

## **Introduction (Summary)**

### **Looking back**

In 2025 The Van Gogh Europe network will celebrate its 10th anniversary. So much have been achieved! Two major activities can be highlighted that have laid the foundation for Van Gogh Europe:

- The celebration of the 125th anniversary of Van Gogh's death in 2015, during which we seized the opportunity of Mons being the Cultural Capital and the reopening of the Van Gogh Museum entrance to organize a grand Van Gogh Year.
- The EU project PITCH (Promoting International Tourism Cultural Heritage) Van Gogh Europe. This project led to the first development of travel packages for the cultural travel industry, and the creation of a first version of a joint consumer website, and extensive research by Breda University of Applied Sciences (BUAS) into travel motivations and international interest in Van Gogh.

Based on the PITCH project, VGE collaborated with SRC Reizen for the first time, which reintroduced this offer to the market last year. In collaboration with educational institutions, BUAS cannot be overlooked. As early as 2013, they developed the joint storylines "Becoming Vincent" and "Being Vincent" based on their academic expertise in storytelling."

Over the years the network grew with new partners, in knowledge and in public engagement. More and more colleagues are finding each other through the network, and sharing knowledge about Van Gogh has now become more of a habit than an extra effort. *"The years of growth must make way for consolidation and reflection. What more can we achieve with the network, and how can we further showcase Vincent van Gogh's heritage through collaboration, and what kind of collaboration does tars."* Before you is the strategic plan outlining the objectives for the next four years.

### **Reflection Period 2019-2023**

The last few years were dominated by the aftermath of the Coronavirus crisis; expanding and consolidating the network; carrying out activities for the anniversary year of 2023; and exploring new opportunities for cooperation. A number of activities were postponed or carried out differently due to the Coronavirus crisis. The partner meetings took place partly online and partly on location. This approach worked well in connection with reducing extra travel for many partners.

The mission of Van Gogh Europe has evolved with the times. After 2020, the board formulated it more precisely: *The Van Gogh Europe Foundation is a network of collaborating European locations and collections that are associated with Vincent van Gogh's life and work. It aims to make Van Gogh's cultural heritage accessible to a wide audience in order to inspire, unite and engage current and future generations. All activities organized by the Van Gogh Europe Foundation now adhere to this mission. The network strengthens their forces and share knowledge to access Van Gogh's cultural heritage.*

### **Education**

To inspire young people about Van Gogh's heritage, collaboration has been sought with several training institutes. Since 2019, Van Gogh Europe has been collaborating with the ISC Business School in Paris (Intercultural Business & Management), KU Leuven

(Economics and Sustainable Entrepreneurship programme), and the Amsterdam Business School of the University of Amsterdam (Entrepreneurship and Management in the Creative Industries). Every year, dozens of students in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands are inspired to develop business cases using Van Gogh's network and heritage. In the process, many surprising projects have been devised in recent years,

generating enthusiasm among students and providing inspiration for the network partners involved.

### **Development**

To explore the possibilities for commercial activities, a collaboration was entered into with associated partner SRC Reizen in 2022. This resulted in a pilot in 2023 for several trips to network partners in the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. SRC Reizen handled the marketing costs, organization, and administration of the trips, while Van Gogh Europe provided time and joint promotion. In addition to bus trips, special fly-and-drive trips have been developed for individual travellers. Although the public was very enthusiastic, the development slows down and comes to a halt. SRC Reizen limited the assortment and chooses only to offer three routes.

The cooperation agreement signed by four associated partners in 2019 shows that the network also brings parties together. Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions (NBTC), Van Gogh Brabant, Marketing Drenthe, and VisitBrabant have entered into a multi-year collaboration to connect Vincent van Gogh's life story and heritage with the landscape, to sustainably develop its range, and to strengthen its visibility.

The goal of obtaining the European Heritage Label for Van Gogh Europe was not achieved in the past period. The various partners and the board could not reach a consensus on the value and need for this label and especially the return of effort. However, obtaining it is still under discussion. We would like to continue and set up a feasibility study.

### **Communication**

In recent years, Van Gogh Europe has developed strong communication channels. Online media has grown significantly, with Instagram followers increasing from 14 to over 19 thousand, and Facebook followers rising from over 7 to almost 8 thousand. A LinkedIn account was created and gained 1,000 followers within a year.

