European Heritage Hub

LOCAL GOOD PRACTICES

Inspiring examples from cities and regions across Europe, showing how heritage can be turned into real solutions for today’s challenges









European Heritage Hub

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EUROCITIES

About the European Heritage Hub

The European Heritage Hub brings together heritage stakeholders and initiatives across Europe to support the transition towards a more sustainable, innovative, and inclusive society. It is formed by a consortium of 28 partners led by Europa Nostra with the Europeana Foundation, Eurocities, KU Leuven, and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, as co-beneficiaries. It is funded by the European Union as a Preparatory Action (2025-2027) following a two-year pilot phase (2023-2025).

The Hub aims to foster cooperation between existing and future heritage initiatives and actors, adopting holistic and integrated approaches to heritage policies at all governance levels.

About the catalogue of good practices

The Hub facilitates exchanges among cities, regions and heritage professionals from Europe and neighbouring countries on approaches and best examples of cultural heritage in the green, digital and social transformation. Through peer-learning activities, the Hub disseminates and transfers good practices supporting local and regional policies and actions to make heritage deliver on green, digital and social objectives.

The peer-learning activities carried out in the frame of the Hub Preparatory Action includes the selection of 10 cultural heritage initiatives as good practices in cities and regions and the publication of 10 case-study factsheets.

The selection was made through a Call for Local Good Practices open online between 13 November 2025 and 5 January 2026 under the theme “Cultural Heritage as an Asset for the Triple Transformation of our Society”.

The local good practices will serve as a basis for two onsite peer-learning visits in June and November 2026.

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From embodied memory to embodied carbon

A pioneering approach to recent heritage



Brussels Capital Region, Belgium

1,250,000 inhabitants

Background

Brussels possesses an extensive patrimony of office buildings that emerged during the city's tertiary boom, forming a vast landscape of late-modern and postmodern structures. As corporate tenants rotate and office standards evolve, a lot of those buildings fall vacant, not because they are structurally obsolete, but because they no longer match contemporary expectations for work environments.

While refurbishment used to be justified primarily by cultural or architectural value, Brussels is witnessing a growing recognition that the carbon embedded in existing buildings constitutes a form of heritage. Demolition was once a tool for rapid modernisation but now is recognised as a missed opportunity for acting as a lever for a more sustainable built environment.

The transformation of Brussels' post-war office stock by the Bouwmeester / Maître Architecte (BMA) in collaboration with other regional bodies for heritage, urban planning and private owners includes the recognition of "young heritage", notably post-war and postmodern architecture, as part of Brussels' cultural legacy.

Good practice story

The BMA brought the question of 'Demolition vs. Preservation' to the fore in a series of public debates. The debate was framed as a spatial, cultural and environmental choice. It proved to be essential in shifting mindsets across public authorities, designers and private developers, establishing reuse as a legitimate and preferred option.

Architecture competitions guided by the BMA are used to introduce public objectives such as reuse, functional mix, spatial quality and public-space activation into large privately driven projects, while keeping developers aboard.

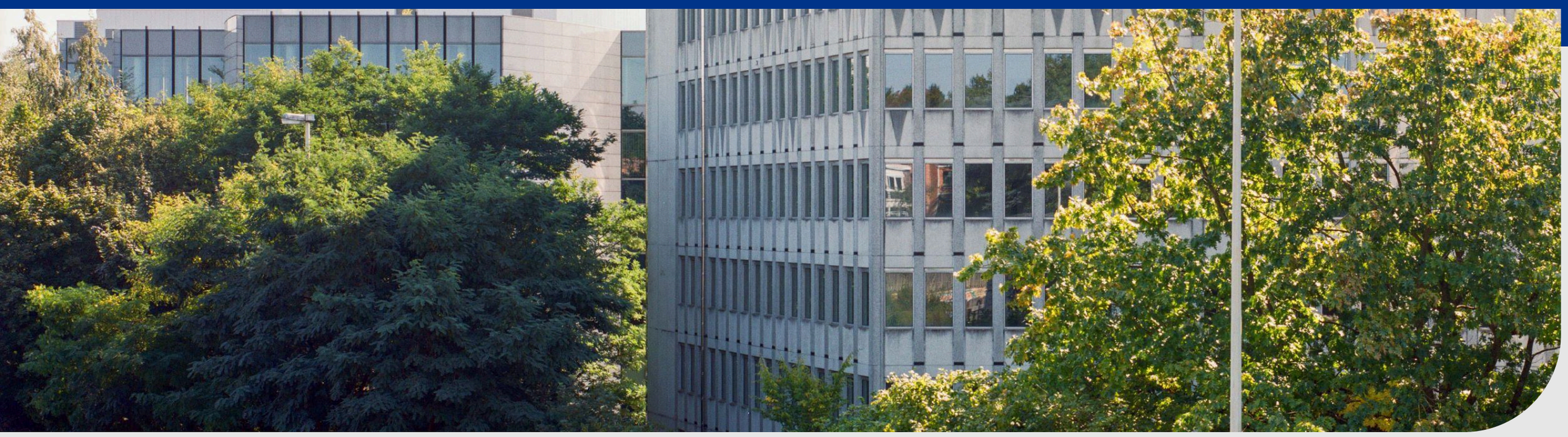
The Department of Cultural Heritage within urban.brussels has been working on an inventory documenting post-war and postmodern architecture. It provides a basis for informed decision-making, enabling public authorities to differentiate between buildings with architectural, historical or typological significance and those whose value lies primarily in their material and structural potential.

Projectlines is a tool set up by the BMA to intervene before redevelopment projects are defined or sites are sold, providing a clear urban planning framework. It sets objectives in terms of functional mix, density, public space and sustainability.
It ensures that heritage, circularity and spatial quality are embedded in projects from the outset and help counteract speculative property purchases.

Impact

Based on the BMA's Design Review requests for permit applications for spaces above 5000m2 between 2019 and 2024, 1.4 million square metres of office space will be given a new life. Among permit applications concerning office transformation (>5000m2) 23% will be demolished, 22% partially demolished and 55% will be entirely transformed. Among the latter, 44% will be reconverted into housing.

The BMA proposes a reform of the Brussels building regulations, anchoring the paradigm shift within a binding regulatory framework. Under the proposed regulatory change, preservation and transformation will become the normative approach, whereas demolition will be considered an exception that must be carefully justified on technical and environmental grounds.



Planning and management

The Bouwmeester Maître Architecte (BMA)'s mission is to improve the spatial quality of urban projects in Brussels from an independent position. The BMA is active in a broad ecosystem where attention to the heritage value of buildings and cityscapes plays an important role.

