

## SPECIFIC ACTION FORMAT “COOPERATION” – GAL DELTA 2000

VERSION OF 22 JANUARY 2026

CODE: DE\_CO\_02

TYPE OF ACTION: TRANSNATIONAL

TITLE OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION SHEET COOPERATION – LAG DELTA 2000

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The idea of including a transnational cooperation project in the Leader LDP to reconstruct routes and stages linked to the historical trade exchanges of the “Silk Road in Europe” arose from proposals made during consultations, in which interest was expressed in studying and tracing stages and routes, thanks to the participation of the Municipality of Cervia in the project 'The European Silk Road', promoted by the Council of Europe, the Municipality of Venice and the Italian headquarters of the Council of Europe. The project, which is to be developed thanks to Leader cooperation, involving LAG areas at European level, is part of the European Cultural Routes promoted by the Council of Europe and the European Institute of Cultural Routes

### PROJECT IDEA TITLE:

THE SILK ROAD: silk production and commercial routes in rural areas of Europe

### RELATED THEMATIC AREA OF INTERVENTION

5. LOCAL SOCIO-CULTURAL AND TOURISM-RECREATIONAL PROVISION SYSTEMS

### RELATED NSP (National Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy) OBJECTIVE

OS.8 PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT, GROWTH, GENDER EQUALITY, INCLUDING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS, INCLUDING THE CIRCULAR BIOECONOMY AND SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT IDEA

The idea of including a transnational cooperation project in the Leader Local Action Plan (LAP) to reconstruct routes and sites associated with historical trade along the 'Silk Road in Europe' emerged from proposals made during consultations. Interest in studying and tracing these routes was expressed, thanks to the Municipality of Cervia's participation in the 'European Silk Road' project, which is promoted by the Council of Europe, the Municipality of Venice, and the Italian Council of Europe headquarters. The term 'Silk Road' refers to the network of caravan routes that connected Europe to the Far East from around the 2nd century BC to the 14th century AD. Historically, the Silk Road was not a single road, but rather a network of land and sea routes. Furthermore, silk was not the only commodity transported along the Silk Road; other goods were transported too, including spices (primarily pepper), pearls, handicrafts such as pottery, and certain breeds of horses. The aim is to enhance and promote sites that were historically involved in trade between Europe and the East. Ravenna played an important role in this during the Byzantine period (4th and 5th centuries AD), a role that continued into the Middle Ages (13th and 14th centuries AD). *“In the 13th century, Venice was the dominant maritime power in the Mediterranean and the Mongols ruled over a vast empire that included China, Persia, Russia and Central Asia. The Mongol conquest integrated regional politics and economies into a continental space where trade and diplomatic relations flourished. The union between the continental circuits controlled by the Mongols and the*

*maritime routes leading to Europe, managed by Genoa and Venice, gave rise to enormous possibilities (...).” (Venice and the Mongols: Trade and Diplomacy on the Silk Roads in the Middle Ages (13th-15th centuries) – Authors N. Di Cosmo-L. Pubblici - Published by Viella 2022). In the Middle Ages, Venice had a monopoly on the salt trade, and so it is interesting to consider the salt routes at that time. By the end of the 13th century, Venice had taken ownership of the salt pans, first in Chioggia and then in Cervia. This meant that they were able to control the trade of the "white gold", by controlling the routes between the Adriatic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea (see ArcheoClub Venezia – Quarterly June 2006).*

Taking into account the historical context, we plan to examine the stages and routes of the 'Silk Road', which pass through rural areas in Italy and other European countries. The project is organised around themes of historical, artistic and social interest in Europe, considering both the geographical routes and their content and significance. Local action groups and stakeholders from rural areas who are interested in developing these itineraries and historical insights in their own and neighbouring territories will be involved. The project is based on the following principles promoted by the Council of Europe:

1. They must represent European values.
2. They must be based on research by multidisciplinary groups of experts.
3. They must illustrate a European memory, history and heritage connected with current European cultural diversity.
4. They must promote innovative initiatives in cultural tourism and sustainable development.

