
AD HOC – Accessible and Digitalized Heritage of Culture for Persons with Disabilities: a project and its results

AD HOC – Dostopna in digitalizirana kulturna dediščina za osebe s posebnimi potrebami: projekt in njegovi rezultati

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Management and protection of archaeological heritage nowadays is unthinkable without the active participation of the general public. Gone are the days when archaeology was a discipline and technique accessible only to a narrow academic circle and supported exclusively by national or international funding agencies. Archaeology and archaeological heritage should be accessible to different profiles, including persons with special needs: People with visual or hearing impairments and people with intellectual disabilities. These groups have been largely denied access to their archaeological heritage and deprived of the opportunity to fully experience their past.

The aim of the project AD HOC – *Accessible and Digitalized Heritage of Culture for Persons with Disabilities* was to create a strategic partnership in the field of higher education to develop and share innovative practices in the field of digitization of cultural heritage and its accessibility for persons with disabilities. The overall goal was to bring archaeological cultural heritage closer to the public, including diverse populations, preferably through the creation of a website and online courses developed by university educators that promote different approaches to presenting the topic. The project activities made archaeological heritage more visible to the general public and popularized conservation science. The main work in the project was organized in the form of 4 Intellectual Outputs – clus-

ters of activities in which partners, contributing their specific experience based on their areas of expertise, participated in the creation of a common product.

IO1 – Field and desktop research was intended to define least accessible archaeological and cultural heritage in participant countries. It was conducted with the purpose to define which aspects of the archaeological cultural heritage can be digitalized and made accessible to the wider population including persons with disabilities. Within this activity, the parameters for digitalization of certain types of archaeological heritage were set.

IO2 – Digitalization of archaeological heritage will prepare the material for the creation of a web site used for the promotion and education about archaeological heritage. The main goal of this activity was the optimization of using modern technologies and testing possibilities of manipulation with data in order to present archaeological heritage.

IO3 – Accessibility of the digitalized archaeological heritage through a web site as adaptation of the digitalized archaeological and cultural heritage content for students with disabilities focusing on vision and hearing impairments and intellectual disabilities. The main goal of the activity was making archaeology and cultural heritage more accessible to marginalized groups.

IO4 – Creation of online courses for the promotion and interpretation of archaeological heritage. Developed by university teachers of different profiles it was intended for the wider public including persons with disabilities. Archaeological heritage presented in the form of basic concepts and case studies of topics relevant for the understanding of human societies in the past.

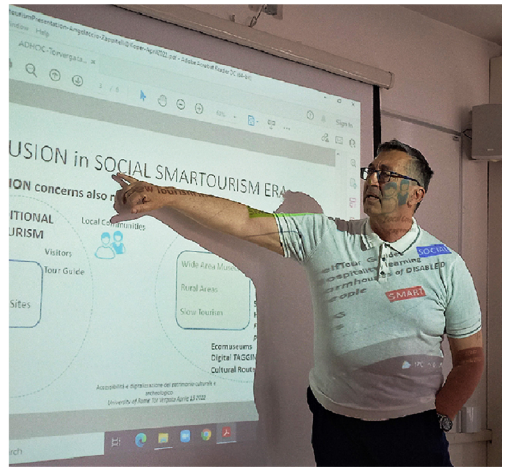
The researchers from the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Primorska, who participated in all the activities, invested most of their time and experience in the creation of the intellectual outputs 3 and 4 of the activities, organized a learning and training activity (LTTA 2), multiplier event (ME 4) and the final event of the project partners (TM4). They focused on the creation of a website, a platform with information about what archaeology is about, and online courses proposing how archaeology should be presented to the wider public, children, and especially people with special needs, creating an interwoven network of the content presenting archaeological heritage.