The BMA has horizontal partnerships with different policy actors, regional and municipal administrations, civil society and private developers. The BMA works closely with the regional departments for urban planning (perspective.brussels) and for cultural heritage (urban.brussels) to evaluate the opportunity to renovate and transform the existing building stock.

Budget

The initiative is carried out by the administrations involved and absorbed in their regular activities. At the BMA, this represents about 10 to 15% of the team's work (including competitions, *projectlines* and design review).

Transferable ideas

- **Winning the minds and the hearts of citizens precedes an eventual regulatory change.** Work on this mindset shift through public debates and soft power tools to accompany the transition with public and private developers.

- **Start with flagship projects that demonstrate excellence in practice.** They can serve as best practice examples for a mainstreamed, common approach.

- **Take the opportunity of transformation to address vacancy of buildings and weak urban fabric.** Add functions where they are missing, reactivate public spaces, improve socio-economic diversity within neighbourhoods.

Explore

Adaptive reuse on the BMA website.

Brussels Heritage Magazine No. 39 Converting offices (in FR)

Cityforward is a real estate fund set to redevelop 21 outdated office buildings owned by the European Commission, totalling 300,000 m2 in the European district.

Contact

BMA team



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Chalki International Music Festival

Reviving the island's roots sustainably

Chalki, Greece **478 inhabitants**



Background

Chalki, like many remote islands, faces depopulation, seasonal closures and cultural isolation for year-round residents. The municipality addresses this by integrating cultural heritage into its broader sustainable development strategy, linking culture with sustainable tourism, support for local businesses and community well-being as part of the island's green transition.

Chalki is the first GR-Eco island, largely self-sufficient on renewable energy for residential and municipal activities. A key aspect of this is the ChalkiON energy community, a citizens' coalition that sets priorities for the island's renewable energy usage. By significantly reducing energy expenses and therefore living costs, ChalkiON helps residents continue living in, maintaining and renovating their ancestral homes. In turn, this contributes to the sustainable revitalisation of the island's abandoned medieval capital (Horio) as built cultural heritage, supported by the Deloitte 'Horio' masterplans.

Other sustainable initiatives include using electric vehicles for municipal activities, an Interactive Park of Green Technologies to educate students in the region and a year-round eco-cultural programme.

Good practice story

The annual Chalki International Music Festival, launched in 2022, promotes 'slow' sustainable tourism while celebrating the music and wider intangible heritage of the island and the Mediterranean. It is the flagship initiative of a year-round cultural programme designed to combat cultural isolation for existing residents and support sustainable cultural tourism.

The programme focuses on the revival of music heritage from the Aegean, Mediterranean and Asia Minor. Each edition explores a similar concept, with the 2026 theme 'Roots' highlighting the shared cultural and music heritage of Eastern Mediterranean societies. The festival balances performances by local, Greek musicians as well as members of the Athens State Orchestra and includes music education workshops for children in the Aegean, connecting young people with their cultural heritage experientially. Concerts activate historic public spaces including the island's harbour, squares and traditional village, transforming the island's architectural landscape into an open-air cultural venue.

The festival takes a sustainable approach; connecting visiting musicians with the community, minimising plastic use, using digital communication instead of printed material, limiting set-building, and partnering with local tavernas to encourage 'slow dining' and showcase the island's gastronomy. The festival attracts conscious visitors and strengthens community cohesion, positioning Chalki as an emerging eco-cultural destination and a place of pride for residents.

Impact

The music festival's impact is assessed through qualitative indicators including community feedback, increased visitor numbers and positive national press coverage citing the festival as a 'cultural landmark of the Aegean'.

The festival's impact can also be seen through social and economic changes on the island, with local businesses staying open for a longer season and many young people and digital nomads staying on the island year-round. This shows how high-quality cultural productions in small and remote communities can co-exist and even flourish when paired with environmentally responsible practices.



Planning and management

Chalki's eco-cultural model is coordinated through a multistakeholder governance approach combining municipal leadership, citizen participation, national public partnership and private sector support.

The municipality works closely with ChalkiON, the citizens' coalition, to manage the island's energy transition. Meanwhile, the Chalki international music festival is organised by a dedicated team and supported by a non-profit cultural production company. Its initial development phase involved a core team of 1-12 members including an artistic director and municipal staff from across administration, culture and hospitality departments. Ongoing delivery of Chalki's cultural programme, including the festival, involves 15-20 staff.

Public partners of the festival include the Athens State Orchestra, the Greek Ministry of Culture, the Hellenic Parliament, the General Secretariat for the Aegean and Island Policy, the Regional Unit of South Aegean Municipalities and the Development Agency of the Dodecanese.

DEI (Greece's national energy provider) and Cosmote provide ongoing support, while Deloitte and Citroen have provided private sector support in the past.

Budget

EUR 210,000 yearly + Over **EUR 1,200,000** for green infrastructure investments as of 2026.

The municipality allocates:
EUR 130,000 for year-round cultural programming
EUR 80,000 for the 'Chalki Music Festival – Dimitris Kremastinos'

Strategic sponsorship from private entities and public corporations has provided over **EUR 1,200,000** for green infrastructure investments as of 2026.

Transferable ideas

- **Align innovation with identity,** integrating the old with the new and providing resources to keep heritage alive and functional.

- **Foster community ownership and trust through the democratic organising of resources,** this can make residents more connected to, and thus more passionate about protecting, their heritage.

- **Leverage site-specific experiences,** for example, using old harbours and squares for concerts, or incorporating music from the Aegean region to attract conscious and culturally curious travellers.

Explore

Chalki music festival

Chalki municipality website

Contact

info@polytonality.gr

Polytonality is an Athens-based NPO currently managing the delivery of the Chalki international music festival.

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Memories of Lisbon

Weaving the city's history together

Lisbon, Portugal **575,739 inhabitants**

Background

In Lisbon, tourism growth, gentrification, and demographic change have accelerated the transformation of neighbourhoods, contributing to the displacement of long-term residents and placing local identity and collective memory at risk.

At the same time, the city is characterised by a high percentage of elderly population (23% aged 65 and over). Older residents who remain in these neighbourhoods are often at greater risk of social isolation.

The lack of opportunities and spaces for interaction between generations further deepens this divide, limiting intergenerational exchange and reducing opportunities for children and young people to engage with the history of the places they inhabit and to develop a meaningful connection with their local environment.

In response to these challenges, the municipality of Lisbon has developed the *Memórias de Lisboa* ("Memories of Lisbon") programme, which aims to preserve community life, strengthen cultural identity, and safeguard neighbourhoods' collective memory, while promoting active ageing and social inclusion through participatory and intergenerational approaches.

