



Co-funded by  
the European Union

# Policy Brief

## GreenHeritage

The impact of Climate Change on  
Intangible Cultural Heritage

**Mytilene**, September 2024

## INDEX

---

# 1

The GreenHeritage project

# 2

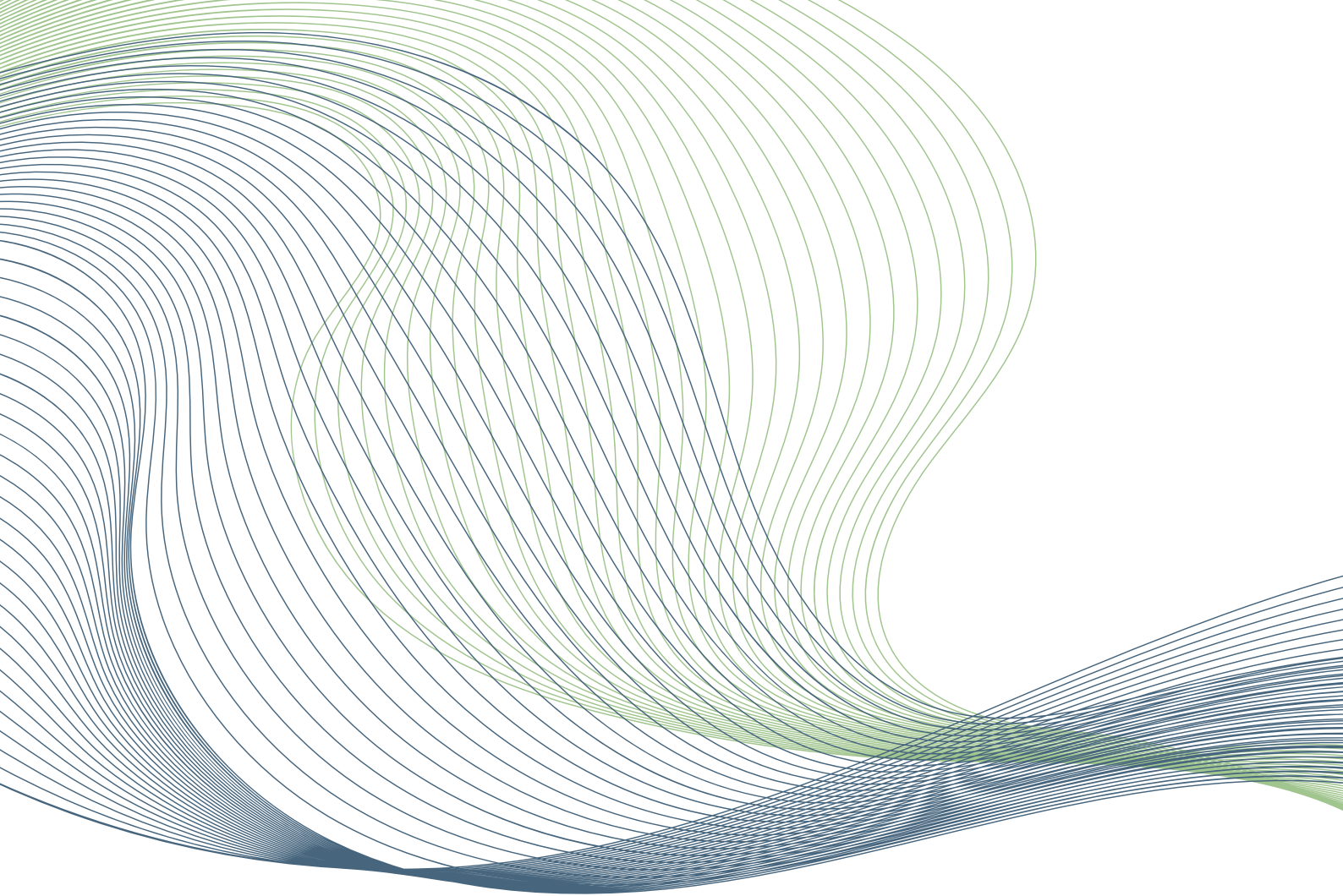
Importance of protecting Intangible Cultural Heritage against Climate Change: the case studies in Greece

