

HISTCAPE

HISTorical assets and related landsCAPE

Background

Historic towns and their landscapes are a unique part of Europe's identity. While Europe's 500 million population is largely concentrated in larger settlements 80% of its territory is rural in character. These rural landscapes are home to a scattered pattern of smaller historic towns and villages.

Histcape focuses on these historical assets – some 4,500 small towns of under 20k population which have traditionally acted as community hubs – a focal point for economic activity and social cohesion. This role has, however, come under serious threat over recent decades with outmigration, particularly of young people as a direct consequence of changing patterns of economic activity – adversely affecting demographic balance and sustainability. The ensuing loss of facilities and services combined with a loss of economic activity has resulted in a lack of investment in these communities. The acceleration of this trend, exacerbated by the recession, directly threatens the existence of much of Europe's historic assets.

The HISTCAPE project addresses this challenge by focusing on the sustainable management of historical assets in small rural towns. Through interregional workshops, study visits and a special online practitioners' forum the project will identify and establish effective policies and plans for the sustainable management of cultural heritage assets and related landscapes.

Objectives and Results

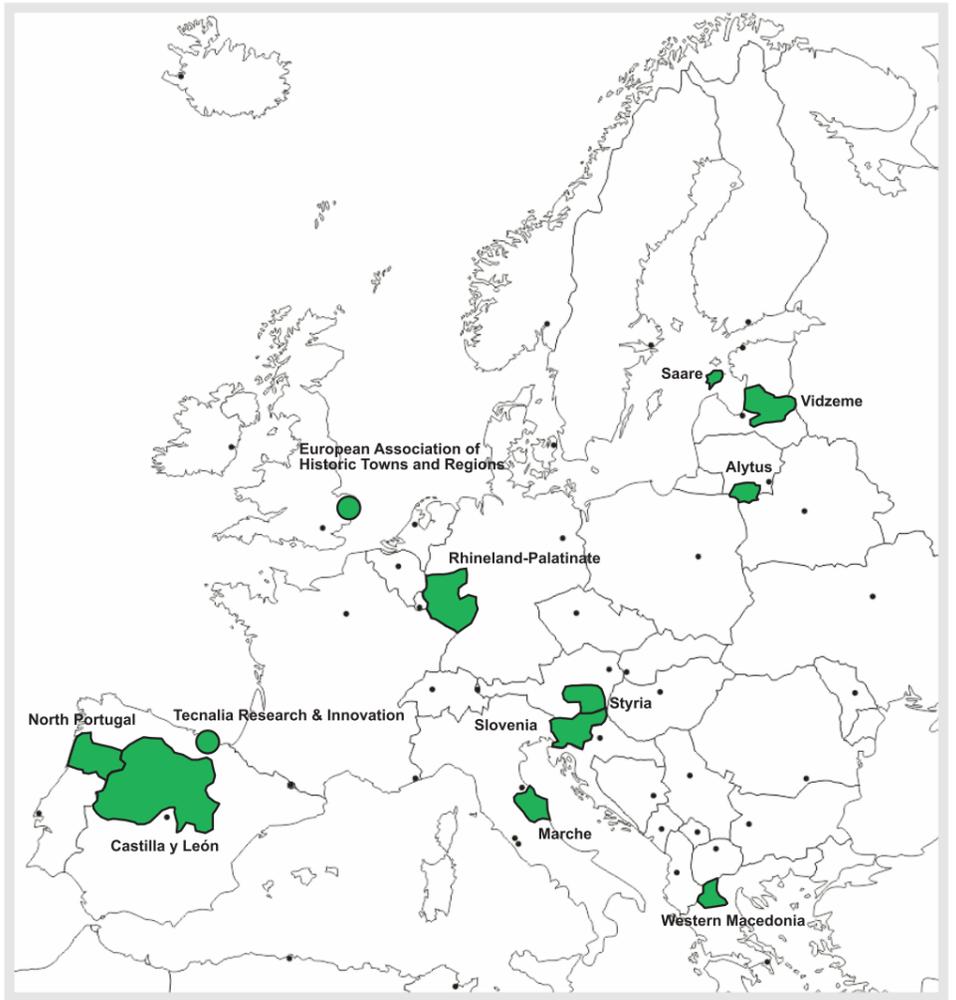
HISTCAPE aims to arrest the decline of historical assets in rural areas. It plans to do this by developing sustainable management solutions to help responsible bodies develop a more dynamic view of cultural heritage assets in rural areas.