Good practice story

Memórias de Lisboa implements the participatory and systematic collection of local testimonies through community memory workshops that address the integration of various groups of inhabitants, giving visibility to diverse community narratives. These intersected stories tell Lisbon's history through voices often absent from textbooks.

Workshops are held in cultural facilities (libraries, theatres, and cultural centres) across different neighbourhoods. Residents are invited to share life stories, personal memories, photographs, and documents that reflect local history.

Intergenerational collaboration is central: students from vocational multimedia schools contribute to filming, editing, animation, and digital content production, taking an active role in digital and cultural production and the protection of existing local heritage. Schools develop artistic projects through which students create innovative works from the recorded memories and contact with storytellers, giving them new interpretations and meanings.

The programme also involves a touring exhibition with first-person video testimonies, pedagogical games, 2D animation and images from the city's cultural archives.

In collaboration with Lusófona University, the programme will lead to the creation of a research-based digital infrastructure *E-Museu Memórias de Lisboa*, ensuring long-term preservation of residents' memories.

Impact

Since 2015, the programme has engaged more than 500 residents through community memory workshops held across 13 neighbourhoods. Over 200 participants have been interviewed, generating more than 300 short audiovisual testimonies.

The programme has benefited older long-term residents in rapidly transforming neighbourhoods, by promoting active ageing, social participation and the recognition of their lived experience as a shared urban resource. Participants report improved well-being, reduced isolation and a reinforced sense of belonging.



Planning and management

The programme is anchored in a strong network of partnerships: at the central (municipal) level, a cross-departmental municipal network, a library network and the "*Um Teatro em cada Bairro*" network.

This functions at the local (neighbourhood) level, with parish councils, vocational schools, and cultural associations.

Budget

EUR 40,000 per year funded by the municipality, not including human resources from the administration.

80% is dedicated to filming interviews and editing testimonial and documentary videos.

Explore

Audiovisual testimonies

Methodological manual (in PT)

Contact

Facebook

Instagram

Transferable ideas

- **Engage the community from the start:**
Build trust and participation by involving residents – especially older long-term inhabitants and diverse community groups – through workshops, storytelling sessions, and cocreation activities. Their lived experiences are the foundation of meaningful heritage preservation.

- **Combine artistic, educational, and digital approaches:**
Integrate creative projects, school collaborations, and digital tools to document, share, preserve and give new meanings to memories. This combination strengthens intergenerational exchange, promotes skills development, and ensures long-term accessibility of heritage.

- **Foster multi-level partnerships:**
Collaborate with municipal services, local associations, schools, and research institutions to leverage expertise, mobilize communities, and ensure sustainability. Strong partnerships enhance capacity, visibility, and replicability of the practice in other urban contexts.

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Holy Houses

Bridging religious heritage, communities and creation



Rotterdam, The Netherlands **670,000 inhabitants**

Background

Rotterdam is a multicultural city with various religious buildings carrying stories of different times and communities.

In 2022, the city of Rotterdam issued a new policy plan for cultural and religious heritage. At the same time, the city's architectural policy recognised churches as neighbourhood icons facing challenges like ageing communities and rising maintenance costs.

Social isolation had also gained prominence in the public agenda with the need to create opportunities for people to get together in a post-Covid context.

In this multifaceted environment, the city came up with the idea to activate religious buildings and communities with cultural and social programming. This came to life as *Heilige Huisjes* – Holy Houses, a festival to explore new perspectives on the modern role that places of worship can play for culture, spirituality and social gathering.

Good practice story

The event aims to lower the threshold for Rotterdammers to (re)experience their religious heritage, to unite managers of places of worship in a new network of cultural and social partners, to appeal to new target groups with innovative programming and to better connect Rotterdam's cultural and social institutions to these places.

It is jointly proposed by the city of Rotterdam and De Kerkvernieuwers. Cultural organisations, local authorities, residents, artists and managers of religious heritage form a network and co-create a programme in places of worship all over Rotterdam during Rotterdam Architecture Month. Holy Houses starts by getting to know the communities and places that will host the festival, building trusted relationships. For the third edition, a matchmaking evening created new encounters between cultural creators, social organisations and places of worship to boost the artistic programming of the festival.

During Holy Houses, visitors can discover religious heritage through a variety of activities: baking bread in the AyaSofya Mosque, returning to the roots of the Norwegian Church with VikingFest!, taking a tour through Cool Zuid, a dance workshop in the Waalse Kerk or discovering their inner artist with Sip 'N Paint in The Scots International Church with poets and musicians.

Impact

More than 40 churches, synagogues, temples and mosques have joined Holy Houses since 2022. The initiative has developed over the years from opening buildings to a professional network providing spaces for experimentation and collaboration with multiple partners such as social organisations.

The number of visitors reached 6000 during the 2025 edition.

Enabling visitors to access places of worship is a way for people to connect and take away prejudices, building peaceful relationships across the neighbourhoods. For religious communities, the festival is an opportunity to broaden their audience, bring people in and find a sense of pride in their buildings and heritage.



Planning and management

The city of Rotterdam is part of steering group shaping the programme of the festival. The departments of culture, monuments and social affairs are involved.

De Kerkvernieuwers is the main organiser of the festival. It is a foundation committed to the future-oriented and socially responsible use of church buildings. Cultuur Concreet, a network of cultural community workers to connect every Rotterdam resident with culture right at home was involved in matchmaking cultural organisations with places of worship in 2023 and 2024.

Young people are involved as co-producers thanks to a partnership with a vocational school in events management.

Budget

Total: **EUR 250,000** yearly.

The city of Rotterdam provides 70% of the budget: from the Culture (30%) Monuments (30%) and Social (10%) departments.

30% comes from private and public foundations

Explore

Website

Mini documentary

Aftermovie 2025

Podcast (in NL)

Contact

Available on the website

Transferable ideas

- **Don't be afraid of trying out new things!** Start with a pilot project to get to know the communities and buildings, identify existing needs, and how to connect various interests.

- **Ensure you create something together** based on a real understanding of the other's traditions, norms, values and practices. The buildings are not mere backgrounds for cultural programming.

- **Be in constant contact with participants**, listen to their needs and adjust. Participatory work is a journey taken together as a network, not a blueprint to follow.

- **Having fun together** is a way to work around challenges and find effective solutions.



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ArqueoSelva project

Archaeological heritage for social transformation



Selva, Spain

4300 inhabitants

Background

The Balearic Islands share an ancient heritage dating back to the Iron Age: the Talayotic culture. This includes the customs and techniques of the prehistoric societies of the Balearic inhabitants, up until the Roman conquest in 123 BCE. In Selva (Mallorca), the remains of a Talayotic wall catalyse a social and environmental project led by the municipality and the local community.

