

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE *Heritage*



**Grecia Salentina
for travellers
and refugees**

CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION PLAN (D003.027)

Deliverable A003.027 – Develop a Cultural Heritage Preservation Plan



ISRICM-EU

Innovative Solutions for Refugee
Integration and Crisis Mitigation in
EU Member States

D003.027 Cultural Heritage Conservation Plan

ISRICM-EU: Innovative Approaches to Mitigate the Societal Consequences of
Russia's War of Aggression Against Ukraine within EU Countries
ESF-SI-2024-UA-01-0006



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Social Fund Agency. Neither the European Union nor the Granting Authority can be held responsible for them.

Deliverable Form	
Project Reference No.:	ESF-SI-2024-UA-01-0006
Project title:	Innovative Solutions for Refugee Integration and Crisis Mitigation in EU Member States
Project acronym:	ISRICM-EU
Project start date:	May 1, 2025
Project end date:	May 1, 2026
Project duration:	12 months
Call number:	ESF-SI-2024-UA-01
Call title:	Innovative Approaches to Mitigate the Societal Consequences of Russia's War of Aggression Against Ukraine within EU Countries
Granting Authority:	European Social Fund Agency
Document Title	D003.027 Cultural Heritage Conservation Plan
Relevant Work Package:	WP3 – A003.027
Type:	R — Document, report
Dissemination Level:	Public
Document version:	Final
Date:	3/12/2026
Author(s):	UCGS
Document description:	This document describes and reports on the activities related to the drafting of the conservation plan.



SUMMARY

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Purpose of the Plan
- 1.2 Geographic and Cultural Scope (Grecia Salentina)
- 1.3 Key Challenges and Opportunities
- 1.4 Strategic vision and priority actions
- 1.5 Expected Results and Impact

2. Introduction and Context

- 2.1 Overview of the cultural significance of Grecia Salentina
- 2.2 Rationale for Preservation and Promotion
- 2.3 Link to regional, national, and European cultural strategies
- 2.4 Scope and timeline of the Plan

3. Vision, objectives, and guiding principles

- 3.1 Vision
- 3.2 Strategic Objectives; Community empowerment; Sustainable cultural tourism
- 3.3 Guiding principles

4. Overview of Cultural Heritage Assets

- 4.1 Tangible Heritage
- 4.2 Intangible Heritage
- 4.3 Priority Resources

5. Stakeholder Engagement Framework

- 5.1 Identification of key stakeholders
- 5.2 Engagement methods (consultations, workshops, interviews)
- 5.3 Roles of public institutions, civil society, and local communities

6. Conservation Strategy

- 6.1 Actions for the Conservation of Tangible
- 6.2 Actions for safeguarding intangible heritage

7. Strategy for promotion and sustainable cultural tourism

- 7.1 Institutions and the tourism market in Grecia Salentina: The role of *ARET Pugliapromozione*
- 7.2 The Four Guidelines for Tourism Promotion



7.3 Initiatives and actions for the implementation of a Griko-Salento tourism model

8. Implementation Plan

- 8.1 Short-term actions (1–2 years)
- 8.2 Medium-term actions (3–5 years)
- 8.3 Long-term actions (over 5 years)
- 8.4 Responsible actors and partnerships

9. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

- 9.1 Indicators
 - 9.1.1 Quantitative (Number of conservation and promotion initiatives launched)
 - 9.1.2 Qualitative (Stakeholder satisfaction, Community perception of cultural vitality)
- 9.2 Tools (Surveys, interviews, periodic reviews)

10. Risk Analysis and Mitigation Measures

- 10.1 Risks (funding, depopulation, loss of language, tourist overcrowding)
- 10.2 Mitigation strategies

11. Considerations on resources and sustainability

- 11.1 Human and Institutional Resources
- 11.2 Financial sustainability
- 11.3 Potential funding sources

12. Conclusions and Next Steps

- 12.1 Summary of Strategic Priorities
- 12.2 Roadmap for Adoption and Implementation



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Purpose of the plan

This final report documents the activities carried out by the partner Unione dei Comuni della Grecia Salentina as part of the ISRICM-EU project, funded by the European Union's Social Innovation+ initiative. The 12-month project (May 2025 – May 2026) addressed the challenge of integrating Ukrainian refugees—and, more broadly, any individual facing cultural challenges stemming from refugee status—through the promotion and digitization of local cultural heritage.

1.2 Geographic and Cultural Context

The territory of Grecia Salentina, located in southern Salento (Apulia, Italy), is an area of extraordinary cultural richness characterized by:

- A unique linguistic heritage: the Griko language, included in UNESCO's Red Book of Endangered Languages
- Traditional rural architecture and historic water collection systems (pozzelle)
- Intangible traditions linked to music, popular religiosity, and farming
- Twelve historic municipalities with significant architectural and archaeological heritage
-

1.3 Key Challenges and Opportunities

The crisis in Ukraine has generated a significant influx of refugees into Europe, with repercussions also felt in the rural areas of southern Italy. The Union of Grecia Salentina, with its millennia-old history of cultural encounters and exchanges between the West and the East, represents an ideal context for experimenting with innovative approaches to integration through cultural heritage.

The project is based on two fundamental premises:

1. **Cultural heritage as a bridge:** sharing local heritage creates opportunities for intercultural dialogue and fosters mutual understanding between the host community and refugees.
2. **Participation as a tool for empowerment:** the active involvement of refugees, residents, and local stakeholders in cultural enhancement processes fosters a sense of belonging and social integration.



1.4 Strategic Vision and Priority Actions

The vision guiding this plan is centered on the virtuous relationship between cultural life and social life: the quality of life for individuals and communities is deeply linked to this relationship, which—to be active, vital, functional, and useful—must be consciously implemented by both local and host communities. This gives rise to a set of priority actions to be implemented across the region in a coordinated manner.

1.5 Expected Results and Impact

Institutional coordination and territorial governance. The Union of Municipalities of Grecia Salentina exists, but its capacity for coordination regarding culture and heritage is limited. There is a need to strengthen its strategic leadership role, with dedicated technical expertise and resources. Each municipality tends to act autonomously, dispersing energy and opportunities.

Engaging the younger generations. Young people perceive local cultural heritage as “old people’s stuff.” We need to make it relevant and connected to their aspirations. Innovative languages (digital, social media, contemporary events) can serve as a bridge.

Balancing conservation and innovation. There is tension between the demands of strict conservation (archaeological protection, landscape restrictions) and the need for innovation to bring heritage to life and generate development. An approach is needed that protects authentic values while allowing for creative adaptations.

Effective integration of refugees. Integration is not automatic. We need to overcome linguistic, cultural, and bureaucratic barriers. There is a need for active policies that create concrete opportunities for interaction and co-creation between the host community and refugees.

Building local expertise. There is a shortage of professionals specialized in cultural heritage management, ecomuseology, and sustainable cultural tourism. Investment in training is needed to build local expertise (avoiding dependence on external consultants).

2. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

2.1 Overview of the Cultural Significance of Grecia Salentina

Grecia Salentina is a geographical and cultural area located in the province of Lecce, in southern Salento (Apulia), comprising **twelve municipalities**: Calimera, Carpignano Salentino,



Castrignano de' Greci, Corigliano d'Otranto, Cutrofiano, Martano, Martignano, Melpignano, Soleto, Sternatia, Zollino, and Sogliano Cavour.

This area represents a unique cultural phenomenon in Europe for several reasons:

Linguistic Heritage

Griko is a linguistic variety of ancient Greek origin historically spoken in this area, born from prolonged contact between Greek and Latin cultures. Officially recognized by UNESCO in 1999 as an endangered language (Red Book of Endangered Languages), Griko is kept alive today through the efforts of local associations and cultural projects.

Architectural and Landscape Heritage

The area is characterized by:

- Courtyard houses: a traditional housing type in historic centers featuring shared spaces
- Pozzelle: underground rainwater collection and filtration systems built with dry stone
- Defensive and aristocratic residential architecture: castles and palaces from the medieval and Renaissance periods
- Evidence of local production systems: the quarrying industry of Leccese stone; the proto-industrial system of underground and semi-underground oil mills linked to the production of olive oil for food and urban lighting
- Archaeological sites: abandoned Byzantine villages (e.g., Apigliano)

Intangible heritage

Rich in traditions related to:

- Songs of Passion: a traveling festival of songs in Griko during Holy Week
- Religious traditions: patron saint cults and syncretic devotional practices
- Memories of farm work: tobacco cultivation, stone quarrying
- Gastronomy and traditional crafts

2.2 Rationale for Preservation and Promotion

The preservation and promotion of cultural heritage constitute a strategic and integrated effort, necessary to safeguard identity, knowledge, and changing landscapes, transforming collective memory into a living, inclusive resource capable of generating social, cultural, and economic value in the present.

Linguistic heritage:

The preservation of the language is seen as an absolute priority, as its disappearance would result in an irreversible loss of cultural identity. The school system emerges as a crucial yet complex arena, fraught with bureaucratic obstacles and a shortage of qualified teachers. There is a tension between pride in identity and persistent social stigma, which hinders its transmission to new generations. Cultural associations play a fundamental role, albeit a limited one without adequate institutional support, while digital technologies are seen as strategic tools for renewing its image and promoting its dissemination among young people.

Architectural and Landscape Heritage:

There is deep concern over the rapid deterioration of elements of the widespread heritage, necessitating timely documentation, protection, and restoration efforts. At the same time, there is a growing tension between the drive for economic development and the preservation of the landscape and existing heritage, exacerbated by the absence of a shared and coordinated territorial vision among the various administrations. The importance of strengthening local technical expertise is also emphasized, by promoting training in traditional construction practices to ensure coherent and sustainable interventions.

