

REVITALIZING ALBANIA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

IN RESPONSE TO THE 2019 NOVEMBER EARTHQUAKE

EU4CULTURE at a glance



Vision:

The European Union is contributing to the socio-economic development of Albania through improved economic standards by revitalising cultural sites and monuments affected by November 2019 earthquake.



Funding:

40 million Euro



Geographical coverage:



Programme Stakeholders:

European Union:

Programme Donor

Ministry of Culture:

Primary Programme Beneficiary

UNOPS:

Implementing Partner



Duration:

2020 - 2024

Background

Albania is located in an area of rich and diverse landscape of the Mediterranean. In 2019, an earthquake of 6.4 Richter magnitude caused significant damage to monuments, infrastructure, and human life. The Covid-19 pandemic has further impacted all other dimensions of the cultural heritage value chain, particularly socio-economic implications on tourism, employment, and community engagement.

Project aim and approach

Implemented by UNOPS, EU4Culture is the largest EU-funded initiative which aims to rehabilitate and revitalise cultural heritage sites damaged by the November 2019 Earthquake in Albania. It will contribute to the recognition of cultural heritage as a driver of Albania's sustainable development, promoting a holistic approach of infrastructural rehabilitation, strengthening communities' relationship with the sites by nurturing culture and creative industry as assets of Albania's economy.

Focus of our first year

UNOPS expertise in procurement, infrastructure, and project management aims to deliver results in these three below key areas of the EU4Culture project with technical advice and provision of services.

During this first year of implementation the project has primarily focused on selection and prioritisation of eligible sites, conservation design and implementation as well as drafting the road map of grants' scheme.

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www.eu4culture.al

Approach



Rehabilitation of sites

- ◆ **Infrastructure & facilities enhancement**, including modernization through digital experiences.
- ◆ **Engagement platforms** for different stakeholders of academia, NGOs, policymakers, local community to bring consensus on the vision of site design and function.
- ◆ **Introducing sustainable procurement principles** to the market for gender parity and environmental protection.



Strengthening systems and empowering communities

- ◆ **Improving protocols and strengthening systems**, technical and managerial competences of those involved in managing sites, from artifact handling and archiving, to revenue creation, and resilience to disasters.
- ◆ **Providing resources** for communities surrounding sites to boost creativity and employment opportunities through grants mechanisms.



Awareness raising on the values of culture

- ◆ **Promoting culture** as a driver of sustainable development through visually engaging messages.
- ◆ **Strategically communicating** project achievements to the public through high profile events & multimedia products.

Restored
Cultural
Heritage site



3 sites where
works are
ongoing



Designs
approved 10



6 Consultation
workshops



bringing
together over 250
participants

such as: policymakers,
academics, field
professionals, media,
community
representatives.



Strategic
roadmap
of grant
mechanism
developed



Initiate
restoration
activities
in 8 new sites

Launch
the grant
scheme



Enhance
revenue
potential of
sites through
business plans

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Highlights of the year - 2021

1

Enhancing the value of sites by combining traditional principles of building with contemporary standards of design



Aiming to preserve the historical character and identity of all the sites, UNOPS approach of interventions is ensuring maximum retention and safeguarding of authentic portions, improvement of seismic durability when necessary for health and safety without jeopardising authenticity. The balance is struck at the conceptual stage where structural engineers of the Design team, cultural heritage specialists from the Ministry of Culture / National Institute of Cultural Heritage and experts from UNOPS define the vision of interventions.

Tracing the origins of the most iconic façade

The first site which started to be renovated, the most important museum and a national landmark of the capital city, the façade of the **National Historic Museum** built in the 1980s. UNOPS, through the **Building Back Better** approach, has turned to the first, original suppliers of the mosaic's tesserae in neighbouring Italy, while the original authors of the mosaic have been an integral part of consultation workshops that have guided the process.

Improved safety while maintaining aesthetic value

Housed in a historical dwelling built in 1764, the Ethnographic Museum in Kruja presents the story of Albanian customs and traditions throughout the centuries. Through the **Building Back Better** approach, in order to maintain its traditional features, yet enhance its seismic stability, the structural reinforcement has been proposed at the ground floor level; the stainless steel ties are proposed to be installed at the floor level and in line with the existing timber joist system; whereas, the ties will extend on the resilience response of the building in the event of the earthquake. The ties can be removed at any time and are positioned next to floor joists purposefully to not obscure the view of the traditional flooring system.

2

Inclusive processes building a common and contemporary vision



UNOPS's approach in heritage revitalization emphasizes participatory decision-making not only at national level, cultural heritage practices but also by involving those most affected - owners, local communities, and local authorities.

Integrating technical restoration with social, cultural and economic value of the museum of Kruja

A consultation meeting on the 14th of May, centered around the common future of the museum and its potential for the area, was attended by the Minister of Culture, the EU Ambassador to Albania and UNOPS Country Manager. The discussion is part of efforts to revive the relationship with communities, local authorities, and artisans. The meeting brought together the director of the Museums of Kruja and staff, municipality representatives, field professionals, academics, media, and community members. The discussion aimed at setting the stage for upcoming interventions in the Museum, aligning the interests of various stakeholders for its future, and guiding design considerations for optimal functionality of the site.

3

Skills for sustainable heritage conservation and management



Museum expositions and artifacts have been central to revitalization activities in 2021, with particular focus on the Ethnographic Museums of Kruja and Museum of Kavaja, for which designs have been already finalized.

Building the skills of future generations of caretakers for safeguarding cultural assets

Drawing on international expertise from the Institute of Conservation at University of Applied Arts in Vienna a one-week workshop was organized at the Ethnographic Museum of Kavaja. The museum hosts heritage not only of local, but also national value in Albania. In cooperation with the National Centre for Registry of Cultural Heritage, Municipality of Kavaja, and the Ethnographic Museum in Kavaja, the workshop aimed to enhance capacities of site managers and cultural heritage practitioners in artifact evacuation once a plan was developed and submitted to the Municipality of Kavaja and the Ministry of Culture. The workshop involved students and teaching staff from the Department of Archeology and Cultural Heritage at the University of Tirana, and a site manager who have packed a total of 810 objects, 120% more than initially planned.

After the workshop and given the demonstrated professionalism and dedication, the students of University of Tirana are supporting the National Center for Registry of Cultural Heritage in their work on finalizing the database for artifacts in the digital inventory system of the Center.