BEST PRACTICES MANUAL OF THE “EUROPEAN HISTORIC GARDENS”
COUNCIL OF EUROPE CULTURAL ROUTE

I. Background

The European Network of Historic Gardens is a not-for-profit association founded on 26 April 2016 which on the one hand aims to serve as an umbrella organisation and stable network for the largest possible number of management entities of historic gardens in Europe, and which on the other hand aims to obtain the Cultural Route Mention of the Council of Europe.

One of the Network’s main objectives is to promote and raise awareness about historic gardens, as defined by the International Historic Gardens Committee, ICOMOS-IFLA in the 1981 Florence Charter, in order to create the “European Historic Gardens” Cultural Route. Accordingly, the Network will design a high-quality cultural and historic offering aimed at developing the territories where the sites are located.

The main goals of the ENHG are as follows:

- To promote and raise awareness about historic gardens through the European Network of Historic Gardens.
- To promote relations with the Council of Europe and other European institutions, in close collaboration with the European Institute of Cultural Routes.
- To promote dialogue and exchange of best practices in order to showcase cultural heritage.
- To foster the collaboration of public authorities and private bodies in order to implement joint actions in relation to this cultural route.
- To promote and initiate educational activities related to the historic gardens that form part of the route, aimed at young people, in order to strengthen their knowledge of their roots and to consolidate their European identity.
- To harmonise, on the basis of sustainable development criteria, all the cultural and tourism activities carried out within the territory of the historic gardens.

The project grew between 2016 and 2018 in terms of both territorial representation and the number of destinations that form part of the route, reaching a membership of ten sites and institutions.

The drawing up of a Best Practices Manual (a technical action plan) forms an essential part of this process since it provides the historic gardens with a single management model and provides the Cultural Route with uniformity in respect of the integrated management of its destinations.

A European Cultural Route is defined as a route which encompasses one or several countries or regions, and which is organised around a theme whose historical, artistic
or social interest is European in nature, whether in terms of its geographical layout
or due to its content and meaning.

In this framework, the European Network of Historic Gardens has designed a Cultural
Route which aims to conserve, make known, promote and facilitate visits to historic
gardens.

The route comprises European gardens considered historic due to their scientific,
artistic or cultural interest.

The design of the route constitutes the first step in order to request acceptance by
the Steering Committee of the European Institute of Cultural Routes of this group of
historic gardens as a European Cultural Route, in accordance with the Resolution on
Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

The present document therefore constitutes the Best Practices Manual for the
management of the sites included in the “European Historic Gardens” Council of
Europe Cultural Route. The document has been drawn up by the technicians listed
below:

II. Definition

The Best Practices Manual constitutes a series of actions and measures aimed at
updating, on the basis of technical criteria, the integrated management of the Historic
Gardens included in the “European Historic Gardens” Council of Europe Cultural Route
Project, promoted by the European Network of Historic Gardens.

The manual does not perform a regulatory or executive function; it does not affect
the ownership and management of the sites currently included in the European
Cultural Route but rather it aims to bring together suitable common characteristics
that affect them or which they may decide to apply, and to incorporate and make the
most of the work already completed, along with the experience of the stakeholders
and managers of each site, pooling it for their mutual benefit.

These actions and measures are aimed at consolidating this heritage resource as a
firm commitment within the Cultural Tourism offering of the European regions and
countries that form part of the ENHG, as part of their development and their tourism
and cultural promotion policy.

This integrated management plan is based on four main pillars: PROTECTION,
RESEARCH, CONSERVATION and DISSEMINATION of the historical and natural legacy
that constitutes the offering of the European Cultural Route. Its priority actions are
promotion, dissemination and modern tourism-cultural management, employing the
solid technical criteria of the destinations.

III. Objectives of this Manual

The main objective of this document is to establish the conditions that must govern
the integrated management of the sites that form part of the “European Historic
Gardens” European Cultural Route.
While this manual does not have executive status, its goal is to provide the institutions and other stakeholders involved in the management of the aforementioned European Cultural Route with a reference advisory instrument in all the aspects necessary to ensure the protection, conservation and rehabilitation, fostering, knowledge and public dissemination of the associated Historic Gardens, along with the corresponding research and its transmission to future generations. The administrative bodies and stakeholders with competencies in the management of the sites have stated their wish to progress in the management of the Historic Gardens of Europe in the framework of the European Network of Historic Gardens.

By means of this plan, on a joint basis within the Cultural Route, the administrative bodies and stakeholders with competencies in the management of Historic Gardens will be able to foster the conditions which, in relation to the assets that form part of the route, enable access to and the conservation of culture, as well as facilitating citizens’ enjoyment, disseminating knowledge and stimulating appreciation for the historical and natural assets that are the common cultural hallmark of all the associated regions.

