

The exchange of best practices leads the II Interregional meeting of MOMAr

- The event hosted by the Province of Groningen joins more than 70 experts in heritage management from six rural areas of Europe.
- The final session is dedicated to the impact of COVID in the heritage management field

13th November 2020- The European project MOMAr (**Models of Management for Singular Rural Heritage**) of Interreg Europe held its second Interregional meeting in the form of an online seminar due to the pandemic. The event took place from 11-13 November, **under the title: “Heritage beyond tourism, a sustainable future”.**

The meeting was attended by the partners of MOMAr, **Provincial Government of Zaragoza** (Spain) as project leader, the **Territorial Administrative Unit of Mehedinti County** (Romania), **the Ministry of Regional Development and Transport of Saxony-Anhalt** (Germany), the **Regional Development Agency of South Bohemian** (Czech Republic), **Corsican Region** (France), and the **Province of Groningen** (Netherlands) as the host of the event. In addition, stakeholders from each of the countries involved were invited in order to exchange good practices in territorial management models, as well as failed cases, all of them with the purpose to expand the knowledge of these entities and delve into the challenges faced by the rural areas in Europe in the field of heritage management. The call was a success **registering more than 70 participants in the first opened session and 40 in the second.**

The COVID pandemic obliged to change the original plan of this Interregional Meeting, which was supposed to take place in the Province of Groningen combining a scientific programme with a study visit. However, MOMAr partners committed to complete the fieldwork once the mobility in Europe will be safe again.

Learning from the others

Monique Antonis, program manager Heritage, Spatial Quality and Landscape and Ingrid de Vries, senior policy advisor Economics of Leisure at the Province of Groningen, together with Maria del Carmen Gracia, Chief of Culture Service at Provincial Government of Zaragoza welcomed the first session and pointed the importance of heritage preservation to restore the identity of the regions and its local population, as well as to attract new visitors.

Partners and stakeholders took the floor then to share examples of good practices in heritage management. The first topic to approach was Heritage & Art through the case of a **Jazz-Festival celebrated this summer in Saxony-Anhalt**. They challenged the COVID restrictions and offered a high-class musical programme in an open space in the rural area of Jerichow, which was strongly appreciated by the residents. Besides, the Province of Zaragoza presented a **mural painting contest held in the town of Torrellas**. Artists were invited to paint facades of houses offered by the neighbours, creating an open-air museum that not only brought new visitors to the town but helped the municipality to restore degraded buildings bringing them a new life.

Heritage as a pole to activate the discovery of the natural environment and the cultural landscape was the next topic to address. The host of the event, the Province of Groningen started presenting **'Maarhuizen'**, a small dwelling with some farmhouses and a historic

graveyard on a man-made hill where the effort and collaboration of various parties made possible a conversion of the place to a cultural, ecological and tourist objective while preserving, restoring and further development of heritage and the surrounding cultural landscape.

Mehedinti County presented Via Transilvanica, a 1200km trail that reveals 200 years of the history of the region. The trail can be done in stages, by foot bike or horseback riding, but mostly it is a journey for Romanian people to rediscover their own identity and landscape. **New Water Works Zoutkamp of Groningen**, was the next case to debate as a combination of water management, keep-safe of cultural heritage, quality of life in the village of Zoutkamp and its surroundings, redevelopment of the lock and further progress of the tourism marina. From Saxony -Anhalt, it was explained the experience with the **World Heritage bus route** which combines the four UNESCO World Heritage sites, together with a total of 115 tourist attractions in the region. This experience, open to both tourists and residents, has achieved the cooperation of different stakeholders in order to disseminate the great variety of heritage in the area. Following, Zaragoza shared the case of **Cultural Parks of Aragón** a great example of how to implement new infrastructures and services to a depopulated area with a unique landscape and of great ecological value. The last good practice makes us travel to South Bohemia to learn about the revitalization of a **chain of castle ruins along the Malše river** in the form of workshops, events, and traditional restoration techniques. This project has conducted innovative and sustainable forms of spending free time. The last block was dedicated to heritage & Education by the collaborative formative system of the **workshop school Ribera Alta del Ebro**.

The session concluded with the presentation of various failed or challenging experiences for local heritage managers. This new approach, especially promoted by MOMAr project, has the will “to turn failures into successes through shared knowledge”, as MOMAr scientific coordinator, Irene Ruiz, pointed out.

How to face COVID impact

The last day was devoted entirely to analyzing and reflecting on the impact of the pandemic on heritage management in rural areas. For this purpose, **Valerie Magar, unit manager at the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM)** was invited. The expert detailed the activities that are being carried out from the institution to give practical tools and knowledge to heritage professionals during the current COVID crisis. Magar declared in this regard: “This crisis can divide us, or it can unite us, but what is certain is that heritage can help to create the necessary bridges”.

To complement the session, stakeholders from Zaragoza and Saxony-Anhalt described successful strategies fulfilled during the last months to fight COVID impact, such as the use of social media, crowdfunding campaigns, smart work systems and international cooperation. MOMAr’s scientific committee also presented the results of an internal survey distributed to the stakeholders to analyse the main obstacles they are facing and what are the majors concerns of the sector.

Interreg community

The meeting also opened a conversation with another Interreg project, KEEP ON, which is dedicated to the sustainability and durability of cultural heritage projects. Its representative, Malgorzata Steckiewicz, presented the work achieved by the six partners involved and highlighted the necessary elements to achieve the sustainability of a project, these are society, culture, economy and the environment, but it is also essential, she said, “coordinate these factors through leadership, as well as to place local communities as the main beneficiary of the project”.

About MOMAr

Models of Management for Singular Rural Heritage (MOMAr) is an Interreg Europe programme funded by European Union. MOMAr means providing strategic thinking to the use of cultural and natural resources. The project highlights the existence of territories with problems - depopulation, ageing, no use of resources- whose identity is however marked by a rich heritage, exceptional in some cases - UNESCO heritage - and whose management entities have either not finished defining their models of action in terms of cultural and natural resources or directly borrowed models that do not correspond to the territorial reality.

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