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## European Network on Research Programme Applied to the Protection of Tangible Cultural Heritage

# NET- HERITAGE

### Protecting Europe's tangible cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is the mirror of society. It constitutes the legacy of tangible artefacts, such as historical buildings and monuments, as well as intangible features, such as traditions, customs and practices. Tangible and intangible cultural heritage operate through a symbiotic relationship, whereby the physical symbols serve as evidence of underlying norms and values of a culture. Taking this into consideration, the importance of protecting tangible cultural heritage is significant not only in order to reflect on and to better understand the past but also to maintain identification in the future.

*'The importance of Europe's cultural wealth can be measured in economic and social terms, in employment, job creation, and a unique quality and way of life that fosters health and well-being.'*

The cultural heritage of the European Union is crucial for establishing a shared European identification through progressive integration. The protection of cultural heritage is an extremely intricate endeavour, one which can only be accomplished by joining forces and maximising synergies. To add to this challenge, there have been no prior means to disseminate research results which applies to the protection of tangible cultural heritage.

NET-HERITAGE (European Network on Research Programme Applied to the Protection of Tangible Cultural Heritage) is the first significant initiative which has set out to coordinate national RTD programmes of European countries, and support European programmes in research applied to the protection of tangible cultural heritage.

The ERA-NET is a partnership of ministries, funding agencies and national RTD authorities from 14 European countries. It has embarked on a monumental effort to fulfil a crucial need within EU research policy: to overcome the barriers of exchanging information on coordinated research activity applied to the protection of tangible cultural heritage. Prior to the formation of this ERA-NET, information on heritage science consisted only of exchange among researchers, as well as dissemination to policy makers, end-users and professional non-researchers. This resulted in the value of heritage science remaining highly invisible and the exchange among researchers fragmented.

### Preparing to strengthen the foundation

The existing national cultural heritage programmes, which NET-HERITAGE is building upon, indicate that this field is prepared for a European cultural heritage research network. The ultimate aim is to strengthen the foundation of scientific and technological research as it applies to the protection of cultural heritage in Europe. NET-HERITAGE will encourage a gradual unfolding and penetrating of cooperation among stakeholders. This will involve three stages: information exchange, strategic activities and joint activities.

Within the information stage, the NET-HERITAGE Observatory, a web portal, will be developed as a response to European fragmentation. As a main access point on all issues related to European cultural heritage, it will be the only resource of its nature in the field of heritage science research providing detailed up-to-date information on European and national programmes, as well as results and research outcomes.

Agreement on best practice and common methodologies will be facilitated through the development of a shared platform, which will lessen unnecessary effort and duplication. This key innovative instrument for information exchange will be active during the entire project and will provide the basis for future dissemination and collaboration activities.



# NET-HERITAGE ERA-NET Coordination Action

**Project reference:** 219301  
**Theme:** Environment  
(including Climate Change)

*'NET-HERITAGE will encourage and support a closer relationship among national RTD programme managers from Europe, fostering cooperation, and leading to joint and reciprocal activities.'*

## Strategy gives rise to impact

Numerous strategic activities are planned. Some of these include the improved assessment of indoor and outdoor environments, environmental monitoring for pollution, climate change, and seismic risks – simple, cost-efficient measurement tools which end-users can utilise. Finally, joint activities will be possible by identifying common priorities to incorporate into national RTD programmes, strategic test cases, and common policies.

The impact of HERITAGE-NET will be vast, spanning the coordination of national activities, education, training and knowledge transfer, the inclusion of cultural heritage protection in EU legislation, and on the harmonisation and acceptability of technologies which apply to tangible cultural heritage. When it comes to cultural heritage preservation, the programmatic and operational approaches differ considerably among NET-HERITAGE partners. This is actually a strength, as it will provide a systematic exchange of information, experience and best practice for joint multilateral actions. One of the project's main outcomes will be the Advanced Training Programme which will address the needs of heritage professionals such as art conservators and conservation scientists.

NET-HERITAGE will provide an opportunity for Europe to maximise and coordinate combined efforts, which will in turn assist it with finding solutions in a global context. Furthermore, its contribution to a sustainable cultural heritage will support the European tourism industry in relation to growth, development and job creation. Essentially, NET-HERITAGE will facilitate the vision to redefine the national approach to research in the cultural heritage domain leading to a common European strategy of investment in research, thereby investing in maintaining Europe's identity in the future.

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## Research field

Protection of tangible cultural heritage

## Coordinator

- Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities (Italy)

## Partners

- Ministry of Education, University and Research (Italy)
- Belgian Federal Science Policy (Belgium)
- Ministry of Education and Science (Bulgaria)
- Ministry of Culture and Communication (France)
- German Federal Foundation for the Environment (Germany)
- Hellenic Ministry of Culture (Greece)
- Archaeological Heritage Agency of Iceland (Iceland)
- The State Inspection for Heritage Protection (Latvia)
- Heritage Malta (Malta)
- Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (Poland)
- National Authority for Scientific Research (Romania)
- Ministry of Culture (Slovenia)
- Ministry of Science and Innovation (Spain)
- Arts and Humanities Research Council (United Kingdom)