive façade of a building. When using geolocation mode, it is especially important to ensure that participants can orient themselves properly, since they only have the descriptive information available to reach the correct location.

Questionnaire Missions

Question-based missions are designed to test knowledge and deepen understanding. They can prompt reflection, challenge assumptions, or reinforce key learning points, turning abstract information into an interactive learning process.

A key feature of questionnaire missions is the ability to set multiple-choice questions, where only one option is correct. This format makes the activity clear and structured, guiding participants to think critically and actively engage with the content. Wellcrafted questions can also spark discussion within groups, making the experience playful yet meaningful while ensuring participants leave with stronger knowledge of the subject.

From this perspective, missions designed in the form of a questionnaire play a central role in the overall game, while the other options serve a complementary function. Therefore, it is advisable to use missions of this type in nearly all of the locations included in the game. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the questions should present challenges connected to the surrounding environment, so that whenever possible they necessarily require the participant's physical presence at the specifically designated point along the route.

Picture Missions

These missions invite participants to take photos connected to their journey – for example, capturing landmarks, symbols, or architectural details. This task encourages close observation, attention to detail, and creativity. Picture missions make the experience interactive while also giving participants a sense of active involvement with the heritage space.

The photo-based mission provides a powerful complement to the questionnaire-based mission, as it allows participants to respond creatively through the observation and identification of details in the surrounding environment. In some cases, it may serve as

an alternative to questionnaires that face certain limitations, particularly when the content of the questions relies on environmental observation.

It is important to inform participants that photos taken within the app are not saved to their smartphone's gallery. If they wish to keep personal pictures as memories, they will need to exit the app and use their phone's camera directly. Clear communication about this ensures that participants can balance completing the missions while also collecting their own personal memories.

QR Code Missions

QR codes in the Next Routes gaming app serve a straightforward but essential function: they allow participants to complete missions by scanning them. To use this feature, organisers must create specific QR codes that correspond to each mission. Once scanned, the code validates the task and enables participants to progress through the route.

For this reason, the main purpose of the QR code understood as a landmark is to encourage the search for a very precise location that is key, to a degree of detail that geolocation alone cannot provide, while at the same time ensuring that its discovery requires the participant to complete a series of essential steps.

It's important to note that while QR codes can also be scanned outside the app to open websites or provide additional information, doing so may break the flow of immersion, since it requires leaving the app and switching to another scanner. For this reason, QR codes should primarily be treated as mission-completion tools, ensuring that the experience within the app remains seamless and engaging.

4.4. Suggested Additional Features

Beyond the essential functionalities, the App allows for the integration of complementary features that can enhance user interaction and enrich the overall experience. These may include multimedia content, geolocation prompts, quizzes, badges, or short narrative fragments that deepen interpretation. The selection of additional features should reflect both the Route's priorities and the capacities of its management team, ensuring sustainable maintenance and long-term usability.

To maximise the impact of the app, here are some extra suggestions and practical tips tailored to its functionality:

Enhancing Missions with Visuals

Although missions cannot be blended, you can enrich them by adding supportive images – archival photographs, modern views, maps, or illustrations. Visuals help participants to better understand the context, recognise details on-site, and feel more connected to the story.

Custom Reward System

Instead of generic points or badges, consider creating your own "stamps" or collectible symbols within the storyline. These could reveal new dates, terms, or code words as participants progress. For example, the stamps could represent artefacts, objects, or symbolic imagery tied to the heritage theme, turning rewards into a meaningful extension of the narrative.

Time Challenges (Outside the App)

While the app itself does not support time limits, facilitators can establish timing rules externally. For instance, groups could be given 20 minutes to complete a section of the route or a whole itinerary. This adds excitement and competitiveness when desired, without altering the app.

Accessibility Considerations

Keep in mind the needs of diverse groups, such as schoolchildren or younger participants. Simplifying language, reducing mission length, or providing supportive visuals can make the activity more inclusive and effective for audiences with different abilities and levels of knowledge.

Personal Stories as Content

Since audio and video cannot be integrated into the app, consider using written personal accounts to add emotional depth. Diaries, autobiographies, testimonies, or interviews can all be included as part of the missions. Learning history through lived experiences makes the activity richer, more human, and more memorable.

