

**PROGRAMMATIC MANIFESTO
OF THE EUROPEAN ROUTE
"LONGOBARD WAYS ACROSS EUROPE"
A Virtual Region and the "Primary Cultural Root of Europe"**

PART I – THE VALUE OF THE HERITAGE: THE PRIMARY CULTURAL ROOT

The European Cultural Route "*Longobard Ways across Europe*" (LWaE), conceived and promoted by the Longobardia Association, is configured as more than a simple mapping of archaeological sites; it is a historical and conceptual restoration of a "Virtual European Region". It unites, within a single geo-cultural corridor stretching from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, 8 current sovereign States and approximately 300 transnational sites (in Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, Switzerland, and Croatia), as well as over 1,300 recorded locations in Italy.

As formally recognized by UNESCO in 2011 and ratified by the International Scientific Committee "Amelio Tagliaferri", Longobard culture represents the "*primary root of European Culture, subsequently inherited and developed by the Carolingians*". Finally, the Longobard millennium—extending from the 1st century BC in the Lower Elbe basin until 1076 AD with the fall of the Principality of Salerno—constitutes the longest period of historical continuity in the West after that of Roman rule from its foundation (753 BC) to the end of the Western Empire (476 AD).

PART II – A MODEL FOR CONTEMPORARY CITIZENSHIP: THE CAPACITY FOR INTEGRATION

In an era in which European Institutions are working to give concrete substance to the shared concept of "European Citizenship", the Longobard epic offers itself as the most successful example of a fruitful migration and integration

phenomenon that took place in the Early Middle Ages—a period long and arbitrarily deemed "dark".

The Manifesto identifies three transnational pillars of value:
1-The Longobards constituted the vehicle for the European continent's transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages through an extraordinary cultural contamination, which united:

- Northern Germanic and Scandinavian traditions;
- Classical Greco-Roman and Late Antique cultures;
- The spirituality and organizational structures of the Christian Church;
- Byzantine-Eastern, Slavic, Bulgarian, and ultimately Arabic influences.

2-The LWaE Route recovers ancient shared Values, superimposing them onto historical variations and current divisive trends, thereby contributing to the political, cultural, and economic bonding between Western and Eastern Europe.

- **From Conflict to Integration (Evergetism):** Overcoming the historical prejudice that painted the Longobard people as irrevocably hostile to pre-existing state systems and the Catholic Church, history demonstrates that the Longobards did not destroy the pre-existing social and religious fabric. Instead, they regenerated it. On one hand, they achieved a rapid evolution toward forms of coexistence and early contamination; on the other, they developed expressions of evergetism, profound devotion, and spiritual submission. Examples range from the *Christianus ac Catholicus* law of King Liutprand in 728, to the multiple expressions of devotion shown through the foundation of places of worship associated with the collection of relics of Early Christian Saints. Notable instances include King Liutprand's recovery of the relics of Saint Augustine in Sardinia, Arechi II's foundation of the Church of Santa Sofia in Benevento, and Sicone I's translation of the remains of Saint Januarius (San Gennaro) from Naples to Benevento.

3-The Legislative and Cultural Synthesis: The Longobard legislative systems (among which the Edict of Rothari and the laws of Liutprand stand out) successfully preserved ancient customs while integrating them with the traditions and cultures of subjugated populations. This also laid the foundations for the earliest experiences of the proto-Italian vernacular language, grafting Germanic toponymy and vocabulary onto the Greco-Latin root.