- The project will
- identify and disseminate good practice
 - contribute to increased skills and capacities within regional authorities
 - identify, implement and transfer improved models of heritage protection
 - improve the networking of regions and heritage management authorities
 - develop policy recommendations at the European level

Approach and Methodology

- 1** The project activities follow a carefully defined methodology. First, partners identify good practice and jointly define a methodology for developing policies. Examples of good practice will be collected, analysed and highlighted by partners. Stakeholders in rural development will be invited to participate in these discussions. Study visits, peer reviews and state of art good practice will be important instruments in this first phase.
- 2** In the second stage, the viability of implementing those policies will be tested through six pilot actions in the partner regions. In parallel, the project partners will pool resources and knowledge to jointly develop new policy instruments building on identified good practice.
- 3** The final stage is dedicated to the development of an implementation plan for each participating region and to the training of partners to ensure these plans are successfully carried out after the end of the project. The plans serve as ready-to-implement strategies for improving the efficiency and sustainability of rural cultural heritage management across Europe.
- 4** Lastly, to create added value at the European level, HISTCAPE partners will present the results of their cooperation in a sustainable management guide on the preservation of rural heritage values. This will include policy recommendations, examples of best practice and general guidelines for successful implementation.

Through regional cooperation the HISTCAPE project will fill a strategic policy gap improving the effectiveness of regional policies relating to cultural heritage in Europe's smaller settlements whose viability is now seriously under threat. It will identify good practice in sustainable management and ensure they transfer into regional action plans that are capable of accessing the structural funds – providing a catalyst for further public and private sector investment alongside the empowerment of local communities.



Lead Partner

Rural Development Styria (Austria)

The province of Styria is characterised by diverse rural areas with a wide range of cultural heritage assets. Apart from the city of Graz with its beautifully preserved historic centre, which was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, most of the province has a rural structure.

The association 'Rural Development Styria' (Landentwicklung Steiermark) was founded by the Provincial Government of Styria to support the implementation of strategies creating dynamic rural areas worth living in. The main goals of Rural Development Styria are to make use of regional values to create a balance between economic, ecological and cultural aspects as well as to preserve cultural heritage and cultural landscapes. Based on the model of Local Agenda 21, these goals should be achieved by strengthening the citizens' self-responsibility and by making use of synergies within the context of networks and co-operation.

As part of the outcomes of the project HISTCAPE effective strategies for cultural heritage protection and preservation including horizontal governance and community empowerment will be transferred to Styria. Rural Development Styria will be assisted by Media K GmbH – an external expert with wide experience in the protection and valorisation of cultural heritage assets – in the identification of good practice and the development of policy recommendations.

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Partner 2

Castilla & León Regional Authority (Spain)

Castilla & León is located in the northwest of Spain. It is one of 17 autonomous communities that territorially comprise Spain. The region has more land surface than any other community in Spain with a low average population density of 27,15 inhabitants/km2 and a high density in cultural heritage assets, 1820 declared cultural properties and 8 properties declared World Heritage by UNESCO.

The regional authority of Castilla & León has overall authority regarding the cultural heritage of the entire region. There are 587 municipalities within Castilla & León with historical assets or monuments distributed throughout nine provinces. 120 municipalities are protected cultural heritage assets; about 80 of which are small towns under 5,000 inhabitants with many having a population of just a few hundred people. The region is therefore characterised by the range and quality of these historical assets dispersed over an extensive, scarcely populated territory.

