

FORTIC STRATEGY

FROM REMAINS OF WAR
TO THE ARCHITECTURE OF PEACE
IN THE ITALY-CROATIA
CROSS-BORDER AREA

JOINT STRATEGY OF ENHANCING
THE ROLE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE
AS VALUABLE ASSET FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
OF COMMON CROSS BORDER
TERRITORY

(Output 3.1)





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in cross-border area of Italy-Croatia***

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JOINT STRATEGY OF ENHANCING THE ROLE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AS VALUABLE ASSET FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMON CROSS BORDER TERRITORY

CONTENTS

1. A SHARED HERITAGE, A SHARED COMMITMENT	5
1.1 FORTIC project.....	5
1.2 Adriatic fortified cultural heritage as a common cross-border asset.....	7
1.3 Conceptual and policy framework	9
1.4 How this strategy was developed.....	13
1.5. What challenges confront our fortified heritage today?	14
1.5.1. Conservation and public access conditions	14
1.5.2. Governance and institutional challenges	16
1.5.3. Physical condition, spatial and infrastructural constraints.....	17
2. FROM WAR REMAINS TO LIVING HERITAGE: WHAT FORTIC ACHIEVED	19
2.1 Valorisation and conservation of fortified war heritage	19
2.2 Fortress business ecosystem and digital innovation.....	21
2.3 Inclusive models for sustainable tourism	23
3. OPENING FORTIC RESULTS TO NEW TERRITORIES AND USERS	25
3.1 Transferable FORTIC solutions.....	25
3.1.1. Replicable sustainable cross-border event format	26
3.1.2. Innovative governance process	29
3.1.3. Co-created promotional virtual and augmented reality experience	31
3.1.4. Highly inclusive tourism management	34
3.1.5. Institutional inclusive skills expansion.....	36
3.1.6. Cross-border knowledge exchange.....	39
3.1.7. Dissonant heritage management	42
3.2 Accessibility and visibility of project outputs	45





4. STRATEGIC VISION AND OBJECTIVES	46
4.1 Strategic vision	46
4.2 Strategic objectives	47
SO2 - INTEGRATE FORTIFICATIONS INTO SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CROSS-BORDER ROUTES, DE-SEASONALIZATION, AND SMART VISITOR MANAGEMENT	54
SO3 - STRENGTHEN PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP THROUGH MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORMS	59
SO4 - FOSTER INNOVATION, DIGITAL INTERPRETATION, AND UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY	63
SO5 - PROMOTE TRANSFER AND REUSE OF THE FORTIC APPROACH IN THE WIDER ADRIATIC AND INTERREG SPACE THROUGH CAPITALIZATION, POLICY INTEGRATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY	66
5. THE WAY FORWARD - PARTNER LOCAL ACTION PLANS FOR INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY	71
LOCAL ACTION PLAN CITY OF PULA-POLA	72
LOCAL ACTION PLAN JURAJ DOBRILA UNIVERSITY OF PULA.....	95
LOCAL ACTION PLAN FORTRESS OF CULTURE ŠIBENIK.....	110
LOCAL ACTION PLAN CA' FOSCARI UNIVERSITY OF VENICE.....	127
LOCAL ACTION PLAN MUNICIPALITY OF CERVIA.....	141
LOCAL ACTION PLAN MUNICIPALITY OF VIESTE	160
LOCAL ACTION PLAN CITY OF KORČULA.....	175
REFERENCES	190
Printed sources and literature	190
Digital sources and literature	191



1. A SHARED HERITAGE, A SHARED COMMITMENT

1.1 FORTIC PROJECT

Throughout history, societies have maintained control over their territories due to the persistent threat posed by potential adversaries. **The specific characteristics of a territory often determine the architectural form of defensive monuments.** Fortifications in the Adriatic region, originally constructed to protect strategic ports and coastal cities, once served as critical military lines of defense. Today, these structures represent a significant layer of shared European cultural heritage. Their primarily utilitarian design has often resulted in a lack of symbolic and ornamental features, thereby obscuring their monumental value and the importance of their conservation. As a result of recent recognition, **fortifications now face multiple policy challenges, such as the adaptive reuse of large and complex heritage assets and the transformation of conflict-marked sites into spaces with contemporary functions relevant to both present and future needs.** Although some fortifications have been successfully repurposed as cultural or tourism assets, many remain closed, degraded, or only partially accessible, despite their prominent locations and acknowledged heritage significance. The loss of military function is the primary cause of this abandonment and explains why many of these monuments, including those constructed in the twentieth century, are in a near-ruinous state.

In the view of current economic development of the Adriatic region and the recognition of shared heritage, the Italy–Croatia cross-border area shows a very uneven pattern of tourism development. Some destinations face strong seasonal peaks, congestion and pressure on infrastructure and the environment, while many coastal, island and inland areas struggle with low visibility, fragmented products, and limited local economic benefits. **If fortifications remain detached from their wider urban and territorial context, they tend to reinforce this situation – either as landmarks that attract only short, concentrated visits, or as unused spaces with little functional role.** When they are instead integrated into a broader, sustainable development strategy, fortifications can help diversify tourism offers, support the extension of the season and provide high-quality public spaces and cultural programmes for residents and visitors alike.





FORTIC - “From remains of the war to the aRchiTecture of peace in cross-border area of Italy-Croatia”, is an Interreg Italy-Croatia project designed to address common challenges.

With the focus on valorization of fortified and former military heritage in sustainable tourism through innovative social models and digital solutions tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups and heritage communities. It unites a diverse partnership of public authorities, universities, and cultural institutions across the Adriatic. Led by the **City of Pula**, project partners include: **Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Fortress of Culture Šibenik, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the Municipality of Cervia, the Municipality of Vieste, and the Town of Korčula.**

The project's core aim is strengthening the role of Adriatic cross-border cultural heritage as indicated by project specific objectives: of capitalizing and preserving cultural war heritage, the development of smart, sustainable business models using innovative digital solutions for cultural heritage, and promoting sustainable, accessible, and alternative tourism for broader society.

Joint Strategy brings different elements together in a single document. The strategy is an official project **output O3.1**, defined as a single joint document output of **FORTIC**.

The Strategy presents a shared perspective on the importance of Adriatic fortifications, lessons learned about their challenges and potential, and the most promising directions for the coming years.

It consolidates key project outputs into a practical toolbox, includes an analysis of the current state of fortifications, a conceptual framework for governing fortified heritage, and specific action plans adopted by partners to ensure applicability and long-term sustainability of goals. In other words, it links existing resources to specific actions that cities and regions can adapt to their own contexts.

From a capitalisation perspective, the Strategy is intended to open FORTIC to a wider circle of users. It highlights the project output that is ready for transfer and explains how they can be reused by other territories, and which partners can provide support in doing so. In this way, the Strategy positions FORTIC as a reference for other Adriatic and Interreg areas that are asking similar questions: what role fortifications should play in their territorial development, which physical, digital and social interventions is appropriate in their context, and the ways in which local actions can be integrated into a broader cross-border network of fortified heritage.



1.2 ADRIATIC FORTIFIED CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A COMMON CROSS-BORDER ASSET

In the Adriatic cross border region fortifications form a heritage system built on a shared maritime war premise. The potential of this heritage was recognized with the joint designation of **The Venetian Works of Defence between the 16th and 17th centuries: Stato da Terra - western Stato da Mar** as a **UNESCO** world heritage site. This system located in Italy, Croatia, and Montenegro, presented a step in cross border fortification valorisation as a shared heritage. Building on this, all project partners recognize Adriatic fortified coastal systems as legacy of a turbulent past and common European heritage, while also perceiving them as important parts of joint architectural potential in peace time. Today these sites represent both a symbolic and practical asset for the stakeholders, despite many remaining underused or abandoned, they hold potential to be the driver for sustainable tourism and development of territory. Positioning fortifications as a shared, innovative, and inclusive cultural resource allows their transformation into spaces of scientific and cultural cooperation, civil and peace initiatives, intercultural dialogue, and promotion of European values in the Adriatic region.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

Adriatic may be “the most unified of all the regions of the sea” which “provides material for all the problems implied in a study of the Mediterranean as a whole”, as once was stated by Braudel (Braudel, 1949, cited in Urošević and Afrić Rakitovac, 2025).

Adriatic fortifications developed due to its geopolitical position as an important corridor between different Mediterranean civilizations with competing imperial tendencies.

