

## MEDITERRANEAN HERITAGE: A PROJECT FOR THE FUTURE

### Museums: real and virtual spaces



Through display and interpretation museums construct a view and present a story; they deal with cultural legacies, museum history, and national culture. Whether a communal space of interaction or an archival space, they face ever-increasing challenges that hinge upon such contested concepts as interpretation and presentation. Objects, paintings, texts, models and audio-visuels acquire new meaning and deliver heritage messages with the authority created by selection, interpretation, display, and classification. Increasingly considered as a major resource for learning, they carry the burden of the past and a role in promoting ownership of diverse elements of tangible and non-tangible heritage, encouraging increased local ownership of cultural heritage, and contributing to stimulating pride and civic responsibilities.

As a regional programme funded by the European Union since 1998, Euromed Heritage, has contributed to the development of cultural heritage of the Mediterranean Region at many levels and within an approach that tries to promote socio-economic development among local communities, while contributing to the enhancement of regional identities. Euromed Heritage 4 represents a further milestone in the process of recognizing 'culture' as a catalyst for mutual understanding between the people of the Mediterranean, and aims to facilitate the appropriation by people of their own national and regional cultural legacy through easier access to education and knowledge on cultural heritage.

Museums, exhibitions, both physical and virtual, databases/websites and inventories have been on the programme's list of options since its inception. Behind their development lie multifarious issues that had to be addressed through the respective projects including research, training, design, and curating,

Following is a rundown of what has been accomplished or is underway in this sector which, as an output, is and will be a major contributor to cultural heritage development.

#### Projects details

1. **Defense Systems on the Mediterranean Coast** [www.medanet.info](http://www.medanet.info) (EH phase 2)  
*Activities of restoration and museum creation on fortresses along the Mediterranean coasts*



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- i. The project involved the conservation, restoration and re-use of historical defence systems on the Mediterranean coast
  - ii. A Training course on the elaboration of Master plans for the sites integrated to the project was held in Cartagena (Spain)
  - iii. A Training course in "Documentation of Historical Defence Systems on the Mediterranean Coast" was held in Egypt and Greece.
2. **Islamic Art in the Mediterranean** [www.museumwnf.org](http://www.museumwnf.org) (EH phase 1)  
*Creation of "heritage trails" and guidebooks that suggest itineraries for exploring Islamic art and architecture in eleven Mediterranean countries: Published catalogues and on-site information turn historic and archaeological sites into exhibition spaces.*
  - i. Twelve in-situ 'exhibitions' with detailed information displays mounted in eleven countries.
  - ii. A series of catalogue/guidebooks about aspects of Islamic art in partner countries.
  - iii. A series of itineraries that were eventually adopted by tour operators
3. **Discover Islamic Art** (EH phase 3) [www.discoverislamicart.org](http://www.discoverislamicart.org)  
*Realisation of a virtual museum on Islamic art in the Mediterranean It develops further the principle of virtual museums initiated within Islamic Art in the Mediterranean - Museum With No Frontiers (MWNF).*
  - i. A virtual museum; it was on display at the League of Arab States' pavilion at Expo 2010, Shanghai [www.museumwnf.org/event\\_details.php?id=ln7#](http://www.museumwnf.org/event_details.php?id=ln7#)
  - ii. An illustrated book and CD-ROM presenting highlights of the virtual museum.
4. **Expo 2000** (EH phase 1):  
*Travelling exhibition on conservation in the Euro-Mediterranean zone. Launched at the Roemer-und Pelizaeus Museum in Hildesheim during Expo 2000, it became a touring exhibition that travelled to Algeria, Cyprus, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey.*
5. **Manumed I** (EH phase 1) **and Manumed II** (EH phase 4) [www.ccl-fr.org](http://www.ccl-fr.org)  
*Manumed I* was about Conservation and inventory of small and private libraries in North Africa and Near East. *Manumed II* aims to contribute to the preservation of the diversity of the written heritage, and its corollary, language, as an intangible heritage.
  - i. Major output is a shared Virtual Library of the Mediterranean, multi-lingual, multi-alphabetical, written and acoustic, will also be implemented within this project.
6. **Museomed** (EH phase 1): ICOM Athens  
*Training course on modern museum technology and management: museum specialists from six countries investigated how museums can be turned into a focus and catalyst for cultural experiences, and explored the kind of technical knowhow that curators must command if they are to exploit the potential of new approaches to display and interpretation.*
7. **Mediterranean Voices** (EH phase 3) [www.med-voices.org](http://www.med-voices.org)  
*Oral history and cultural practice in Mediterranean cities: oral histories including family histories; memories of places and important events; local folklore, rituals and customs; festivals and holidays; as well as a number of daily practices which are part and parcel of everyday life, working and socialising in these cities and certain neighbourhoods within them; are presented in an online database-archive.*
  - i. Virtual archive of oral history
  - ii. Exhibition: Fragments from the Past with parallel film and book
  - iii. Exhibition: Shared spaces in times of crises



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8. **Prodecom** (EH phase 2) [www.chbeauxarts-prodecom.org](http://www.chbeauxarts-prodecom.org)

**Support and training for traditional Mediterranean arts and crafts:** based on an approach of cultural heritage as a factor for local development, PRODECOM focused on the implementation of a regional label «cultural development products®» which, attributed according to cultural, ethical, social, technical and aesthetic criteria, aims at recognising the originality and the quality of crafts products, in order to support their commercialisation in Europe and elsewhere.

- i. Exhibition: Empreintes et Couleurs de Méditerranée

<http://www.chbeauxarts-prodecom.org/expositions/framexpositions.htm>

9. **Qantara** (EH phase 1) [www.qantara-med.org](http://www.qantara-med.org)

**Mediterranean Heritage: Crossings between Orient and Occident** is a transversal data base (of about 1000 items). It uses a whole range of multimedia supports (pictures, videos, texts).

*This database/virtual museum allows a search by geographic location, themes (commerce, transmission of traditional skills, life style and life at court, the art of calligraphy, religious life, treasures, power, architecture and urban spaces, diplomacy, literature, shapes and motifs, and war. All these themes are further broken down into sub-themes and each is supported by images, a thematic text as well as a bibliography.*

10. **Med-Mem** (EH phase 4) [www.ina.fr](http://www.ina.fr)

**Sharing our Mediterranean audio-visual heritage:** the Med-Mem website will showcase more than 4000 videos from all around the Mediterranean within their historical and cultural contexts and with a commentary in three languages.

11. **Remee** (EH phase 4) [www.remee.eu/](http://www.remee.eu/)

**Rediscovering together the water heritage in the Mediterranean region:** the preservation of vernacular heritage linked to water management in the Euro-Mediterranean region is a priority issue.

- i. A virtual resource centre on water heritage
- ii. An eco-museum on water heritage in Tamesloht, Morocco
- iii. An eco-museum of citrus groves in Hammamet, Tunisia

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**More themes tackled within Euromed Heritage:**

*Archaeological sites and ancient theatres; audiovisual archives; education and the production of tool kits; manuscripts; oral history; traditional hammams; vernacular and monumental architecture; water heritage; women and youth; tourism; handicrafts and traditional skills.*