The project is closely linked to and complements the ARACNE project carried out by CREA as part of the European HORIZON Europe programme. The ARACNE project, which began on 1 March 2023, will end on 28 February 2026. As part of the ARACNE project, the following activities were carried out in collaboration with the European partners involved:

- Research into the main points of interest of the silk heritage in the partner countries
- Research into ancient mulberry trees in the area and their geolocation, description and genetic analysis
- Multiplication of old silkworm strains for the breeding of at least one ancient strain in the country of origin
- Educational activities in schools and collaboration on the above research
- Involvement of museums and creative industries in promoting the cultural heritage of silk through fashion collections and gamification projects
- Historical research in archives

The expected outputs at the end of the project are:

- Creation of a virtual map of points of interest related to silk
- Creation of collections of germplasm identified in the territory in collection fields
- Provision of multiplied strains for silkworm farmers
- Creation of an educational kit for silkworm breeding, a guide for silkworm farmers, a video, a catalogue of CREA silkworm stains, and a set of recommendations for the establishment of a European Cultural Route of Silk, a catalogue, a virtual showcase for the

collections created by creative industries as part of the project, and gamification tools for museums participating in the project.

- Creation of a first local route in the Cévennes and Georgia.

### Living Labs and Leader

Thanks to the “living lab” workshops launched by CREA in 2025 on the “Silk Road”, LAG DELTA 2000 joined the promoting committee to develop the Leader cooperation project in close synergy with CREA and the LAG partners who will join the Silk Road Leader project.

The Leader project, thanks to the work already started by the Horizon ARACNE project, intends to focus on the relationships and itineraries of silk production and marketing in Europe, enhancing historical sources and oral testimonies from key stakeholders to reconstruct the entire silk production chain and contribute to the organisation and promotion of a cultural itinerary of the Silk Road in Italy and Europe, promoting rural areas.

The topics that may be addressed, in line with the guidelines of the project developed by the European Council, will include, for example: textile activities from craftsmanship to industry; silkworm rearing and its social, economic, agricultural and landscape impact; silk in painting, fashion and design; research and development in silk production, historical artefacts dedicated to trade (e.g. the so-called markets that took place in the ‘Pavaglioni’), spinning mills, etc.

### The proposed Leader cooperation project “Via della Seta” (Silk Road) envisages the following actions:

1. **Scientific Steering Committee:** thanks to the activities carried out by CREA's Living Lab “Silk Road”, a scientific coordination committee will be set up, involving representatives from CREA Policies and Bioeconomy and CREA Agriculture and Environment, the Sericulture Laboratory of Padua, universities, etc. The Scientific Committee may meet online or in person. In addition to the members of the Scientific Committee, the members of the Coordination Committee of the LAGs involved in the project and any experts involved in the project will participate in the Committee. The Scientific Committee will meet at least twice a year to review progress, contribute to the implementation of activities, participate in events organised by the LAGs in implementation of the project, and liaise with the leader of the Leader Silk Road project and the European Institute for Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe - Venice Office, etc. **Types of expenses envisaged:** travel, board and lodging expenses for the participation of the members of the Scientific Committee, to be borne by the LAGs and the Leader project. The cost of the staff of the LAGs involved is included in the costs of the Coordination Committee for the management of the project.
2. **LAG Coordination Committee and project management:** a LAG Coordination Committee will be set up, involving LAG coordinators or other LAG staff members. In addition to the usual activities involved in managing a Leader cooperation project by the LAG partners, at least two meetings per year will be held with all the LAG project partners in order to plan activities, monitor the physical and financial progress of the project, etc. Each LAG will liaise with its regional representatives regarding the management and reporting of the project. In order to optimise time, the LAG coordination meetings will also include a meeting of the scientific committee. **Types of expenditure envisaged:** internal staff, external experts, travel, board and lodging.
3. **General mapping:** With reference to the guidelines produced as part of the ARACNE project, the methodology for mapping historical and current points of interest involved in the silk production chain will be adopted in order to complete the mapping in the rural

areas involved in the project. Each LAG will collaborate on the mapping based on the methodology that will be made available by CREA in Padua, developed as part of the ARACNE project. The mapping activities will draw not only on historical sources, but also on existing oral sources in the territories, in order to build an interactive map of points of interest in the silk production chain and create a historical and cultural itinerary that is part of the European cultural itinerary. Each LAG will carry out this mapping with its own staff or by involving external experts and collaborators. The mapping work will be coordinated and supervised by CREA in Padua, a member of the Scientific Committee, as well as by the lead LAG. **Types of expenditure envisaged:** Staff or external experts.