From the pre-historic, Hellenic, and Roman period to today, fortified structures along the Adriatic coasts were developed to protect the maritime trade routes. **They have always been of greatest importance to the development and networking of European cultures, through conflicts but also cultural exchange.** Each era was shaped by distinct strategic needs and technological capabilities. The longest era was the **Venetian era** when the economic and political maritime power of Venice ruled the Adriatic. Ancient walled towns and cities were expanded with fortresses and coastal forts. Built to control maritime trade routes and defend against pirates and the threat of



incursions of the Ottoman Empire. As the invention of artillery rendered traditional vertical defensive walls obsolete, Venice began constructing larger, angled bastions designed to deflect cannon fire. When the **Austro-Hungarian Empire** expanded in the 18th and 19th centuries and replaced Venetian influence, the Istrian coast became strategically important, offering several excellent ports and safe anchorages suitable for large battleships. With the rise of industrial-age artillery, the Empire developed modern defensive systems, including fortified rings, coastal batteries, and integrated fortification networks around key naval ports. These systems were further expanded during World War II, when **Italian and German** force added concrete bunkers, underground firing positions, anti-tank obstacles, and anti-aircraft batteries along both shores of the Adriatic. On the eastern Adriatic coast, socialist **Yugoslavia** later upgraded and expanded these structures, constructing extensive underground complexes, missile bases, and observation networks. After 1990, most of these sites lost their military function and entered a period marked by mixed civilian use, partial restoration, and varying degrees of abandonment.

TYOLOGIES AND SPATIAL ORGANIZATION



The Adriatic defense landscape consists of a variety of sites and defensive structures.

Together, all these elements and landscapes, today recognized as formed a unified defensive network monitoring sea route, trade flows, and military lines along both sides of the Adriatic.

ICOFORT Charter on Fortifications and Military Heritage (2020): fortifications and military heritage comprise of any structure built with either natural (i.e. botanical or geological) or artificial materials, by a human community to protect themselves from assailant.

These include castles, fortified towns, citadels, military bases, underground complexes, and specific types of architecture such as bastions, ramparts, bunkers, etc. Most of structures can be found on both shores of the Adriatic, with higher predominance on the eastern shores where the development of structures was tied to the natural ports the coast offered. Sea forts and coastal batteries guard strategic channels, headlands, and harbor entrances. Complemented by island fortresses, which form a chain of control over major maritime corridors. Urban fortification rings around cities expanded fortifications in larger and more complex systems, organizing defense in concentric layers. Inland strongholds and elevated positions further secured access to routes from the hinterland. In the 20th century, underground systems and missile installations were also very common elements of defense systems. It is also important to observe that fortifications



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more than any other type of architecture have an integral relationship with the surrounding cultural landscapes, therefore fortified structures are mostly not only identified as individual “castle” structures, “fort” elements or sites, but considered parts of a territorial defensive system developed over a long period of time; in different “fortified landscapes” connected with historic cities.

PRESENT SITUATION AND CROSS-BORDER COMMONALITIES



Fortified cities stand as historical testaments to human resilience, ingenuity, and cultural heritage. However, today, Adriatic fortified cities form a widespread but unevenly developed cultural landscape. Thousands of objects on both coasts of the Adriatic Sea, with the highest concentrations around inlets and other coastal formations. While we witness greater recognition of the need to conserve, protect and value fortifications and their surrounding cultural landscapes, we can also observe that some sites have become fully revitalized landmarks like the fortresses Šibenik, others are partially revitalized as seen in Pula, while many others remain underutilized, inaccessible, or still under restricted status, like the Castle of Vieste.

At the same time, cross-border Adriatic region shares strong opportunities: a distinctive cultural identity, potential for year-round tourism and for sustainable digital innovation. These commonalities are precisely the origin of the FORTIC project.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Heritage-led development positions cultural heritage not as a static asset to be preserved in isolation for economic gain, but as an active driver of culturally sustainable development both local and cross regional. The framework promotes rights-based, participatory, and context-specific planning that uses both tangible and intangible heritage to support inclusive economic development, social equity, environmental responsibility, and the empowerment of communities who carry that heritage. The approach aligns with **UNESCO** 's 2011 *Historic Urban Landscape* (HUL) Recommendation, which emphasizes integrating heritage into broader urban planning through bottom-up, community-driven processes.



The FORTIC project is building on the models of the European Network for Fortified Cities, Forts, and Defense Lines (EFFORTS), that recognizes that fortified cultural heritage offers opportunities to a range of different stakeholders.

Instead of treating monuments, landscapes, or historic structures as costs or constraints, this heritage-led approach sees them as catalysts for economic vitality, social cohesion, environmental responsibility, and cultural identity. In practice, heritage-led development mobilizes historic sites as heritage catalyst which can support a high-quality tourism through the generation of jobs, new business models, strengthened community participation, and reinforcing the distinctiveness and creativity of a place. Points are highlighted within **OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Papers**, specifically: **The role of culture-led regeneration in place transformation**. Which lays out the wider socioeconomic benefits of cultural development and explores opportunities and modalities for redevelopment through stakeholder action and investment.

INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN REFERENCE FRAMEWORK

FORTIC rest on a framework of previous strategies from varied international bodies of **UNESCO**, more Europe focused **Council of Europe** conventions, and specific **EU** policy frameworks such as the **European Green Deal, Territorial Agenda 2030**, and others. Together, these frameworks guide the project's ambition to reinterpret fortified cultural heritage as a catalyst for sustainable development.

The primary international reference for managing fortified heritage is the doctrine developed by ICOMOS through its International Scientific Committee on Fortifications and Military Heritage (ICOFORT). The ICOFORT Charter on Fortifications and Military Heritage (2020) and the subsequent ICOMOS Guidelines on Fortifications and Military Heritage (2021) articulate the categorical distinction of fortifications from other building types, thereby necessitating specific management frameworks.



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The aim is to preserve the authentic attributes of this *'fortified cultural heritage,'* while protecting its integrity as a whole and as part of wider defense systems and cultural landscapes. They promote the use of a comprehensive approach aligned with the *Historic Urban Landscape* (HUL) principles. They emphasize a people-centered, multidisciplinary approach that integrates conservation with planning, resilience, and infrastructure, guided by clear criteria and adaptive monitoring to protect landscape values while ensuring community identity, participation, and shared benefits.

The **Council of Europe's Faro Convention** places communities and human rights-based approaches at the core of heritage management. It stresses that the significance of cultural heritage lies in the values, meanings and uses that communities and society assign to it, not solely in the fabric of the objects and places themselves. Complementing this view, the **Landscape Convention** recognizes landscape as an important factor in individual and collective well-being, identity, and quality of life. It advocates for co-operation through participatory planning and public awareness with the goal of mutual protection and enhancement.

EU policy frameworks like the **European Green Deal**, **Territorial Agenda 2030**, and **European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage** reinforce these commitments by positioning cultural heritage as a driver of sustainable, creative, and inclusive development. The **New European Bauhaus** (NEB) initiative links sustainability, aesthetics, and social inclusion to encouraging tangible innovative and community-embedded use of historic sites. This innovation is complemented with the **Creative Tourism** framework encouraging innovations in tourism. The **European Green Deal** recognizes climate change and environmental degradation as existential threats. To address these challenges the **Green Deal** advances climate-resilient, resource-efficient, and socially fair transformation of a competitive **EU** economy. Building on that the **Territorial Agenda 2030** seeks to promote equal development and cross-border cohesion across Europe. It aims to achieve *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) put forward by the **UN Agenda 2030** in Europe.

Project **FORTIC** is also compatible with the goals of **EUSAIR** "*Development of sustainable and thematic cultural routes/connecting cultural routes in EUSAIR AIR Cultural Routes*" especially as it also strengthens the cultural-tourism framework of the region and supports sustainable heritage valorisation. Through the support of creative industries promoting enhancement of archaeological heritage, specific festivals or implementation and systematization of already existing events.



BUILDING ON PREVIOUS PROJECTS AND AVAILABLE KNOWLEDGE

Most experiences the project capitalizes on originate from projects implemented by the FORTIC project partners in previous national, cross-border and transnational projects with similar expertise domains

FORTIC builds on a broad and diverse set of previous EU-funded initiatives focused on fortified heritage, sustainable tourism, destination management, digital interpretation, and inclusive cultural experiences.

For example, **FORTIC**'s flagship event **Night of Fortresses**, whose model was directly inspired by the successful **AdriFort** and **Night of Fortresses** held jointly on heritage monuments in Croatia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of **Interreg IPA CBC HR-BA-MNE**. Additionally, the revitalization of the Šibenik fortresses by the **Fortresses of Culture** is recognized at regional and European level as a best-practice example of sustainable reuse of fortified assets. Along with other good practices related to fortification networks, carrying-capacity assessment, decision-support systems, and immersive digital tools. These lessons are reinforced through international networks such as **European Federation of Fortified Sites (EFFORTS)**, of which several partners are members, and through capitalisation of studies such as the **FHIS – European Fortified Heritage Socio-Economic Impact Study** led by **UNIVE**. This accumulated knowledge forms a solid foundation for designing innovative solutions that respond to current challenges in the Italy-Croatia Programme area.