### **Anniversary year**

2023 was a special year. The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam celebrated its 50th anniversary with two major exhibitions, the completely renovated Van Gogh Village Nuenen reopened, it was 150 years since Van Gogh stayed in London, and 140 years since he arrived by train for a three-month stay in Drenthe. Several activities were organized by Van Gogh Europe, including a seminar on art and mental well-being in Paris and a conference in Emmen about Van Gogh's heritage and the international partners' efforts to purchase and renovate their locations, making them more public-friendly. For that year, the Van Gogh Europe logo was refreshed, the website updated, and a new brochure published. A route app was developed along six sites in the four countries. External financial contributions were sought and found within Europe for all these activities.

The preparations for the anniversary year consumed significant time from the board and the project manager, resulting in the postponement of the meeting for and writing of our new strategic plan by a year. The additional benefit is that the time period now coincides with the policy periods of most museums and governments.

The network has grown successfully over the past period, thanks to the great efforts of the project manager. This means that maintaining this network is reaching its limits, given the available capacity of the project manager. This is one of the points of attention that Van Gogh Europe will include in the next policy period.

**Current Situation**

In 2024, Van Gogh Europe is a foundation with a clear profile, serving as a point of contact for many institutions regarding Van Gogh's heritage in the Netherlands, Belgium, England, and France, and as a serious discussion partner for commercial parties interested in Van Gogh's heritage. Van Gogh Europe now consists of 25 heritage and museum partners and four associated partners.

In recent years, thanks to the benevolent cooperation of the Van Gogh Museum, our project manager has been able to work full-time for the network, instead of the 12 hours she had been allocated by the Van Gogh Europe Foundation. The current success of Van Gogh Europe has been partly due to this extensive effort.

However, from 2024 this will no longer be possible. The board has considered the future and the project manager's hours commitment in relation to continuing the success. This has resulted in an agreement with the Van Gogh Museum, whereby the project manager can be seconded from the museum to Van Gogh Europe for 18 hours per week in total. Although this means fewer hours, it still provides more hours for project management compared to previous years.

**Strategic goals 2025-2028****Introduction**

Van Gogh Europe is a network organization focused on the interconnection of its network partners. All our activities are aimed at strengthening this network and raising its profile. The activities are aimed at promoting the locations in question, education and the mutual sharing of knowledge about Van Gogh and his heritage. In doing so, we remain committed to our mission and continue the work as much as possible within the 18 hours of project management.

The rapid and strong growth of Van Gogh Europe has increased the need to focus more on the governance, quality, and sustainability of the network, as well as the prioritization of activities. These are the challenges facing the Van Gogh Europe Foundation in the coming years.

**Mission**

The Van Gogh Europe Foundation is a network of collaborating European locations and collections that are associated with Vincent van Gogh's life and work. Working together as partners, through networking, carrying out projects and supporting each other, the foundation aims to make Van Gogh's cultural heritage accessible to a wide audience in order to inspire, unite and engage current and future generations.

**Organization****1. In the coming period, the board is committed to further professionalizing the governance and project management of the Van Gogh Europe Foundation.****GOAL: clearer responsibilities and formalize collaborations.**

- We will review the statutes of Van Gogh Europe to determine if they are still up to date or if adjustments are needed.
- We will define the responsibilities of the board members and provide a profile of each individual board member.
- We will confirm the secondment of project management in collaboration with the Van Gogh Museum.

- We will develop new infrastructure for communication within the board and across the network partners. We will explore ways to engage the network partners in realizing the strategic plan, for example by working with subgroups on different topics.
- We will investigate new revenue models to support common educational or other projects.
- We will formulate criteria for different kind of partnerships and assess whether the financial contributions of the partners are still in line with the network's activities.

**In the coming period, we will consolidate the current partner base and ensure an improvement in the quality of activities within the network.**

**GOAL: from quantity to quality.**

- Two network meetings will be organized annually: one online and one on location at one of the network partners. All network partners will be invited to these events.
- We will reinforce the methods of knowledge sharing among partners.
- We will assess the wishes of our current partners regarding the network.
- In consultation with the partners, we will define the responsibilities and criteria of network partners and request a declaration of intent to adhere to them.
- Every other year, we will organize a seminar with an educational focus for our partners.
- We will organize a major conference for our partners and organizations that share common ground with the theme in question, only when there is a special occasion, like a jubilee year.