Intangible Heritage

A tension emerges between nostalgia for the rural past and the awareness that a return to that model is neither replicable nor desirable, while acknowledging its cultural value. Traditional knowledge is considered a concrete resource for generating new economies, provided it is enhanced through contemporary approaches and appropriate training programs. The inclusive potential of projects capable of involving new communities as an opportunity for exchange and the transmission of skills is also highlighted. At the same time, attention is drawn to the risk of reducing living practices to mere tourist attractions, thereby compromising their authenticity and meaning.

2.3 Link to regional, national, and European cultural strategies

The 2021–2027 EU programming period offers significant resources for cultural projects, social integration, and urban regeneration (ERDF, ESF+, EAFRD, thematic programs). Grecia Salentina can apply with integrated projects.

2.4 Scope and Timeline of the Plan

The Plan for the Conservation of the Tangible and Intangible Heritage of Grecia Salentina spans a 10-year timeframe, with specific short-, medium-, and long-term actions.



Geographical Scope:

The Plan covers the entire territory of Grecia Salentina, comprising the twelve municipalities: Calimera, Carpignano Salentino, Castrignano de' Greci, Corigliano d'Otranto, Cutrofiano, Martano, Martignano, Melpignano, Soleto, Sternatia, Zollino, and Sogliano Cavour.

Thematic Areas:

It has the following priority areas of intervention regarding the cultural heritage of the reference area:

1. *Architectural and rural landscape heritage*: the “case a corte” settlement system; defensive and noble residential settlement systems, water sources, and rainwater collection systems; evidence of industrial archaeology linked to the early olive oil industry and the quarrying industry of Pietra Leccese, archaeological sites.
2. *Linguistic and intangible heritage*: the Griko language, ritual and musical traditions, and the memory of agricultural and artisanal work.
3. *Economic and productive heritage*: local crafts, traditional agricultural products, and historical farming practices.

Plan timeline:

The timeline is structured around short-, medium-, and long-term actions aimed at research, protection, and promotion:

Short-term actions (1–2 years):

- Census and restoration of water sources and rainwater collection systems (pozzelle)
- Typological mapping and drafting of guidelines for the restoration of courtyard houses
- Establishment of inter-municipal coordination and design of an integrated network
- Launch of experimental Griko language courses
- Campaign to collect audiovisual testimonies on intangible cultural heritage
- Structured support for existing identity-building events

Medium-term actions (3–5 years):

- Expansion of the program to restore and integrate water features and rainwater collection systems (sump pits) into public spaces
- Launch of reuse initiatives for the widespread use of courtyard houses

- Redevelopment of abandoned quarries and improved accessibility to archaeological and industrial sites
- Structural integration of the Griko language into local school curricula
- Creation of a publicly accessible digital archive

Long-term Actions (over 5 years):

- Completion of priority restoration and scheduled maintenance of water sites
- Consolidation of the economic model for sustainable hospitality in courtyard houses
- Full operation of the integrated inter-municipal cultural network
- Expansion of the community of active speakers and normalization of the public use of the Griko language
- Continuous updating of the archive and its use in research and education

3. VISION, OBJECTIVES, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1 Vision

The long-term vision for cultural sustainability and identity that informed the plan, starting from the co-design work carried out together with stakeholders, has led to the sharing of a series of key future goals:

Grecia Salentina in 2035:

- Where the Griko language is alive and spoken by the younger generations
- Where the Ecomuseum is a national model of participatory management
- Where sustainable cultural tourism generates local employment
- Where refugees are active co-stewards of the heritage
- Where young people find opportunities related to cultural promotion
- Where heritage is a strategic resource for the future

3.2 Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives define the framework for action within which to guide conservation, promotion, and development efforts, translating the needs identified through territorial analysis into integrated and measurable operational guidelines.

- Knowledge, protection, and planning of built heritage

Strategic Objective 1: Establish an integrated system for the analysis, evaluation, and planning of interventions on architectural heritage of historical and identity value.

- Integrated enhancement and sustainable local development

Strategic Objective 2: Initiate processes for the enhancement of the built and landscape heritage oriented toward environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

- Preservation of linguistic and intangible heritage

Strategic Objective: Strengthen the preservation and transmission of the Griko language and related intangible cultural expressions, countering processes of decline.

- Protection and Revitalization of Traditional Technical and Productive Knowledge

3# Strategic Objective: To preserve and enhance the heritage of knowledge related to traditional agricultural and artisanal activities, recognizing its identity-forming value and economic potential.

- Governance, participation, and intergenerational continuity

4# Strategic Objective: To build a participatory model for managing cultural heritage, based on inclusive processes and structured mechanisms for transmission.

3.3 Guiding Principles

The guiding principles constitute the methodological and value-based framework that guides the implementation of the strategic objectives, ensuring consistency, quality, and sustainability in project decisions over the medium and long term.

- Community-led development

1# Guiding Principle: The process of protecting and enhancing heritage is based on the active involvement of the local community as the primary agent in shaping, managing, and transmitting cultural values.

- Cultural Authenticity

2# Guiding Principle: The planned actions must respect and safeguard the tangible and intangible integrity of the heritage, avoiding processes of folklorization, trivialization, or alteration of identity.

- Sustainability

3# Guiding Principle: Intervention policies must ensure a balance between preservation, enjoyment, and development, with a long-term perspective.

- Intergenerational Transmission

4# Guiding Principle: Cultural heritage is recognized as a dynamic asset, whose survival depends on its ability to be transmitted, reinterpreted, and revitalized by new generations.

4. OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSETS

4.1 Tangible Heritage

T. 01 - Of dry stone and holm oaks: the relationship between towns and the countryside

One of the defining characteristics of Grecia Salentina and its people's identity is the relationship between towns and the countryside. Recognized by the regional legal framework, this relationship significantly influences urban quality and landscape development, viewing the countryside as a vital resource for towns and their growth.

In a way, the countryside here in Grecia has never been a mere backdrop while life unfolded in the castle courtyards or the bustling historic palaces; rather, it has served as a repository of historical evidence and the guardian of working practices and ancient traditions.

Below are some material assets relevant within the Grecia Salentina reference framework:

- Birthplace of Vito Domenico Palumbo



- San Biagio Farm
- Pozzelle San Pantaleo
- La Mandra Nature Reserve
- Santa Marina Nature Reserve
- Pozzelle Park
- De Gualtieris Palace
- Apigliano Archaeological Site
- Marchese's Palace
- Pirro's Pozzelle
- Lucchetti Arch
- Marchese Castriota Palace
- De' Monti Castle
- Poggioreale Forest
- Pilamuzza Menhir
- Sogliano Cavour Pine Forest
- Carpignano Salentino Colombaia Tower

T. 02 - Of Patron Saints, Holy Words, and Ancient Customs

Religion plays a significant role in shaping local identity, extending beyond mere faith or beliefs. Religious architecture is, in fact, one of the most valuable sources of evidence that tells the story of this region and the diverse peoples who have inhabited it, particularly those with Eastern and Byzantine influences.

The relationship between the local community and religion is also enshrined in rituals and traditions that have been lived, pursued, and protected since time immemorial, often intertwined with more secular or pagan elements. From the ancient songs about the Passion of Christ in Griko to rituals of goodwill, gratitude, and fertility, every tradition has its own place in the calendar and is reenacted every year.

Below are some relevant religious sites within the Grecia Salentina area:

- Rural Church of San Vito
- Church and Convent of San Francesco
- Monastery of Santa Maria della Consolazione
- Church of San Lorenzo in Apigliano
- Madonna Arcona
- Crypt of Santa Marina and Santa Cristina
- Byzantine Church of Santo Stefano
- Church of San Lorenzo
- Crypt of St. John the Baptist
- Augustinian Convent

- Church of Saint Nicholas
- Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Church and Convent of St. Francis

4.2 Intangible Heritage

T. 03 - Of tobacco and quarries: life and work, life is work

There was a time when the spheres of life and work used to coincide, a cultural phenomenon that was widespread throughout Southern Italy. Especially here in Grecia, people used to work in tobacco fields and quarries from which the local tuff stone, pietra leccese, was extracted.

Families were large and often lived together in courtyard houses, with many children considered part of the workforce. Each town had its own dialect, although the most widely spoken language was Griko, an ancient dialect similar to Classical Greek. Over time, Griko has been replaced by local dialects, and only recently have local town halls and associations been working to restore it as a shared heritage and a significant element of local identity.

Below are some relevant intangible assets within the Grecia Salentina reference framework:

- Memories of the “Villani e Pranzo” Tobacco Warehouse
- Court life on Via Catumerea
- Stories of work in the quarries
- Recipes for traditional dishes
- Songs of Passion
- Folk songs
- Folk sayings and proverbs
- St. John’s Water
- Techniques for shaping, firing, and decorating ceramics
- Techniques for working Lecce stone
- Legume cultivation techniques

4.3 Priority Resources

Some of the most relevant and recognized elements of the local cultural heritage. Directly identified through the process of mapping and prioritizing local assets, these elements are highlighted for the role they play in shaping local identity: they are elements that should be better promoted and showcased to raise awareness and effectively communicate local



heritage, contributing to the development of a clear brand image for the entire region.