# 3

The target audience

# 4

Recommendations



## 1 - THE **GREEN**HERITAGE PROJECT

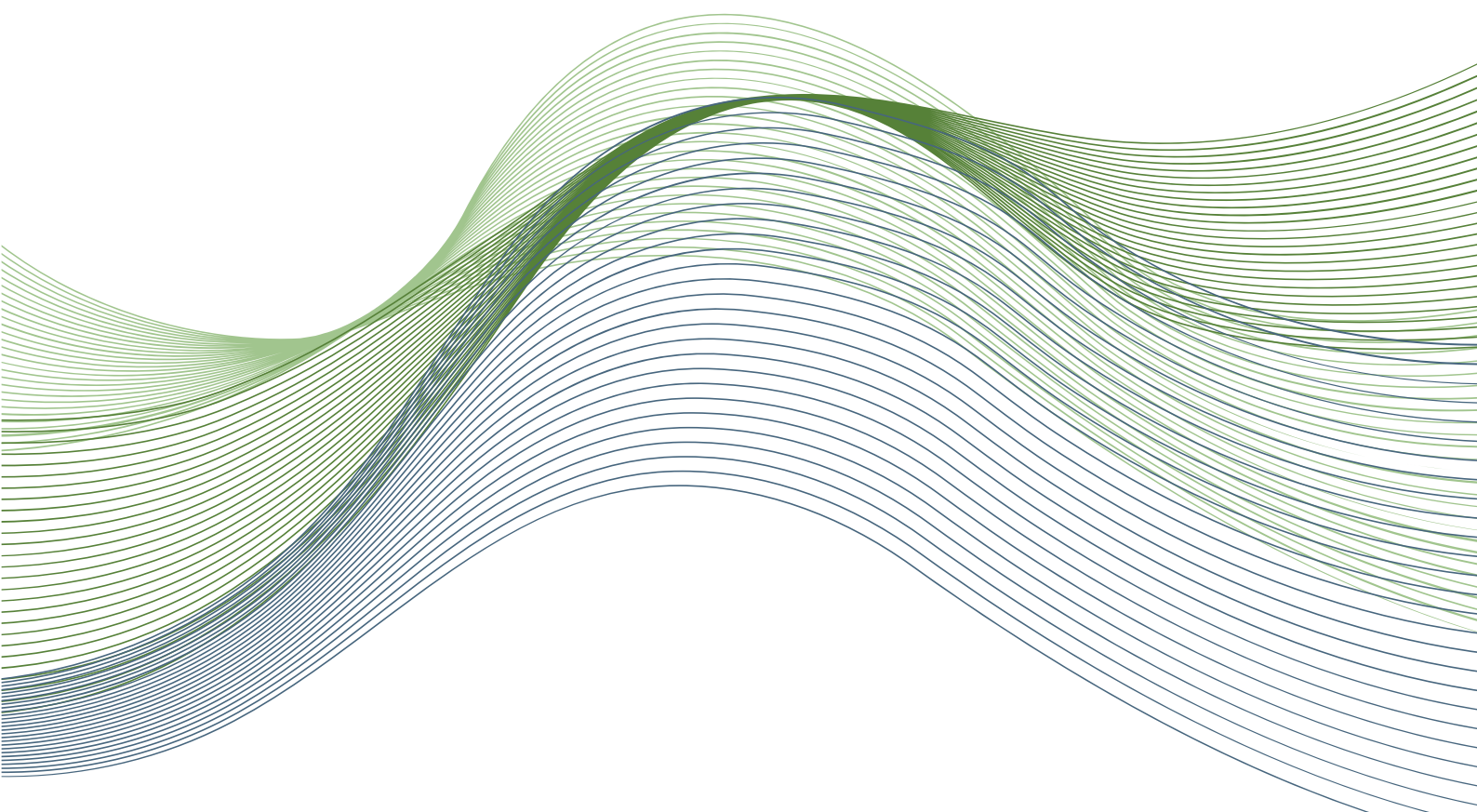
The European GreenHeritage project was launched in December 2022, aiming to develop a holistic, innovative and inclusive approach to the direct and indirect impact of **Climate Change** on **Intangible Cultural Heritage**. To this end, it seeks innovative tools and methodologies capable of promoting adaptive and systemic approaches to better manage climate change issues and effects. It aims to be an urgent reminder that this issue is present, affecting both directly and indirectly all aspects of Europe's heritage.