**By 2028, we aim to be THE network that deal with Van Gogh's heritage in the Netherlands, Belgium, England, and France.**

**GOAL: official status that create better changes for fundings.**

- We will communicate the value of this network as widely as possible to relevant authorities within Europe.
- Commercial parties will be able to contact Van Gogh Europe.
- We will apply to join a European label (preferable European Heritage Label) to obtain a quality label, thus increasing the network's visibility. We can apply for fundings as an official network organisation and it can help partners in encouraging local support.
- We will set up a working group for applying for the heritage label.

## **Education**

**We will continue educational projects and explore new opportunities to inspire younger generations with Van Gogh's heritage.**

**GOAL: inspire young professional for the network and Van Goghs heritage.**

- We will maintain our current educational projects, adjusting the number of projects to fit the available hours.
  - In line with our cultural ANBI status, no fee will be charged for participation in these projects. However, travel and accommodation costs will be billed.
- We will develop new joined educational projects about Van Gogh and his heritage, ensuring joint promotion of these initiatives.
- We will encourage the sharing and reuse of existing educational content from our partners to extend programs.
- We will set up a workgroup for education.

## **Marketing and Promotion**

**We will evaluate our collaboration with tourism partners and investigate new revenue models.**

**GOAL: a healthier financial mix.**

- We will evaluate our collaboration with tourism partners.

- We will evaluate the route app. The route app will be updated in 2026, if it has been successful for the coming years
- We will explore other financial possibilities
- We will set up a working group for marketing & communications.

**We will create a communication plan to enhance the promotion of all partners.**

**GOAL: Van Gogh Europe known as our shared story line.**

- This will be done in a two-step way: from B2B to a wider audience.
- We will continue to promote heritage and story of Van Gogh.
- We will evaluate the current channels, like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and the website, to make those more effective.
- Promotional materials will be evaluated and we will facilitate the partners with regularly updated promotion tools.
- We will create more interaction and interplay between the partners to reinforce all the activities from the partners. We as a group create more collectively than the individual components. "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts".
- Action: create a communication plan to enhance the promotion of all partners.

### **Implementation**

Depending on where the emphasis is placed the board will prioritize the goals and involve partners for certain challenges. During the period strong choices will be made. The strategic plan will be translated in an activity plan and will be evaluate every year.

**Attachment****Trends in cultural tourism that we keep in mind.**

Cultural tourism in Europe is a vibrant and evolving sector, influenced by various trends that reflect changing traveller preferences, technological advancements, and the broader socio-economic landscape. Here are some key trends shaping cultural tourism in Europe:

**1. Sustainable and Responsible Tourism**

- Travelers are increasingly seeking sustainable and eco-friendly travel options. This includes supporting local communities, reducing environmental footprints, and engaging in tourism activities that preserve cultural heritage rather than exploit it.

**2. Experiential and Immersive Experiences**

- Visitors are moving beyond traditional sightseeing and seeking immersive experiences, such as cooking classes, craft workshops, or staying with local families. This trend emphasizes active participation in local culture rather than passive observation.

**3. Digitization and Virtual Tourism**

- The use of digital technologies, including virtual and augmented reality, has expanded access to cultural sites. Virtual tours of museums, historic sites, and other attractions are becoming popular, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated digital adoption in the tourism industry.

**4. Personalization and Niche Tourism**

- There is a growing demand for personalized travel experiences that cater to specific interests, such as art, history, gastronomy, or genealogy tourism. Tour operators are increasingly offering tailored packages that focus on niche cultural experiences.

**5. Focus on Lesser-Known Destinations**

- To combat overtourism in major cities like Paris, Venice, and Barcelona, there is a trend towards promoting lesser-known destinations. Travelers are encouraged to explore smaller towns, rural areas, and hidden cultural gems that offer authentic experiences without the crowds.

**6. Cultural Festivals and Events**

- Festivals, art biennales, music concerts, and traditional events are attracting tourists who want to experience Europe's rich cultural calendar. These events are often used to promote local culture and heritage, attracting international audiences.

**7. Slow Tourism**

- Slow tourism emphasizes quality over quantity, encouraging travellers to spend more time in a single location to deeply engage with the local culture. This trend supports longer stays, deeper connections, and a more relaxed travel pace.

**8. Cross-Border Cultural Routes**

- Cultural routes that span multiple countries, such as the European Route of Industrial Heritage or the Camino de Santiago, are gaining popularity. These routes highlight shared European heritage and provide a thematic journey through diverse cultural landscapes.

These trends are shaping how cultural tourism is experienced in Europe, with an emphasis on sustainability, authenticity, and personalized engagement with cultural heritage.