FORTIC capitalizes lessons learned from previous projects by adapting and advancing existing tools and methodologies to the specific context of Adriatic fortifications. Rather than replicating past solutions, the project redesigns them through innovative, immersive, and metaverse-based approaches, generating new evidence on their transferability and effectiveness in cross-border settings. Lessons are integrated into reusable outputs such as strategic and governance models, digital interpretation tools, and inclusive tourism guidelines, supporting sustainable heritage management and policy learning across the Programme area. FORTIC also strengthens capacities beyond project partners with more integrated outputs.



1.4 HOW THIS STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

METHODOLOGY FOR DRAFTING THE STRATEGY

The Strategy is based on materials produced within the FORTIC project, relevant scientific and professional literature, existing planning and strategic documents, as well as the previous experience of project partners. The preparation of the Strategy consisted of a structured process combining desk-based research and analysis.

The Strategy also incorporates inputs collected throughout the project from a diverse range of stakeholders, including tourism organizations (Pula Tourist Board, Promozione turistica Regione del Veneto – “Veneto – the Land of Venice”, Promozione Turistica Regione Puglia, CerviaIn, Korčula Tourist Board), heritage and museum institutions (Historical and Maritime Museum of Istria, Archaeological Museum of Istria, Ecomuseum of Salt and Sea, Gradski muzej Korčula, Cooperativa Guide Turistiche Autorizzate di Venezia), non-governmental organizations and educational institutions (Association of Deaf and Hard Hearing of Šibenik-Knin County, schools in Cervia, Polytechnic of Šibenik, LUM University), as well as business associations from the tourism sector and the broader economy (Venetian Cluster, Federalberghi Venezia, Associazione Veneziana Albergatori, CONFCOMMERCIO, CONFINDUSTRIA).

The Strategy is informed by these contributions and is based on iterative consultation and review. The inputs collected through the participatory process are reflected in the definition of priorities related to the safeguarding, interpretation, and compatible use of fortified heritage, with particular attention to accessibility, community involvement, and the management of sites as part of wider cultural landscapes.



1.5. WHAT CHALLENGES CONFRONT OUR FORTIFIED HERITAGE TODAY?

1.5.1. CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS CONDITIONS

Fortified sites included in the FORTIC project share similar ownership and management patterns, many of which were identified and analysed under Activity 2.1 “Studies on potentials and socio-economic spillover and business ecosystem”. At the same time, differences in their conservation status, legal protection and level of accessibility significantly influence their potential for reuse. For the purposes of this Strategy, the sites are grouped into three broad categories:

- a) sites that are active and available for public use
- b) sites that are in use but not generally accessible to the public
- c) sites that are currently in disuse and inaccessible



This category concerns sites that have been revitalized, or are in active use for economic, social, or cultural activities, or any combination of those. These sites are protected by local conservation rules yet have managed to provide all necessary modern infrastructure to ensure use or accessibility. Most prominent example is Šibenik, where all three forts managed by Fortress of culture have been renovated and put back in use for public and cultural purposes, although some with minor works remaining on segments to achieve full revitalization. Another example is represented by Cervia, where few **WW2 bunkers** have already revitalized for interpretation and visitation purposes, and this work will continue as part of FORTIC with **Refurbishment of a defense artifact in Cervia (D.3.3.8)**.



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The second category comprises sites that are only partially accessible to the public, often because they are currently used for other purposes, such as military or restricted institutional functions that are not open to visitors. Sites are formally protected but their present uses do not reflect the cultural significance of the structures. One example is Vieste, where the Swabian Castle is structurally intact, but public access are constrained by navy administration. A similar situation exists at several locations in Pula, where the Ministry of the Interior uses certain sites, such as the Monvidal tower, while the city-owned Fort San Giorgio functions as a museum storage facility without systematic maintenance or accessibility considerations. In their current state, these uses prevent more productive public reuse of the sites, which is why further work is needed to provide accessible infrastructure and enable adaptive reuse.



The final set of sites has significant long-term potential but faces the most demanding conditions for reuse. Sites share similar constraints: weakened conditions, strict legal protection and very limited public access. Korčula's city owned **Forteca** presents this more fragile model, most structures need maintenance, including an archeological site that is also legally protected. Thus, the site remains underused due to limited financial and professional capacities to improve the infrastructure and restore the sites to new use. A comparable situation can also be observed in **Fort Bourguignon**, which remains disused and structurally unsound despite individual heritage monument protection due to the financial constraints of the municipality. Sites in similar conditions need precise reuse plans, to help create stronger conservation outcomes, and better implementation of accessible infrastructure and strategic reuse, supported by a dedicated professional institution and forward-looking project pipelines.



1.5.2. GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES



In project partners areas, the assessment reveals a marked fragmentation of management, both between sectors and between levels of public administration. Responsibilities for fortification heritage are distributed among municipalities, heritage and planning authorities, cultural and tourism institutions, private operators and civil society organisations, but often without a clearly mandated coordinating body or agreed framework for joint decision-making.

In several cases, such as in **Pula**, individual fortifications are managed as separate sites under different mandates, rather than as parts of a single cultural entity. This is largely due to the size of the system and the complexity of property rights, and as a result, the use of sites tends to remain project-based and episodic, not guided by long-term management plans. Regarding underutilized or monofunctional locations; in **Pula** and **Vieste**, forts such as Cassoni Vecchi and Torre San Felice have no articulated strategies of continuous use and are activated mainly through occasional cultural events, with little connection to wider social or territorial goals. In the area of the city of **Korčula**, the initiatives led by the city and the museum as managers of the fortifications remain mostly isolated, limited by the lack of higher-level strategic guidelines that would support sustainable investments, leaving the fortifications peripheral in relation to wider development processes. Also, smaller municipalities such as **Vieste** and **Korčula** have reduced access to specialized expertise in heritage management, participatory planning and digital interpretation, while the scale and complexity of the Pula fortification system exceed current capacities for systematic monitoring and maintenance.



At the same time, the analysis identifies emerging arrangements that are similar to international good practice. In **Šibenik**, a dedicated public institution for fortresses (Fortress of Culture Šibenik) provides a clear institutional management framework, operating within national and international frameworks, coordinating preservation, interpretation and public use in an





integrated manner. In **Cervia**, the collaboration between the Municipality and the Ecomuseum of Salt and Sea offers a platform through which it is possible to harmonize municipal strategies and community-based initiatives.

The Integrative Management Plan (D.2.3.1), developed under Activity 2.3, responds to this challenges by setting out principles and tools for a more participatory and long-term management of the fortification network, with the aim of maintaining its cultural values and public relevance over time.

1.5.3. PHYSICAL CONDITION, SPATIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS



Many forts within the project sites have significant structural and environmental vulnerabilities linked to age, prolonged underuse and earlier interventions that do not comply with current standards. Soil-covered masonry structures, as those prevalent in **Pula**, are particularly susceptible to moisture, which is resulting in progressive decay and a need for continuous conservation and maintenance. Even where stabilization works have been carried out, as at Fort Verudela, the technical conditions required for safe public access and for the introduction of new functions remain demanding. Modern building services, digital infrastructures and fire-safety systems require stable and dry environments, which are often difficult to achieve.



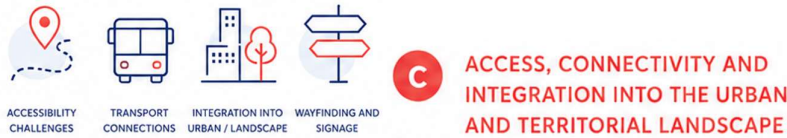
Complex ownership structures frequently limit the capacity of local authorities to implement coherent access and reuse strategies, even where there is clear political will. In **Cervia**, the perimeter of the quadrilateral is almost entirely in private hands, which confines the municipality to indirect measures such as accelerating permitting procedures and adapting local planning instruments. In **Pula**, only five of twenty-five forts are fully city-owned, while many key sites remain under national or military control. In such contexts, long-term leases, protection



Italy – Croatia



regulations and management agreements become preconditions for any substantial investment in access, infrastructure and adaptive reuse.