One of the challenges of the project is to suggest and promote policies enabling to address the needs derived by climate change, that policymakers can consider in the design or adaptation of policies from the national to the EU levels. To address this challenge, GreenHeritage is developing, among other activities, 5 policy roundtables, leading to 5 policy briefs and a final handbook on the impact of Climate Change on Intangible Cultural Heritage at the national and EU level, including key findings of the project and the final recommendations for policy change.

## 1 - THE GREENHERITAGE PROJECT

---

The project, co-funded by the European Union, through the Erasmus+ programme, is being carried out in 5 European countries (Belgium, Greece, Italy, Latvia and Spain) by the following consortium: CNR - Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche-Leader (IT); CUEBC - Centro Universitario Europeo per i Beni Culturali (IT); CMCC - Fondazione Centro Euromediterraneo sui Cambiamenti Climatici (IT); FSMLR - Fundación Santa María la Real del Patrimonio Histórico (ES); ReadLab P.C. - Research Innovation and Development Lab (GR); ILFA LU - Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia (LV); UAEGEAN - University of the Aegean (GR); CANDIDE - International (BE), ELORIS S.A. - Research, Education, Innovation and Development Company of the North Aegean Region (GR); ALLI - Athens Lifelong Learning Institute (GR).





## 2 - IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE: THE CASE STUDIES IN GREECE



ΟΙ ΕΠΙΠΤΩΣΕΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΚΛΙΜΑΤΙΚΗΣ ΑΛΛΑΓΗΣ  
ΣΤΗΝ ΑΥΛΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΙΚΗ ΚΛΗΡΟΝΟΜΙΑ

### ΣΥΖΗΤΗΣΗ ΣΤΡΟΓΓΥΛΗΣ ΤΡΑΠΕΖΗΣ

ΕΠΙΜΕΛΗΤΗΡΙΟ ΛΕΣΒΟΥ, (Π.ΚΟΥΝΤΟΥΡΙΩΤΟΥ 71)  
2-3 ΣΕΠΤΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ 2024 & ΩΡΑ 10:00.

A **team** of people consisting of representatives of different stakeholders' groups (among other, public authorities, universities, associations, and companies) met in Mytilene (Lesvos) on 2 and 3 September 2024 to tackle this problem during the third policy roundtable of the GreenHeritage project.

Links between Climate Change and Intangible Cultural Heritage, as well questions and potential solutions were analysed. The **debate** ranged from general CC threats (such as reduced rainfall) and their impact to ICH, to various adaptation techniques that constitute themselves part of the Greek ICH. Moreover, general challenges around cultural tradition and the protection of ICH were brought into the discussion. The work carried out resulted in recommendations that were divided in **13 macro-themes**.



## 2 - IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE: THE CASE STUDIES IN GREECE

Aiming to identify the stakeholders' knowledge level and awareness related to the challenges produced by the interaction of climate change with immaterial cultural heritage, and to co-define the necessary policies, stakeholders were invited to give their opinion on whether Climate Change is affecting Greek ICH. The discussion was centered around the three Greek case studies that were identified under project's Deliverable 2.2 GreenHeritage Primary and secondary data research findings and used as an illustrative examples to initiate the discussion.