1) HOLM-OAK-WOOD

In Calimera, Carpignano Salentino, Martignano

Located near Calimera, Carpignano, Martignano, and Melendugno, a holm oak forest is one of the most distinctive examples of the natural heritage in Grecia Salentina. The forest and the sheep trails are maintained thanks to local associations and one of the most important entities in terms of preservation and promotion, the Natural History Museum in Calimera.

2) VITO DOMENICO PALUMBO

In Calimera

Born in Calimera in 1854, Vito Domenico Palumbo was a poet and scholar. An active participant in the first local peasant struggles, we owe him a vast written legacy of songs and poems in Griko. His works have had a significant impact on the definition of local identity: not everyone knows that he is the author of one of the most popular local traditional songs, Kali Nifta.

3) MENHIR PILAMUZZA

In Sogliano Cavour

The Pilamuzza menhir is just one of the many archaeological artifacts one can discover simply by wandering through the countryside. Unfortunately, and often not well preserved, these prehistoric structures should at least be made more accessible and understandable, raising awareness of just how much time has passed since Grecia Salentina was first inhabited.

4) POZZELLE

In Zollino, Corigliano, Martano, Castrignano

Pozzelle bear witness to the ancient method used to collect usable water. These round underground structures, built of dry stone, collected rainwater, naturally filtered it, and stored it. Pozzelle are no longer in use, but restoring this ancient method could be a powerful and innovative solution to address two of the long-standing problems of this region: the lack of natural water sources and the arid climate, especially in a time of climate emergency.

5) SANTO STEFANO

In Soleto

Located in the historic center of Soleto, this church is one of the most important and well-preserved examples of late Gothic art in Apulia. Believed to be the private chapel of Raimondello Del Balzo Orsini, feudal lord of Soleto, its stunning frescoes have been studied for years and represent one of the most expressive fusions of Western and Eastern cultures.

6) APIGLIANO

In Martano, Zollino

Apigliano was a Byzantine village built between the towns of Martano and Zollino. Inhabited for several centuries, it was abandoned, forgotten, and later rediscovered. Today, Apigliano is an archaeological site featuring an ancient cemetery, a deconsecrated chapel, and two distinct former farmhouses.

7) SONGS OF PASSION

In Castrignano, Corigliano, Calimera, Martano, Martignano, Melpignano, Zollino, Sternatia, Soleto, Carpignano, Cutrofiano, Sogliano Cavour

Canti di Passione is the traveling festival held in Grecia Salentina the week before Palm Sunday. It features songs and poems in Griko that tell the story of Jesus Christ's life and death. Joining the many unique rituals that enliven Holy Week in Southern Italy, Canti di Passione is establishing itself as one of the most defining elements of Grecia Salentina's local culture.

8) GRIKO

In Castrignano, Corigliano, Calimera, Martano, Martignano, Melpignano, Zollino, Sternatia, Soleto

Griko was spoken throughout most of Grecia Salentina, originating from a long-standing interaction between Ancient Greek and Latin languages and cultures: this constant cultural exchange is one of the main themes in local culture. It began a slow decline in the 1950s, when it ceased to be taught and native speakers were too elderly. Officially included in UNESCO's Red Book of Endangered Languages in 1999, many associations are working to keep this dialect alive.

9) COURTYARD HOUSES

In Melpignano, Martano, Corigliano

Courtyard houses have been a typical dwelling in Salento and especially in Grecia Salentina: small rooms opening onto a shared courtyard, often shared with relatives or coworkers. These houses can still be seen in many historic centers, even though they have lost their original communal nature and sense of community: in a time when life and work overlapped, it was the space where one could escape the alienation of rural labor.

10) QUARRIES

In Cutrofiano, Melpignano

Walking through the historic centers, one will notice the typical yellowish color of houses and palaces: the local tuff stone was extracted from quarries scattered throughout the countryside. Used until the late 1900s, most of them are now abandoned, leaving huge sinkholes in the landscape. Nevertheless, quarries represent a historic and speleological heritage, telling the story of one of the most significant local industries and offering an opportunity for renaturalization and regeneration.

5. Stakeholder Engagement Framework

5.1 Identification of Key Stakeholders

Stakeholders were identified through:

- Desk research on cultural associations active in the area
- Contacts with the Union of Municipalities and local administrations
- Snowball sampling techniques (each stakeholder suggested others)

Profile of the stakeholders involved (N=15):

- *Anna Grazia Biancamano - Il Griko in Martano*
- *Samuele Tommasi - Le Vie dei Boschi*
- *Luigi Montinaro - Citizen, Calimera*
- *Gianluca Miglietta - Citizen, Calimera*
- *Marco Forte - Pro Loco Cutrofiano*
- *Lorenzo Rossetto - Kora*
- *Paolo Mele - Ramdom*
- *Ilaria Zacheo - Philos*
- *Grazia Malerba - Citizen, Sogliano Cavour*
- *Michele Rizzo - Pro Loco Sogliano Cavour*
- *Paola Durante - Zoom Culture ETS*
- *Lea Sodano - Città Fertile ETS*
- *Alessia Neo - Citizen, Soleto*
- *Daniele Solito - Don Bosco Association*
- *Giulia Garofalo - Citizen, Sogliano Cavour*

5.2 Engagement Methods (consultations, workshops, interviews)

The engagement tools used include:

A. Online participatory workshops (n=3)

- **Format:** facilitated video calls, 2 hours each

- **Participants:** 8–12 stakeholders per workshop
- **Tools:** brainstorming, mind maps, group discussions
- **Output:** identification of priorities, opportunities, and risks

B. Semi-structured interviews (n=15)

- **Duration:** 45–60 minutes each
- **Format:** online and in-person
- **Topics:** perception of cultural heritage, state of preservation, vision for the future, refugee integration (see Appendix A for the interview format)

C. Satisfaction Surveys

Administered at the end of each workshop to evaluate the process, facilitation, and perceived usefulness (see Appendix B)

D. Documentary research

Analysis of official documents, academic studies, land-use plans, and community materials to contextualize the local cultural heritage.

5.3 Roles of public institutions, civil society, and local communities

Category	N	Main roles
Cultural associations and the third sector	6	Local cultural associations, social promotion organizations
Public administrators and technical staff	4	Union representatives, culture councilors, technical officials
Experts and researchers	3	Local historians, anthropologists, linguists, architects
Active citizens and practitioners	2	Tour guides, custodians of local memory

6. CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The strategy for the conservation of the tangible and intangible heritage of Grecia Salentina is divided into two main areas: actions for the conservation of tangible heritage and actions for the safeguarding of intangible heritage

6.1 Actions to preserve tangible heritage

Measures for the conservation of tangible heritage aim to protect and enhance the architectural, landscape, and archaeological assets of Grecia Salentina.

Identification, survey, mapping, documentation, and cataloging:

- Field surveys of the territory aimed primarily at identifying those lesser-known architectural and landscape heritage assets that, being often privately owned, are overlooked in existing surveys and preservation efforts
- Survey and cataloging of architectural and landscape assets according to the national standards of the ICCD (Central Institute for Cataloging and Documentation) for inclusion in the “General Catalog of Cultural Heritage” maintained at the national level
- Creation of a georeferenced database of assets (GIS)

Digitization of cultural heritage:

- Creation of 3D models of architectural and landscape heritage, following the guidelines of the “National Plan for the Digitization of Cultural Heritage (PND)” drafted by the Central Institute for the Digitization of Cultural Heritage – Digital Library of the Ministry of Culture
- Laser scanning and photogrammetry for the creation of 3D models
- Creation of digital archives of images, videos, and documents related to cultural heritage
- Implementation of a digital content management system (DCM), in line with the PND’s guidelines for data management

In-depth analysis of the state of conservation:



- Documentation of the current state of cultural heritage through survey campaigns and photographic documentation
- Identification of causes of deterioration through non-invasive or minimally destructive diagnostic programs
- Definition of intervention priorities

Design of interventions for recovery, restoration, extraordinary and routine maintenance, monitoring, adaptation, and reuse:

- Design of restoration and rehabilitation projects for cultural heritage assets
- Definition of strategies for routine and special maintenance
- Monitoring the state of conservation of cultural heritage
- Adaptation and reuse of cultural heritage for cultural and tourism purposes

6.2 Actions to safeguard intangible heritage

Measures to safeguard intangible heritage aim to protect and promote the Griko linguistic heritage, as well as the traditions and cultural practices of Grecia Salentina.

Safeguarding the Griko linguistic heritage:

- Griko language courses for adults and children
- Development of educational materials and language resources
- Promotion of the use of the Griko language in public and private settings

Documentation and transmission of oral history:

- Collection and cataloging of oral testimonies
- Creation of a digital archive of oral history
- Use of oral history for educational and cultural purposes

Promotion of ritual and musical traditions:

- Support for traditional cultural events and festivals
- Creation of a calendar of festivals and traditions
- Promoting active community participation in traditions

Preservation of traditional agricultural and artisanal practices:

- Documentation of traditional agricultural and artisanal practices
- Creation of an archive of techniques and skills
- Promoting the transmission of traditional practices to new generations

7. STRATEGY FOR PROMOTION AND SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL TOURISM

1.1 Institutions and the tourism market in Grecia Salentina: *The role of ARET Pugliapromozione*

The main institutional actor active in the field of management and promotion of Puglia as a tourist destination is the Regional Tourism Agency Pugliapromozione. Established by Decree of the President of the Regional Council of Puglia No. 176 of 2011 (as provided for by Regional Law No. 1 of 2011, amended by Regional Law 18/2010), it is a non-economic public entity, a technical operational body of the Region.

