CD ETA – Collaborative Digitization of Natural and Cultural Heritage

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The Foundation for Research and Innovation of the University of Florence (FRI) is partner of a five-year Interreg Project “CD-ETA – Collaborative Digitization of Natural and Cultural Heritage”, whose Lead partner is Euroregion Pleven-Olt, a cross border association of the municipalities from Pleven District (Bulgaria) and the municipalities from Olt (Romania).

The partnership is balanced both in terms of regions and competencies of the participating organizations: Estonian War Museum (Estonia); University of Patras (Greece); Foundation for Research and Innovation (Italy); Harghita County Council (Romania); Regional Development Agency of Gorenjska (Slovenia); Association of Municipalities of the Ribera Alta Region, (Spain); Foundation Saint Mary the Royal of Historic Heritage (Spain).

The main objective of the project is to improve the implementation and the adoption of policies on digitization for natural and cultural heritage, through the identification of best practices and the drawing up of 8 Action Plans, one for each member state partner.

The project just concluded its first 3-year phase where the following main activities were carried out:

- Organization of local stakeholder meetings (8 meetings within each participating member state) focusing on digitization of natural and cultural heritage with the involvement of representatives operating in the sector of Culture (local/regional/national Authorities, museums and galleries, libraries, archives, owners of natural and protected areas, institutes, universities, technology companies)

- Organization of Interregional Work Meetings and Thematic Seminars to identify and exchange good practices, thus enhancing cross-border cooperation and capacity building in the sector of digitized cultural heritage.

- Drawing-up of Action Plans, since during this period, each involved partner has hardly worked to lay the basic foundation for his own Action Plan and get the signing by the local policy responsible body.
FRI, the Tuscany partner of the CD-ETA project consortium, supported by the Department for Culture and Research of the Tuscany Region, set up an Action Plan made of four main actions, aimed at enhancing digitization of natural and cultural heritage in Tuscany. Such actions are strongly aimed at exploiting both the Tuscan best practices presented to the CD-ETA partners during the international thematic seminars and all the other best practices learned during the above-mentioned events, as well as the many experiences gathered during the project phase 1.

The first action is related to the creation of a database/repository of best practices on the Tuscany Region’s platform, specifically within the section developed by the Department for Culture and Research. The final aim is to make available, for those cultural entities having a demand for technological innovation, an ensemble of ready-to-use solutions, which represents a potential technological offer at the regional level. Overall, this action aims at reducing the digitization technology gap in the cultural sector, at the regional level, through a matching process.

The second action is related to the support offered by FRI to the updating process of the Regional Smart Specialization Strategy, specifically concerning Culture and Research. By means of this action, FRI transferred the lessons learnt in the first three years of activities of the project from an international to a regional scale, linking the CD-ETA outputs and objectives to the regional roadmap of the Smart Specialization Strategy in the field of cultural heritage.

The third action aims at integrating CD-ETA digitization experiences and practices dealing with cultural heritage within the Strategic Plan of the Metropolitan City of Florence. Even if the action is clearly conceived at the provincial scale, it can nonetheless trigger very relevant innovation/dissemination processes throughout the whole region as well, being the Metropolitan City of Florence the main hub where the cultural stakeholders act and work in the Tuscany Region.

The fourth and final action refers to the Italian Technology Cluster “SmartCommunitiesTech” activities, where both FRI and the Tuscany Region are involved, respectively as managing member and reference public stakeholder. The final action objective consists in the integration of dedicated measures related to digitization of cultural heritage within the three-year Action Plan of the Italian Technology Cluster.

Overall, the action plan might improve the policy instrument both directly and indirectly. The direct influence could contribute at the designing and support of specific interventions aimed at exploiting CD-ETA outcomes for the benefit of the territory. The indirect one could allow for an interaction between the policy instrument and other policy and strategic instruments, so to preliminary test possible solution and implementation activities before making them the object of the regional policy instrument.