4. **Local community maps:** based on the general mapping, the LAGs will draw up local maps showing the routes that connect and link the historical, cultural and productive points of interest along the Silk Road itinerary. The maps will be created with content related to the route, but also with anecdotes, curiosities and stories collected through a participatory approach involving local stakeholders. These maps will be created as community maps, borrowing the methodological approach used by ecomuseums. **Types of expenses envisaged:** External services for the drafting of maps, expert facilitators for the collection of information using a participatory approach, etc. Each LAG, based on the common methodology developed by the LP and shared with the LAGs and the scientific committee, will proceed with the collection and drafting of community maps.
5. **Creation of routes:** by systematising and cross-referencing the mapping of the general itinerary and the local community maps, each LAG will develop an itinerary/route that enhances and links the points of interest of the Silk Road in a circuit. This route will be part of the European cultural itinerary of the Silk Road thanks to the continuity and interaction with the work done within the ARACNE project and thanks to the scientific collaboration of CREA. **Types of expenses envisaged:** External services for the creation of the itinerary and production of digital material and paper folders promoting the itineraries created. The promotional material includes the creation of paper material with a common map showing all the local LAG routes on one side and details of the “local” route on the other. The materials produced will be in both paper and digital format, in two languages (Italian or, if LAGs from other countries participate, in their native language and in English).
6. **Promotion and awareness:** in order to promote the itineraries both in Italy and abroad, educational tours will be organised for tour operators interested in cultural tourism at national and international level. Press tours will also be organised with journalists from the sector in order to publicise the cultural itineraries created. **Types of expenses covered:** Hospitality expenses for participating tour operators and journalists. Each LAG will organise educational tours within its available budget, hosting the number of people interested. The lead LAG will also cover the costs of an expert to carry out scouting research on the most suitable areas and targets to involve in the educational tours.
7. **Local events and awareness raising:** in order to raise awareness among the local population about the historical and cultural value of the Silk Road, local events will be organised at points of interest and/or in locations that each LAG considers to be of interest in raising awareness among the general public. Cultural and economic education courses on the Silk Road may also be organised in local schools. Each LAG, based on its own characteristics and specificities, may involve lower or upper secondary schools, or primary schools, developing specific educational modules and initiatives for the target audience to be involved. **Types of expenditure envisaged:** Expenditure for the organisation of events and educational activities in schools. Each LAG, based on the available budget, may tailor the activities to the specific characteristics of its territory and itinerary.

**FINAL OUTPUT: Contributing, through the activities carried out and the materials produced, to the recognition of the European Cultural Route Silk Road and generating added value for the rural areas of the LAGs by promoting new “tourism-cultural” products that can create new jobs and new economic activities.**

**Note: In order to achieve the objectives, each LAG interested in participating must have sufficient budget available in SRG 06 Cooperation for the Silk Road project to participate in at least activities 1-2-3-4-5.**

**Following the collection of expressions of interest in joining the project, a detailed budget will be drawn up.**

TIMELINE:

- **BY FEBRUARY 2026** INITIAL MEETING WITH THE LAGS THAT HAVE ALREADY CONFIRMED THEIR PARTICIPATION, INCLUDING A REVIEW OF THE TIMELINE AND PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING DOCUMENTATION TO THE RELEVANT REGIONAL MANAGING AUTHORITIES.
- **BY MARCH 2026** FINAL COLLECTION OF EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FROM LAGS AND SECOND MEETING OPEN TO ALL LAGS THAT HAVE ADHERED TO THE INITIATIVE.
- **BY APRIL 2026** CLOSURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP AND FORMALISATION OF THE APPLICATION FORM AND THE COOPERATION AGREEMENT.
- **PROJECT LAUNCH:** STARTING FROM JUNE 2026, IN LINE WITH THE APPROVAL PROCEDURES OF THE RESPECTIVE REGIONAL AUTHORITIES.
- **DURATION 24 MONTHS FROM APPROVAL OF THE PROJECT BY THE REGION OF THE LEAD LAG.**

#### TERRITORIAL AREAS WITH WHICH TO DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS

**Territorial areas of LAGs in Europe affected by trade routes historically linked through silk trade relations**

#### FINANCIAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE LAGS FOR THE PROJECT

LAG DELTA 2000 proposing Lead partner: 66.000,00 €

LAG XXX

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