Pugliapromozione is an instrumental body of the Puglia Region, endowed with organizational, administrative, financial, accounting, managerial, and technical autonomy, whose mission is “to implement the Puglia Region’s policies regarding the promotion of a unified image of the regional territory for tourism purposes.” The specific tasks listed in the Law and the Regulations can be grouped into the following broad categories:

Marketing, strategic planning, and stakeholder coordination

Develops the implementation plan for the general strategy regarding tourism promotion;

Coordinates the implementation of initiatives within tourism marketing plans;

Develops detailed implementation plans for the initiatives;

Coordinates stakeholders (local actors involved in the promotion or marketing of tourism products) both in terms of strategic planning (sharing of vision and strategies) and operational planning (training, information, assistance, and integration into a network);

Acts as a liaison with other sectors of the Regional Administration to ensure policy consistency;

Collaborates with the regional tourism district to develop product offerings;

Coordinates the Local Tourism Systems (STLs) in the strategic planning of the promotion of territorial areas;

Supports the Region in ensuring the organization and operational effectiveness of the Local Tourism Systems and the Tourism District across its product segments.

Observatory and Destination Audit

Conducts qualitative and quantitative analyses and measurements (including in collaboration with universities and research centers, administrations, public bodies, specialized organizations, and agencies) on: the destination’s competitiveness; the alignment of destination management and promotion actions with the vision and mission entrusted to the Agency by the Apulia Region’s policy guidelines and the effectiveness of the actions



undertaken; tourism demand, relating to specific products or markets; tourism supply, relating to specific products or markets; regional tourism flows; the quality of tourists' stays, particularly with regard to the protection of tourist-consumer rights; any other factor necessary for strategic planning; Collects statistical data regarding the territory; Communicates information and results to all local stakeholders (arrivals and overnight stays); It collects and investigates complaints regarding the pricing of accommodation facilities; It exercises, on behalf of the Region, supervisory and control functions over all tourism activities; It studies and monitors the informal economy (in relation to businesses and employment); Implements a regional data collection and reporting system; Performs any other functions of the Observatory delegated by the Puglia Region to the Agency, including in accordance with the provisions of the Regional Law on the Regional Tourism Observatory.

Promotion of Puglia as a Destination

Promotes the image and manages the brand positioning of Puglia and the tourism products originating from this destination through various integrated communication and promotion tools: media plans, press office and public relations, e-marketing, and management—including editorial management—of the Region's tourism portals, publications for tourism promotion or information, etc.; Manages the program of trade fairs, road shows, and co-promotion activities; Manages educational tours and other activities to raise the destination's profile; Promotes, through specific actions, the matching of supply and demand and the marketing of tourism products, in coordination with the Tourism District and its branches.

Management of the Puglia Destination

Promotes and develops a culture of welcome and hospitality; Coordinates (by integrating its components), oversees, and monitors the region's offerings (resources and services); Coordinates initiatives to improve the region's accessibility; Oversees and monitors the needs identified by stakeholders and provides them with assistance (especially regarding new businesses); Supports the activities of Local Tourism Systems; Based on specific guidelines approved by the Regional Council after consultation with ANCI Puglia, manages the tourist information points (I.A.T.) in coordination with the Pro-Loco system (for which it manages the structure and maintenance of the registry).

Building on this premise, ARET Pugliapromozione has aimed to relaunch a unified image of the region under a single brand, while carefully highlighting the unique tourist attractions and historical heritage of each individual territory:

- Gargano
- Imperial Puglia
- Bari and the Coast
- Itria Valley
- Salento
- Murgia and Gravine

Given its activities and the role it plays, Pugliapromozione thus becomes the natural partner for the project's tourism-related operations.

7.2 The Four Guidelines for Tourism Promotion and the Objectives

The area of interest benefits from its central location within the Province of Lecce, which as far back as 2010 surpassed the Province of Foggia in terms of total visitor numbers in Puglia, consolidating its position nationally and internationally as an emerging tourist destination.

Driven by powerful regional marketing around the "Salento" brand—in part a result of Pugliapromozione's efforts—Grecia Salentina demonstrates the potential to become an independent destination within the province, with its own distinct cultural and tourism identity.

The analyzed data suggest the need to thoroughly explore the potential of a tourism model with a purely cultural focus, detached from the (inevitable) seasonality of coastal areas and particularly attractive to a target audience of foreign tourists interested in high-quality tourism.

At the same time, it is necessary to forge ideal and functional ties—valid regardless of seasonality—with established tourism areas (Lecce, Melendugno, Otranto, Gallipoli).

In this context, the need to thoroughly explore the potential of a purely cultural form of tourism—unbound by the (inevitable) seasonality of coastal areas and particularly appealing to foreign tourists seeking high-quality travel experiences—becomes increasingly clear.

At the same time, it is necessary to forge ideal and functional ties, valid regardless of seasonality, with established tourism areas (Lecce, Melendugno, Otranto, Gallipoli).

In light of these considerations, the objective is defined as "Ensuring and expanding the visibility and accessibility of the historical and architectural heritage of Grecia Salentina." This, in turn, is broken down as follows:

- Building a comprehensive narrative of the sites in question, accessible both online and offline, based on high-quality multimedia content: travel stories, artistic photo essays, video trailers, art short films, immersive virtual reconstructions of the sites, etc.;
- Providing potential visitors with comprehensive, clear, and detailed tourist information—both online and offline—regarding exploration routes (traditional and slow tourism), maps, itineraries, accommodations, local contacts, and guides, etc.;
- Strengthen, in line with regional and local strategies, a coordinated image and a unifying message that facilitate easy recognition among tourism operators and travelers of information regarding the cultural heritage under study as part of Grecia Salentina.

Based on the above, we can outline guidelines for tourism promotion that could guide awareness-raising and promotional activities for the region, including in the medium and long term:

1. Suggest the opportunity to discover a Salento that is “different” from the tourist image that has been more or less consciously constructed in recent years. A Salento that is not limited to its coastlines and the more or less mass-market folkloric events of the summer season. Grecia Salentina can be presented as “An Island within a Peninsula,” a hinterland rich in history and culture that can be discovered and visited throughout the year;
2. Link the enjoyment and promotion of the historical and architectural heritage to high-profile cultural events (exhibitions, concerts, theater performances, art-house film festivals);
3. Promote the creation of a network of “high-quality” lodging facilities in the Grecia Salentina region, capable of offering—in combination with alternative modes of transportation (bicycles, local trains)—a leisurely and immersive experience of the surrounding cultural heritage;
4. Suggest the creation of “experiential itineraries” that link the discovery of the historical and architectural heritage with that of the intangible cultural heritage (musical, linguistic, literary, and gastronomic).

Finally: In order to achieve any kind of short-, medium-, or long-term impact on the tourism market of Grecia Salentina, it is essential that the implementation of these guidelines be carried out in continuous and constant coordination with the efforts of ARET Pugliapromozione, the Union of Municipalities of Grecia Salentina, and, as far as possible, local operators. Without connection to the regional operational structure and to the primary local institutions, any type of action would appear disjointed and would be destined to undermine the systematic work necessary for territorial promotion.

1.2 Initiatives and actions for the implementation of a Griko-Salento tourism model

A fundamental condition for the growth of a creative ecosystem in which to develop innovative services for the communication and enjoyment of cultural heritage and the territory, for the storytelling of places, and for tourism is, first and foremost, the presence of the human resources that populate it. We must therefore act with a view to enhancing the human resources present in the area, attracting new talent from outside, and fostering cross-sector collaboration capable of multiplying ideas and developing more innovative ones.

We wish to reiterate the proposed guidelines for tourism promotion and suggest some possible lines of work. Here are the guidelines:

- Suggest the possibility of discovering a Salento that is “different” from the tourist image that has been more or less consciously constructed in recent years. A Salento that is not limited to its coastline and the more or less mass-market folkloric events of

the summer season. Grecia Salentina can be presented as “An Island within a Peninsula,” a hinterland rich in history and culture that can be explored and visited year-round;

- Link the enjoyment and promotion of the historical and architectural heritage to high-profile cultural events (exhibitions, concerts, theater performances, art-house film festivals);
- Promote the creation of a network of “high-quality” lodging facilities in the Grecia Salentina region, capable of offering—in combination with the use of alternative modes of transportation (bicycles, local trains)—a slow and immersive experience of the surrounding cultural heritage;
- Suggest the creation of “experiential itineraries” that link the discovery of the historical and architectural heritage with that of the intangible cultural heritage (musical, linguistic, literary, and gastronomic).

On this basis, we have outlined some possible lines of work for the medium term. Here they are:

A | Slow Territory (see Slow Cities Network)

The peripheral nature of the area, the lack of an efficient mobility system between the towns of Grecia, yet their proximity, and the challenges of the Sud-Est railway network can be fundamental assets for promoting slowness as a key factor in the quality of life of a gentle territory that consciously chooses this approach to protect the landscape and communities. For this reason, rather than adding lanes for August tourism, we should develop integrated slow mobility routes—combining cycling and rail—between established tourist destinations and Grecia, perhaps beginning to conceive of them as serving not only tourists but also residents.

B | “Community” Experience Routes

A strategy focused on the demand for tourist experiences rather than products is to design routes for exploring the region (both traditional and via apps) that connect the cultural heritage of the places with their intangible heritage through community participation. By leveraging the expertise and desire of travelers to be actively involved in authentic experiences, these itineraries can include music lessons with local “pizzica” musicians, Griko language courses with elderly “native speakers,” cooking classes with local women, and workshops with artisans. In addition to involving the community and broadening the economic benefits to a wider range of stakeholders, this approach attracts visitors with a specific purpose at any time of year, such as for a long weekend.

