



**GREEN VILLAGE – SUSTAINABLE RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
FOCUS ON CULTURE & NATURE**



**UNIT 8 - INTERGENERATIONAL
CULTURAL LEARNING**



Introduction

The module 'Intergenerational Cultural Learning' was created within the 'Erasmus Plus Key Action 2 project. ALITHE – "Active Learning in the Historic Environment" and becomes an 8th unit in the course "Sustainable Rural development – Focus on Culture and Nature". This earlier curriculum development work, was an outcome / Intellectual output (IO) from the "EU Leonardo da Vinci– Development of Innovation" project 'Green Village'.

It is a vocational module where learners will gather, in a historic environment and learn. They will also look at the broader cultural landscape and see where their training fits within it. The module is classed as IVT (Initial Vocational Training); this does not mean it's unsuitable for University students who often crave hands-on experience.

The Green Village partnership was led by Grampus Heritage & Training, with a range of partners with the skills, knowledge and experience to get to grips with the European-wide problem of rural decline and decay and to make best use in a sustainable way of the tangible cultural and natural assets of the countryside and villages :-

Devetaki Plateau Association (Bulgaria).

Hylates (replaced during the life of the project by) Kato Drys Community Council (Cyprus)

Buildungsstätte Dübener Heide Naturpark (Germany).

Náttúrustofa Vestjarða – NAVE (Iceland).

Sylviron Limited (Ireland).

CNR-IVALSA (Italy).

Satul Verde Association (Romania).

Ipel Eko s.p.o.l (Slovakia).

A 'Third-Country' partner, Manyatta Youth from Kenya were also a partner and gave valuable insights to 'Green Village' with an East African perspective.

The 'Green Village' (GV) project was supported by the European Union's 'Leonardo da Vinci – Multilateral Development of Innovation Programme', which was part of the 'Lifelong Learning Programme' (LLP). The creation of curriculum focused on 4 key areas for sustainable rural development....

RURAL FOOD

RURAL ENERGY

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING

WOOD PRODUCTS

.....and 3 more key areas that are more overarching and transversal....

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

OUR SUSTAINABLE ANCESTORS

ACCESS TO RURAL RESEARCH

All 7 of these units have been in regular use from the end of the Green Village project (2012) to the current day. During that time, Grampus and partners increasingly noticed that the historic environment and cultural assets had not been given sufficient attention in Green Village, so in 2018, ALITHE (Active Learning in the Historic Environment), a Key Action 2 Structured Partnership was developed to address the curriculum insufficiency.

From the original Green Village partnership 4 original partners entered into an agreement to complete ALITHE by September 2023....

Grampus Heritage (United Kingdom)
Kato Drys Community Council (Cyprus)
Satul Verde Association (Romania)
Devetaki Plateau Association (Bulgaria)

Others partners (in all cases linked to other Green Village partners) joined ALITHE....

Bildungshaus Heideland (Germany)
Lišov Museum (Slovakia)

To populate the new unit “Intergenerational Cultural Learning”, we carried out sample training in each participating country. We set some ground rules / prerequisites....

1. The training must take place in a historic environment. It could be an old building or a cultural outdoor environment like a fruit orchard, an olive grove or archaeological excavation or investigation.
2. An expert on the cultural subject should be involved as a teacher or an advisor, it is not essential that the person is an older individual but it often will be.
3. In order to make best sustainable use of cultural assets, we must recognize that those people with the skills and knowledge are very often not teachers, and might not even wish to be. It is essential to invest time and energy to prepare such ‘teachers’, through raising kudos and empowering them.
4. Although the teaching language of the unit is English, we do not want to exclude teachers / advisors who do not use English, so an interpreter must very often be present.
5. It is important that those attending the training are of varied ages; in an ideal situation, grandparents, parents and the younger generation are involved, to ensure intergenerational learning. This is an adult education project and VET project, so schoolchildren are not a target group (but could be in the future)
6. All efforts must be made to cause no offence; there must be a strong element of cultural respect ... most obviously where tradition and religion are concerned.
7. It is the duty of those delivering the unit to attempt contemporisation, pointing out how what is learned can have an importance in the current days and in the future. This might involve a switch to more modern materials BUT we want to promote sustainable materials.
8. We must try to make the learning intergenerational, we should ensure that skills and knowledge can travel in all directions, from younger people to older people and from older to younger.... This might mesh with No. 7, concerning contemporisation.
9. Ideally some element of making, creating, handcrafting will be involved – there should be a tangible output/ product.
10. Our definition of ‘Active Learning’ requires the learner to do more than just listen; they should ‘learn by doing’, whatever their educational level. We recognise that ‘thinking’ and ‘contextualising’ should be combined with motor/ hand skills and the use of IT and achievement of the digital shift is part of contemporisation and intergenerational learning.