The *Puig de Crist Rei* (Oratory of Christ the King) was built during the 1920s on an important archaeological site from the Talayotic period. Since the 1960s, the hermitage has been progressively abandoned due to cracks and landslides compromising its integrity, but it remains an important area for locals, notably hosting a traditional pilgrimage during Easter celebrations.

The vegetation has penetrated the structure over decades and damages the ancient Talayotic wall. To prevent further deterioration and to improve historical understanding of the site, the municipality of Selva has embarked on a multi-year project blending archaeological research and preservation with social inclusion. It tackles social isolation of elderly residents and of people with mental health conditions. In doing so, Selva also promotes a tourism model that adds value to the local economy without compromising the site's integrity.

Good practice story

The ArqueoSelva project started with a conservation campaign clearing vegetation affecting the architectural structures. Then it organised the restoration and consolidation of part of the wall's exterior facing and the creation of two trenches to determine its width; and third, the area was cleaned and stabilised to improve the overall view of the site and get closer to the full restoration of the interior of the wall. Restoration techniques use traditional dry-stone masonry and natural materials to limit the carbon footprint of the intervention. Digital documentation (3D modelling and educational videos) ensures remote access to excavation campaigns and findings.

The project combines scientific investigation and physical recovery of the archaeological site with training and employment of young people with mental health diagnoses. Thanks to the partnership with ArqueoCET (an organisation providing labour insertion programmes for youth at risk of social exclusion and people with mental health conditions), specialised tutors adapted archaeological tasks to each participant, using heritage conservation as a tool for rehabilitation, dignity, and professional inclusion.

Public outreach is a cornerstone of ArqueoSelva with open site days guided by archaeologists, the creation of didactic materials for local schools, and social media activities to reach beyond academic circles and foster community ownership.

Impact

Key indicators include the acquisition of labour skills, improvements in self-esteem, and successful integration into the professional work team. 2 stable job positions were created for youth with mental health diagnoses and/or risk of exclusion. To ensure long-term protection and social use, a Strategic Master Plan was drafted, leading to the public acquisition of the land by the Town Council in 2024.

35 m^2 of the Talayotic fortification wall (out of 100 m^2) have been consolidated and stabilised over three years.
250+ students from "Es Putxet" school participated in workshops and didactic visits.
50 active participants from the Elderly People's Association were involved in oral memory sessions.
A documentary film will showcase their memories and give value to their contributions.
100+ annual visitors during open-house days and guided tours.



Planning and management

Selva Town Council (Local Administration) acts as the coordinating and promoting body. Its role involves the comprehensive oversight of the initiative and institutional support throughout all project phases, ensuring alignment with municipal policies.

- The Technical Heritage Commission of the Consell de Mallorca (Regional Administration) is responsible for the approval and technical supervision of archaeological interventions.
- Fundació Esment provides expertise in the field of social economy. Its collaboration is essential for the therapeutic and labour-related supervision of youth with specific needs (ArqueoCET), ensuring the archaeological site is a safe and inclusive environment.
- Institut d'Estudis Baleàrics (IEB): Co-finances the research project "The Oratory of Crist Rei: History, Memory, and Living Heritage" (2025). Its role is vital in providing scientific support for humanities research and promoting cultural dissemination.
- Elderly People's Associations and Educational Centres of Selva act as community oversight bodies and are the primary recipients of outreach activities.

The project relies on a team of 8 to 10 people:

- A strategic team made of the Mayor of Selva, responsible for institutional leadership and strategic management; an archaeologist for scientific direction and field investigation; a restorer leading conservation and heritage preservation; a cultural manager coordinating research and community engagement.
- An operational and social team made of social inclusion workers for the physical conservation and site maintenance tasks and support from 2 to 4 collaborators from the Esment Foundation (psychologists and tutors).

Budget

Total budget: **EUR 23,000**

EUR 14,000 from the Consell de Mallorca for conservation and labour inclusion, archaeological research and site maintenance.
EUR 5,000 (2025/2026) from the Institute of Balearic Studies (IEB) for socio-educational activities with the Elderly People's Association, local schools, and vulnerable groups and for historical archive research.
EUR 4,000 from the municipality of Selva
for scientific dissemination and public outreach activities.

Transferable ideas

- **Seek public ownership and institutional leadership:** public land acquisition or the drafting of a Strategic Master Plan ensures that investment is not ephemeral but becomes a permanent cultural facility.

- **Foster interdisciplinary synergies:** conservation and restoration of heritage must be intrinsically linked to both rigorous archaeological research and a social dimension. A multidisciplinary team ensures the project's integrity.

- **Embed social sustainability in every action:** partner with organisations dedicated to supporting groups in vulnerable situations.

Explore

Municipality of Selva

ArqueoCET

Contact

Instagram

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Cross-border living heritage

Piešťansko and Slovácko: turning traditions into local growth



Trnava Region, Slovakia **203,659 inhabitants**

Background

The Czech Slovak border region of Piešťansko (SK) and Slovácko (CZ) has a rich cultural heritage including vineyards, rural traditions, and crafts which are notably reflected in traditional clothing and music. This intangible heritage has long been reduced to folkloristic or ceremonial use, without consideration of its contemporary relevance or economic sustainability.

In fragmented markets and the absence of strong branding, there are few opportunities for small-scale artisans and rural producers. At the same time, limited intergenerational transfer and low engagement of young people progressively lead to the loss of traditional skills and knowledge.

Against this backdrop, KIRA – the Regional Innovation and Development Agency of the Trnava Region (SK) – created a cross-border, heritage-based development model. The aim is to transform living heritage into a sustainable driver of regional development, linking cultural heritage with innovation, entrepreneurship, education and cross-border cooperation.

Good practice story

The cross-border heritage-based development model implemented by KIRA in the Piešťansko and Slovácko regions combines two complementary activities that transform living cultural heritage into a socially and economically relevant resource.

Living traditional costume heritage and its reinterpretation
Designer-led workshops connected ethnographic research with creative experimentation, enabling knowledge transfer between artisans, embroiderers, ethnographers and young designers from the Strážnice High School. Traditional patterns, materials and techniques were translated into contemporary fashion and design products. The approach supports youth engagement, intergenerational knowledge transfer and small-scale sustainable production, while strengthening destination identity and enriching tourism offers through cross-border thematic routes.