C | Cultural Routes

The routes mentioned above must take the form of cultural trails mapped out across the region that connect local sites and villages around common themes (concepts), taking into account and balancing various factors such as slow travel, the beauty of the landscape, the presence of



cultural heritage sites, local shops or “branded” activities, and the opportunity to participate in a community experience. There are many examples in Europe (e.g., The Routes of the Olive Tree), and some experiences suggest avoiding routes that link sites or towns that are too similar to one another—for example, “the castle route”—because by the second stop along the route, this could be perceived by the visitor as repetitive, especially in the case of common architectural or urban structures in the area. The key lies in a mix of different experiences centered around common themes, ranging from more traditional to more innovative ones, from visits to a village to a cooking workshop.

D | Network for Responsible Tourism in Grecia Salentina.

Regarding the organization of the tourism system, one of the major shortcomings identified in the region is the chronic lack of coordination and synergy among the various local stakeholders. Consequently, the creation of a network for responsible tourism that brings together associations, businesses, municipalities, and others from the grassroots level appears to be the necessary key to overcoming some of the challenges linked to the rigidity of public bureaucratic structures in the field of planning.

E | Strengthen local assets through events.

Small and large events, such as the Notte della Taranta festival, should be closely linked to a tourism development strategy, serving as an attraction, accelerator, and catalyst for related activities in the region. Rather than merely being a mass event confined to the period of its occurrence, the Notte della Taranta and similar events should aim to generate momentum, disseminate expertise, and leverage media interest not in the event itself but in the sector—for example, the preservation of the local language and cultural traditions.

F | New uses for cultural, industrial, and proto-industrial heritage (pozzelle...)

With a view to integrating potential tourism development with the economic functions, spaces, and tangible and intangible heritage already present in the region, the reuse of abandoned sites seems natural. This ability to align efforts and experiments in new uses with abandoned historical, architectural, and industrial heritage is certainly a high-quality starting point. Furthermore, in line with national trends, there is also significant momentum and debate at the local level regarding the creation of coworking spaces. This speaks volumes about the potential of these spaces to create new possibilities for the future of such a peripheral region. Taking a broader view: Abandoned spaces, often contrasting with the postcard-perfect narrative of Salento and Grecia as exclusively rural areas, offer an intriguing opportunity for visitors to explore and learn. These opportunities should be explored within the framework of a culturally-based model of responsible tourism.

G | Branded artisanal and artistic products.

Compared to established tourist destinations, especially coastal ones, where tourists find themselves surrounded by shops overflowing with pseudo-typical products—most of which are

of low quality or produced elsewhere—a differentiation strategy for Grecia could be to position itself as a “widespread marketplace of local craftsmanship.” In fact, tourists often do not consciously choose to buy non-local or low-quality products but are confused by the array of options before them. A brand that distinguishes and protects local products rooted in the region’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage could, on the one hand, guide tourists, and on the other, help raise the quality of the overall offering by requiring compliance with specific standards. In our view, this should not certify the supposed “typicality” of the item, but rather compliance with all the qualities by which the region chooses to define itself, e.g.:

- being produced entirely on-site;
- being eco-friendly;
- being responsible (with reference, for example, to respect for workers).

In this way, the brand can encompass not only traditional artisanal or food and wine products but also innovative products, design and art products, as well as all those services and venues in sectors such as hospitality or dining.

This strategy could also lend itself to incorporating these products and services into itineraries for experiencing the region, which include among the possible experiences—alongside those linked to cultural heritage and the landscape—visits to workshops or stops at “branded” trattorias.

8. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This Implementation Plan translates the outcomes of the three thematic workshops into a coordinated set of operational projects aimed at the protection, enhancement, and transmission of the region’s tangible and intangible heritage.

The actions are organized by strategic areas and structured according to:

- objectives of the intervention
- planned actions
- stakeholders involved
- time horizon (short/medium term)
- Expected results

The approach is integrated and cross-sectoral, with a particular focus on territorial governance, economic sustainability, and intergenerational transmission.

AREA A - Rural Architectural and Landscape Heritage



A1 – Urgent program for the inventory and restoration of pozzelle

Introduction

Pozzelle constitute a traditional hydraulic engineering system of great historical and cultural significance, currently in a state of severe disrepair. The workshop highlighted the urgent need for a systematic documentation and restoration effort.

Expected results:

- Halting the deterioration of priority structures.
- Strengthening of local technical expertise.
- Inclusion of the pozzelle in sustainable tourism circuits.

A2 – Program for the enhancement of courtyard houses and historic centers

Introduction

Courtyard houses represent a traditional settlement type threatened by abandonment and speculation. The workshop has identified them as a potential model for rural hospitality and slow tourism.

Expected results:

- Reduction in the abandonment of historic centers.
- Stimulation of compatible local economies.
- Strengthening of community identity.

A3 – Integrated Network of Historical and Productive Heritage

Introduction

Castles, towers, Lecce stone quarries, and archaeological sites are currently promoted in a fragmented manner and lack territorial coordination. Among the priority sites are the Castle of Corigliano d'Otranto and the archaeological area of Apigliano.

Expected results:

- Overcoming management fragmentation.
- Increase in qualified use.
- Strengthening of the integrated cultural offering.

AREA B - Linguistic and Intangible Heritage

Project B1 – Special Plan for the Preservation of the Griko Language



Introduction

The workshop highlighted the critical state of the Griko language, with a breakdown in intergenerational transmission and a real risk of extinction within 15–20 years.

Expected results:

- Increase in the number of active speakers.
- Overcoming linguistic stigma.
- Strengthening of cultural identity.

Project B2 – Program for the Documentation and Transmission of Oral History

Introduction

Stories, proverbs, place names, and traditional songs are currently preserved mainly by the elderly population and have not been systematically documented.

Expected Results:

- Preservation of oral heritage.
- Creation of permanent educational tools.
- Initiation of processes for cultural continuity.

Project B3 – Promotion of ritual and musical traditions

Introduction

Syncretic religious practices and Passion Songs represent strongly unifying elements of identity, but are at risk of losing their original meaning.

Expected results:

- Strengthening of the sense of community.
- Conscious transmission of traditions.
- Balance between external visibility and authenticity.

AREA C - Linguistic and Intangible Heritage

Project C1 – Archive of Agricultural and Artisanal Work

Introduction

The memory of tobacco cultivation, the extraction of Lecce stone, and traditional agricultural practices represents a cultural and narrative resource of great value.

Expected results:

- Preservation of the socio-economic memory of the territory.



- Construction of coherent local narratives.

Project C2 – Training Program on Traditional Techniques

Introduction

Skills in working with Lecce stone and in dry-stone construction are becoming increasingly rare, despite representing concrete employment opportunities. Dry-stone construction is recognized by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage (2018).

Expected results:

- Transfer of technical skills.
- Creation of skilled jobs.
- Support for local restoration projects.

Project C3 – Economic Chain of Traditional Knowledge

Introduction

Local crafts, traditional agricultural production, and historic farming practices can generate economic value, provided that commercial trivialization is avoided.

Expected results:

- Strengthening of the local economy.
- Sustainable promotion of traditional skills.
- Balance between market forces and cultural authenticity.

8.1 Short-term actions (1–2 years)

In the initial phase, it is necessary to activate and secure the aforementioned assets through a series of actions:

- A1 – Pozzelle: comprehensive inventory and initiation of restoration with at least 5 pilot projects.
- A2 – Courtyard houses: typological mapping and drafting of guidelines for restoration.
- A3 – Heritage network: establishment of inter-municipal coordination and design of an integrated network.
- B1 – Griko Language: Launch of pilot courses (schools/adults) and development of digital content.
- B2 – Oral history: urgent campaign to record testimonies.
- B3 – Ritual traditions: structured support for existing identity-related events.
- C1 – Work Archive: launch of a collection of documents and testimonies.

- C2 – Technical training: launch of initial courses on dry stone construction and Leccese stonework.
- C3 – Knowledge chain: preliminary analysis for a quality certification system.

8.2 Medium-term actions (3–5 years)

In a second phase, we will move on to implementing the following actions aimed at structuring and integrating the previous ones, therefore:

- A1 – Pozzelle: expansion of the restoration program and integration into visitor itineraries.
- A2 – Courtyard houses: launch of reuse initiatives for rural hospitality.
- A3 – Heritage Network: Redevelopment of abandoned quarries and improvement of accessibility to archaeological sites.
- B1 – Griko language: systematic integration into local school curricula.
- B2 – Oral History: creation of a publicly accessible digital archive.
- B3 – Ritual traditions: educational programs for informed transmission.
- C1 – Labor Archive: integration into museum and educational programs.
- C2 – Technical training: establishment of permanent training sites.
- C3 – Knowledge chain: implementation of a certification and integrated promotion system.

8.3 Long-term actions (over 5 years)

The final phase, aimed at consolidation and ensuring systemic sustainability, includes the following refinement actions:

- A1 – Pozzelle: completion of priority restoration and scheduled maintenance.
- A2 – Courtyard houses: consolidation of the economic model for sustainable hospitality.
- A3 – Heritage Network: full operation of the integrated inter-municipal cultural network.
- B1 – Griko language: expansion of the community of active speakers and normalization of public use.
- B2 – Oral history: continuous updating of the archive and its use in research and education.
- B3 – Ritual traditions: stable balance between external visibility and authenticity.
- C1 – Work Archive: consolidation as a regional documentation center.
- C2 – Technical training: structured professional pathway in restoration and craftsmanship.

- C3 – Knowledge network: an integrated and recognizable local economic system.

8.4 Responsible actors and partnerships

Implementation of the Plan requires a multilevel governance model based on:

- stable inter-municipal coordination;
- integration among public entities, the associative sector, and economic operators;
- active involvement of the local community;
- collaboration with research and training institutions.

We propose the establishment of a **Permanent Coordination Committee**, responsible for strategic direction, monitoring, and operational coordination among the various project areas.

- Institutional actors: Local Authorities, Puglia Region, Ministry of Culture
- Heritage protection agencies and international organizations: UNESCO, SABAP (Superintendence of Archaeology, Fine Arts, and Landscape)
- Education and research system: Local schools, universities, vocational training institutions
- Cultural and community associations: Third Sector organizations, volunteer organizations, foundations
- Economic operators and supply chains: artisans, businesses, small companies, and local producers
- Community: residents, tourists, refugees

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

9.1 Indicators

The project adopted a **participatory, bottom-up** approach based on the following methodological principles:

1. Ecomuseum approach

The ecomuseum is a model of territorial management that promotes tangible and intangible cultural heritage by actively involving the local community. Unlike a traditional museum, the ecomuseum:

- Operates across a wide area, not within a closed building

- Considers the local community as the custodian and interpreter of the heritage
- Highlights the connection between cultural heritage, identity, and local development
- Encourages the active participation of residents and visitors

2. Participatory Methodology

The project prioritized action-research and facilitation tools that center the knowledge, experiences, and visions of local stakeholders. The goal was not merely to gather information, but to co-design shared solutions through collaborative processes.

3. Accessible digitization

The digitization of heritage was conceived as a tool for:

- Systematic documentation for preservation
- Accessibility for diverse audiences (residents, tourists, refugees)
- Promotion through online platforms and thematic itineraries

9.1.1 Quantitative

The consultation process took place in July 2025 through three online thematic workshops, followed by individual qualitative interviews with each of the 15 stakeholders involved.

Consultation schedule:

- **LAB #1:** July 5, 2025 - "Rural Architectural and Landscape Heritage"
- **LAB #2:** July 12, 2025 - "Linguistic and Intangible Heritage"
- **LAB #3:** July 19, 2025 - "Work heritage and productive traditions"
- **Individual interviews:** July 22 – August 10, 2025

9.1.2 Qualitative

At the end of each participatory workshop, participants completed an anonymous satisfaction survey. The survey included:

- 10 statements rated on a Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)
- 3 open-ended questions for qualitative feedback

Response rate: 28 completed questionnaires out of a total of 31 participants in the three workshops (90% response rate).

4.2 Satisfaction with the participatory process

Dimension assessed	Average (1–5)	Rating
Clarity of the workshop objectives	4.7	Excellent
Effectiveness of facilitation	4.8	Excellent
Opportunity to express one's opinions	4.6	Excellent
Listening to and valuing contributions	4.5	Excellent
Usefulness of dialogue with other stakeholders	4.7	Excellent
Relevance of the proposed activities	4.4	Very good
Adequacy of the time available	4.2	Very good
Contribution to heritage enhancement	4.6	Excellent
Overall satisfaction with the experience	4.7	Excellent
Interest in participating in future initiatives	4.9	Excellent
OVERALL AVERAGE	4.6/5	Excellent

Key qualitative feedback from open-ended questions:

Most appreciated aspects:

- "Finally, a space where people are truly listened to, not the usual formal meeting"
- "I discovered initiatives from other municipalities that I didn't know about; networking is important"

- "The participatory approach gave everyone a voice, even the shyest participants"
- "I appreciate that we started with our heritage to discuss integration—an innovative approach"
- "Hearing the Union of Municipalities' commitment to these issues gives me hope"

Areas for improvement:

- "Two hours isn't enough for such complex issues; longer meetings would be needed"
- "There was a lack of direct participation from refugees; we're talking about them without them"
- "We need more concrete action: it's nice to talk, but then who does what?"
- "The online format works but limits spontaneity; in-person meetings are better"

Suggestions for the future:

- "Continue with regular meetings; don't stop at the project."
- "Involve schools and young people; they are the future of Grecia"
- "Create a stable coordination among cultural associations"
- "Organize public events open to all citizens"

9.2 Tools

A cross-cutting analysis of the three workshops and the 15 interviews revealed some areas of consensus and some areas of tension:

CROSS-CUTTING CONSENSUS:

- **Urgency of preserving the Griko language:** unanimous agreement that this is the top priority. Without the language, the essence of Griko identity is lost.
- **Value of the ecomuseum approach:** all stakeholders appreciate the idea of a widespread ecomuseum as a model for participatory territorial development.
- **Need for territorial coordination:** awareness that individual municipalities cannot tackle challenges alone; leadership from the Union of Municipalities is needed.
- **Potential for sustainable cultural tourism:** consensus that tourism can be a resource if it respects local identity and is not mass-market.
- **Digitization as an opportunity:** appreciation for digitization initiatives that make heritage accessible globally.

TENSIONS AND DIVERGENCES:

- **Economic development vs. conservation:** a divergence between those who prioritize development (even at the cost of compromises on heritage) and those who prioritize strict conservation.
- **Role of refugees:** some stakeholders are enthusiastic about the idea of involving refugees in heritage promotion; others are skeptical or concerned about “contamination” of identity.
- **Public vs. private:** divergence on the role of public institutions (some call for more intervention, others fear stifling bureaucracy) and the private sector.
- **Closed vs. open identity:** tension between a “protective” identity vision (defending Griko from external influences) and a “dialogic” vision (Griko as an intercultural bridge).

10. RISK ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Based on consultations with stakeholders and a review of the literature, the main risks have been identified, and ad hoc strategies have been developed to address them.

10.1 Risks

1. Risk of extinction of the Griko language

Probability: High

Impact: Critical

Timeframe: 15–20 years

Without massive language revitalization efforts (school instruction, adult courses, public use), Griko is destined to disappear with the current generation of elderly speakers. The loss of the language would result in the irreversible loss of Griko cultural identity.

2. Risk of depopulation and demographic aging

Probability: High

Impact: High

Timeframe: Ongoing

The municipalities of Grecìa Salentina, like many rural areas in Southern Italy, are suffering from depopulation (youth migration to cities) and an aging population. This leads to: a lack of generational renewal to preserve cultural heritage, the abandonment of homes and land, and a loss of economic and cultural vitality.

3. Risk of deterioration and loss of architectural heritage



Probability: Medium-High

Impact: High

Timeframe: Ongoing

Many assets (wells, courtyard houses, minor archaeological sites) are in a state of abandonment and progressive deterioration. Without maintenance and restoration efforts, there is a risk of physical loss of the heritage.

4. Risk of insufficient economic resources

Probability: Medium

Impact: High

Timeframe: Permanent

The conservation and enhancement of heritage require significant and ongoing investments. Reliance on project-based European funds creates discontinuity. There is a need for long-term economic sustainability models.

5. Risk of overtourism and loss of cultural identity

Probability: Low (at present)

Impact: Medium

Timeframe: Future (5–10 years)

If poorly managed, cultural tourism can become a threat: massification, the folklorization of traditions, real estate speculation, and loss of authenticity. Salento has already experienced the negative effects of mass tourism in coastal areas.

10.2 Mitigation Strategies

STRATEGY 1 – Plan for the linguistic revitalization of Griko

Implementation of an integrated language preservation program that includes the systematic introduction of Griko instruction into school curricula, the organization of adult courses and intergenerational learning initiatives, as well as the use of the language in public and cultural contexts. The plan also calls for the production of digital content and multimedia tools to foster interest among younger generations.

STRATEGY 2 – Policies to Enhance Regional Attractiveness and Active Residency

Promotion of policies aimed at countering depopulation through the reuse of housing stock (courtyard houses and historic centers), the creation of employment opportunities linked to cultural tourism, crafts, and local production, and support for youth entrepreneurship and the return to residence in the municipalities of Grecia Salentina.

STRATEGY 3 – Program for the maintenance and restoration of dispersed heritage



Development of a systematic plan for the inventory, monitoring, and restoration of at-risk architectural and landscape assets, prioritizing elements of local identity such as pozzelle, rural architecture, and minor archaeological sites. The program includes pilot projects, training for specialized craftsmen, and the integration of restored assets into cultural tourism circuits.

STRATEGY 4 – Sustainable economic models for heritage management

Development of economic sustainability tools based on public–private partnerships, integration between cultural activities and local economic sectors, and diversification of funding sources (European funds, national programs, private investments, and forms of the social economy).

STRATEGY 5 – Proactive planning for sustainable tourism

Development of regional guidelines for the management of cultural tourism, oriented toward models of slow and widespread enjoyment, the control of impacts on heritage, and the prevention of the massification and folklorization of local traditions.

11. CONSIDERATIONS ON RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABILITY

11.1 Human and Institutional Resources

Implementation of the plan requires the coordinated mobilization of human resources from public institutions, the associative sector, the research community, and local economic operators. Implementation capacity is based on a multilevel governance structure that leverages existing expertise within the territory and strengthens coordination mechanisms among the various stakeholders involved.

In particular, the main institutional resources are the **municipalities of Grecia Salentina** and **the Union of Municipalities**, which perform functions of strategic guidance, territorial coordination, and integration of actions with local planning tools. These entities are supported by regional and national bodies responsible for cultural heritage protection, territorial planning, and cultural policies.

A central role is also played by:

- **local cultural and linguistic associations**, committed to the preservation and promotion of the Griko language and intangible traditions;
- **schools and universities**, involved in research, documentation, training, and the intergenerational transmission of heritage;

- **artisans, skilled workers, and cultural practitioners**, who are custodians of technical skills linked to traditional knowledge (stonework, rural construction, agricultural practices);
- **tourism operators and local businesses**, which can contribute to the development of sustainable economic models linked to heritage enhancement.

The implementation of the plan also involves strengthening local expertise through specific training programs in the fields of cultural heritage management, sustainable tourism, European project design, and regional development.

11.2 Financial Sustainability

The financial sustainability of the planned actions is based on a diversified model that combines public resources, European funding, public-private partnerships, and forms of economic development of cultural heritage.

In the short term, the implementation of initial activities (surveys, documentation, planning, pilot projects) will be supported primarily by public funding and European programs dedicated to culture, territorial cohesion, and rural development.

In the medium and long term, the plan aims to develop models of self-sustainability through:

- the sustainable tourism-based promotion of cultural and landscape heritage;
- the development of economic sectors linked to traditional knowledge, local crafts, and high-quality agri-food production;
- the reuse of historic buildings for cultural, educational, and hospitality activities;
- the establishment of public-private partnerships for the management of cultural spaces and services.

Diversifying funding sources reduces dependence on individual programs or calls for proposals and ensures the continuity of actions over time.

11.3 Potential Funding Sources

The actions outlined in the plan are eligible for various funding streams at the European, national, and regional levels, as well as public-private partnership instruments.

At the European level, the 2021–2027 programming period offers significant opportunities through the main structural funds and thematic programs, including:

- the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), for urban regeneration, cultural heritage enhancement, and sustainable tourism development;

- the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) for training programs, social inclusion, and the development of professional skills;
- the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), for initiatives to develop rural areas and enhance local agricultural supply chains.

These instruments are complemented by directly managed European programs, including:

- Creative Europe for cultural cooperation projects and the promotion of intangible heritage;
- Erasmus+ for educational and exchange programs related to language and cultural transmission;
- Horizon Europe for research and innovation projects in the field of heritage digitization and sustainable development practices.

Additional resources may come from national and regional programs dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage, tourism development, and territorial regeneration, as well as from private foundations, cultural cooperation programs, and public-private partnerships.

The integration of these various funding sources will make it possible to sustain the actions outlined in the plan over time and to strengthen the region's capacity for project development.

12. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

12.1 Summary of Strategic Priorities

The identified priorities constitute the strategic core on which to focus actions in the short and medium term, in line with the outcomes of the participatory workshops and the analysis of territorial risks and opportunities. They reflect a shared orientation among stakeholders and represent the areas where intervention is most urgent and potentially transformative, in order to ensure the protection, continuity, and sustainable development of the cultural heritage of Grecia Salentina.

- Priority on the protection of the Griko language
- Recognition of the ecomuseum model
- Need for coordination among municipalities
- Cultural tourism as a sustainable opportunity
- Digitization as a tool for promotion

12.2 Roadmap for Adoption and Implementation

The roadmap defines the main operational phases for the adoption and implementation of the Plan, identifying a timeline of actions aimed at ensuring a progressive, coordinated, and sustainable implementation of the identified strategies and projects:

PHASE 1 – Institutional validation and governance activation (0–6 months)

Objective: to formalize the adoption of the Plan and activate the coordination structure.

Key actions:

- Presentation of the Plan to the Municipal Councils for formal approval.
- Resolution of adherence by the Union of Municipalities of Grecia Salentina.
- Establishment of the Permanent Coordination Committee.
- Appointment of the Plan's technical–scientific manager.
- Definition of the three-year operational timeline.

Expected outcomes:

- Plan formally adopted.
- Operational governance established.
- Technical structure identified.

PHASE 2 – Detailed design and securing of funding (6–18 months)

Objective: to translate strategic guidelines into projects ready for implementation and eligible for funding.

Key actions:

- Drafting of priority implementation projects (e.g., Griko preservation, restoration of pozzelle, memory archive).
- Identification of relevant European, national, and regional calls for proposals.
- Establishment of institutional and technical-scientific partnerships.
- Submission of funding applications.
- Implementation of initial low-cost actions (surveys, documentation, pilot training).

Expected outputs:



- Complete project proposals.
- Initial financial resources secured.
- Launch of priority interventions.

PHASE 3 – Operational Implementation (1–5 years)

Objective: to carry out the actions outlined in the macro-projects in a coordinated manner.

Key actions:

- Implementation of language preservation programs.
- Carrying out restoration work on priority architectural heritage.
- Launching an integrated network for regional development.
- Development of training sites and vocational training programs.
- Digitization and online publication of archives.

Expected outputs:

- Physical interventions completed.
- Operational regional cultural system.
- Initial economic and employment impacts.

PHASE 4 – Consolidation and monitoring (3–10 years)

Objective: to ensure sustainability, continuity, and adaptation over time.

Key actions:

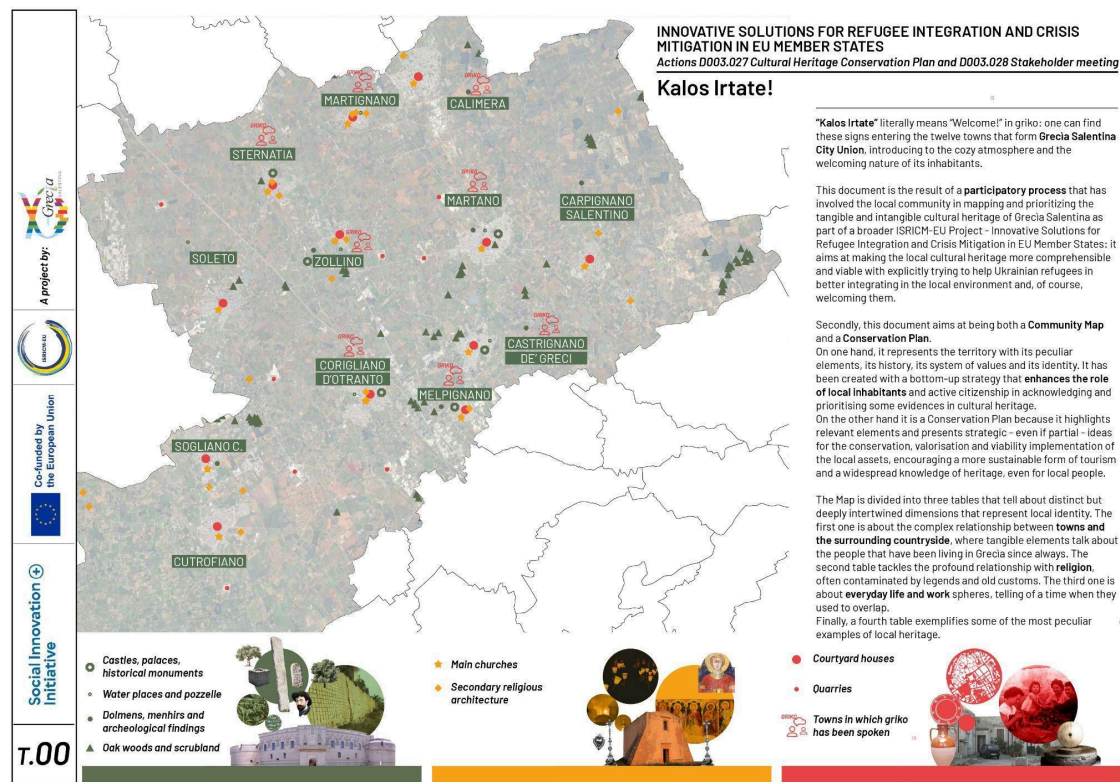
- Periodic monitoring of indicators (language, tourist flows, employment, condition of assets).
- Updating the Plan every 3 years.
- Stabilization of local economic sectors.
- Strengthening the regional brand and interregional networks.
- Scheduled maintenance of restored heritage.

Expected outputs:

- Stable governance model.
- Sustainable economic and cultural system.
- Effective intergenerational continuity.