Physical access to fortifications is often constrained by topography, distance from urban centers, limited public transport and barriers such as steep gradients and stairways. In **Vieste**, for example, the historic core and the Swabian Castle occupy a visually prominent position, but the approach remains demanding, so that only a single route has been adapted for visitors with reduced mobility. Signage and wayfinding are intermittent or deteriorated, further reducing legibility and everyday use. More broadly, forts tend to remain weakly integrated into wider urban and territorial planning frameworks. Green corridors, cycling routes, digital tools and multimodal mobility networks are rarely conceived in relation to the fortification systems, leaving many sites as isolated enclaves at the edge of the urban fabric rather than as components of a cultural landscape. In **Pula**, several forts lie in proximity to existing attractions and accommodation, yet are not systematically connected through marked walking and cycling routes or coherent signage, so visitors experience them as scattered points rather than parts of an integrated system. **Cervia** illustrates a similar fragmentation in the digital sphere: information and communication are dispersed across different institutional channels, meaning that each cultural actor manages its own digital and physical communication.



2. FROM WAR REMAINS TO LIVING HERITAGE: WHAT FORTIC ACHIEVED

This chapter draws directly on the experience gained during the implementation of the project and on the ways in which this has shaped approaches to the valorisation and conservation of fortified war heritage in the partner cities. It focuses on what has actually been tested and learned in practice – in documenting and interpreting fortifications, in exploring their economic and digital potential, and in working with different groups of users.

The three sections follow this logic. The first deals with knowledge and documentation of the sites themselves. The second addresses the socio-economic effects and digital tools developed within the project. The third looks at how the fortifications have been opened up to the city and connected through cross-border cooperation. Taken together, these experiences form a basis for further planning of conservation and valorisation that is grounded in project results rather than only in general recommendations.

2.1 VALORISATION AND CONSERVATION OF FORTIFIED WAR HERITAGE



Fortified structures are a specific category of cultural heritage in which military, architectural and landscape values are closely interwoven. From early works of defence to twentieth-century installations, they record changes in warfare, technology and territorial control, while at the same time shaping everyday life in the surrounding settlements. Any approach to their valorisation and conservation therefore needs to recognise both their material complexity and their role in the collective memory of the communities to which they belong.



Italy – Croatia



In the project area, fortified heritage was approached through three types of activity: work on knowledge and documentation, work on interpretation and sustainable use, and work on education and awareness.

The first group concerns **knowledge and documentation**. Technical, archaeological and interpretative work on Fort Bourguignon and Fort St. Michael in Pula, the North-East Tower of St Michael's Fortress in Šibenik, Second World War defensive artefacts in Cervia, the Swabian Castle in Vieste and the fortifications of Korčula brings together information on structures, development, significance and present use of fortified heritage. This responds to international guidance which treats sound knowledge and understanding as a basic condition for identification, management and monitoring of heritage sites.

The second group concerns **interpretation and sustainable use**. The Green Outdoor Incubator in Pula, the Green Lab, the interpretation plan and digital path for Cervia's Second World War artefacts, the Sustainability Lab in Vieste and the workshop in Venice explored ways of presenting fortifications in relation to sustainable development, climate questions and tourism outside the main season. Each site was considered together with its cultural landscape and urban context, and work on conservation, public access and neighbouring areas was handled in one framework instead of through separate, unrelated actions.

The third group concerns **capacity-building and awareness**. Cross-border summer schools in Pula and Šibenik, international and joint conferences in Pula, Šibenik and Vieste, and a seminar in Venice brought universities, municipalities, cultural institutions and civil society into the same discussion on fortified heritage. This helped to align views on values, management needs and possible new uses, in line with documents that recommend interdisciplinary teams and regular involvement of stakeholders in decisions on fortifications.

On this basis, the main directions for further work are:

DOCUMENTATION - site-specific documentation is needed to set priorities and to prepare realistic conservation and investment programmes;

INTEGRATED APPROACH - conservation, interpretation and territorial development work better when they are defined together, with clear aims for public use, for the treatment of surrounding areas and for local knowledge;





EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION - educational and participatory activities form part of long-term preservation, because they build recognition of fortified heritage as a useful resource and support its reuse for cultural, educational and community purposes.

2.2 FORTRESS BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM AND DIGITAL INNOVATION



ECONOMY+

Because of their position on coasts, hilltops, harbour entrances and urban edges, fortifications have long influenced the distribution of activities around them. In contemporary conditions, this influence extends beyond the physical sites to a wider “business ecosystem” of cultural, tourism and creative actors that use fortifications as reference points, venues or images. The introduction of digital tools adds a further layer, opening new channels for access and interpretation while raising questions about economic models, governance and the relationship between virtual and on-site experience.

The project also considers how fortified heritage supports local economies and how digital media can broaden access and use. Work focuses on socio-economic effects and actors, on new digital environments, and on basic planning tools that connect these elements.

The first group of activities looks at the **socio-economic role of fortifications**. The study on potential effects and key players around selected sites examines how cultural, tourism and creative uses linked to forts influence jobs, income and the wider offer of each city. It identifies public, private and civil-society actors already active in this field or with the capacity to enter it. In this way, fortifications are read within local development systems, with attention to spill-over effects, uneven benefits and dependence on seasonal tourism.



Italy – Croatia



The second group deals with **digital media**. Partners are preparing concepts for 3D models, metaverse environments and other tools that allow parts of the fortifications to be experienced online. These are meant to support on-site visits by offering remote access, additional layers of explanation and formats suited to schools and younger audiences. Their design raises questions of selection (what is shown), of how to distinguish between existing fabric and reconstruction, and of how to keep content accessible and updated.

The third group **relates these insights to planning**. On the basis of the socio-economic analysis and the digital concepts, partners are working on documents that set out how physical investment, programming and digital content might be coordinated over time. They indicate possible sequences of action, key responsibilities and basic management options, so that project outputs feed into broader cultural, urban and tourism policies instead of remaining isolated pilots.

From these activities, several orientations for further work on socio-economic valorisation and digital tools can be outlined:

EVIDENCE BASE - socio-economic effects and business ecosystems should be documented in a structured way, so that claims about the contribution of fortified heritage to local development can be tested and updated;

COMPLEMENTARITY - digital tools should be conceived as an extension of, and support to, on-site experience and management, not as an autonomous product detached from the physical sites and their communities;

GOVERNANCE - new business models around fortifications, especially those involving digital platforms and cross-border promotion, require clear roles, responsibilities and benefit-sharing between public authorities, cultural institutions, private actors and residents;

INTEGRATION - socio-economic measures, digital tools and physical interventions are most effective when framed together, within urban, cultural and tourism policies that give fortifications a defined place in the long-term development of each locality;



2.3 INCLUSIVE MODELS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



TOURISM+

An integrated reading of the military-architectural fabric, the cultural landscape and the social uses of fortified heritage makes it possible to frame tourism as one function among others, rather than as the sole driver of change. In this perspective, sustainable tourism models are those that combine careful management of visitor flows with attention to local needs, accessibility and year-round cultural life, and that involve residents, schools and civil society in defining how forts and related spaces are used. Such models treat fortified heritage as a shared resource whose enjoyment is broadened, while its conservation requirements and symbolic weight are respected.

The project also works on how fortified heritage is used, communicated and managed across the Adriatic area, with a focus on cooperation between cities and on inclusion of different groups of users.

A first set of activities builds on **Night of Fortresses and similar joint events**. By linking programmes in Pula, Šibenik, Korčula, Vieste and Cervia, partners test how forts and related spaces can host coordinated cultural content, extend the tourist season and reach residents who may not normally visit these sites. Shared branding, simple common guidelines and basic monitoring of attendance and feedback help to understand which formats work and how they can support local cultural calendars rather than stand apart from them.

A second set of activities addresses **inclusion**. Work with vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, older residents or young people with limited access to culture, looks at both the physical and the interpretative barriers present in fortifications. This involves small adjustments in access and signage, tailored guided visits, sign-language and other targeted formats, as well as testing how digital tools can support those who cannot easily reach or move through the sites. In this way, the idea of “use” is broadened beyond standard tourism to everyday culture and education.



Italy – Croatia



A third set concerns **cooperation and skills**. Cross-border workshops, study visits and joint trainings bring together staff of municipalities, cultural institutions, tourism organisations and civil society. The aim is to exchange working methods on programming, accessibility, communication and basic site management, and to create informal networks that remain in place after the project. Fortifications are thus used as a shared theme through which different cities and sectors can compare approaches and learn from each other.

From these experiences, several practical directions can be noted:

CONTINUITY: joint events such as Night of Fortresses should build on existing cultural programmes and capacities in each city, so that fortifications become a regular part of local calendars;

INCLUSION: work with different groups of users needs to combine feasible adjustments to access and signage with formats co-designed with schools, cultural associations and organisations representing persons with disabilities or older residents;

BALANCE OF ON-SITE AND ONLINE: digital content, live events and educational formats should be planned together, so that they can be combined by local operators and adapt to different audiences and seasons;

PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE: brings the most benefit when it focuses on concrete working methods – programming, communication, basic site management – and when channels of contact between institutions (cities, cultural organisations, tourism bodies) are maintained beyond a single project cycle



3. OPENING FORTIC RESULTS TO NEW TERRITORIES AND USERS

This chapter presents the project-level initiatives developed through FORTIC, focusing on pilot actions that have produced validated good practices. It outlines a curated set of **outputs and models identified by project partners as the most promising and ready for transfer**. The chapter explains what concrete results have been achieved, why they are effective, and how they can be replicated in other contexts. Its overall aim is to demonstrate how these initiatives generate long-term, reusable value for a wide range of actors working in cultural heritage and related sectors, while supporting proper and diverse valorisation of heritage assets.

3.1 TRANSFERABLE FORTIC SOLUTIONS

For each pilot action it covers, a structured description covering the context and challenge addressed, a brief overview of the initiative, and the specific FORTIC intervention carried out. It also presents evidence of success, such as stakeholder feedback and early impacts, which validate these actions as tested solutions. Particular attention is given to strategy components with high capitalisation potential, explaining what makes each solution innovative, what formats it, and who the main users are, such as municipalities, heritage agencies, DMOs, or NGOs. The chapter also clarifies why and how each solution can be replicated elsewhere, including any adaptations that may be required.

Finally, the chapter defines for each site what the mechanisms for transfer and capitalisation are by clearly identifying the “givers” and “takers” of each output. It specifies which partners act as reference providers for particular solutions and which types of institutions, territories, or programmes can adopt them. The transfer pathways are described to show how knowledge and tools will circulate, such as: study visits, workshops, webinars, mentoring schemes, open documentation, and online tutorials. This coordinated transfer strategy will be adopted and implemented by all partners, ensuring shared commitment and maximizing the impact and reusability of FORTIC results across territories over time.



3.1.1. REPLICABLE SUSTAINABLE CROSS-BORDER EVENT FORMAT

Night of
Fortresses



Figure 1. NOF 2025 Pula - photo: italy-croatia.eu/web/fortic/nights-of-fortresses-2025

Night of Fortresses / La Notte delle Fortezze / Noć Tvrđava Goes Green is an international event promoting cultural heritage outside the high tourist season. It is held jointly and simultaneously at partner fortifications to raise public awareness of the value of fortified heritage. Through FORTIC, the event was expanded and strengthened, with a particular focus on increasing its sustainability. **Fortress of culture Šibenik** acts as the coordinator in Croatia, building on the original **Noć Tvrđava** initiative established for fortified cultural heritage in Croatia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina within **the Interreg IPA CBC HR-BA-ME** programme. The project facilitated the mobilization of new sites to join the initiative in Croatia. In Italy, where this approach was entirely new, activities were coordinated by PP6 – Municipality of Vieste, the coordinator of the NOF on the Italian side for the FORTIC project. Strengthened cooperation among operators across borders was



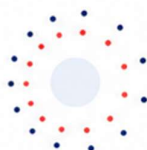
Italy – Croatia



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achieved **through Activity 3.1 – Capitalisation of Fortified Creativity**. This process embedded cross-border branding and sustainability principles through key deliverables, including the implementation of the event in four new sites through **Night of Fortresses in Pula, Korčula, Vieste, and Cervia (D.3.1.1)**, and the **Night of Fortresses Branding Strategy (D.3.1.2)**.

The event is further structured by breaking the organization process into clear, actionable steps aligned with the core principles of sustainable event management through the **Night of Fortresses Goes Green Guidelines**. Sustainable event organization minimizes environmental impact through careful planning of venues, infrastructure, energy and water use, waste management, and sustainable procurement involving responsible suppliers, eco-friendly materials, green energy, and locally sourced catering. Digital communication, sustainable merchandise, environmentally friendly transport options, and post-event legacy actions further support inclusive, low-impact participation and deliver lasting environmental and community benefits. The validation of the model is reflected in strong PP engagement through the uptake of the Guidelines as a practical planning tool, integration of the event into regular cultural programming, and institutional commitment of partner resources for project continuation.



COMPONENTS WITH HIGH CAPITALISATION POTENTIAL

The Night of Fortresses Goes Green model is a component of the FORTIC strategy with clear potential for reuse. It is easy to replicate because it is modular, relatively low-cost and aligned with current European priorities on sustainable culture and tourism. The format can be adjusted to different fortified or cultural heritage sites through common branding and a basic set of sustainability measures, which are then adapted to local conditions, governance capacity and environmental sensitivity.

A main added value lies in synchronising cultural programmes in several countries and linking them into a recognisable network. Participation in the event not only promotes the host site, but also directs attention to other locations in the Night of Fortresses system, creating a shared promotional platform. The Night of Fortresses Branding and Coordination Framework supports this by providing a structure for joint communication and for basic coordination between national and local organisers, so that dispersed sites can act as parts of a single cultural offer.

Another strength is the possibility to introduce specific annual themes, such as environmentally responsible behaviour, climate adaptation or inclusive access. In this way, the event becomes a vehicle for targeted messages, for example on sustainable mobility, reduction of waste or green





procurement. The Goes Green toolkit translates these principles into practical steps, offering site managers a concise guide to planning more sustainable events in fortress environments.

GIVERS, TAKERS, AND TRANSFER PATHWAYS

The main giver are the Fortress of Culture Šibenik PP3, as the originators of the project and main coordinators, they are the principal reference for the events planning, design and sustainability integration. The potential takers for this programme include operators of fortified heritage site from other cultural heritage institutions, tourism boards, NGOs, and regional or national authorities across the Adriatic and wider European area. The principals of transfer can be observed through the integration of Italian partners PP6. demonstrating how a nationally rooted initiative can be successfully scaled and adapted to new international contexts, in this case the territorial context of Italy. The broader Night of Fortresses network currently spans 72 locations in 11 countries outside of Croatia, spanning from Italy, to Czechia to Ukraine and covering 230 programmes.



3.1.2. INNOVATIVE GOVERNANCE PROCESS



Figure 2. Utopia/dystopia - photo: D.1.2.4

The Sustainability Lab (D.1.2.4), developed by the Municipality of Vieste, is a participatory tool created to address tourism seasonality, demographic decline, environmental vulnerability and competition between destinations at FORTIC sites, especially Vieste. It brings together young citizens and local stakeholders to look at tourism trends, work with six selected SDGs and co-design dystopian and utopian future scenarios.

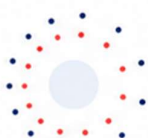
The Lab generated concrete proposals for each risk scenario, dealing with overtourism, depopulation, climate impacts and virtual tourism, with attention to resilience, quality of life, cultural identity and off-season appeal. **These results fed into the Business plan of hospitality**



Italy – Croatia

**FORTIC**

of fortifications/castles (D.2.1.3) for the castle and fortifications of Vieste, with relevance for other sites facing similar issues. The method proved effective by combining active participation, coherent proposals and alignment with EU and regional sustainability frameworks.



COMPONENTS WITH HIGH CAPITALISATION POTENTIAL

The Sustainability Lab is easy to transfer. It relies on a clear but flexible sequence of steps, moderate costs and a simple way of linking local knowledge with broader policy frameworks such as the SDGs. Other cities can reuse the model for strategy preparation, adjusting themes, groups of participants and scale to their own context.



GIVERS, TAKERS, AND TRANSFER PATHWAYS

The main givers are the Municipality of Vieste and FORTIC partners involved in designing and running the Lab, who can provide reference materials and mentoring. Potential takers include municipalities, heritage bodies, NGOs and regional authorities dealing with culture, tourism or planning. Transfer can be organised through workshops, peer-learning and open documentation, and supported by webinars, training modules and existing European networks. The model can be used on its own or built into wider planning exercises as a practical tool for more inclusive and forward-looking governance of heritage sites.