- **The agricultural and dietary tradition of Carob in Crete**

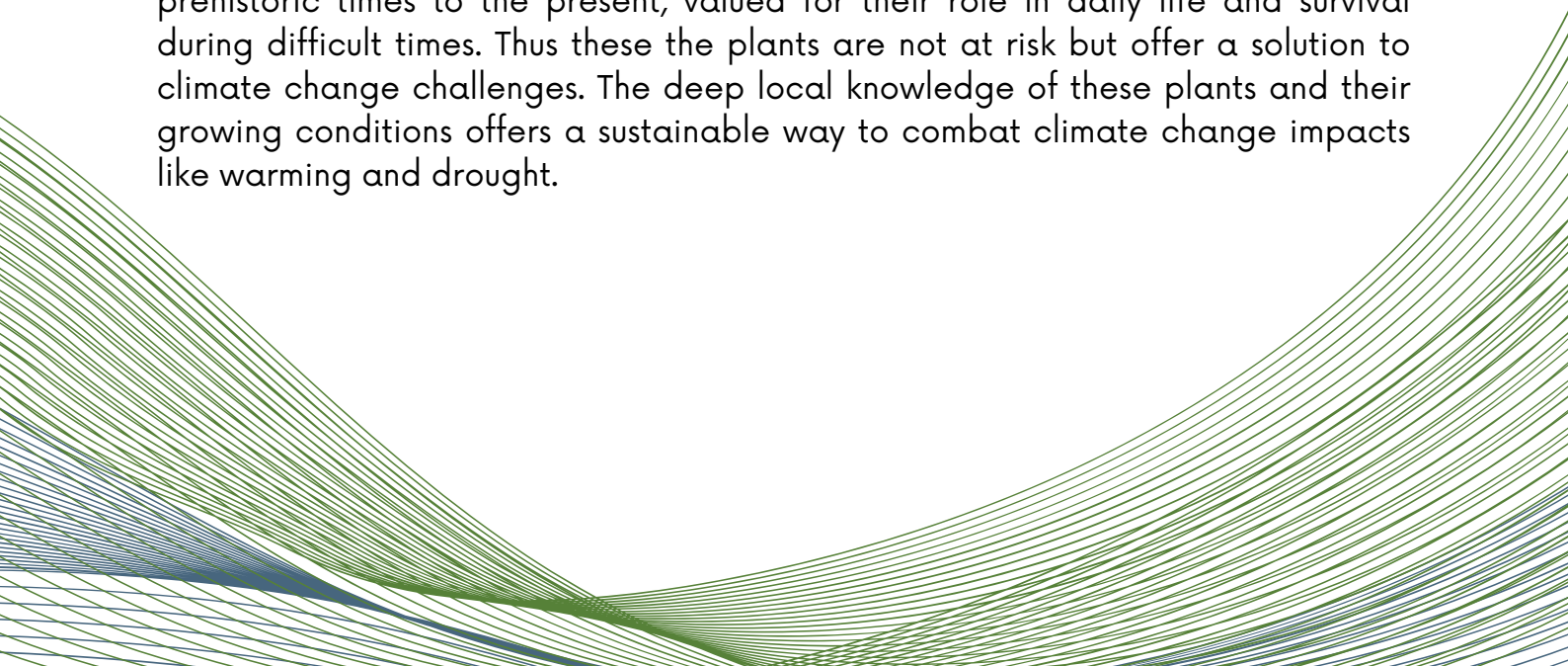
Carob trees have been cultivated in the Mediterranean since ancient times, usually in areas with mild and dry climates and poor soil. They have been presented as a solution to environmental restructuring as they are one of the most useful trees in the Mediterranean basin, representing resilience and self-sufficiency. The CC effects that they can overcome include temperature rise, drought and climate warming and unpredictability.

- **The mandras (paddocks) of Lemnos**

The paddocks of Lemnos describes an organizational system of primary production, i.e., agriculture and livestock breeding. Through the "Terra Lemnia" project, the effects of the CC and the importance of retaining the ICH have been researched extensively. The main threats identified include the increase of temperature, the increase of rainfall and destructions related to flooding; loss of local biodiversity and uncontrollable increase of the wild rabbit population.

- **Traditional Practices of Wild Edible Plants in Crete**

Wild edible plants, or "χόρτα," are a rare and integral element of Cretan intangible cultural heritage. They have been a staple in Cretan cuisine from prehistoric times to the present, valued for their role in daily life and survival during difficult times. Thus these the plants are not at risk but offer a solution to climate change challenges. The deep local knowledge of these plants and their growing conditions offers a sustainable way to combat climate change impacts like warming and drought.





### 3 – THE TARGET AUDIENCE

The policy recommendations described in this policy brief identify as their primary target **governmental entities** at different scale, involving authorities from the local to regional, national and European level. Through the definition and implementation of laws and policies, the different institutions can play a crucial role in mitigating the impacts of Climate Change on Intangible Cultural Heritage.

This set of suggestions should guide and orient decision-making in this field. Note that even if policymakers are the primary target, all the stakeholders of the quadruple helix are included in the target audience, as their engagement is crucial for the implementation of the policies and the identification of new emerging needs and potential new proposals. Indeed, information, suggestions and policies given in this policy brief are also valuable for experts and researchers in the field of Intangible Cultural Heritage, culture in general and heritage, as well as for those involved in areas such as science, entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainable development. Additionally, **entrepreneurs** and economic leaders may find the information in this document of interest and use. Finally, the brief aims to generate broader societal interest through **civil society organizations**, foundations, and other related groups.