ATTACHMENT: MAPS AND LOCATION OF RESOURCES



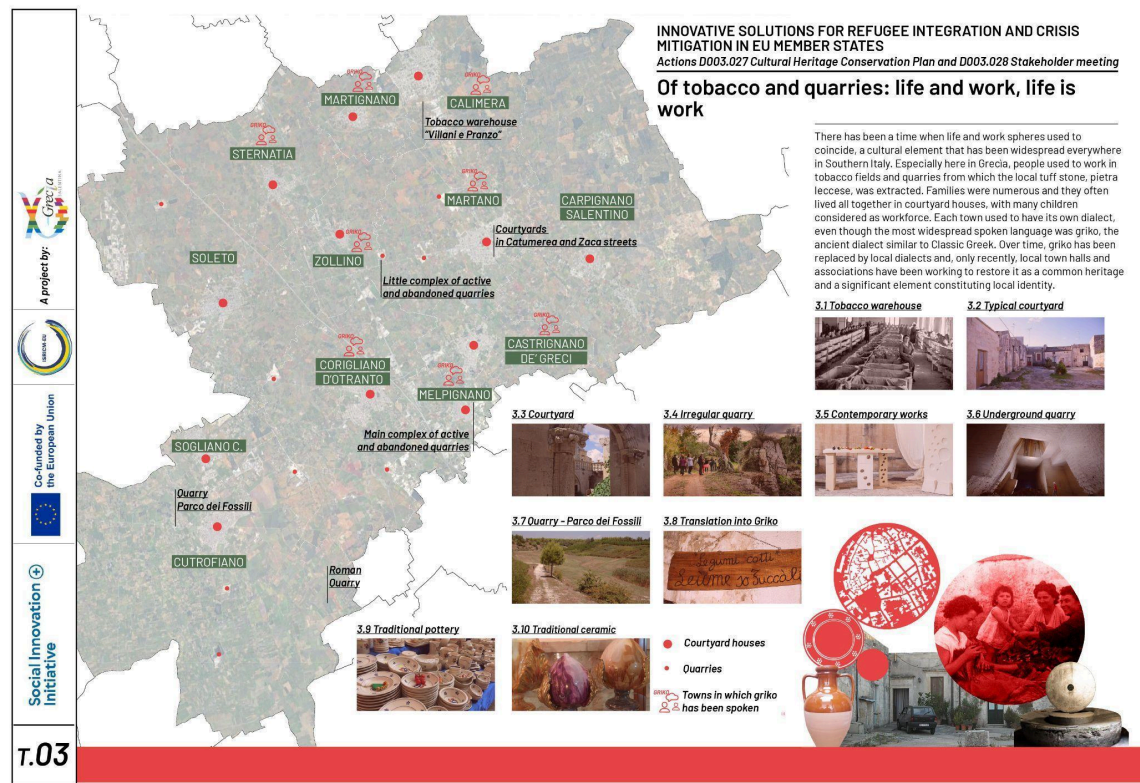
T.00 Kalos Irtate!



T. 01 - Of dry stone and holm oaks: the relationship between towns and the countryside



T. 02 - Of Patron Saints, Holy Words, and Ancient Customs



T. 03 - Of tobacco and quarries: life and work, life is work



A project by:



Co-funded by the European Union



Social Innovation Initiative

T.04



1. HOLM-OAK-WOOD
Calimera, Carpignano Salentino, Martignano

Located next to Calimera, Carpignano, Martignano and Melendugno, a holm-oak-wood is one of the most peculiar evidences of the natural heritage in Grecia Salentina. The wood and the sheep-tracks are kept viable thanks to local associations and one of the most relevant subjects in terms of preservation and valorisation, the Natural History Museum in Calimera.



2. VITO DOMENICO PALUMBO
Calimera

Born in Calimera in 1854, Vito Domenico Palumbo was a poet and a scholar. Engaged in the first local peasant struggles, to him we owe a wide written-heritage about songs and poems in Griko. His works have actually had a great impact in the definition of the local identity: not everyone knows that he is the author of one of the most common local traditional songs, Kall Nifita.



3. MENHIR PILAMUZZA
Sogliano Cavour

Menhir Pilamuzza is just one of the many archaeological evidences one can find just roaming in the countryside. Unfortunately and often not well preserved, these prehistoric works should at least be made more viable and intelligible, raising awareness towards how much time has passed since Grecia Salentina has been inhabited.



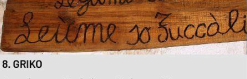
4. POZZELLE
Zollino, Corigliano, Martano, Castrignano

Pozzelle witness the old way with which usable water was harvested. These round underground structures made of dry stones collected rainwater, naturally filtered it and stored it. Pozzelle are no longer used, but restoring this ancient method could be a powerful and innovative solution to tackle two of the longstanding problems of this territory, the lack of natural water sources and the dry climate, especially in a time of climate emergency.



7. CANTI DI PASSIONE
Castrignano, Corigliano, Calimera, Martano, Martignano, Melpignano, Zollino, Sternatia, Soleto.

Canti di Passione is the itinerant showcase held in Grecia Salentina the week before Palm Sunday. It features songs and poems in griko that tell the story of Jesus Christ's life and death. Joining the many and peculiar rituals that brighten up the Holy Week in Southern Italy, Canti di Passione is establishing itself as one of the most identifying elements of Grecia Salentina local culture.



8. GRIKO
Castrignano, Corigliano, Calimera, Martano, Martignano, Melpignano, Zollino, Sternatia, Soleto

Griko was spoken in most of Grecia Salentina, originated from a long contact between Ancient Greek and Latin languages and cultures: this constant contamination is one of the main leitmotifs in local culture. It entered a slow process of extinction in the 1950s, when it stopped being taught and native speakers were too elderly. Officially included in the Unesco Red Book of Endangered Languages in 1999, many associations try and keep this dialect alive.



5. SANTO STEFANO
Soleto

Located in the historic centre of Soleto, this church is one of the most important and complete evidences of late Gothic art here in Apulia. Perhaps the personal chapel of Raimondello Del Balzo Orsini, feudal lord of Soleto, its stunning frescoes have been studied for years, representing one of the most expressive mixtures of Western and Eastern cultures.



6. APIGLIANO
Martano, Zollino

Apigliano was a Byzantine village built between the towns of Martano and Zollino. Inhabited for several centuries, it has been abandoned, forgotten and later re-discovered. Today, Apigliano is an archaeological site with an ancient cemetery, a deconsecrated chapel and two distinct former farmhouses.



9. COURTYARD HOUSES
Melpignano, Martano, Corigliano

Courtyard houses have been a typical dwelling in Salento and especially in Grecia Salentina: little rooms opened around a common court, often shared with relatives or work colleagues. These houses are still visible in many historic centres, even if they lost their original sharing feature and their sense of community: in a time in which life and work spheres coincided, it was the space where escaping the alienation of rural work was possible.



10. QUARRIES
Cutrofano, Melpignano

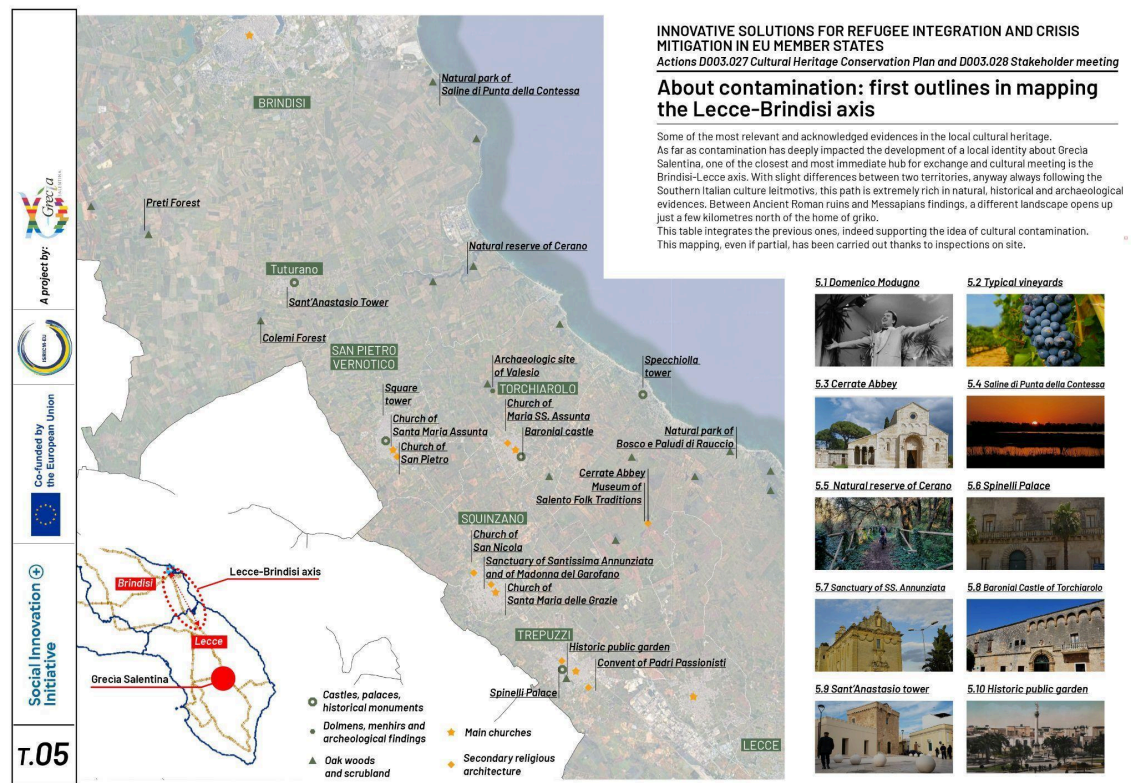
Walking by the historic centres one will notice the typical yellowish colour of houses and palaces: the local tuff stone was extracted from quarries spread through the countryside. Used until the late 1900s, most of them are now abandoned, leaving huge sinkholes in the landscape. Nevertheless, quarries are a historic and speleological heritage, telling the story of one of the most relevant local industries and offering an opportunity for renaturalisation and regeneration.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION AND CRISIS MITIGATION IN EU MEMBER STATES
Actions D003.027 Cultural Heritage Conservation Plan and D003.028 Stakeholder meeting

Focus on strategic elements

Some of the most relevant and acknowledged evidences in the local cultural heritage. Directly emerged from the process of mapping and prioritising local assets, these elements are presented because of the role they play in the creation of the local identity: these elements that should be better promoted and valorised, in order to raise awareness and better communicate local heritage, in the development of a clear branding image of a whole territory.

T.04 - Focus on strategic elements



T.05 - On contamination: initial steps in mapping the Lecce-Brindisi axis