PART III – RESPONDING TO THE DEMANDS OF YOUTH: A DYNAMIC AND PARTICIPATORY TOURISM

Regarding today's youth, the program of the "Longobard Ways across Europe" Cultural Itinerary helps transform the notion of tourism from a visit to a "static museum" into a modern, dynamic, interactive, and ecological experience guided by the following operational lines:

1-Archaeology between the Fascination of Discovery, Scientific Rigor, and the Recovery of Civic and Faith Testimonies

Young people do not inherit a closed history, but rather participate in an ongoing investigation. **The European University Network** (coordinated by the University of Salerno and featuring participation from the Universities of Hamburg, Vienna, and Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, among others) develops dialogue initiatives with open archaeological sites. Examples include the excavation of **the "Blacksmiths' Village" in Lüneburg** (which compensates for the scarcity of monumental evidence in Northern Europe by showcasing the metallurgical excellence of their origins); the study of the small **church of S. Ambrogio alla Rienna in Montecorvino Rovella (Salerno)**, which witnesses the contamination of cults between the Longobards of Southern Italy and the subsequent Carolingian component in the North; **genetic research carried out in coordination between Vienna and other universities**; and canonical

recognitions and scientific investigations into the relics of Saints collected and venerated by the Longobards.

2-The "T-Factor" and the Central Role of the Longobard Woman

In contrast to the rigidity of other contemporary laws (such as the Salic Law of the Franks), Longobard society recognized **a strong decision-making weight, an original magical-sacred role, and matrilineal forms** in the transmission of lineage to women. The **figure of Queen Theodelinda** (referred to within LWaE as the "T-Factor") and the actions of the *Mulieres Salernitane* (Salernitan Women) in the medical field become formidable levers of cultural marketing for the new generations, offering thematic itineraries linked to female empowerment and cultural diplomacy.

3-Active Tourism and the Natural Environment as a "Historical Highway"

Where the territories of Central and Northern Europe do not present the monumental wealth of Italy (the leading area of the Project), the leading role shifts to the **Natural Environment**. The large river corridors (the Elbe, the Danube) and the collaboration **with the CAI (Italian Alpine Club) and equivalent European associations** for the recovery of Alpine and Apennine mountain paths transform the route into a paradise **for historical trekking, taking the form of tourism on foot, by bicycle, or on horseback.**

4-Narrative Tourism (Narraturismo): Giving Soul to Stones

Through the tool of Narrative Tourism, the lack of physical evidence in certain stages is supplemented by the power of digital storytelling (podcasts, geolocalized audio guides, augmented reality). Young travelers will have the opportunity not just to observe a stone or a fortified river crossing (such as the *castra* of the Friulian foothill *limes*), but to listen to the voices of the protagonists who lived through the epochal transition toward the birth of medieval Europe, brought to life through AR.

PART IV – NETWORK OF EUROPEAN SOURCES: MUSEUMS AND HISTORICAL ARCHIVES

The current repositories of the Values expressed by Longobard Culture are the Museums and Historical Archives that safeguard its material and documentary evidence. The coordination of these Institutions within the network "*Sources of European Culture - Primary Longobard Root*" (promoted by the Longobardia Association) unites lighthouse institutions such as the Cathedral Museum of Monza, the MAN (National Archaeological Museum) of Cividale del Friuli, the Museum of the Early Middle Ages in Rome, the Schwedenspeicher Museum in Stade (Germany), the Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna, the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest, and the State Archives of Lucca, Benevento, Salerno, and Modena, as well as the archives of the monasteries of Bobbio, the SS. Trinità of Cava de' Tirreni, Saint Gall in Switzerland, and others.

The network assumes the role of bringing full light to a heritage that represents an objective and substantial reference point. This serves both to complete the fertile early medieval—and specifically Longobard—historical framework from a cognitive and educational perspective, and to elaborate studies and conceptual guidelines regarding the development of integration policies and capabilities that have always characterized the evolution of European societies.

PART V – LINES OF DEVELOPMENT ("IDENTITY CLUSTERS")

Every territory touched by the Longobard Ways is organized into "Identity Clusters": geographic microcosms in which archaeological evidence merges with the landscape and traditional resources (crafts, agri-food, food culture).

This organizational model guarantees the economic sustainability of the Route, creating real opportunities for tourism enterprises, "green" hospitality, and new openings in economic sectors—**especially for the youth of the involved territories**—transforming historical memory into an original, tourism-economic engine for sustainable development.