The regional authority has an ambitious programme for heritage, set out in its Strategic Plan for Cultural Heritage (Plan PAHIS 2004-2012). This includes the recognition of cultural values and the cataloguing of cultural assets as well as guaranteeing the protection of cultural heritage, preserving and restoring cultural heritage, as well as collaboration with other institutions and organisations. Throughout the project we expect to develop innovative instruments and tools for the improvement of sustainable territorial management policies in cultural heritage preservation and to create a common methodology for the protection of small towns with cultural heritage values situated in rural, scarcely populated areas.

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Partner 5

Region of Western Macedonia (Greece)

The Region of Western Macedonia was created in 1987 under the Law 1622/1986 setting out the reformed land-planning and administrative division of Greece into Regions. It serves as the area where de-centralized bodies of central government meet with representatives of local government. The Region contributes to national planning and within this framework draws up programmes and applies the policies for economic, social and cultural growth.

The principal role of the Region of Western Macedonia as a development institution is clearly illustrated with the planning of the 4th Regional Operational Programme of Western Macedonia. The main objective of the programme is to contribute to the creation of a dynamic region that will utilize not only the cultural assets but also the human potential of its citizens.

The Department of Culture and Sport is mainly responsible for coordinating activities of cultural institutions of the region. This can involve the implementation of cultural programmes and events, the establishment of awards, grants and other means in order to encourage the development of education and arts. In addition it is responsible for monitoring and strengthening associations and bodies which pursue similar goals, the joint organization of cultural events with local actors for the preservation of local heritage and its dissemination, particularly to the young.

The Region is participating in the HISTCAPE project in order to find ways for better preserving, managing and promoting its cultural assets through an exchange of experience and the identification and implementation of good practice in the sustainable management of those cultural heritage assets.

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Partner 6

General-Directorate of the Cultural Heritage Rhineland-Palatinate (Germany)

Rhineland-Palatinate is an old cultural region in the centre of Europe, based on Celtic and Roman roots. Thus, it possesses an outstanding historical heritage which is visible in important monuments, artworks and traditions. It is the home of famous German myths like the Nibelungen, the worldwide known Lorelei, the Roman emperor Constantine the Great, Charlemagne, the forefather of Europe, the medieval centres of Jewish life in Speyer, Worms and Mainz, the inventor of printing Gutenberg – man of the millennium, the list goes on. Four UNESCO World Heritage sites characterize the region: the Roman monuments in Trier, the cathedral in Speyer, the Upper Rhine Valley and the ancient Roman frontier Limes. 80 % of Rhineland-Palatinate consists of small towns in rural areas.

The General-Directorate of Cultural Heritage Rhineland-Palatinate (GDKE) is the professional authority for historical assets. The protection of historical assets is ensured jointly between the General-Directorate and 36 local authorities all over the region. It is indispensable to develop standards and appropriate methodologies/strategies in order to make decisions regarding the approach to the diverse problems which are found in rural areas. Through the HISTCAPE project the General-Directorate expects to benefit by the experiences of other European partners, by good practice Europe-wide and complementary expertise within the partnership.

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Partner 9

Vidzeme Planning Region (Latvia)

Vidzeme is the biggest region in Latvia in terms of territory and the smallest one in terms of inhabitants. The Region is represented in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. The Vidzeme Planning Region is a legal public body under the control of the Ministry of the Environment and Regional Development of Latvia. It was established to define regional policy, to ensure development and spatial planning, to ensure co-ordination and co-operation between municipalities and other regional institutions and to implement regional projects.

Since 2009 Vidzeme Planning Region has provided a consultancy service to cultural heritage specialists working in the Municipalities and compiles information about the cultural products and assets in the region. The Vidzeme Planning Region's mission is to provide political support for regional development.

Through the HISTCAPE project Vidzeme Planning Region can share its specific knowledge with the partners and contribute to experience exchange activities and mutual understanding among relevant players. In the medium and long term, Vidzeme Planning Region is interested in setting out priorities and measures to preserve and restore the necessary infrastructure for the sustainable management of historic cultural heritage assets, and to ensure the quality and accessibility of cultural services.