Regional Product Piešťansko certification
Inspired by the established ‘Regional Product Slovácko’ model and developed with Czech partners, the scheme defines quality, regional origin and heritage criteria for local products. Certification and collective branding improve market access and support the economic viability of artisans and small producers.

Impact

Combining living cultural heritage with contemporary design and regional product certification increased economic relevance and visibility of heritage.

Five educational and cultural institutions, 12 freelancers and 40 students contributed to workshops, public events and knowledge transfer activities.

Five local producers, artisans and small businesses were actively involved in the certification process and pilot implementation. Four small business owners were awarded the Regional Product Piešťansko label, anchoring heritage-based production in regional value chains. Cross-border cooperation enabled effective transfer of know-how and reduced implementation risks.



Planning and management

- KIRA (Regional Innovation and Development Agency of the Trnava Region): design and implementation of the project; quality control, coherence and long-term sustainability of the models.
- ÚĽUV – Centre for Folk Art Production: ensuring authenticity and quality of heritage interpretation.
- Regional Tourism Organisation Resort Piešťany: promotion and communication.
- Region Slovácko association for the development of tourism (CZ) for the establishment of the Regional Product Piešťansko certification scheme.
- NGO Folk traditions and crafts (Lidové tradice a řemesla, CZ): producing folk costumes, supporting workshops, professional exchange and cross-border learning.

The initiative was developed with 5–6 staff members across partner organisations (about 3 FTE positions).

To sustain the initiative, 2–4 staff members are involved (approx. 2 FTE), mainly within the lead organisation and key partners, as the practice is embedded in existing organisational and regional structures.

Transferable ideas

● **Ensure early participation of partners across the territory, including small municipalities,** local actors and regional centres. Territorial balance strengthens ownership, coordination and prevents concentration of benefits in one location.

● **Plan diversified actions for entrepreneurs, schools, cultural institutions and the public.** A multi-target approach increases social impact, supports intergenerational knowledge transfer and strengthens links between culture, education, entrepreneurship and tourism.

● **Go beyond prototypes** by developing supporting infrastructure, services and distribution models that connect products with tourism flows and markets. Integration into destination management and regional branding is key for long-term viability and impact.

Budget

Total budget: **EUR 62,260.83** including:

- **EUR 49,808.66** (80%) from Interreg SK-CZ - Small Projects Fund
- **EUR 7,471.29** (12%) from the Ministry of investments and regional developement
- **EUR 4,980.88 (8%)** from KIRA

About 50% of the budget was allocated to the cross-border partner NGO Folk tradition and crafts, covering joint activities, expert inputs, workshops and knowledge exchange necessary for the transfer of good practice and cross-border cooperation.

33% of the budget was allocated to coordination and management, expert and ethnographic services, capacity building activities, communication and dissemination, public events, and the development and pilot implementation of the Regional Product Piešťansko certification scheme.
17% of the budget was dedicated to equipment and tangible assets for workshops, exhibitions and public presentation of results.

Explore

Living costume heritage

The Piešťany Region Product

Contact

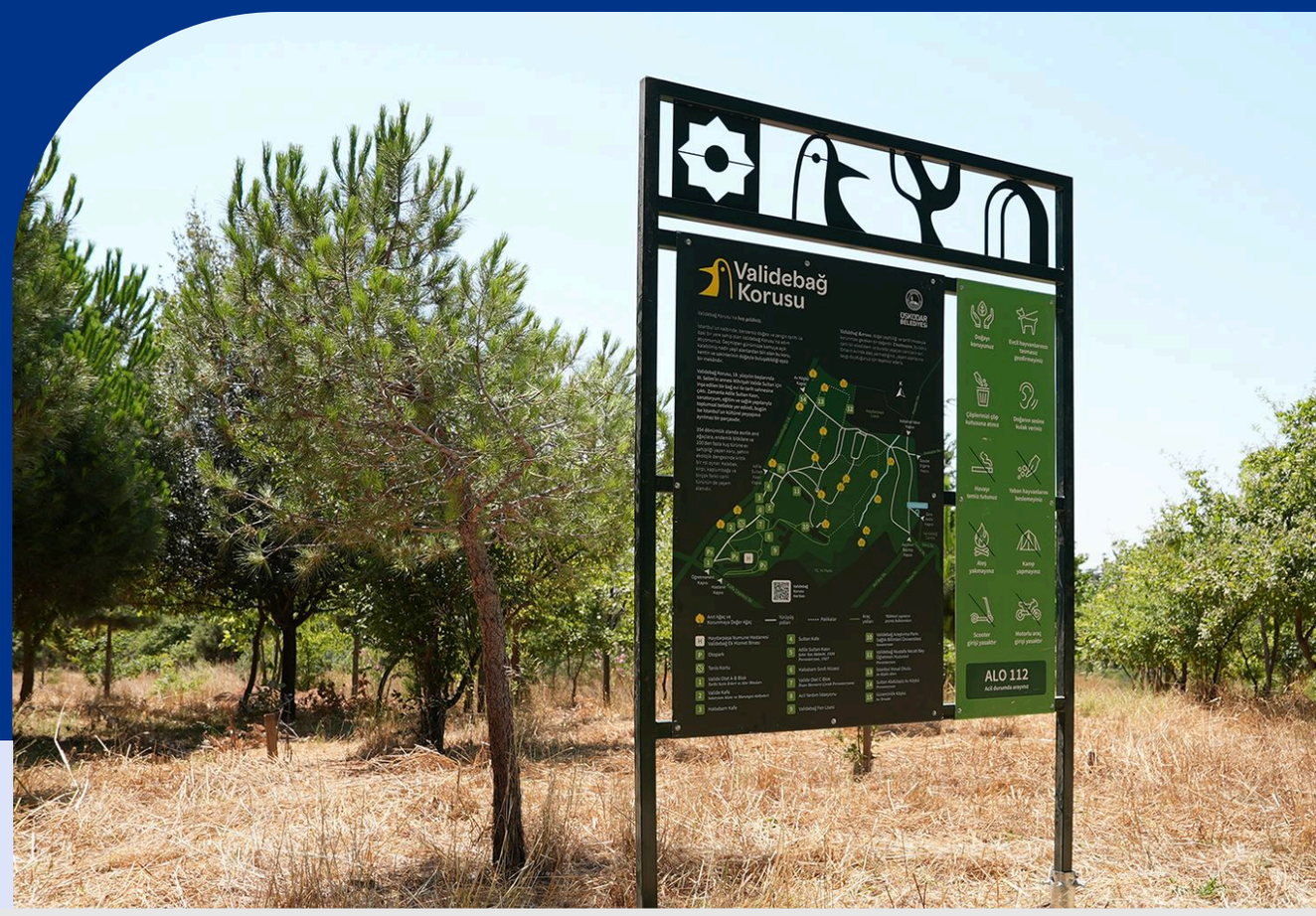
piestansko@kira.sk

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CARE Validebağ

Civic and rights-based ecosystem governance practice for Validebağ grove



Üsküdar, Turkiye **533,570 inhabitants**

Background

Located in the municipality of Üsküdar, Validebağ Grove covers 35.4 hectares. It is one of the largest metropolitan green and cultural heritage areas in the metropolitan core of Istanbul's Asian side.