3.1.3. CO-CREATED PROMOTIONAL VIRTUAL AND AUGMENTED REALITY EXPERIENCE

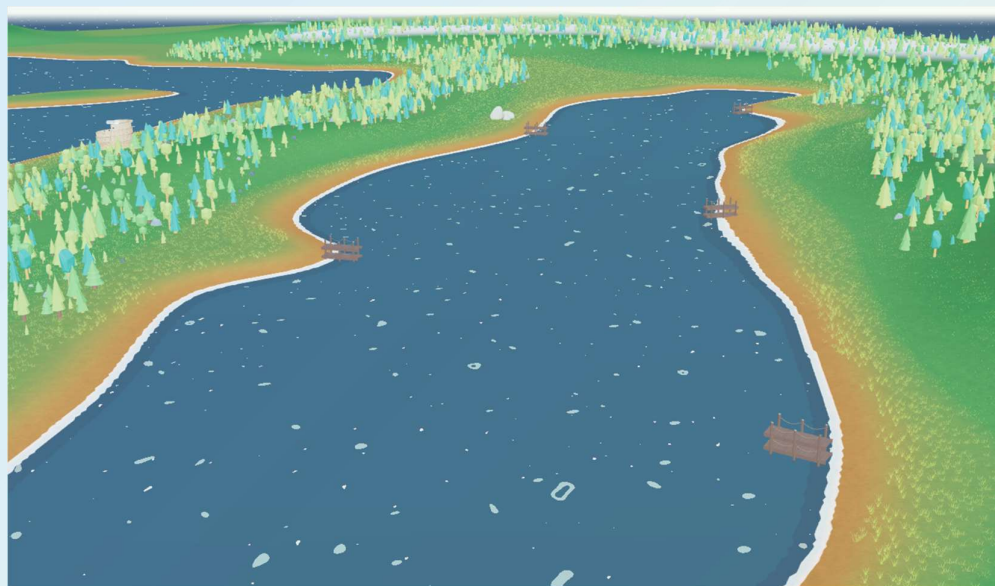


Figure 3. Tiny Adriatic - photo: stylized-water-fortic.vercel.app

The Metaverse Showroom, with its complementary augmented-reality (AR) experiences, is the main digital output of **Activity 2.2 – Metaverse development plan and pilot action for Pula, Korčula, Vieste and Cervia**. It adds a virtual layer to the valorisation and interpretation of fortifications and responds to the need for shared digital tools that improve cross-border access, reduce fragmentation of interpretation and remain usable beyond a single project.

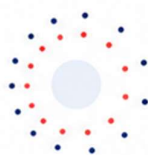
Led by Ca' Foscari University of Venice with academic, municipal and cultural partners, the work produced common content criteria and data collection (**Data collection for Metaverse – D.2.2.1**), a **Metaverse Development Plan (D.2.2.3)** and AR itineraries and elements tested in Pula and Korčula (D.2.2.2, D.2.2.5). The platform combines low-poly 3D models, photogrammetric interiors and multimedia content in a single navigable 3D space where users can move between reconstructed fortifications, explore interiors and exteriors and access interpretative materials.



Italy – Croatia



The prototype was tested (D.2.2.4) and deployed to several sites, with technical coherence ensured by academic oversight and early use monitored through attendance and analytics. Expected effects include better access to fortified heritage, stronger cross-promotion between sites, shared content standards for partners and recognition of the Metaverse as a tool for education, cultural programming, economic activity and cross-border tourism promotion.



COMPONENTS WITH HIGH CAPITALISATION POTENTIAL

The Metaverse Showroom turns separate interpretations of fortified heritage into a shared, scalable digital environment. Its replication potential rests on harmonised content criteria, interoperable data collection procedures and a technical framework that allows new sites and content layers to be added without redesigning the core system. New locations can join by producing additional models and AR elements in the same formats, using the existing instructions and support.

A further strategic advantage is the model's ability to absorb complementary outputs developed in other parts of FORTIC, including podcasts, animated videos, and accessibility-oriented digital content such as sign-language virtual tours. Open-source code also gives it the ability to absorb even content made during other phases of the programme such as **Podcasts and animated videos made for public and educational use (D.3.3.1)** from **Activity 3.3. – Sustainable cultural tourism and its promotion** or even **Virtual tour of Šibenik fortresses in sign language (D.3.2.6)** made as part of **Activity 3.2 – Crossborder exchange of reuse of best practices and training courses including vulnerable groups** making it suitable for wider promotional and accessibility use by interested municipalities or cultural institutions.



GIVERS, TAKERS, AND TRANSFER PATHWAYS

The main giver is Ca' Foscari University of Venice, which led the concept, content logic and technical design, and can provide documentation on platform functions and content preparation. Municipal and cultural partners from Pula, Korčula, Vieste and Cervia act as additional givers through their site-specific content and tested use cases. Potential takers are municipalities, heritage bodies, cultural institutions, tourism boards and regional authorities managing fortified or other heritage and looking for digital tools that improve visibility and access without building



Italy – Croatia



new standalone platforms. Universities and thematic networks can also use the model for teaching, research and outreach.

Transfer can take place through open technical and content guidelines, workshops, webinars and mentoring aimed at new adopters. Future projects or partnership models could support the expansion of the user base and the extension of the platform to a wider European network of fortified sites. Instead of multiplying isolated digital products, the FORTIC metaverse offers a shared infrastructure into which new narratives, AR elements and educational or promotional content can be progressively integrated, reducing duplication and strengthening long-term visibility.



3.1.4. HIGHLY INCLUSIVE TOURISM MANAGEMENT

*Study and Design
“Accessible” Itineraries*



Figure 4. Hidden Vieste Itinerary - photo: D.3.2.4.

Through the **study, design and implementation of “Accessible” Itineraries** Comune di Vieste developed and implemented an integrated accessibility plan to create barrier-free cultural and touristic routes. Due to complex historic urban and architectural heritage created before the conception of universal design principles, the historic core faces persistent barriers to accessibility limiting inclusive tourism and social participation. **Tourism for disabled people and vulnerable groups (D.3.2.4)** developed dedicated barrier-free tourist routes for people with disabilities and local social inclusion activities for vulnerable groups in the city. This plan also created recommendations for infrastructure improvement based on **Universal Design** and **Design for All** principles to eliminate architectonic barriers along the defined routes and create specific urban furniture to support vulnerable groups living/visiting Vieste. Furthermore, it

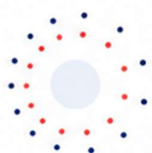


Italy – Croatia



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includes information and training activities aimed at spreading a shared culture of accessibility and hospitality at participant sites. These recommendations were realized through **Infrastructures for disabled people and vulnerable groups (D.3.2.5)**. The intervention consolidated the design and realization of infrastructure upgrades such as ramps, walkways, route adaptations, requalification of public spaces with inclusive urban furniture, communication tools, staff training, and awareness-raising activities. Building on the findings of deliverable **Inclusion of vulnerable groups (D.3.2.2)**, communication with vulnerable groups has increasingly been channeled through disability associations and local cultural and voluntary organizations from the earliest stages of visit planning. The central pilot intervention was ramp and elevator access to a future museum space in the historic core as a visible demonstration of inclusive design.



COMPONENTS WITH HIGH CAPITALISATION POTENTIAL

The Accessible Itineraries model links diagnosis, planning and implementation in one sequence, supported by training and awareness-raising. This helps ensure that investments follow a clear vision and that new infrastructure is taken up in everyday tourism and heritage management. The inclusion report also demonstrated that co-planning with vulnerable groups and the organizations they trust is essential for ensuring that accessibility measures and communication truly respond to their needs. **The approach is relevant for many historic cities facing similar barriers and spatial constraints and shows how universal design principles can be applied** in dense historic fabric while also supporting de-seasonalisation and stronger engagement of residents and young people.



GIVERS, TAKERS, AND TRANSFER PATHWAYS

The main giver is the Municipality of Vieste, as initiator, coordinator and test site, together with local guides, associations and the tourism school involved in co-design and service delivery. Regional partners working on accessible tourism provide an additional framework, allowing Vieste's inclusive itineraries to be positioned within broader regional visit opportunities and to benefit from shared standards and promotional channels. **Likely takers are municipalities and regions with historic centres and heritage sites with significant physical barriers**, as well as cultural institutions, tourism boards and NGOs managing heritage routes. Transfer can be organised through peer-to-peer exchanges and study visits to Vieste, technical workshops on universal design and route planning, and the distribution of practical guidelines and design examples, supported where needed by mentoring and online training.



3.1.5. INSTITUTIONAL INCLUSIVE SKILLS EXPANSION



Figure 5. Education in sign language - photo: tvrdjava-kulture.hr

Fortress of Culture Šibenik implemented an **inclusive skills expansion programme**, within the FORTIC project, that addressed the persistent lack of accessibility for deaf and hard-of-hearing visitors. Cultural sites are often inaccessible due to limited staff capacity, lack of adapted guided tours, and insufficient use of inclusive digital interpretation. These challenges restrict the social and tourism potential of heritage assets.

A six-month online individual Croatian Sign Language course, as described in **Education in sign language (D.3.2.7)**, was organized for eight employees working directly with visitors, delivered by members of the Šibenik-Knin County Association of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing People.