The main goals of this Best Practices Manual are:

1. To coordinate the application of the technical mechanisms for the legal protection of the sites.
2. To foster the drawing up of the necessary documentation of the Historic Gardens
3. To propose the suitable prevention and conservation parameters in each case, in order to ensure the optimal preservation of this heritage for future generations.
4. To propose the basic criteria for the physical protection of the sites.
5. To foster and facilitate scientific research and to disseminate its results to society.
6. To standardise the visitor schedule and conditions of access to the gardens that form part of the “European Historic Gardens” European Cultural Route, on the basis of a technical diagnosis of their conservation and real potential for receiving visitors.
7. To improve the visitor assistance service of the sites open to the general public on this Cultural Route.
8. To foster harmony between cultural and tourism management within each of the associated regions, in respect of this heritage, linking up with local entities and other management entities that focus on territorial development.
9. To foster networking, setting out basic criteria and unifying efforts between all members in order to generate synergies and close collaboration, ensuring that the infrastructures and experiences of each community are at the service of all members.
10. To integrate the ENHG in national and international channels for the general management of resources (networks, transnational associations, etc.).
11. To create a high-quality cultural tourism product, with a common image and similar services, developing a strategy for public enjoyment that is compatible with conservation.
IV. Best Practices to be observed in the destinations of the “European Historic Gardens” European Cultural Route, managed by the ENHG

The Best Practices Manual proposes a common model related to this heritage, on the basis of the work already completed by public authorities, management entities and other stakeholders, respecting the specific features of each site.

The Best Practices Manual is based on the four pillars established in the integrated management plan:

1. PROTECTION:
   - All the historic gardens included in the Cultural Route must have in place a legally defined protection system.
   - Each site will establish visit conditions that ensure its conservation, restricting any activities that may degrade the quality of the visit. In any cases, visitors must always follow the instructions of the personnel of each management entity.

2. RESEARCH:
   - The network will foster the continuous training of visitor assistance staff at each site through joint actions.
   - The stakeholders of the Cultural Route sites will put together research programmes such as:
     o Coordination and promotion of scientific research on the heritage of historic gardens.
     o Annual plan of scientific and dissemination publications on the Cultural Route sites.

3. CONSERVATION:
   - There must be a strong focus on the sustainable conservation of natural settings, fostering the efficiency of resources.
   - Any intervention carried out at the site or in its setting must be legible and reversible, minimising its visual and environmental impact.
   - Access points to the sites must be sized and adapted to the natural setting and the specific characteristics of each site.
   - The conservation of heritage must be carried out exclusively by qualified senior technicians, preferably with extensive experience in this field. The stakeholders of the sites must employ a technician responsible for its conservation and oversight.
   - Each site must establish its real visitor carrying capacity. For this purpose it must take into account the total surface area, the route open to the public, the environmental parameters of the site in natural conditions, the safety of the artistic or archaeological manifestations of the site, visitor safety and the available human resources.

4. DISSEMINATION:
The sites will strive to provide suitable information and interpretation of the sites through the specifically trained staff.

All the sites must have in place the essential resources in order for staff to work in decent and proper conditions, and in order to ensure visits with a high degree of satisfaction.

Visitor groups must not be excessively large; the maximum number of visitors per group will be established according to conservation criteria, the characteristics of the site and the quality of the visit.

Each destination must have a stable visit schedule (times and days). Any modification must be immediately incorporated in the website of the European Network of Historic Gardens.

The Network must collaborate with and facilitate the work of tourism agents and operators who create products related to the Cultural Route sites.

The Network will establish a close working relationship between the Cultural Route sites and other sites, museums or festivals based on a related theme.

The Network will strive to establish the European Day of Historic Gardens, consisting of an “open day”, in order to bring citizens into closer contact with this heritage.

The sites included in the Cultural Route will display a specific seal (plaque).

The Network will periodically carry out joint actions to publicise the Cultural Route, striving to pool the supply of data for the publication of educational material, with the goal of offering rigorously researched information.

The sites must have an information request and bookings system.

A system for the evaluation and quality control of the Cultural Route sites will be implemented. Furthermore, a study will be conducted on current and potential user types in order to design dissemination strategies in the future.

The stakeholders of the Cultural Route sites will put together socio-cultural promotion programmes such as:

- The progressive and continuous organisation of pedagogical and educational dissemination activities, in partnership with education ministries and other cultural institutions.
- The periodical organisation of talks and theme-based visits.