From the sample trainings, these were chosen to illustrate the model for the unit, of course there are almost endless variations.... But as long as the 10 rules above are adhered to, we retain integrity. Each “course” is of 5 days duration, so with arrival and departure, 8 days in total is needed (there is one free day).

EXAMPLE ONE – Orthodox Christian Icon Painting – Kato Drys, Cyprus

Introduction

Because Cyprus has a mild climate and most training takes place indoors, timing for this course is flexible but it's important to avoid important Orthodox Christian festivals, especially 'Holy week' (Easter). Arrival should be on Monday and departure on Monday and one day will be a non-training day, for relaxing or touristic activities. As with all our partnership network trainings, there is no exclusion on attendance through ethnicity, religion or gender; all we ask is for mutual respect.

DAY ONE (Monday)

Arrival to either Paphos or Larnaca international airports. Collection and transfer to Pano Lefkara for self catering accommodation. An evening meal together and discussion of the week ahead. Over dinner we talk also about food and some religious impacts on what is eaten and when; it is not necessary for anybody to follow Orthodox tradition, we only wish to inform and engender understanding.

DAY TWO (Tuesday)

Visit to Kato Drys and St Charalambous church. The Church Treasurer and traditional skill trainer, Panayiota Demetriou is the host and she will show the iconography in the church, explain the significance of various saints and what they are known for or associated with. You will be encouraged to photograph original icons. There are four saints particularly respected in Kato Drys, Saint Spyridon, Saint Prodromos, Saint Charalambous and Saint Neofytos. You will then visit the studio which is within the church grounds and is a converted religious meeting room, with a fine view over the valley to a nearby monastery. You choose the icon you want to paint.

Learning outcomes for the day

At the end of Day Two, you will

- Understand something about Orthodox Christianity
- Be aware of the basis of iconography
- Know something of the significance of the 4 local saints
- have selected and photographed your chosen saint
- become aware of the historic space you will work in
- have taken part in an interactive risk assessment

DAY THREE (Wednesday)

In Pano Lefkara you will visit 2 of the local chapels/churches – there are 45 of them in the greater village. You will meet your icon painting instructor, Aylin Myumyunova and she will talk about colours and paint types.... Water colour, oil, acrylic and natural pigments. Returning to the studio space at St Charalambous church in Kato Drys, you will select the surface you will paint onto; in line with our sustainability ethos, this will most often be discarded wood, such as shutters and door panels, but tiles and pottery pieces are also possible. You first clean the surface and then sketch the scene from your copy of the original icon; focusing especially on the outline of the saint. Aylin assists you in sketching as necessary. You then apply gesso, we use modern spatulin-like materials and fill the outline, then smooth it. When you achieve a satisfactory surface, you start to sketch features and details of clothing or anything being held. Only then do you apply paint, choosing the darkest tones first. In this course we generally use good quality acrylics but there is some opportunity to use oils or even make your own paint from minerals, plants or animal products.

Learning outcomes for the day

At the end of Day Three, you will have....

- Discussed colour (historical development) and types of paint for icon painting.

- Selected and prepared a recycled surface for the icon.
- Sketched the basic outline of the saint and key features in the background
- Applied gesso (or equivalent) with a palette knife to the saint's figure and smoothed it
- Sketched in details
- Begun to apply colour..... darker shades first
- Gained support and offered support to your teacher and learner colleagues (key skill)

DAY FOUR (Thursday)

You go directly to the Kato Drys church studio space and continue your work/training. You complete the first application of colour and add layers. There are inserted breaks in the day because icon painting requires concentration. These include a local museum visit. Your teacher guides each step and your learner colleagues look at your work and you look at theirs. The story behind your chosen saint begins to have extra meaning. Also local villagers call in to see what you are doing. They will make comments and are grateful for the intercultural opportunity of you being in their village. By the end of the day, your main colours and layers are all applied.

Learning outcomes for the day

At the end of Day Four, you will have....

- Understood more fully the story of your saint..
- Interacted with locals and conversed about daily things but also become more aware of their faith
- Applied successive layers of colour to “construct” the icon.
- Perfected your technique and brushwork
- Mixed colours to make new shades
- Gained support and offered support to your teacher and learner colleagues (key skill)

DAY FIVE (Friday)

This is your final painting day. Now you are adding detail, always remembering the “flat” nature of Orthodox icons which are abstractions rather than realistic representations of real people. The lack of perspective and three-dimensional elements reduces the need for shading. As well as facial details, you will spend a significant time working on hands and feet.... coincidentally learning about the holding of the fingers to represent the “trinity”. You will also complete a halo and this can be of gold leaf and you will learn how to apply it. Importantly, you will learn when to ‘stop’ painting. Whilst your work is drying, you have another local visit to the Embroidery Museum and the newly restored schoolhouse; you hear about the culture of the village and how it is being cherished and nourished. You apply a final coat of lacquer and your icon is finished. In the golden light of early evening you, your icon and the group are photographed.

Learning outcomes for the day

At the end of Day Five, you will have....

- Perfected your technique and brushwork and added detail
- Continued to interact with locals and conversed about village life, their aspirations and their culture – you know them better now!
- Applied gold leaf to form a halo on your icon.
- Applied a lacquer as a finishing coat.
- Taken part in a photoshoot to disseminate your work

DAY SIX (Saturday)

This is a free day. We will guide you and facilitate your local travel. There can be an optional excursion but you are absolutely entitled to rest and relax only.

DAY SEVEN (Sunday)

This is the final day of the training but it will be run at a less urgent pace. Importantly it includes attending the Orthodox church service in either Kato Drys at St Charlambous church or the Holy Cross church in Pano Lefkara. This represents an opportunity to interact with locals, who are likely to know exactly what you are doing in the village by now. It does not matter what race or faith you are or whether you are religious or not. You are not expected to take part fully...lighting candles and kissing icons.... But you must show respect in your mode of dress and behaviour. After lunch in a local taverna, and if the weather is suitable, we visit an ancient olive grove (1,000 years plus) and discuss the greater historic and cultural landscape. Our discussions lead us to consider the four pillars of sustainability in relation to what we did this past week. There is a feedback session, which is open but also has a feedback form to fill in case you require anonymity.

Learning outcomes for the day

At the end of Day Seven, you will have....

- Completed your learning about the Orthodox Christian faith and seen the context of iconography with it
- Continued to interact with locals and conversed in a more rounded way.
- Visited an outdoor cultural space for an open discussion.
- Understood your training / work with the context of the four pillars of sustainability.
- Taken part in an open and closed feedback session.

DAY EIGHT (Monday)

This is departure day but if flight times allow, there is a chance for final shopping!

EXAMPLE TWO – The Importance of Maintaining Thatched Farm Buildings and the Process of Restoring Thatch – Râmeț, Romania

Introduction

The steep roofed, thatched buildings of montane Romania are one of Europe's cultural treasures and yet enjoy very little protection. Râmeț is a high altitude commune in Alba County's Trascau Mountains (part of the Carpathian Apuseni) consisting of 13 hamlets. The area was not included in the communist collectivisation because the land was not considered to be good enough, so the mountain farmers were spared some of the damage inflicted by the regime. Within August, timing for this course is flexible but it's important to avoid important Orthodox Christian festivals, especially 'Funeral of Mary' on August 15th and the 'Beheading of John the Baptist' on August 29th. Arrival should be on Monday and departure on Monday and one day will be a non-training day, for relaxing or visiting cultural sites. As with all our partnership network trainings, there is no exclusion on attendance through ethnicity, religion or gender; all we ask is for mutual respect and a willingness to talk and to listen.

DAY ONE (Monday)

Arrival to Cluj Napoca international airport; collection and transfer to the Stremț valley near Alba Iulia for self catering accommodation. An evening meal together and discussion of the week ahead. Over dinner we talk also about the region in general and the importance of the vernacular buildings and the need to rescue them.