The main product of IO 3 was the creation of a website that enables learning about the past through archaeology. The website is structured to represent the past through concepts such as living, eating, loving, making war, and dying, and includes adapted text that is easily understood by both the public and people with intellectual disabilities. Although archaeological sites from all partner countries are presented, most of the cases featured are from Slovenia and Northern Macedonia. Some of the most internationally significant but sometimes difficult to access sites and finds are presented, such as the cave of Divje Babe, the Bronze Age settlements of Sodolek and Ormož and the cemetery of Zavrč, the Iron Age finds from the cemeteries of Brezje, Vače, Novo Mesto and Srednica, the Roman Age tombs from Miklavž and Zagonce, and the mediaeval city of Koper and the city walls of Piran. The visual design of the site and the necessary preparation of the visual material were also adapted to the needs and abilities of the var-

ious users. Supplemented by the created blocks and plug-ins that make sign language videos and text-to-speech applications easily accessible, it offers a number of additional features that make it exceptionally transparent and user-friendly.

The final activity of the project, IO 4, was the creation of a freely accessible educational platform. This platform was created by members of the Faculty of Humanities in Moodle programme and contains content from the website that has been transformed into educational material. With its accessibility features, it can easily be used to introduce archaeology to children and the public, as well as to persons with disabilities. The content of the website is presented in a visually enriched and textually reduced version of PowerPoint presentations, which have been translated into all languages of the participating countries and into English. Sign language videos interpreting key elements of the texts from the presentations were also added. The medium allowed us to enrich the content with additional videos introducing the sites discussed, as well as three-dimensional scans and videos presenting the digitized artefacts of these sites.

The April 2022 partners meeting was for the Learning Teaching Training Activity (LTTA 2). It was organized by the teachers and researchers of the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Education of the University of Primorska in cooperation with other project partners. The activity had a wide reach as it was attended by numerous members of the University, students, and professionals working in various institutions in the region. The organized training activity was primarily aimed at presenting the development and implementation of online curricula in the field of cultural and archaeological heritage. In order to address the complexity of field-specific issues in the presentation of archaeological heritage, a broader range of programs was created. It included introductions to relevant topics in education, tourism, and historic preservation, with an emphasis on the potential for adaptations for persons with disabilities.



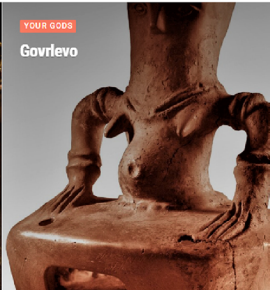
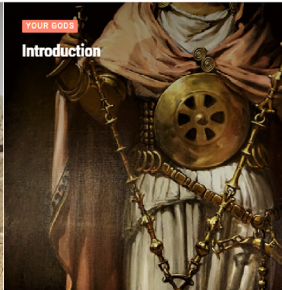
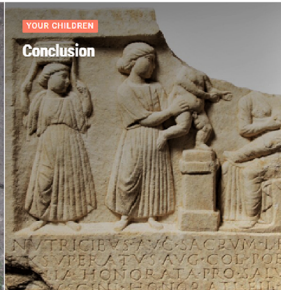
Participants gained valuable insights into the results and experiences of the host partner institution, both in the conference and in the practical field work. Various previous projects and project results related to the research and promotion of the cultural heritage of the University of Primorska were presented – starting in the city itself and slowly expanding to the surrounding area. Introducing Koper and its heritage was just the beginning, the Roman villa in Simonov zaliv (bay) was presented as an example of an archaeological park with a developed infrastructure and an organised programme of presentations for the public – with special attention to the people with disabilities. We also presented the infrastructure and activities of the Centre of Excellence InnoRenew CoE in Izola, as well as an example of a successful initiative of the University of Primorska, which in cooperation with regional and international partners has created a modern international research infrastructure. From the University led Aquarium to the park of freestanding monumental stone sculptures Forma Viva in Portorož, on the path of good practises was also presented The Rodik Mythical Park, as well as the potential of the surrounding area such as the Castle of Socerb and the Church of the Holy Trinity in Hrastovlje.

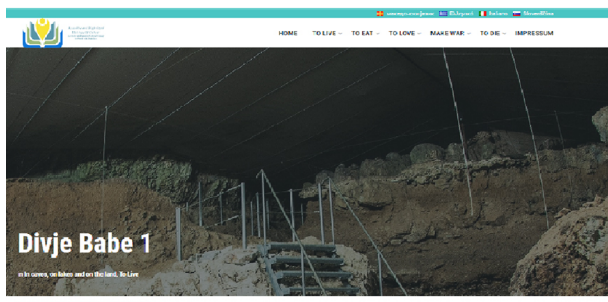
The fourth multiplier event (MP 4) of the project was included in the European Researchers Night, organized at the University during the last weekend of September. In the ARTLaboratory of the Institute of Archaeology and Heritage, 2D and 3D technologies for the digitization of archaeological heritage and technologies for the preliminary analysis of archaeological finds were presented to the public (and especially to regional schools). The inclusion of an international event allowed us to increase the impact, as the organization provided additional promotional opportunities for the activities, not to mention the numerous visitors to the presentations.

The final event of the project, the Fourth Transnational Meeting (TM 4), was again organized at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Primorska. At this final meeting,

all participating organizations contributed to the visibility and sustainability of the project results so far. One of the outcomes of the project is the derivation of a framework for the creation of new approaches to the creation of accessible online materials in the field of cultural and archaeological heritage, new curricula for online courses and new open educational resources (OER) for people with special needs. The innovative value of the project lies in the accessibility of OER and the development of greater compatibility with special technology, easy connection to screen readers and speech recognition software for the visually impaired. In addition to concluding comments, project ideas and future collaboration opportunities between the partners were discussed during this meeting.

This issue of *Studia Universitatis Hereditati* is dedicated to presenting challenges we have encountered, case studies we have examined, and solutions we have proposed.





Divje Babe 1

It is coming, on Sabina and on William. Be Live

One of the most famous archaeological sites in Slovenia, which produced several sensational discoveries that changed the perception of the past and the scientific methodology we use to decipher it, is the cave Divje babe in the valley of the river Idrija in western Slovenia. More access life through a narrow path descending from Savojske planine above the cave's hiding almost 100,000 years of history demonstrating how ancient people adapted to their environment. The most famous discovery was the alleged legbone of a juvenile cave bear indicating the possibility that the late Neanderthals were the first humans to enjoy music. Discovered near a small fireplace this find brings us back to the night or so the humans spent in the small cave high above the river valley.

The sediments preserved in the cave do not hide only the remains of human activities but can be also used to document changes in the global climate and regional environment. Perhaps the most intriguing discovery were fossilized remains of cave bear hair discovered in lumps of sediments - witness of the time when it served as a bear size when females spent the winter with their cubs. Numerous juvenile bones demonstrate how hard it was to survive the long winters before food was available again in the spring for these ice age giants.



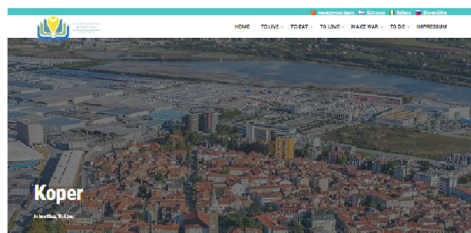
Entrance to the Divje babe 1 cave



Cave sediments preserved in the Divje babe 1 cave



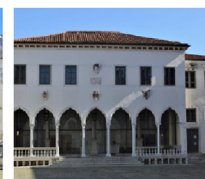
The Neanderthal Flute



Koper

Home / Trča / Koper

In the city, in the valley of the narrow river, the story of the four Neanderthals has been discovered. In the valley of the narrow river, the story of the four Neanderthals has been discovered. In the valley of the narrow river, the story of the four Neanderthals has been discovered.



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