**V. Application stages of the Best Practices Manual**

With the goal of implementing this Best Practices Manual, the members of the ENHG, and therefore of the “European Historic Gardens” Council of Europe Cultural Route, have established the following application stages:

**Stage 1. Diagnosis:**

An initial stage has been established, to be implemented over the course of one year, in which the current status of the management of the Cultural route sites will be
determined. As such, a full diagnosis must be completed of each site, for the purpose of which the attached Diagnosis Technical Sheet (Annex I) must be filled in.

The specific goals that must be met in this stage are:

- To obtain a technical diagnosis of the protection status of each of the historic gardens of the route.
- To obtain a specific technical diagnosis of the conservation status of each of the gardens.
- To obtain a technical diagnosis related to the cultural and tourism management of heritage in each of the gardens.


Once the information is obtained, a technical committee will be set up (with at least one representative of each member entity of the ENHG), which will determine the specific needs of each site, with the goal of ensuring that the application of the Best Practices Manual is efficient.

The execution of this stage is scheduled to take no longer than two months.


A period of one year is established for implementing the Best Practices Manual in all the sites of the European Cultural Route.

At the end of this period, the technical evaluation committee will inspect the sites and verify the suitability of each site in order for it to be definitively included in the Cultural Route.

VI. Addenda to the Best Practices Manual

The goal of this section is to properly complete the manual drawn up by the institutions involved in the “Historic Gardens of Europe” Cultural Route and to adapt its content to the new guidelines of the Council of Europe for European Cultural Routes over the next few years.

1.- The “Historic Gardens of Europe” Cultural Route will be based on the historic gardens of the entire territory represented in the Council of Europe. While the route initially encompasses the signatory gardens, the goal is to progressively incorporate more regions and countries, especially those that form part of the Council of Europe and, if possible, bordering areas. It should therefore be clearly understood that there is a strong commitment to opening up the route to other regions and countries.

2.- The present project has a well-defined management model, involving a specific body for the long-term promotion and management of the resulting European Cultural Route:

i. As set forth in the statutes of the ENHG, this international association has been created in order to manage this cultural route.
ii. There is a large scientific committee with specialists at the service of the management and promotion of the route.

iii. The “Historic Gardens of Europe” Cultural Route has an approved Best Practices Manual that constitutes a road map for its management.

3.- The Cultural Route is clearly geared towards tourism. Indeed, the goals of the ENHG include the promotion of the Cultural Route as a tourism resource, as set out in Article 3 of its Statutes:

**ARTICLE 3.** – The Network aims to promote and raise awareness about the historic gardens that form part of the “European Historic Gardens“ Cultural Route, as defined by the International Historic Gardens Committee, ICOMOS-IFLA in the 1981 Florence Charter. Accordingly, the Network will design a high-quality cultural and historical offering aimed at developing the territories where the sites are located.

4.- The route aims to focus strongly on the field of promotion and knowledge of European Society, especially that of young Europeans. To this end, the following initiatives are implemented, among others:

i. The project website will feature tools related to the knowledge and dissemination of European historic gardens, especially designed for schoolchildren (primary and secondary) around Europe.

ii. Visits of European historic gardens by teaching institutions (primary and secondary schools, universities) will be promoted on the basis of specific promotional programmes.

iii. The creation of the “European Day of Historic Gardens” is one of the core activities aimed at providing future European generations with knowledge of the legacy of their history.

iv. Specific educational workshops will be organised for school parties at the sites of the Cultural Route.

v. Educational guides will be published in all the regions, devoted to interpreting and disseminating knowledge of the heritage of historic gardens.

5.- In addition to the dissemination and promotion of the sites, other related multidisciplinary aspects will be fostered, such as environmental protection and sustainability. Furthermore, the Historic Gardens will be promoted as part of European History of Art through the creation of specific initiatives aimed at relating the artistic and natural heritage of these sites to other artistic manifestations which they may have inspired over the course of history.

6.- The access of all people to the Historic Gardens will be promoted. In this respect, work will be carried out to make them accessible to persons of reduced mobility.

**ANNEX I:**

Diagnosis Technical Sheet.

Site:

- Location:
- Signage close to the site:
- Infrastructures (access points):
- Infrastructures (lighting):
- Infrastructures (others):
- Staff employed:
- Staff management:
- Visit schedule:
- Daily/annual visitor limit:
- Group visits:
- Bookings (booking method):
- Admission price:
- Visitor information:
- Conservation of the setting:
- Heritage conservation:
- Needs raised by staff:
- Detected infrastructure needs:
- Observations: