

Press release
12 December 2023

**Recovering stories from the past for a sustainable future:
a HORIZON EUROPE research project coordinated by Babeş-Bolyai University (BBU) and
implemented in 12 countries.**

Researchers and community development experts from 12 European countries, coordinated by Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, will analyse resource management strategies from the last 800 years in rural and urban communities to provide contemporary generations with strong examples of sustainable development. The activities will be carried out for three years within a research project funded by the European Commission under the HORIZON EUROPE financing mechanism with a budget of 3 million euros.

The project *RESTORY – Recovering Past Stories for the Future: A Synergistic Approach to Textual and Oral Heritage of Small Communities* will launch at the beginning of 2024, bringing together 20 partners – universities, public institutions, companies, and NGOs – from 12 European countries. RESTORY is the first Research and Innovation project on cultural heritage won by an academic institution in Romania, as well as the first investigation of this type coordinated by BBU within the HORIZON EUROPE funding programme.

The core of the project consists of a series of case studies inspired by the historical experience of the Transylvanian Saxons, who built prosperous settlements in the Middle Ages on the territory of present-day Romania, some still admired as part of the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. This model of successful practices in the sustainable management of material and human resources has placed a special emphasis on local schooling, on intuitive circular economy processes and on affective communication strategies in relation to inhabited places.

These early-established societal traditions that evolved alongside the Romanians, Hungarians, and Roma, dwellers of the same shared communities, create a remarkable symbolic vocabulary of regional cultural heritage and territorial identity. Their stories are preserved in contemporary accounts and community records, many to be found in poorly explored archives and libraries. The investigation will initially target an urban context, Sighișoara (Mureș county), and a rural one, Jelna (Bistrița-Năsăud county). Other settlements with a similar historical profile, such as Sebeș (Alba county), or villages like Brateiu, Buzd (both in Sibiu county) or Cincu (Brașov county) will deepen the area of exploration during the course of the project.

Subsequently, ten parallel research actions will be undertaken in Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Ukraine, all aiming to validate the relevance and general soundness of the medieval, modern, and recent traditions from Transylvania, strategies developed in pursuit of a better management of limited resources, especially over extended periods of crisis.

“The focal point of the case studies will be the coherent collective behaviour of responsibly managed communities, illustrating the transformative nature of cultural messages, an essential aspect highlighted precisely through recycling practices”, points out RESTORY’s project leader, PhD. Habil. Adinel C. Dincă, Associate Professor at the Department of Medieval, Premodern, and Art History of the Faculty of History and Philosophy, BBU.

Assisted by colleagues from BBU, Dr. Dincă will coordinate a large international team of academics, primarily historians, but also geographers, philologists, architects, sociologists, computer scientists, etc., together with community facilitators, and communication and territorial marketing specialists. The entire group of professionals will pay greater attention to the textual and oral stories generated by the inhabitants of small and medium-sized settlements, pieces of cultural heritage that have long been overshadowed by monuments and sites of national or trans-national significance.

This research endeavour to recover resource-maximizing solutions, intuitively implemented by small communities over a long period of time, will ultimately enable the knowledge transfer from academia to local memory institutions such as museums, archives, or libraries, actively and emotionally involving citizens in the sustainable development of the traditional heritage.

Thus, RESTORY targets both institutional users and visitors of cultural sites by including them in consultancy activities with reference to the management of historical artefacts, as well as through educational campaigns or training sessions intended to generate new skills and jobs in the cultural heritage economy; another important aspect pertains to assisting GLAM institutions in implementing open access policies and accessing funding.

RESTORY – *Recovering Past Stories for the Future: A Synergistic Approach to Textual and Oral Heritage of Small Communities* (project no. 101132781) will be implemented between 1 January 2024, and 31 December 2026 by Babeş-Bolyai University, coordinator of a consortium of 20 partners – academic entities, public institutions and museums, companies, and non-governmental organizations.

The funding of 3,000,000 euros was awarded by the European Commission’s HORIZON EUROPE programme, following an intense competition of projects under the call HORIZON-CL2-2023-HERITAGE-01-04: *Cultural heritage in transformation – facing change with confidence*. This financing mechanism aims – by means of innovative scientific investigation tools and dynamic communication strategies – to avail of the inexhaustible vein of European cultural traditions and integrate the knowledge thus accumulated in the configuration of sustainable strategies and effective public policies for managing the challenges faced by contemporary society.

The RESTORY consortium brings together 20 organizations from 12 countries:

1. Babeş-Bolyai University, România
2. Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, România
3. Sighişoara City Hall, România
4. Civitas Foundation for Civil Society, Cluj-Napoca, România
5. C.School for Creative Acts, România
6. 23 Film Studio & Media, România
7. Università degli Studi di Roma „La Sapienza”, Italy
8. Università degli Studi di Cagliari, Italy
9. Consorzio Materahub Industrie Culturali e Creative, Italy
10. Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium
11. Maison du Patrimoine Médiéval Mosan, Belgium
12. Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France
13. Háskóli Íslands, Iceland
14. Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal
15. Helsingin Yliopisto, Finland
16. Tartu Ülikool, Estonia
17. Atlantic Technological University, Ireland
18. Uniwersytet Im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poland
19. Asset Technology, Greece
20. Bukovinian State Medical University, Ukraine