

TITLE OF THE PROJECT :
"Protecting and developing cultural heritage "

Objectives :

A benchmarking programme between 3 art cities: Venice, Palermo, Damascus on the best practices for :

- 1 training and promoting craftsmen, artists and professional in conservation of the architectural heritage, decorations techniques and historical buildings/churches/mosques maintenance
- 2 setting up actions for the economic involvement of the cultural heritage in job creation and local development impact.

Partners:

1. VENICE : CNA (National Confederation Craftsmanship)
2. MedEurope (Palermo):
3. DAMASCUS :

Project logic:

The cultural heritage should be an important asset to be maintained in order to enrich our and the future generations' culture.

Many times it is not easy for the public to afford the high costs of maintenance and management.

Additionally there are still gaps in the local, regional and national organisation to make the public aware of these treasures, to exchange know-how among each other or simply, to be ready to drive suitable actions for its valorisation and impact in the local economy, especially through the cultural tourism strategy and cultural events' promotion and management.

Therefore it needs **innovative business concepts, attraction of private investors, professional marketing concepts, tools and practices, high quality in services, European co-operation and networking in all these fields**, in order to elaborate and put in practice the most successful and economically sustainable management models.

The aim of the project is to exchange some best practices :

- 2 on the training professional craftsmen and artists who are able to protect and restore the cultural heritage sites and
- 3 on the capacity building to set up or improve the management competencies for the economic valorisation of the cultural heritage.

The choice of the art cities partners of the project is motivated by objective evidence : Damascus received the nomination of Arab Capital of Culture in 2008, Venice as a whole is in the list of the World Cultural Heritage of UNESCO and one of its main peripheral Offices, Palermo has been one of the first cross-cultural capitals in Italy, during the period of Normans Kings and Frederick II empire. Both Palermo and Venice are the European cities of art, where the cultural influence of the Arab culture and artistic styles are in great evidence. Moreover, there are many historical proofs that one of the most important venetian crafts, that's the artistic glassworks, came from Syria, the cradle of this fanciful art.

Pilot experiences :

To pave the way for this approach to the cultural heritage, a selection of the art & crafts and economic valorisation practices should be made. Therefore, our proposal could be focused on :

1. Craftsmen, artists and professional competencies :

Four sectors deserve particular and careful attention, that's glasswork, mosaic techniques, stucco and mural painting (fresco technique and decorations), because of their impact on the quality of the cultural heritage (exterior and interior) and the impressive lack of people able to keep the rigorous know how relevant to the conservation and/or reproduction requirements. The cultural exchange will be according to both "knowledge" economy (the presentation of the scientific and historical basis of these techniques in the towns involved in the project) and "practical experiences", through a few "workshops" between the still existing craftsmen and artists, who have kept the transmission of the competencies required.

2. Economic action for the cultural heritage valorisation :

The impact of the cultural heritage on the economic wealth and value creation of a city or a territory, is largely underestimated. Many cultural sites, monuments, historical buildings, with their precious mural paintings and decorations (especially stucco and mosaic) are neglected, but forgotten. The "intangible" economy is more and more important in the value creation all over the world : culture and the cultural heritage play a strategic role in the competitive advantages in the territorial marketing. Moreover, the "happiness economy", proposed by the Nobel Prize Daniel Kahneman, represents an "alternative" interpretation of the wealth rating in the nations : the future economy will be more and more oriented to the intangible assets. This approach is "labour intensive", much more than the traditional industry and businesses, which are day by day "labour saving". The job creation, as a basic component of the added value of the economic activities, is much more achievable through the cultural activities for the local development and territorial and urban marketing. Art cities must improve their image and the cultural events and art locations : the European Cultural Capital Event, promoted by the European Union, proves from its first event in 1985 (Athens) that an active cultural policy can provide many positive effects in re-positioning the cities and their attractions in the globalized market. In fact, all the cities, which have been beneficiaries of such an event, certify an improvement of their economy and sustainable development.

The purpose of the present project is:

Improved valorisation of the cultural heritage in the Art Cities of Venice, Damascus and Palermo by promoting exchanges of professional know-how, skills and competencies of craftsmen, artists and professionals on the cultural heritage conservation and developing innovative concepts, professional management practices and services for its economic valorisation

Activities :

The project can be divided in 4 main activities, that we will call work packages:

Work package 1: Needs analysis and survey on the cultural heritage of the cities, the situation concerning the existing (or not existing) craftsmen, professionals and artists able to apply the conservation techniques of the four sectors proposed (mural painting, stucco, mosaic and glasswork). A questionnaire will be prepared and shared between the partners of the project and a provisional report will be presented.

Work package 2: Kick off meeting in Damascus, to present the provisional report, to deepen the scientific and historical basis of the arts & crafts proposed, to exchange the relevant experiences and best practices, to design and plan the workshops for the practical training and the formal and informal competencies achievement for the arts & craft conservation. Visits and survey on the exemplary masterpieces of the cultural arts & craft (Azm Palace, Bayt al-Aqqad, Maktab Anbar, Beit al-Mamlouka etc.)

Work package 3: Meeting in Venice, for :

- 4 Separate workshops on “glasswork” and “mosaic” techniques, through practical works and simulations, visits on the sites with exemplary masterpieces of the techniques (in the Venice Palaces and Museums, in St. Mark Basilica, in the Ducal Palace, in Murano island etc.)
- 5 a short seminar of experts in cultural heritage valorisation and Cultural events’ budgeting, management practices and economic outcomes (Palazzo Grassi, Biennial of Venice,)

Work package 4: Meeting in Palermo for :

- 6 separate workshop on “ stucco” and “mural paintings and decorations “ technique, through practical works and simulations, visits on the sites with exemplary masterpieces of the technique (particularly the works of Giacomo Serpotta in the Santa Cita Church, in San Francesco Church, in the patrician buildings etc.)
- 7 a short seminar of experts in cultural heritage valorisation (Sviluppo Sicilia, Civita, Palazzo Abatellis etc.)

Work package 5 : Final Meeting in Damascus for :

- Final Conference and presentation of the 2 Reports :
- 1 1 Report of the artist, craftsmen and professionals on the “techniques” exchanges and best practices, monitoring the results of the benchmarking and the competencies achieved and know how successful transfer (the “secrets” of the processes)
 - 2 1 Report of the experts on the “cultural heritage” valorisation practices, marketing-concepts or business-plans in correspondence with experienced partners actions, the economic impact evaluation.

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