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Partner 10

Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of Republic of Slovenia (to be confirmed)

Slovenia is divided into 4 environmental regions named Alpine, Danubian, Adriatic-Ionian and Dinaric Arc. The specific environmental and geographical characteristics and historical reasons have defined the unique characteristics of each region. More than 50% of Slovenian settlements are rural villages and hamlets, divided by hills, which gives them a strong local character visible through their architecture and cultural life. The Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning establishes cooperation with local communities according to the principles of partnership and subsidiarity. It ensures the openness of development and enforcement of policies and sustainable development measures by encouraging the participation of individuals and groups, as well as civil society organisations. Goals of the Ministry concern protection and preservation of rural heritage including preventing or mitigating adverse impacts which present a threat to sustainable development.

The Ministry wants to address new issues facing rural heritage preservation not only regarding the economic activity but also to the social, territorial, environmental, landscape, energy, and management and conservation aspects. The Ministry hopes to benefit from HISTCAPE through lessons learned in different regions and from the definition of a common framework which will add new value to their environmental policies.

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Partner 3

Northern Cultural Regional Direction (Portugal)

Northern Cultural Regional Direction (NCRD) is a decentralized body governed by public law, created in 2006, with competences in preservation, conservation, valuation and promotion of cultural heritage of the entire territory of the Northern Region of Portugal, with responsibility for the management, conservation and valorisation of the 53 monuments and sites that are State property in Northern Portugal.

The Northern Region of Portugal has many small historic centres, with more than 800 years of history, representing many different heritage values.

Under the powers of the NCRD to preserve the historical heritage and its framework, it has intervened in the rehabilitation of these small historic centres, contributing to ensuring the sustainable development of these socio-economically depressed rural areas.

Through the exchange of experiences between cultural heritage organisations in different countries it is hoped to identify and implement good practice and to gain and improve staff capacity and expertise in the management of cultural heritage assets. NCRD expects to gain from the HISTCAPE project the capacity to promote and raise awareness of heritage values, in relation to protecting cultural heritage and preserving landscape, providing local agents with the policies and efficient instruments for the sustainable management of these rural territories, and enhancing local economies through the valorisation of rural cultural assets.

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Partner 7

Alytus district municipality administration (Lithuania)

Alytus District Municipality is a local authority within Alytus County, situated in a beautiful corner of southern Lithuania. The territory of the district occupies 1411 square kilometres; The district is divided into 11 local administrative units. The population of the district is more than 32 thousand inhabitants and accounts for over 17% of the total county population.

For the last 17 years the Municipality has had responsibility for the cataloguing and management of historic heritage objects and collecting information for a data base for the protection of cultural and historical heritage assets. There are 72 archaeological, 395 historical, 144 art, 29 architectural and 3 urban monuments, 19 landscapes containing evidence of historical settlements.

With the HISTCAPE project the Municipality expects to develop local policies for protecting and enhancing cultural assets, values and landscape. The project's challenge - through promoting innovation and added-value project activities related to the enhancement of cultural assets and landscapes - is to strengthen sustainable economic activities and employment related to cultural heritage assets. Through HISTCAPE Alytus District hopes to increase awareness of its cultural heritage assets and their value by reaching a wider audience both within and beyond the project partnership.

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Partner 11

Teczalia Research & Innovation (Spain)

Fundación Tecnalia R&I (TRI) is the leading private technology centre in Spain and one of the main organisations devoted to applied research in Europe. With a presence in 10 European countries Tecnalia is the biggest technological corporation in Spain and the fifth largest in Europe. TRI has more than 50 years of experience in supporting enterprises and administrations in their technological and innovation needs, regarding different key areas of sustainable development. TRI is organised into 5 main areas - the Cultural Heritage Department (CHD) is under the Sustainable Development Division (SDD).

