

# THE COLUMBAN CHARTER OF PARTNERSHIP

We, the undersigned, declare our intention to help support and promote pilgrimage, cultural and scientific activities relating to Saint Columbanus and to his travels and those of his followers, including Saint Gall, in all regions and countries where their memory remains alive. In particular, we commit to the following aims and purpose:

To develop and promote the pilgrimage routes that link the territories that celebrate Columbanus, Gall and their followers and that broadly follow the many journeys they took, in particular through, Ireland, Britain, France, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Italy. Many of these pilgrimage routes are mapped out in the Via Columbani website.

To promote cultural activities that relate to these themes or are in support of the project, on an interregional and international level. To encourage cultural, educational, spiritual and scientific exchanges of all kinds between these territories, for people of all ages and origins.

To work with scientists, scholars and teachers, to have a broader understanding of the life, historical context, work, heritage and spirituality of Columbanus, Gall and their disciples; and more generally of the Irish monastic movement in Europe.

In all of the above, to work in a spirit of openness, tolerance and respect, following the example of Columbanus and his disciples, who cherished the natural world, all creatures that inhabit it and all people, whatever their origins and beliefs. Also to encourage partnership, peace and reconciliation between all territories, organisations and peoples.

To develop and maintain relations with European Union institutions, in particular with the Council of Europe, with the goal, in due course, of requesting certification of the Columban Way/Via Columbani as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. In addition, to foster dialogue and exchange of good practices with other Cultural Routes on all subjects mentioned above.

## THE CONTEXT

In the sixth to eighth centuries of our era, a time of upheaval throughout continental Europe, the monastic communities of Ireland were a haven of stability, promoting literacy and learning. These centres sent monks to mainland Europe, to found or develop communities that were later to become the great monasteries of the Middle Ages. This period is known by historians as that of the Irish Monastic Movement.

Among the first to travel across Europe were Saints Columbanus and Gall, to whom we owe the great monasteries of Luxeuil, Saint-Gallen, Bregenz and Bobbio, and the convent of Jouarre, still operating today. Many other centres were founded by their followers and disciples.

Columbanus was also a poet and writer of letters and sermons, a number of which have survived. His values were founded on peace and tolerance. He was the first to give voice to the concept of 'Europe' as a single united entity, overcoming ethnic and cultural barriers.

1400 years later, the memory of these journeys and of these teachings is still alive wherever Columbanus and Gall travelled and settled. From Columbanus' birthplace in Mt. Leinster on Carlow/Wexford border, from Bangor Abbey (Northern Ireland) where they set sail to Bobbio, where Columbanus' tomb can still be visited; in Ireland, France, Switzerland, Austria and Italy, their memory lives in the names of towns, villages and churches; in associations, cultural events and celebrations.

## THE NATURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

This partnership is formed between public and private organisations, large and small, including faith communities, private groups, clubs and voluntary associations, with cultural, sporting, spiritual or charitable goals; as well as public bodies such as libraries and museums; but also regions, towns, local authorities or protected natural areas.

Any private or public body may put forward their desire and intention to join this partnership; and will be accepted if they actively support and work towards the aims and purposes listed above. It is understood that the purpose of this partnership is to facilitate exchange, collaboration and friendship between these organisations. It is specified that no member will have authority over any other as a result of this partnership; each member of the partnership maintaining their full independence and freedom of action.