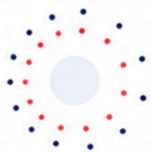
Italy – Croatia



The training focused on practical communication in a heritage context and was immediately applied in daily visitor interactions. In parallel, **Virtual tour of Šibenik fortresses in sign language available online and promoted (D.3.2.6)** translated an audio visual tour into Croatian Sign Language and made available online through partner and association websites, enabling both remote access and future on-site use by visitors with hearing disabilities, strengthening awareness and inclusion-oriented practices within the organization. As a concrete next step, in May 2026, within the framework of **the “Night of Fortresses Goes Green”** event, Fortress of Culture Šibenik implemented the inclusive programme **„Tvrđave ruše zidove”-“Fortresses Break Down Walls”**, aimed at improving accessibility of cultural heritage for persons with disabilities and raising public awareness about different forms of accessibility.

Each guided tour, organised at individual fortresses, was dedicated to a specific group of visitors with particular types of impairments, while remaining open to the general public. The tours were led by the institution’s professional guides with the support of representatives of associations of persons with disabilities, enabling a shared experience and fostering a better understanding of accessibility challenges as well as new ways of interpreting the fortress spaces. In parallel, the institution has recognised that such one-off initiatives need to be supported by systematic training for front-office employees, receptionists, guides and other visitor-facing staff, so that inclusive approaches and awareness of accessibility are embedded in everyday practice and not confined to special events.

The *“Fortresses Break Down Walls”* programme demonstrated that the sustainability of cultural events extends beyond the environmental dimension to include social inclusivity. In this way, the Night of Fortresses in Šibenik was further affirmed as a platform that connects fortification heritage, the local community, accessibility, and sustainable cultural tourism



COMPONENTS WITH HIGH CAPITALISATION POTENTIAL

From a capitalisation perspective, the Šibenik model is made up of three simple elements that other institutions can easily adopt: targeted sign-language training for front-line staff, joint production of at least one tour or video in sign language with a deaf association, and regular inclusion of accessibility topics in internal meetings and staff education. Together, these steps change how staff communicate with visitors, what kind of content is available, and how the institution thinks about accessibility. Because they rely on local partners and modest resources, they can be introduced within a single project cycle and then gradually expanded, making them highly suitable for transfer to other fortified sites and cultural organisations.





GIVERS, TAKERS, AND TRANSFER PATHWAYS

In this model, the “givers” are primarily the Šibenik fortresses and local deaf and hard-of-hearing associations, which jointly develop content and methods that can be shared with other sites. The main “takers” are cultural institutions managing fortified heritage and city museums that want to improve accessibility for deaf visitors but lack in-house expertise. Transfer pathways include peer-to-peer exchanges between fortress managers, joint workshops with disability organisations, and simple replication of the Šibenik training-plus-content package within other local contexts. Over time, regional heritage networks and national associations of museums can act as multipliers by embedding these practices into their regular training offers and guidelines.

Crucially, disability associations act as trusted intermediaries, meaning that when a museum or city develops accessible services within the reach of vulnerable groups such as deaf and hard-of-hearing visitors, these associations should be the first channel used to convey tailored information about the new offers. The Night of Fortresses platform, which already functions as a transnational network for knowledge exchange and joint programming, can also offer in the future a ready-made channel to disseminate the model and encourage partners to incorporate inclusive components into their own events.



3.1.6. CROSS-BORDER KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE



Figure 6. Cross-border summer school in Pula - photo: fet.unipu.hr

Cross-border knowledge exchange between the University of Pula (UNIPU) and Ca' Foscari University of Venice (UNIVE) within FORTIC, has been structured around joint educational formats, shared research outputs, and integrated pilot activities, creating a sustained learning environment for students and professionals in both countries centered around Activity 1.3 – Cross-border summer schools for young researchers. As higher-education institutions, both UNIPU and UNIVE use forts and fortified landscapes as case studies in tourism, heritage, and destination-management curricula. This educational role is operationalised through the **Crossborder summer school in Pula (D.1.3.1)**, the **Green outdoor incubator – urban usage of cultural heritage (D.1.2.1)**, and high-level scientific events such as the **High level scientific international conference in Pula (D.1.4.1)**, where European experts from countries such as Finland, Poland, and Slovakia share comparative examples with students and practitioners. **Crossborder summer school in Šibenik (D.1.3.2)** provided a second,



Italy – Croatia



complementary phase of field-based learning, allowing the same Italian and Croatian students to test and compare models of fortification management in a mature, multi-site context.

The cross-border summer schools were the main instrument for knowledge exchange, bringing together mixed Italy–Croatia student teams. This also complemented activity **Cross-border workshop (D.3.3.6)** to develop proposals for the future use of Fort St. Michael and other fortified sites. Ideas such as a rooftop café, entertainment facilities, and a metaverse element linking arrival to rooftop experience showed how participants combined heritage preservation with contemporary functions and digital tools. **The Green Outdoor Incubator (D.1.2.1)** focused on the urban role of cultural heritage through an expert lecture on Fort St. Michael, a guided site visit and a group discussion involving students and professors on sustainable and innovative reuse of fortified heritage. In Šibenik, students then worked in mixed teams on comparative analyses of Šibenik fortresses, Istrian sites and Italian examples, presenting their proposals for sustainable reuse publicly at Barone Fortress during **Night of Fortresses Goes Green**, which reinforced the link between academic work, live cross-border events and local communities.

Together, these instruments make cross-border knowledge exchange an important element of FORTIC's approach to developing a new generation of scholars and managers able to use fortified heritage for sustainable development. Participant feedback points to high satisfaction with the summer schools, conferences, and workshops, highlighting both the quality of expert input and the value of working in binational teams, which helps to build durable professional and personal ties for future cooperation.



COMPONENTS WITH HIGH CAPITALISATION POTENTIAL

From a capitalisation perspective, three elements are particularly suitable for transfer: a compact cross-border summer school format with mixed national student teams working on fortified sites, an outdoor incubator that combines classroom sessions with site visits and discussion on the urban role of fortifications, and the systematic use of a shared socio-economic evidence base on fortifications in teaching and local planning. Together, they constitute a coherent learning framework that other academic and territorial actors can replicate, maintaining the same sequence of steps while adapting themes and locations to their own contexts.

Components are relevant for capitalisation because they strengthen skills, institutional roles, and cooperation structures over the long term. They help to build a pool of young professionals familiar with fortified heritage and governance issues, position universities as stable knowledge



Italy – Croatia

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providers for local authorities, and give municipalities and heritage managers access to evidence-based analysis and fresh proposals.



GIVERS, TAKERS, AND TRANSFER PATHWAYS

The principal givers for this model are **PP2 – UNIPU – Juraj Dobrila University of Pula** and **PP4 – UNIVE – Ca' Foscari University of Venice**, accompanied by **PP3 – Fortresses of Culture**. They provide three main types of input: tested formats for cross-border summer schools and outdoor incubators, teaching materials and case studies on fortified heritage and governance (including examples such as Forte Marghera), and methodological guidance on how to organize mixed-team work around real sites.

Potential takers are universities and higher-education institutions that wish to introduce cross-border teaching formats on fortified heritage or related interregional topics, as well as municipalities and heritage agencies interested in hosting such activities. The model is particularly relevant in contexts where fortifications are underused assets and where public authorities need structured examples and analytical inputs to explore new uses.

Transfer pathways rely on existing documentation of the formats and on direct cooperation with UNIPU and UNIVE. The universities can support adaptation through mentoring, joint workshops, and participation in new cooperation projects that finance further summer schools, incubators, and related events.



3.1.7. DISSONANT HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

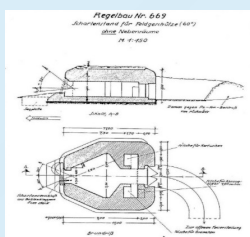


Figure 7. Dragons teeth at the promenade - photo: D.1.1.4

In Cervia, dissonant heritage management within the FORTIC project focuses on integrating difficult and often overlooked wartime remains into a broader, inclusive narrative. Originally constructed as a defensive barrier against amphibious landings and advancing tanks, German bunkers and dragon's teeth in Cervia were positioned directly along the beachfront. These elements have now been carefully integrated into the renewed waterfront green space part of Milano Marittima promenade. This transformation exemplifies how dissonant heritage can be recontextualised within everyday urban life.

The most significant of these structures, a Regelbau-type bunker located on the. This bunker serves as an anchor point within a newly restored system of public open spaces and landscaped paths. It can be viewed externally as part of the everyday seafront experience, while its interior



Italy – Croatia

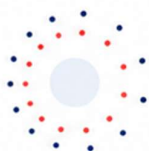


has been adapted into a small museum. Access to the interior is limited to guided tours, ensuring controlled engagement and allowing for curated interpretation of wartime history.

Through the FORTIC project, this coastal defence system is being systematically documented and interpreted as a central component of Cervia's dissonant heritage management model. It demonstrates how military structures located within a heavily touristic setting can be sensitively integrated into a contemporary, people-centred urban environment.

