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Collaboration in the ReInHerit Horizon 2020 Project - Redefining the Future of Cultural Heritage, through a disruptive model of sustainability)

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Type of best practice
General Cultural Heritage Management

Keywords
collaboration, digital hub, communication, museums, heritage sites, heritage management, sustainable cultural tourism, smart tourism, smart destinations

The ReInHerit project involved the collaboration between 12 partners (Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, CYENS CoE, ECTN, University of Graz, University of Florence, Arcada University of Applied Sciences, Graz Museum, Cycladic Museum, Blue Shield, Arte Sostenible, Consorzio Materahub, University of Nicosia) with complementary expertise in heritage management located in 7 countries (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Italy, Greece, Spain) in Europe for the development of the Digital Hub. The aim of the project has been to create a model of sustainable heritage management for fostering a digital dynamic European network of heritage stakeholders through the ReInHerit Digital Hub. The ReInHerit Digital Hub provides museum and heritage professionals and visitors with the tools and resources to communicate, experiment, innovate and disseminate European cultural heritage.

Organisation in charge of best practice
Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation (BoCCF)

Location
Nicosia, Cyprus

Dates
1 March 2021 - 29 February 2024

Description
The ReInHerit project (ID No 101004545) was funded under the EU Horizon 2020 Programme as a Coordination and Support Action (hereafter CSA) which funds activities consisting primarily of accompanying measures such as standardisation, dissemination, awareness-raising and communication, networking, coordination or support services, policy dialogues and mutual learning exercises and studies, including design studies for

new infrastructure and may also include complementary activities of strategic planning, networking and coordination between programmes in different countries. Aligned with CSA, the aim of the project was to create a model of sustainable heritage management for fostering a digital dynamic European network of heritage stakeholders through the Digital Hub. The ReInHerit Digital Hub provides to relevant stakeholders (museums, heritage sites, policy makers, professionals and communities) with the tools and resources to communicate, experiment, innovate and disseminate European cultural heritage.

To achieve this, the project was implemented by adopting a bottom-up approach, meaning that involved the consortium partners and external museum and heritage professionals from the beginning. The collaboration in the project was divided into three phases. The aim of the first phase was to identify the sector's needs, challenges and practices across Europe by using quantitative and qualitative research methods (desk research, focus group interviews and questionnaires). During this phase the consortium partners held multiple ideation workshops for formulating the focus group interview questions and the questionnaires to gain information from professionals and visitors with the aim on how to develop the Digital Hub and its resources. A comprehensive map of the stakeholder's practices and perceptions on European cultural heritage was created with the produced (qualitative and quantitative data) and allowed the partners responsible for developing the exhibitions and the digital apps to (cross)examine the needs, challenges and practices of the sector across different levels. In doing so, the consortium collected important information on the digital transformation of heritage sites and museums, its impact, innovation potential and sustainability; these were the core issues for building the ReInHerit digital ecosystem and management model. This phase developed a set of requirements that paved the roadmap for an impactful implementation for the second phase, which included the development of the ReInHerit Toolkit and Digital Hub, and, finally, the pilot phase where stakeholders were provided with access to the Toolkit through the Digital Hub and additional testing, workshops and hackathons took place for interacting with potential users and evaluating the projects' outcomes.

In this project, sustainability was considered as a medium for developing a long-term strategic heritage management policy that can provide museums and heritage sites (particularly small- and medium-sized) with the abilities to adapt to new audiences, new forms of communication, new organizational structures, and technologies. The utility of the sustainability mind-frame was used to incite rethinking about patterns of consumption and current practices, modes of operation and managerial organization for achieving long-term impact. This was aligned with the need to develop an innovative Digital Hub. Innovation was understood in the ReInHerit project as an ongoing process that creates new products, methods and/or processes. It is a process of modification, conversion, translation, application in which a creative product is made into something that is concretely useful and has a new value (practice & improvement). In accordance with OECD (Oslo Manual, 2018), the result of the innovation process is "a new or improved product or process (or combination thereof) that differs significantly from the unit's previous products or processes and that has been made available to potential users." An important aspect of innovation in the ReInHerit project was social innovation deriving from the relationship between services/objects and people (how these services are used, their meaning, the relationships between services), which can lead to new ways of inclusion in heritage and

improve the welfare and wellbeing of communities. For the European Commission (New European Innovation Agenda, Commission Staff Working Document, 2022, p2), "innovation is key in a global context that can accelerate the transition to sustainable development, while improving our well-being, reducing inequalities and ensuring longer-term prosperity".