Due to its size, biodiversity and ecosystem functions, the Grove provides multiple benefits to wildlife, the urban environment and local communities. The Grove also encompasses significant cultural heritage assets, including registered and unregistered examples of Ottoman civil architecture from the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as public buildings from the Republican period.

Despite these exceptional natural and cultural values, Validebağ Grove has been exposed to continuous development pressure for more than thirty years. Local civic initiatives had engaged in long-term struggles to prevent construction projects and protect the Grove's habitat and biodiversity. However, the area was lacking a long-term governance framework. In the absence of an institutionalised dialogue, heritage protection of the Grove had become a conflictual topic of conversation between locals and the administration.

Good practice story

In 2021, civil society engaged with the Istanbul Planning Agency through stakeholder analysis and four participatory workshops, involving academics, public bodies, and civic groups to define shared problems and principles.

This led to the Validebağ Forum, attended by Üsküdar and Istanbul Metropolitan Municipalities, public authorities, civic initiatives, and experts. The forum fostered transparent dialogue, culminating in the adoption of the Validebağ Grove Policy Document by the Istanbul Planning Agency. This document formally recognises the Grove as a shared natural and cultural heritage asset and establishes ecosystem-based, participatory governance as a public policy goal. After the "Validebağ Forum: Past, Present, Future" workshop, academics and civil society agreed to develop a comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Management Plan. Given the time required, a Short-Term Ecosystem Management Plan was created to address urgent ecological risks and enable immediate action while the broader plan was finalised.

Üsküdar Municipality, with civic and academic partners, adopted this Short-Term Plan in 2024. It translates shared values into actionable, science-based measures: awareness-raising signage, ecologically sensitive maintenance, seasonal pruning, plant treatments, and ongoing protection. Residents' knowledge, advocacy, and participation were vital, shaping policies, decision-making, and stewardship, while ensuring transparency throughout.

Impact

The Grove provides essential ecosystem services such as climate regulation, air quality improvement and biodiversity protection, as well as access to a shared cultural landscape that supports wellbeing, education and social cohesion in a dense urban setting. The Validebağ process has contributed to the agenda-setting of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's forthcoming master planning work, ensuring that the Grove is recognised and addressed as a protected cultural and ecological landscape within metropolitan-scale spatial and environmental planning.

The process has influenced municipal practice beyond the Grove by demonstrating the feasibility of participatory, evidence-based heritage governance. It has strengthened institutional capacity for dialogue-oriented planning and contributed to a shift away from project-driven interventions towards process-based stewardship in urban green and heritage areas.



Planning and management

A strong coordination structure was established within the municipality in collaboration with civil society actors to support both the preparation and the implementation of the management plan and to ensure a participatory process.

The governance structure established through this process continues to operate, with management and maintenance activities carried out in collaboration with civil society stakeholders, while ensuring open communication and continuous feedback.

Twenty-one municipal staff members, including the Vice Mayor and the Head of the Parks and Gardens Department, have been involved throughout the entire process. Under the leadership of the Vice Mayor and in collaboration with the Public Design Office team, 10 municipal staff members were involved in planning, stakeholder engagement, and overall coordination.

In the sustainability and implementation phase, 7 staff members are actively involved, including the Head of the Parks and Gardens Department, a technical team of 3 specialists responsible for addressing diseases and pests in green areas, the site supervisor, and other field staff. In addition, a 6-member operational team is responsible for pruning and pesticide application activities within the grove.

Budget

Total: EUR 1,350,000 (funded by the municipality)

Transferable ideas

- **Start with people, not with plans.**
Before drafting management plans or technical documents, invest time in understanding local actors, conflicts and knowledge systems. Recognise civic initiatives and local communities as legitimate partners from the outset.

- **Anchor participation in formal policy instruments.**
Participation alone is not sufficient unless it is translated into official policy documents, management plans or guidelines formally adopted by public authorities to ensure continuity, accountability and long-term impact.

- **Combine scientific evidence with rights-based governance.**
Ground decisions in scientific analysis (e.g. ecosystem services, biodiversity cycles and climate resilience within a scientific advisory board) while framing heritage as a shared civic value and a public right.

Explore

Validebağ Volunteers association website

Map of Validebağ

European Heritage Hub

Co-funded by the European Union

MuKa – Museum for everybody

The cultural-heritage collection of all Vantaa residents



Vantaa, Finland **252,724 inhabitants**

Background

Part of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, Vantaa is the 4th most populous municipality in Finland and the country's most multicultural city with over 120 spoken languages.

Historically, the Vantaa City Museum's collections and curatorial narratives mostly reflected heritage rooted in Finnish and Swedish cultural traditions. Therefore, many residents felt unrepresented and disengaged as their voices, experiences and cultural backgrounds remained absent from programming.

In 2023, Vantaa City Museum launched the Museum for Everybody project to further develop inclusive practices and broaden participation among the city's multicultural communities.

Its objective was to develop inclusive models that brought these communities into the museum as visitors, co-creators, contributors and active cultural citizens.

Good practice story

Museum for everybody (MuKa in Finnish) started by mapping multicultural stakeholders in Vantaa and forming partnerships with integration services, educational institutions and ethnic organisations. The museum staff also exchanged knowledge with peers working on multicultural initiatives in the neighbouring cities of Espoo and Helsinki.

Through MuKa, Vantaa City Museum proposed collaboratively developed activities including multilingual guided tours, crafting, performances, games and intercultural encounters led by community members.

A multicultural student group from Laurea University of Applied Sciences co-developed activity prototypes for visitors with no local language skills, which were tested in the museum setting.

The museum organised a digital storytelling course, "How I Became a Citizen of Vantaa" with the Workers' Educational Association of Finland. It produced seven personal narratives that were integrated in the collections.

Thanks to MuKa, the museum began to function as a shared civic space where diverse groups could meet, interact and build connections, supporting broader municipal goals for inclusion and social cohesion.

Impact

At least 300 visitors from 40 countries, many of whom had never visited the museum before, attended the activities and the museum became more familiar and accessible to them.