DAY TWO (Tuesday)

Visit to hay meadows high in the Trascau mountains; in this area, they are very special with great biodiversity of plants. There is a tangible link between hay making and thatching with longstraw; haystacks are built onto a frame made of branches to keep it off the ground and the hay is laid in horizontal layers. The vegetation cut for hay is not just grass but includes many flowering plants and herbs. The presence or absence of various plants links to specific cheese products with particular names. On our walk of discovery through the montane summer meadows, we will see the colonies of meadow ants, they manifest as small humps/hills and they are distributed according to the food requirements of each colony. Where tractors are used the ant hills are quickly destroyed, so the colonies are found in unmown areas or where cutting of hay is manual, with a scythe. The ants have a symbiotic relationship with a blue butterfly, the latter lays eggs on the mound and the ants nurse the egg, then the larvae to the point where it transforms into a butterfly. You have a go at cutting with a scythe...the straw for thatching is also cut in this way traditionally. You help to build a haystack and discuss the link to thatching.

In the afternoon, you visit 4 thatched buildings at Victoria's farm and note how the thatch is damaged by...

1. Erosion by rain.
2. Nesting and drey building by birds and squirrels.
3. Overgrown trees whose branches blow against the thatch.
4. Shading by adjacent trees, which causes the thatch to not dry out and stay wet... encouraging the colonization by mosses, lichens and even flowering plants such as *Clematis vit alba*.
5. Collapse of wooden infrastructure, especially roof timbers, beams and batons. The habit was to use less durable (and valuable) species in the roof, such as aspen, birch and spruce. In the main log-walled building, oak and elm timbers (more durable) were preferred.
6. Previous repairs (patching) that use inferior straw (chopped or short straw) or even hay.

We end day two with a discussion on how to mitigate the 6 scenarios above and allow restored roofs to last longer

Learning outcomes for the day

At the end of Day Two, you will

- Take part in and understand the basics of haymaking, a process that underpins all traditional life in the pastoral Romanian landscape.
- Understand the link between traditional Romanian haymaking and stacking and the thatched roofing process.
- Be aware of the 6 main reasons for failure of original thatched roofs
- Have discussed how restoration of roofs can be modified to ensure that roofs are more long-lived.
- Have taken photographs, which illustrate what you learn and can be used in a future description.
- become aware of the historic space you will work in for the next days.

DAY THREE (Wednesday)

You all assemble at Victoria's farm in Râmeț. The day starts with a review of the roof restoration process and includes a risk assessment. Logistically, it is very difficult to erect standard scaffolding and you will use simpler combinations of ladders and gantry's. The risks are identified interactively and ways to reduce risks are discussed.

By mid-morning, you are ready to strip the roof of old and damaged thatch; it will not be thrown away unless it is very rotten, the product (longstraw) is so precious that it is kept and mixed with new straw material. After the old straw is stacked close-by, any restorations of the wooden roof structure are necessary. If the process uses only traditional axes, adzes and chisels, it takes a long time...any compromises, such as using motor manual tools should be discussed and agreed. In a similar way, the original builders used only wooden pegs, dowels and nails. We prefer to use only wooden elements so you must cut and shape these (with knives and billhooks). The day ends with the roof structure stripped of old thatch and repaired.

Learning outcomes for the day

At the end of Day Three, you will have....

- Undertaken / taken part in, an interactive risk assessment and discussed and incorporated the best available actions to reduce risk.
- Understood and taken part in the process of stripping off old straw and saving useful material.
- Selected wood and prepared wooden dowels, pegs and nails, rejecting sapwood and creating the necessary points to enter and grip into drilled timbers.
- Learned the process of splitting beams and batons with axes and wedges and riving them to shape with adzes and side axes.
- Assisted the master carpenter to reconstruct the roof, ready for thatching.
- Gained support and offered support to your teacher and learner colleagues (key skill)

DAY FOUR (Thursday)

You go directly to the Victoria's Farm, the thatching material has already been delivered, also some birch and juniper branches cut by the group as they drive up from the valley. Working in rotating teams (each learner doing all tasks) the following actions are completed (masks and safety gear as necessary).....