During the last 15 years, the Cultural Heritage Department has been dealing with the strategic planning and management of cultural heritage assets, working with authorities in Spain to deliver methodologies, exchange of experience and policy recommendations. The main activity is focused on research and innovation methodologies, developing instruments and tools for the preservation, conservation and management of cultural assets in historic centres at local and national level.

Through the exchange of good practice between partners, TRI expects to widen its contact with cultural heritage managing authorities, to learn from them, to identify needs and areas for innovation in rural heritage preservation and to increase TRI's skills, knowledge and capacities in the sustainable management of cultural heritage assets and related landscape.

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Partner 4

Regione Marche (Italy)

Regione Marche is one of the 20 Italian Regions. It lies in Central Italy alongside the Adriatic Sea.

Marche is known as a "plural region" for its traditions, dialects, historic cities and for its different landscapes ranging from mountains to the sea. However when you say "Marche" you think of a typical landscape of hills and rural areas with a wealth of historical settlements and heritage assets.

Marche Region has been pursuing the objective of safeguarding and enhancing the quality of its landscapes for many years mainly thanks to the Regional Authority's Landscape Plan. It has focused on protecting the historical heritage as well as its botanical and geological assets through connected landscape and urban policies.

The Landscape Plan is now under review. Marche Region is facing the challenge of designing proactive policies besides the more traditional regulatory ones. The aim is to start landscape-based development action plans involving local communities.

Thanks to HISTCAPE Marche Region will carry out a pilot-action relating to this strategy. The pilot-action will have particular relevance as it relates to and will be within the framework of the new Strategic Agenda of Marche Region Landscape Plan.

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Partner 8

Saaremaa Local Governments Association (Estonia)

Saare County comprises Saaremaa, the biggest island of Estonia and another 7 inhabited islands. Saaremaa and its islets are famous for the richness of their geological heritage or geotopes.

Saaremaa Local Government Association was founded by the local governments of Saare County in 1993. 15 local municipalities are members of the Association. The Association is the public body in charge of promoting the balanced development of the environment, economy and cultural heritage of the county. It has a long history of competences in the development of sustainable tourism and also in devising and implementing strategic plans and policies to protect the environment, landscape and cultural heritage.

The Association aims foremost to improve the protection of cultural heritage values of historic assets and related landscapes in rural areas and therefore hopes to implement the policy recommendations for the protection of rural landscape developed by the HISTCAPE project.

Specific benefits (and input) for Saaremaa Local Government Association from the project are the exchange of experience in the management of historic assets and landscape to achieve sustainable environmental development through the Islands' Silurian Geopark. The aim from the project is to prepare policies for sustainable development and the continuing health of the geopark as well as to provide an overview about the islands' geological heritage.

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Partner 12

Heritage Europe (UK)

Heritage Europe was formed as The European Association of Historic Towns and Regions by the Council of Europe in October 1999 as part of the initiative "Europe – A Common Heritage". Heritage Europe now represents through its range of membership categories over 1000 historic and heritage towns, cities and regions in 30 European countries.

Heritage Europe's aim is to promote the interests of historic towns and cities across Europe through:-

- International co-operation between heritage organisations, and historic towns, cities and regions.
- Sharing experience and good practice between historic towns, cities and regions.
- Promoting vitality, viability and sustainable management of historic towns, cities and regions.

The main focus of Heritage Europe is to bring historic towns together to share and disseminate good practice in the sustainable management of historic towns. In particular it aims to identify the underlying processes that lead to success. Specifically it organises international symposia, commissions research and produces guidelines on good practice, leads and participates in European projects, arranges study visits and staff exchanges.

Heritage Europe (EAHR) seeks through HISTCAPE to inspire local and regional authorities to cooperate so that rural cultural heritage assets will be valued and preserved by the adoption of innovative good practice solutions. As a partner in the project, EAHR will broaden its contacts with both regions and smaller historic towns in rural areas, giving them access to a historic towns network at local, national and European level allowing them to share experience and professional expertise as well as good practice and practical guidelines. Specifically Heritage Europe aims to ensure that the project's findings are widely disseminated throughout Europe.

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