## 4 – RECOMMENDATIONS

The discussion in the panels gave rise to a series of policy recommendations to focus on in the medium and long term. These recommendations have been divided into **thirteen macro-themes**, reported and detailed below:

1. Broad Reorientation of Tourism toward Sustainability
2. Support for Experiential and Educational Tourism Businesses
3. Educational Programs for ICH Preservation
4. Cross-Regional Skill and Labor Force Exchange
5. Broad Climate Change Education for ICH Resilience
6. Decentralization of Efforts and Localized Strategies
7. Support for ICH Registry and Classification
8. Balancing Agricultural and Environmental Needs - Recognition of ICH as a Tool for Resilience
9. Broader Protection of Natural Resources
10. Establishment of Destination Management and Marketing Organizations (DMMOs)
11. Expanded Funding for ICH-related Infrastructure and Conservation
12. Support for Community-Driven Innovation and Experimentation
13. Differentiating Cultural Heritage from Folklore





### 1

#### **Broad Reorientation of Tourism toward Sustainability**

- **Shifting Tourism Focus toward Sustainability:** Implement a broad re-orientation of the tourism product, prioritizing sustainable tourism (e.g., winter and low-impact tourism) that integrates and respects local traditions, culture, and the environment.
- **Promotion of Experiential and Educational Tourism Businesses:** Support and promote experiential and educational tourism businesses that embed visitors in local cultural practices such as inviting tourists to participate in the gathering season or incorporating educational elements during tourism visits.

### 2

#### **Support for Experiential and Educational Tourism Businesses**

- **Fostering Educational Tourism Visits:** Encourage policies that incorporate educational elements, such as traditional craft activities and cultural heritage games, into the tourist experience to promote deeper engagement with local traditions, like offering stone masonry workshops or farm-based tourism.
- **Promotion of Off-Season Tourism:** Promote off-season tourism by extending festival periods (e.g., longer Panigiria seasons), which align with local cultural practices and reduce the environmental and resource pressures of peak-season tourism.

## 4 - RECOMMENDATIONS

### 3

#### Educational Programs for ICH Preservation

- **Targeted Educational Programs for ICH Skills Development:** Develop targeted educational programs focusing on the transmission of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) skills, such as traditional stone construction techniques or ancient agricultural methods (e.g., planting flowers at field edges to detect sickness or growing vineyards with deep roots to resist drought).
- **Youth Engagement through Experimental Initiatives:** Launch experimental initiatives to reconnect younger generations with ICH, such as youth programs that blend education with cultural heritage tourism, creating opportunities for young people to engage with traditional practices.



### 4

#### Cross-Regional Skill and Labor Force Exchange

- **Facilitating Cross-Regional Labor and Skill Sharing:** Promote policies that encourage the cross-sharing of specialized labor forces (e.g., dry stone construction specialists from Ikaria to Lesvos) to support the preservation and revitalization of regional ICH practices.
- **Promoting Cross-Regional Skillset Transfer:** Facilitate the transfer of ICH-specific skills across regions, allowing successful practices from one area to help rejuvenate traditional techniques in other areas.
- **Incentives to Address Labor Shortages:** Implement policies that provide incentives for labor forces to remain on the island, ensuring the continuity of local agricultural and cultural practices by making it more viable for workers to stay, particularly in sectors like olive oil production, which is suffering from a lack of labor due to climate change and economic challenges.



## 4 - RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5

#### Broad Climate Change Education for ICH Resilience

- **Education for Climate Change Resilience:** Promote educational programs focused on increasing community awareness of climate change impacts on local practices, encouraging sustainable consumption patterns, water conservation, and responsible land management.
- **Climate Change and ICH Curriculum Integration:** Incorporate education on the intersection of climate change and ICH into school curriculums to build early awareness of preservation efforts and local climate resilience strategies.

### 6

#### Decentralization of Efforts and Localized Strategies

- **Localized Knowledge and Decentralized Education:** Promote decentralized approaches to education that incorporate locally specific knowledge about ICH and climate change, allowing for regional variations to shape learning outcomes and curricula. Regions such as Ikaria have long traditions of resilience that can inform such initiatives.
- **Decentralization of Funding and Cultural Conservation Initiatives:** Decentralize funding mechanisms to empower local communities to manage and promote their own ICH conservation projects, providing greater flexibility for regionalized cultural heritage efforts.





