

The InHerit pilot course in Italy

Parco Nazionale del Circeo

InHerit is a Grundtvig Multilateral project that creates and provides training material and delivers in-service training courses on heritage interpretation to build heritage staff capacity for delivering effective competence-oriented informal learning in inspiring heritage contexts.

After developing a 'heritage interpreter competence profile', a reference framework for competences in the professional field of heritage interpretation, the team also developed a course curriculum and a set of learning outcomes based on this profile in order to organise a competence oriented in-service training course. The approach was tested during two pilot courses: one in Eltham Palace (UK) and a second one in Circeo National Park (IT).

The InHerit pilot course concept is a 3 days introductory course. This course is conceived to serve a mix of roles/tasks and introduce learners to the approach of heritage interpretation. It targets heritage staff and adult educators already working in the field of non-formal and informal adult learning at monuments, sites, natural protected areas and museums, who are nevertheless not yet familiar with the approach and methodology of heritage interpretation.

This pilot course is an EQF level 5 course since the majority of competences tackled are situated on level 5 in the HI competence profile. The InHerit pilot is conceived as a competence oriented course involving input, on-site exercises related to the historic site hosting the course and exercises linked to the sites the participants come from.

The main goal of the course is to help participants develop the necessary competences for successfully introducing the concept of heritage interpretation in their own working context. This implies general knowledge about heritage interpretation and its principles, awareness raising about the benefits of interpretation in an heritage context, development of basic competences related to interpretation techniques and transfer competences.

The second InHerit pilot course took place from 16 to 18 November 2015 in Italy and was hosted and organised by the Istituto Pangea, in cooperation with the InHerit team. 20 heritage staff members from 6 different countries took part, all keen to learn about heritage interpretation.

The courses headquarters and meeting rooms were in the Oasi Di Kufra hotel in Sabaudia, a small town in the Circeo National Park, about 100 km south of Rome. The group explored the area during several excursions highlighting a beautiful garden, a Roman villa, the Circeo

Park and its visitors' centre. Through experiencing the sites, examples of interpretation, presentations, discussions and group work the participants developed their interpretation competences; the course organisers tested the competence oriented InHerit training approach.



Ninfa Garden (IT)

The first stop was a visit to the Ninfa Garden (Latina, Lazio). This garden, in the New York Times described as “The most beautiful garden in the world”, is located within and on the ruins of the mediaeval town of Ninfa and offers an ‘unearthly and timeless’ experience. In first instance the group was asked to wander through the garden as ‘a blind person who just recovered his/her sight’. The discussion afterwards covered topics like personal perception and emotions, why we look at different things, what the interpretive theme for this garden could be ...

In the afternoon we revisited the garden, this time led by an experienced guide followed by a discussion on the interpretive elements and techniques used in the tour.

The second day started with a brief introduction to the TORE¹ model: for communication to be successful it must be related to a Theme, it also must be Organised, Relevant and Enjoyable for the listener. The presentation also included the principles of interpretive planning: from developing your ‘theme’ to basic planning for a talk, panel or leaflet. After this introduction the group visited the Domiziano Emperor’s estate, the ruins of a Roman villa, with two experienced interpreters. The group was asked to pay attention to the different techniques implemented by the interpreters. The visit was followed by a feedback session: is there a message, is there an objective, is the interpretive talk relevant, does it provoke, involve, reveal etc...?

In the afternoon there was a group activity: in pairs the trainees planned an interpretive session involving the techniques they discovered so far, to be performed in 5 minutes max..

¹ TORE™ ©2008 Sam H. Ham

They started the activity by going out on the sand dunes, searching for an object to be interpreted. They then came back to prepare their performance.

Day three brought the group to the Visitor Centre of the Park. We learned that interpretation already starts at the gate of the park: to make people feel welcome, to provide good orientation and help them follow the flow of the park. The participants visited the renewed park museum introduced by the park staff. A key quote from the guide: "Important is not what I am going to tell the visitors but what I will make them do and what they can learn from it."

Participants were asked to look for the TORE elements at the museum. The feedback session dealt with possibilities and proposals to improve the interpretation at the museum. The context of the park also triggered a discussion on the role of interpretation in sustainability, conservation, protection and 'attitude change'.

The afternoon was dedicated to principles of interpretive writing. Participants were given a short written example of 'information' and 'interpretation' about the same topic and were asked to spot the differences. Several examples of posters, leaflets, panels etc. were given to participants, to be studied and evaluated.

The final session of the course dealt with "transfer": "How can you apply what you learned and introduce interpretation in your organization"? It also included a 'validation of learning outcomes' session: participants were asked to (self and peer) assess their competence development for 'interpretive guiding' and 'interpretive writing'.

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Full texts are available on the project website. Follow the development of InHerit on:

www.interpretingheritage.eu

Project partners

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