Reflection Points

Conclude your route with a reflective element. For example, ask participants in the final question to evaluate the route—what they found surprising, what they learned, or

how the experience changed their perception of the site. This reinforces learning and invites participants to think critically about their journey.

4.5.   Co-creation and Testing

The development process benefits greatly from the involvement of stakeholders, local communities, and potential users through co-creation workshops and iterative testing sessions. Gathering feedback at multiple stages allows managers to identify usability issues, validate narrative choices, and ensure accessibility across diverse audiences. Testing also supports evidence-based decision making, helping refine interactions and optimise the final version of the App.

Involve youth groups in the definition of the contents, so they can propose their own perspective

Young people should play an active role in content creation. Their perspectives, language, and cultural references can make the experience feel authentic and relevant to their peers. By involving youth groups in the design process, the activity becomes more inclusive, dynamic, and aligned with the ways young audiences like to communicate and learn.

Involve other people in testing the experience before launching it publicly

Before making the activity widely available, it is crucial to run pilot tests with diverse groups. These testing sessions allow for the identification of strengths and weaknesses, ensuring the experience is intuitive, engaging, and accessible. Gathering feedback from real participants helps refine the design and guarantees a smoother and more impactful public launch.

4.6.   After Designing: What Comes Next

Once the App's structure, missions, and content are finalised, the focus shifts to deployment, communication, and continuous improvement. Managers should prepare a launch strategy, coordinate with partners for visibility, and monitor early user data to identify areas for refinement. Post-launch, regular updates, maintenance routines, and

periodic performance reviews ensure that the App remains relevant, functional, and responsive to evolving visitor needs.

Include the proposal in your cultural programmes in order to complement your activities with a free, flexible and accessible tool

The app should be integrated into broader cultural programming as a complementary activity. Because it is free, flexible, and easily accessible, it can add value to existing initiatives without requiring major additional resources. This integration allows cultural institutions to expand their reach and offer visitors new ways of engaging with heritage.

Disseminate the Tool through Cultural Heritage Mediators and Educators

Promote the tool among mediators, educators, and cultural practitioners who can extend its reach to the intended audiences. By involving these professionals, the tool gains credibility and visibility, becoming embedded in existing cultural and educational practices.

Organise Trainings for Practitioners

Provide training opportunities for practitioners to ensure they are enhanced and well prepared to use the tool effectively. Training sessions help them understand its potential, integrate it into their work, and share it with participants in engaging and meaningful ways.

Open your Route to the contributions by other stakeholders to include new missions and perspectives

The experience should remain open and adaptable, allowing contributions from different stakeholders over time. By enabling the addition of new missions, perspectives, and stories, the activity stays dynamic and relevant. This collaborative approach not only enriches the content but also fosters a sense of shared ownership among partners, communities, and participants.

5. Conclusion: A Framework for Sustainable Digital Transformation

The NEXT ROUTES Training Methodology, Toolkit, and App, complemented by this User Manual, represent a comprehensive strategy for the digital empowerment of European Cultural Routes. The ultimate goal is twofold: not only to equip professionals with the necessary technical skills but also to foster a culture of continuous innovation and ethical heritage management.

The four core modules—Marketing, Engagement, Storytelling, and Gamification— provide a roadmap for developing digital competencies that directly translate into the ability to:

- Improve the visibility and educational outreach of the Routes.

- Build active, participatory communities.

- Transform heritage knowledge into compelling digital narratives.

- Create interactive and rewarding user experiences.

The Next Routes gaming app, with its mission-based structure, serves as a practical engine for implementing these concepts. Through the tools and case studies provided, Route managers can:

- Experiment and prototype digital solutions with minimal technical barriers.

- Integrate digital content with the physical experience through location- and observation-based missions.

- Ensure impact and relevance by applying an iterative cycle of Plan, Execute, Measure, and Optimize.

All users are encouraged to adopt a mindset of continuous improvement, utilize cocreation and testing mechanisms with diverse groups (including youth), and keep their Routes open to contributions from other stakeholders. Only through ongoing adaptation and integration of the App into broader cultural programs can its full potential be realized, ensuring the long-term vitality, accessibility, and sustainability of Europe's cultural heritage.

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