The museum's staff benefited from a strengthened understanding of diverse communities and improved capacity to develop inclusive, culturally responsive practices.

Local integration services and educational institutions gained new cultural tools and collaborative models to support integration and intercultural interaction. Good practices from the project have been embedded in the museum's public services team regular jobs.



Planning and management

MuKa was led by a cultural producer with a migrant background and professional expertise in museum work and cultural management. Vantaa's cultural and integration services supported the work through consultations, outreach to multilingual residents and facilitation of their participation in museum and city events.

The Espoo City Museum and the Hotel and Restaurant Museum in Helsinki acted as peer partners in developing their own multicultural approaches.

The Heureka Science Centre in Vantaa supported the project by organising roundtable discussions that offered a neutral platform for cross-institutional learning and the development of methods for multicultural engagement.

Educational partners – including vocational colleges and Laurea University of Applied Sciences – contributed by involving students and integration-course groups in the co-design and testing of new museum activities.

Budget

EUR 38,500 (August 2023 – December 2024)
- **EUR 30,000** from the Finnish Heritage Agency
- **EUR 8,500** from Vantaa City Museum

The budget prioritised community involvement while also investing in tools to support long-term impact. Most of the project budget was allocated to the salary of the full-time project manager, who was responsible for planning, coordination and implementation.

Additional funds were used to contract representatives of multicultural communities through short-term service agreements to lead tours, workshops and performances.

Part of the budget covered materials and refreshments for events, as well as translations of core museum information into eight of the most widely spoken languages in Vantaa.

Transferable ideas

Work with cultural mediators and active community representatives
Hiring people who are trusted within their own cultural groups – guides, artists, teachers, organisers – creates immediate relevance and organically brings their communities into the museum. Involve them not only as performers, but as co-designers and advisers.

Prioritise formats that do not rely on language
Music, crafts, dance, cooking and other hands-on or non-verbal activities allow everyone to participate on equal terms. Simple shared experiences build confidence and connection across linguistic boundaries and make newcomers feel safe to return.

Invest in strong networks
A well-functioning network provides channels for outreach, increases visibility and impact, saves resources and generates mutual benefit across sectors. Build long-term cooperation with schools, integration services and community organisations – these partnerships are essential for sustainability.

Explore

Vantaa City Museum website

Project page on city of Vantaa website

Video 'Five tips for museums on multicultural audience development'

Project report (in FI)

Contact

Vantaa City Museum

European Heritage Hub

Co-funded by the European Union

Retail regulation for cultural heritage protection

Restoring liveability in Venice’s city centre



Venice, Italy **250,000 inhabitants**

Background

With extraordinary examples of architecture, art, museums as well as traditional festivals and events, ‘Venice and its lagoon’ has been listed UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1987.

As such, the city is a global tourist destination which requires an approach that reconciles residents' and services for daily life with the protection of cultural heritage from mass tourism. The city’s goal is to promote sustainable tourism to share Venice uniqueness, while safeguarding its authenticity and the residents’ quality of life. While Venice's extensive cultural heritage is the main reason for attracting visitors, they remain concentrated within a few iconic locations, creating an imbalance of tourism flows in the city. These dynamics impact the commercial offer in those areas, which is unilaterally aimed at tourists.

The city administration had long been looking for ways to intervene on open-and-close activities to counteract commercial desertification and the displacement of residents from the city centre. In 2018 it introduced restrictions on the opening of takeaway food shops in the historic centre, implemented in 2020 with additional measures for the monumental areas of the Rialto Bridge and St. Mark's Square.

Good practice story

In 2022, the municipality of Venice started a scheme for preserving retail trade in the historic centre, based on mapping streets subject to heavy tourist pressure by measuring pedestrian flows.

The city introduced a three-year pilot resolution also known as the anti-paccottiglia (anti-junk) regulation. It regulates commercial and artisan activities in targeted areas of the historic centre to protect and enhance cultural heritage, preserving community life over ‘tourism-only’ activities. It targets new openings and business transfers and prohibits most retail food outlets; craft or industrial production, preparation, and/or sale of food products except resident oriented activities (butcheries, fishmongers, greengrocers, bakeries) and unattended formats (self-service laundromats, vending-only shops and ATMs).

In 2024, a new project conducted by the IUAV University of Venice produced an interactive shop database available to residents and visitors, promoting bottom-up initiatives for the protection and enhancement of local identity. The city also introduced strict rules on shopfront displays, merchandise spill-out, signage, and visual clutter, framing retail not just as an economic activity but a part of the city identity and landscape. Attention is given to souvenir shops, especially in highly visited areas, setting quality standards for retailed goods and display.

Impact

The IUAV University conducted a study on the impact of commercial activities in the historic centre that contributed to the evaluation of the experiment. The regulation became permanent in May2025.

Monitoring by the Venice City Council shows a fall in closures and over 200 new openings in the protected areas of the historic centre: 222 new businesses have opened during the experimental phase (2022-2025), mainly high-end fashion and artistic handicrafts, followed by art objects and bookshops.

71% of the new openings took place in heritage protected areas showing that heritage is not a hurdle to a quality retail economy.



Before and after / Image credits: Tuia Giannesini

Planning and management

The initiative comes from the Municipality of Venice, in particular the department responsible for Trade and Productive Activities. Other departments involved include Citizen and Business Services and Quality of Life (Tourist Flows Sector), the Event Planning department (Management and Protection of Traditions Sector). The municipal police and the civic legal office intervene for matters within their jurisdiction.

The Veneto Region, the Ministry of Culture, together with the Soprintendenza (local office of the Ministry of Culture which deals with the protection of cultural heritage), were also involved.

The collaboration with the IUAV University of Venice provided evidence on which to draft the regulation regarding tourist flows, types of commercial activities, and compliance with the UNESCO guidelines on the protection of historic urban landscapes.

Budget

The initiative is part of the municipal administration's activities.

The collaboration with the university required approximately **EUR 50,000** (**EUR 30,000** provided by the municipality and **EUR 20,000** by the university).

Transferable ideas

- **Start by mapping commercial activities in historic areas to understand the situation and local practices.** If there is an imbalance between activities dedicated to residential use and those exclusively for tourism, it is necessary to define tools, which may involve regulations, or specific incentives for certain activities you want to promote.

- **Establish collaborations with institutions from other administrative levels (national, regional) and with research partners.** They will help you identify the areas of intervention based on evidence and prepare the legal background for new regulations.

- **Monitor and follow up on the tools put in place.** Conduct weekly checks to verify that the regulations concerning shop windows, the display of goods, and the type of goods comply with the regulation.

