

## Nurturing Europe's cultural heritage expertise

***An EU-funded project is creating a Europe-wide cultural heritage research infrastructure to provide easier access to scientific facilities, archival information and expertise and to improve training in heritage science.***



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The IPERION CH project is using EU funding to integrate national facilities of recognised excellence in heritage science and to connect experts from across Europe. Opening up world-class facilities to a wider number of researchers and academics will foster more collaborative work and strengthen the reputation of Europe's heritage sciences.

"If you are working on a tangible heritage project such as the restoration of a church, you might need access to several analytical tools and to consult with previous restorations," says IPERION CH project coordinator Luca Pezzati from the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche in Italy. "A constant challenge for researchers in this field has been that cultural heritage is so fragmented. The tools and information a research might need are often dispersed in archives or institutions across Europe."

By achieving better coordination among institutions, Pezzati and his colleagues hope to address the issue of fragmentation and offer more comprehensive support to European cultural heritage science. "The IPERION CH infrastructure will provide access to all services, instruments and expertise from participating institutions through one access point," he explains. "This is about creating a viable research community."

### **Raising cultural awareness**

From prehistoric cave paintings through to contemporary street art and everything in-between, Europe's cultural heritage is second to none. Conserving and restoring artworks, architecture and museum collections require expertise and resources, both of which demand investment. The IPERION CH project aims not only to make more efficient use of European knowledge and expertise, but to raise awareness of the social and economic importance of looking after our cultural heritage.

"The lack of coherence in this field has led to cultural heritage science being overlooked," says Pezzati. "When it comes to funding programmes or research priorities, cultural heritage is very rarely in the headlines. One of the reasons we wanted to create this infrastructure

was to raise the profile of this field.”

IPERION CH comprises 23 partners from 12 Member States plus one in the US. A large number of institutions are taking part, while many more have expressed an interest. The project enables heritage scientist to access 19 first-class facilities grouped under three platforms: MOLAB, for portable laboratories; FIXLAB, for large-scale facilities; and ARCHLAB, for archives of technical and scientific data. Transnational access is accompanied by joint research activities, aimed at developing and improving the existing facilities, and networking activities, including training for users and scientists, dissemination and innovation.

### Looking to the future

The project, which is the culmination of 15 years of closer collaboration in this field, is building on previous EU-funded cultural heritage network and infrastructure projects such as LABS-TECH, EU-ARTECH and CHARISMA.

“These have been important steps towards improving access to facilities and archives for cultural heritage researchers,” says Pezzati. “This latest project, the final one in this series if you like, will establish a more permanent, recognised European infrastructure that will bring benefits for years to come.”

IPERION CH, due for completion in April 2019, will eventually feed into the European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science, E-RIHS (currently in its preparatory phase). This ambitious infrastructure project plans to integrate cultural heritage research with related disciplines, such as chemistry, art history, architecture, archaeology and digital humanities. This will facilitate more holistic research projects in the future, and put cultural heritage science on the same level as more traditional scientific disciplines. “Building up heritage science is a slow process, and IPERION CH is just another step towards our objective,” says Pezzati.

#### Project details

- Project acronym: **Iperion CH**
- Participants: Italy (Coordinator), Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, France, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, UK, United States
- Project N°: 654028
- Total costs: € 8 157 487
- EU contribution: € 7 994 987
- Duration: May 2015 to April 2019

### See also

**Project website:** <http://www.iperionch.eu/>

**Project details:**

[https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/198068\\_en.html](https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/198068_en.html)

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