## 4 - RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7

#### Support for ICH Registry and Classification

- Strengthening and Expanding the ICH Registry: Enhance the existing Ministry of Culture registry of ICH entries by supporting efforts to register new cultural practices and systematically categorizing ICH based on climate change vulnerability.
- Climate Change Risk Classification and Case Studies: Develop case studies to classify ICH forms, which should lead to typification of the forms of vulnerability, from which overarching risk mitigation strategies can be drafted.



### 8

#### Balancing Agricultural and Environmental Needs - Recognition of ICH as a Tool for Resilience

- **Balancing Agricultural and Environmental Needs:** Implement policies that balance ICH conservation with biodiversity protection efforts, ensuring local cultural practices are preserved while protecting ecosystems.
- **Recognition of ICH as a Tool for Resilience:** Acknowledge the role of ICH as a defence against climate change by promoting cultural practices like the traditional gathering of greens (horta), while developing alternative solutions that ensure these practices are sustainable and environmentally resilient in the face of changing ecosystems.

## 4 - RECOMMENDATIONS

### 9

#### Broader Protection of Natural Resources

- **Limiting Water-Intensive Developments:** Enact regulations that protect green spaces and limit water-intensive developments (e.g., swimming pools, or decorative grass) to preserve natural resources critical to sustaining local ICH practices, especially in view of the water shortages of the Mediterranean.
- **Promoting Sustainable Land and Water Use:** Encourage policies that support the sustainable use of land and water resources, integrating traditional knowledge (eg stone terraces) with modern conservation techniques to protect ecosystems that support ICH. For instance, policies must address water shortages affecting key industries like olive oil production.



### 10

#### Establishment of Destination Management and Marketing Organizations (DMMOs)

- **Creation of DMMOs for ICH Promotion:** Establish Destination Management and Marketing Organizations (DMMOs) to coordinate between local, regional, and national authorities, ensuring that ICH is integrated into tourism and cultural promotion strategies.
- **Centralized Coordination of ICH Conservation Efforts:** Use DMMOs as a centralized focal point to manage the promotion, funding, and strategic development of ICH conservation initiatives, bridging the gap between tourism and culture sectors

### 11

#### Expanded Funding for ICH-related Infrastructure and Conservation

- **Funding for Reconstruction and Maintenance:** Promote funding for the reconstruction and maintenance of ICH-related infrastructure (e.g., stone terraces, traditional water management systems) and support initiatives that promote cultural heritage conservation.
- **Support for Retaining a Skilled Labor Force:** Provide funding and support for initiatives aimed at retaining skilled labor in critical sectors like traditional agriculture, stone construction, and artisan crafts, which are essential for maintaining ICH practices.
- **Financial Support for ICH Educational and Promotional Initiatives:** Expand financial support for educational programs, promotional campaigns, and conservation efforts, ensuring that traditional practices are preserved and passed on to future generations.

### 12

#### Support for Community-Driven Innovation and Experimentation

- **Local and Community-Driven Conservation Efforts:** Support conservation efforts that originate within local communities, involving collaboration with academia and other stakeholders to ensure that preservation strategies are tailored to local needs. For example, the Open Farm network showcases agricultural innovations rooted in cultural heritage.
- **Experimental Initiatives for Youth Engagement:** Launch experimental initiatives aimed at reconnecting the younger generation with ICH, blending education and tourism to foster deeper engagement and a sense of stewardship over cultural practices.

### 13

#### Support for Community-Driven Innovation and Experimentation

- **ICH as Distinct from Commoditized Folklore:** Differentiate ICH from folklore that has become commodified for tourism purposes, ensuring that policies focus on the preservation of authentic cultural practices rather than their commercialization.
- **Promoting Authentic Cultural Engagement:** Ensure that tourism focuses on promoting authentic ICH, with initiatives like educational agricultural visits offering genuine engagement rather than folklore performances.





# Thanks.

GreenHeritage Project  
[www.greenheritage-project.eu](http://www.greenheritage-project.eu)  
[giuseppina.padeletti@cnr.it](mailto:giuseppina.padeletti@cnr.it)

"The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein".



Co-funded by  
the European Union