Explore

Article on Il Sole24Ore

European Heritage Hub

Co-funded by the European Union

Study for the Protection of the Built Heritage of Vlasotince

Towards sustainable use and renewal of architectural heritage



Vlasotince, Serbia **25,695 inhabitants**

Background

Vlasotince, nestled in the Jablanica District of southern Serbia, stands as a testament to the region's rich cultural and commercial history. At its heart lies a distinctive triangular central square, framed by a park and flanked by a linear artisanal and commercial bazaar – a layout that embodies the town's deep-rooted connection to trade. The architectural and urban fabric of Vlasotince's old centre emerged organically throughout the 19th century, with more structured planning efforts commencing in 1912. This blend of spontaneous growth and deliberate design has shaped a unique heritage landscape, reflecting both the town's economic past and its evolving identity.

Today, Vlasotince faces a series of pressing challenges. As a rural municipality, it grapples with demographic decline, economic stagnation, and the gradual erosion of its valuable built heritage. These issues are compounded by a lack of systematic documentation, insufficient integration of heritage considerations into urban planning, and limited awareness among property owners and potential investors. Preserving the existing urban matrix and respecting the historic logic of the old town centre is therefore not only a matter of safeguarding physical structures, but also of sustaining the cultural and social memory embedded within them.

Good practice story

In 2023, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments Niš, with support from Serbia's Ministry of Culture, launched the "Study for the Protection of the Built Heritage of Vlasotince." This project brought together rigorous research, digital innovation, community engagement, and policy dialogue to safeguard the town's architectural legacy.

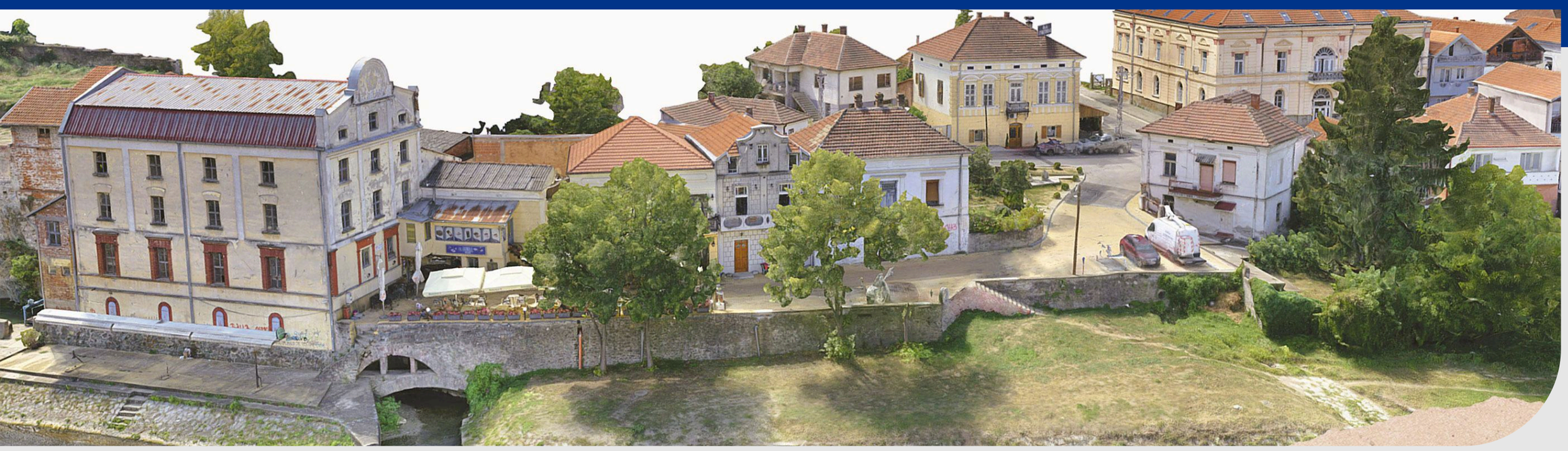
Through extensive fieldwork and collaboration with the University of Niš's Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture, the study systematically documented and analysed the old town centre's urban fabric, mapping its most significant buildings and spaces but also connected intangible heritage. A digital cultural heritage database with 3D photogrammetric models improves documentation, planning and data accessibility.

The result is a comprehensive protection plan that not only identifies heritage assets but also sets clear guidelines for their conservation, restoration, and adaptive reuse, prioritising restoration over demolition to align with principles of resource efficiency and sustainable development. The process was rooted in local participation. Data on properties were gathered in close cooperation with owners, fostering trust and shared ownership of the town's heritage. The initiative also inspired the next generation, with architecture students contributing through a dedicated workshop.

Impact

The study represents an initial step to preserve the spatial identity of the region. Its guidelines are already used to guide property owners and investors and will provide the professional basis for the preparation of a new General Regulation Plan by the Municipality of Vlasotince, ensuring that cultural heritage is systematically integrated into future planning documents.

Qualitative indicators include strengthened collaboration between academic and cultural institutions; increased public engagement with cultural heritage through exhibitions, publications, and interactive 3D models; capacity building for staff of the Institute, Faculty, and local library. The study has enhanced local tourism attractiveness with the creation of additional revenue streams and inspirated similar projects in neighbouring municipalities.



Planning and management

The implementation of the practice was overseen by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments Niš, in close cooperation with the Municipality of Vlasotince (departments for urban planning, spatial development, and cultural affairs).

Urban planning inspectors from the Ministry of Construction and representatives of the Agency for Spatial Planning were informed and consulted during the implementation to ensure alignment with national regulations and planning frameworks.

Additional support and expertise were provided by academic institutions, including architecture faculties.

Budget

Total budget: **EUR 17,700**

EUR 12,500 from the Ministry of Culture, through the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments Niš.
EUR 5,200 from the Municipality of Vlasotince, through the library contributing to the preparation and printing of a monograph on the built heritage of Vlasotince.

Transferable ideas

- **Foster strong collaborations:** engage academic institutions, local cultural organisations, and municipal authorities with clear roles, shared goals, and regular communication from the start.

- **Combine traditional and digital tools:** use a mix of field research, public events, publications, and digital resources to maximise outreach, educational impact, and long-term usability of results.

- **Plan for community engagement and visibility:** involve students, residents, and stakeholders through workshops, exhibitions, and publications. Promote the outcomes widely to inspire interest, attract support, and create potential for replication in other regions.

Explore

Official project page

Academic article (Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Niš)
Student workshop website

Photogrammetric documentation of numerous buildings and creation of an open digital database

Public exhibition and promotion of the Study

Roundtable “The Disappearance of Small Towns”

Contact

Institute for the protection of Cultural Monuments Niš