1. Mixing retained (original) longstraw with fresh material.
2. Filling a small tarpaulin with the mixed material and ascending ladders onto the roof superstructure.
3. Where the height and footing allow, using a pitchfork to lift up hanks of mixed straw to the person spreading / laying it.
4. Laying the mixed straw in horizontal layers on the curved wooden 'catchers' and spreading it evenly.... Like a coiled Clamping the loose ends of the fresh birch and juniper branches and twisting them clockwise, then tucking in the side shoots to create a spiral 'tube'.
5. Handing up the branch spirals to the straw spreaders as instructed....it will be every second layer usually, to give a skeleton for the straw to grip.
6. Laying the branch spirals in the same configuration as the straw and tamping straw between the whorled branches to create a solid mass.
7. Twisting, passing up and laying the juniper branch whorls/ spirals at intervalsevery second layer ...incorporated in the thatch to repel rodents.

Learning outcomes for the day

At the end of Day Four, you will have....

- Successfully mixed old and new straw and delivered it to the thatcher by use of ladders after health and safety check.
- Cut, twisted and utilised birch and juniper branch whorls/ spirals in the thatch structure and understood the reason and regularity.
- Learned how to use a pitchfork and pitched up hanks of mixed straw onto the roof, where footing and height allows it.
- Laid and tamped down the thatching material in ascending horizontal layers, to the correct depth and solidity, incorporating the branch spirals / whorls..
- Understood the health and safety situation and followed the risk assessment, whilst bearing in mind the integrity of the ancient skill and task.
- Gained support and offered support to your teacher and learner colleagues (key skill)

DAY FIVE (Friday)

In the past, thatching was a communal activity and twenty experienced and vigorous mountain people could thatch a high roof in one day. You are part of a team of learners with two experienced instructors and a translator; the thatching will take at least two days.

Day five is therefore a repeat of day four.... and the same tasks and learning outcomes apply.

DAY SIX (Saturday)

This is the day to complete the thatched roof. Straw would have been 'overloaded' to allow for final sculpting to achieve the perfect pitch / angle of slope. Some elements of the entire building design are used to ensure that angle and pitch are pretty much a constant. The montane Romanian buildings commonly have an 80 to 85 degree pitch, which is very steep (90 degrees is vertical) considering that usual roofs have a 30 to 45 degree pitch.

Before sculpting there will be a discussion on roof pitch and the reasons for the extra steep Romanian pitchwater shedding from the mass before soaking through, snow shedding, roof storage, smoke incorporation/dissipation.

Sculpting is normally done by eye but any bulges must be raked out using a downward motion with a toothed long handled hay rake. Once pitch is even, the final raking aligns all the outer straw stands downwards.

The ridge is finished by stitching through the roof tip, allowing for the slot which allows aeration of the roof space.

A trip into adjacent mixed hardwood and softwood forest is to identify and cut 'wishbone branches' with 2 equal branches and a crotch; between 6 and 8 of these are placed on the ridge with the branch extending down the thatch between 1.5 and 2.5 metres.

Learning outcomes for the day

At the end of Day Six, you will have....

- Understood and discussed the angle and pitch of the Romanian montane thatched roof and the reason for extreme pitch.
- Judged by eye the equality of the pitch.
- Raked out (downward motion) bumps in the overloaded thatch to achieve even pitch.
- Assisted in sewing the top of the ridge and ascertained that the aeration slot is correct.
- Cut and fitted wishbone branches to secure the ridge and straw from wind.

DAY SIX (Saturday)

This is a free day. We will guide you and facilitate your local travel. There can be an optional excursion but you are absolutely entitled to rest and relax only.

DAY SEVEN (Sunday)

This is the final day of the training but it will be run at a less urgent pace. Ideally an archaeologist or historian will be on hand, who knows the history and development of this ancient form of thatching. You will discuss likely origins in the Neolithic period. A visit to the ethnographic museum in Bradesti will focus on the total relocation of a wooden, steep straw thatched building. You will discuss with local people the usual maintenance (each spring time) of the type of building you have been working on.

The day ends with a feedback session on how the new curriculum succeeded or not, in fulfilling your personal learning needs. A celebration with local teachers and team members and you and your colleagues will most usually follow.

Learning outcomes for the day

At the end of Day Seven, you will have....

- Understand how such buildings might be disassembled, moved and re-erected.
- Discussed ongoing uses.
- Understood the annual maintenance tasks and how they have to be factored into ongoing management.
- Understood your training / work with the context of the four pillars of sustainability.
- Taken part in an open and closed feedback session.

DAY EIGHT (Monday)

This is departure day but if flight times allow, there is a chance for final shopping!



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