The adoption of digital technologies (that integrate physical and digital interactions) in museums and heritage sites has been aligned with social innovation: the democratic and inclusive approach to heritage management that has been taking place in recent decades. ReInHerit project has identified a core issue in this: sustainable digital transformation has not been fully implemented (digital solutions are outsourced and heritage professionals are not active agents in digital transformation) for all museums. Tackling the issue of a sustainable digital transformation can lead to disruptive innovation in cultural heritage management. This means the implementation of solutions that are capable of radically changing the market behavior in the heritage sector for the different stakeholders. Innovation in ReInHerit addresses a key priority of the European Commission which is aligned with the New European Innovation Agenda:

"A Europe fit for the digital age: empowering people with new generation technologies"

The aim with this priority is to achieve digital transformation that will enhance both economic and environmental efficiency while developing new sustainable, circular and inclusive ways to satisfy human needs and wellbeing. The ReInHerit project contributes to this by providing innovative solutions (processes and products, see figure below) that enables the formation of a sustainable heritage management by creating a guided path through learning resources, prototypes and codes, best practices and handbook, webinars that can help museum and heritage professionals recreate, adopt and adapt the ReInHerit's Digital Toolkit and exhibitions.
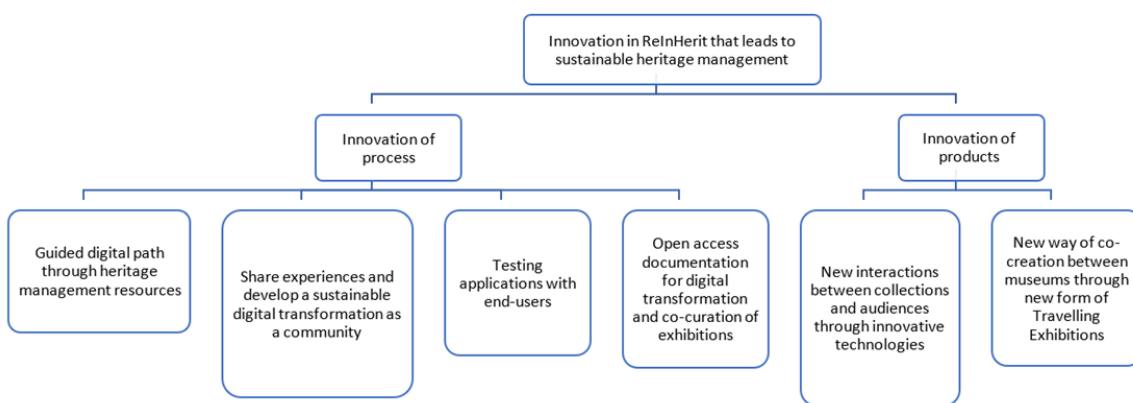

Fig.1 Innovative solutions in ReInHerit

Links
https://reinherit-hub.eu

Resources needed

Human and financial resources are required to develop collaborative projects. EU funded projects such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Horizon Europe and Interreg or public-private partnerships can provided the necessary means for developing collaborative projects for heritage management.

Challenges encountered

The main challenges encountered related to the communication between partners in the beginning of the project due to the traveling restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in the early stages of the project and due to the different approaches to digital technologies stemming from the different disciplinary and cultural backgrounds of the partners. Regular contact through meetings and ideation workshops and in person discussions from the beginning of the project have been necessary for the success of the ReInHerit project.

Evidence of success

Through the collaboration of the consortium, the Digital Hub has been created and contains a plethora of resources on heritage management: 1) for developing technology-assisted immersive performances, educational, gamification, and smart tourism, applications (guidelines and prototypes); 2) training webinars related to the Toolkit; 3) best practices and a handbook on communication and collaboration between museums and heritage sites; and 4) networking area for museum and heritage professionals to discuss and co-create digital exhibitions. For the audiences it offers access to digital exhibitions, eshop, digital apps and promotional material for the immersive performances and travelling exhibitions.

Potential for transfer

Many surveys have been conducted in the last few years on the challenges the heritage and museum sector are facing in the adoption and leverage of digital technologies. These surveys have highlighted the importance of training and developing skills for the sustainable digital transformation of the museum and heritage sectors. The collaboration between partners in this project can guide future collaborative designs for digital technologies and provide the learning material required for it.

Further Information

All the resources can be found on the project's digital hub: https://reinherit-hub.eu