Within the framework of the deliverable **Research and Interpretation Plan (D.1.1.4)**, the municipality is conducting both archival and field research to support the definition of an interpretation strategy. This strategy is materialised through an outdoor heritage itinerary, marked by physical placards and supported by the renewed "ImmaginaCervia" web application. The platform links on-site locations to multimedia content, helping visitors understand how these remnants of conflict contribute to a broader narrative of peace, resilience, and local identity.

Additional bunkers are, or will be, refurbished for controlled viewing, often through external windows or glass installations, as foreseen in **Refurbishment of a defense artifact in Cervia (D.3.3.8)**, which includes deep cleaning and installation of glazing. This allows visitors to encounter dissonant military heritage in a managed, interpretive way, embedded in wider walking routes and reinforcing the overarching goal of integration: telling a unified story of the city where fortifications, sea, and everyday coastal life are distinct but strongly connected layers.



COMPONENTS WITH HIGH CAPITALISATION POTENTIAL

From a capitalisation perspective, three elements of the Cervia approach are particularly suitable for transfer. First, a coastal planning and interpretation framework for dissonant heritage, which begins with mapping dispersed Second World War remains, assessing their condition and visibility, and defining how they are integrated into the wider urban and landscape context. Second, an itinerary format that combines clear on-site markers with a lightweight web interface, allowing visitors to understand the line of former defences within their everyday movements, with optional access to additional stories, images and archival material. Third, a refurbishment model for bunkers in busy areas, focused on cleaning and stabilisation, limited interior access through guided visits, external viewing through glazing, and careful integration into surrounding public space.

Together, these components provide a practical template for coastal cities that wish to make low-visibility wartime remains legible and discussable, without turning entire areas into formal



Italy – Croatia



memorial zones. They show how defensive structures can be incorporated into ordinary urban life, how digital tools can support but not overwhelm on-site experience, and how sensitive interiors can be opened in a controlled but meaningful way. This makes the Cervia experience relevant, because many coastal cities in the Adriatic area have similar low-visibility, dispersed wartime remains, this integrated, promenade-based framework is highly replicable as a way to convert defence lines into spaces for reflection, leisure, and sustainable tourism.



GIVERS, TAKERS, AND TRANSFER PATHWAYS

The main giver for this model is **the Municipality of Cervia**, which has developed and tested the overall approach to mapping dispersed wartime remains, integrating them into urban and landscape planning, and defining how they are presented to the public. It provides practical experience with applying an interpretation framework, designing an itinerary that combines physical markers and digital content, and refurbishing a bunker in a way that is compatible with everyday use of surrounding public spaces. Local heritage and memory associations, cultural organisations and tourism operators act as co-givers by contributing research, narratives and guided activities, and by demonstrating how civil society can be involved in shaping dissonant-heritage programmes.

Potential takers include coastal municipalities and regions with scattered Second World War or other contested military remains, as well as museums and regional parks that wish to integrate such heritage into wider cultural and tourism offers. For these actors, the Cervia experience offers a reference for organising surveys, defining interpretation priorities, and combining modest physical interventions with simple digital tools. Transfer can take place through study visits and professional exchanges, during which practitioners experience the itinerary and bunker intervention on site, review documentation and discuss lessons learned, as well as through workshops and training formats that focus on practical aspects such as mapping, signage, visitor management and cooperation with local associations. In this way, the model can be adapted to different coastal and urban contexts while retaining its core principles of proportional intervention, controlled access and balanced storytelling.



3.2 ACCESSIBILITY AND VISIBILITY OF PROJECT OUTPUTS

Project outputs and deliverables will be made available through the FORTIC section of the Interreg Italy–Croatia website and on partners' own platforms, in line with programme communication and ownership rules.

At programme level, the online library and partners page will provide central access to documents, digital tools and contacts, while each partner remains responsible for storing and updating its materials on institutional websites, repositories and the joint metaverse showroom. Where appropriate, outputs will also be shared through European fortress networks and linked to the Night of Fortresses initiative.

Deliverables will be provided at least in the Programme language (English), with selected outputs also available in Italian and Croatian, depending on audience and territorial relevance. Files will use open and widely accessible formats, avoiding proprietary types where possible, so that reports, guidelines, training materials and other documents can be easily downloaded and reused. Metaverse models and related digital content will be stored according to the Metaverse Development Plan, with documentation on modelling, scanning and other standards hosted on the central site.

Users seeking support will be able to contact the responsible partner via institutional channels indicated on the FORTIC website and on partner pages. Digital tools, virtual tours and AR itineraries will be accessible through standard web and mobile technologies and will be integrated into existing or future heritage-management platforms of local authorities, universities and cultural institutions. In this way, project outputs can be incorporated into everyday work, strategies, educational activities and programmes, in line with principles of accessibility and inclusion.



4. STRATEGIC VISION AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 STRATEGIC VISION

The FORTIC partnership envisions the Adriatic fortification cross-border network as a living, interconnected cultural landscape where historical military architecture functions as shared public heritage for communities and visitors.

Conservation integrates built structures with surrounding cultural landscapes, adapting heritage management practices to address ecological and climate pressures. The network operates as a year-round destination, with coordinated programming and cross-border routes reducing seasonal concentration and linking sites through sustainable mobility. Governance structures involve institutional custodians, local communities, cultural operators, and heritage professionals in shared decision-making. Interpretation acknowledges diverse historical narratives, and economic benefits reach the communities that caretake these sites. Digital tools expand global access while improving on-site interpretation for visitors with different physical, sensory, and linguistic needs.

Methods and frameworks developed through the partnership support adoption by other territories managing fortified heritage across the Adriatic region and beyond. The network shows that military heritage, when





managed through cross-border cooperation, innovative practices and community participation, can provide infrastructure for culture, education, sustainable tourism, and social cohesion.

4.2 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The five strategic objectives set out below form the core of the FORTIC Joint Strategy. They grow out of shared challenges in the Italy–Croatia cross-border area, of the experience gathered during the project, and of existing international frameworks for responsible management of fortified heritage. The Strategy, including these objectives, is conceived with a time horizon up to 2030, while acknowledging that work on fortified heritage will necessarily continue beyond this period.

Each objective describes the issue it responds to, what change it aims for, and which types of measures can be used to move in that direction. The measures indicate practical directions that partners and stakeholders can adjust to their own territorial, institutional and heritage situations.

The five objectives are closely linked. Conservation depends on meaningful use; sustainable use requires participatory governance; governance is strengthened by digital tools and accessible interpretation; and all of these together generate knowledge that can be transferred beyond the immediate partnership.





SO1

SAFEGUARD, REVITALIZE AND ENHANCE THE CULTURAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUES OF ADRIATIC FORTIFICATIONS THROUGH INTEGRATED CONSERVATION

- M1.1.** Continued engagement with European networks on conservation standards
- M1.2.** Improvement and development of the management structure
- M1.3.** Advocacy for enhanced recognition and protection of fortified heritage at national level and cross-border level
- M1.4.** Support for site-level conservation planning and climate-adaptive maintenance
- M1.5.** Cross-border knowledge exchange on heritage management



SO2

INTEGRATE FORTIFICATIONS INTO SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CROSS-BORDER ROUTES, DE-SEASONALIZATION, AND SMART VISITOR MANAGEMENT

- M2.1.** Shared understanding and documentation of the Adriatic fortification system
- M2.2.** Development of cross-border fortification itineraries within existing mobility and tourism systems
- M2.3.** Promotion of de-seasonalised programming at fortified sites
- M2.4.** Visitor management based on carrying capacity principles
- M2.5.** Linking fortified heritage with maritime and coastal economies
- M2.6.** Use of existing digital tools to improve cross-border visibility and access



SO3

STRENGTHEN PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP THROUGH MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PROCESSES

- M3.1.** Establishment of multi-stakeholder governance processes





- M3.2.** Heritage communities and plural narratives
- M3.3.** Youth and next generation stewardship
- M3.4.** Inclusive and participatory approaches to reuse and programming



SO4

FOSTER INNOVATION, DIGITAL INTERPRETATION, AND UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY

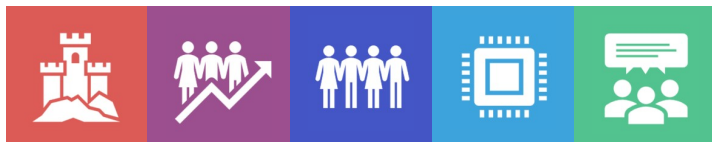
- M4.1.** Physical accessibility improvements across Adriatic fortifications
- M4.2.** Multilingual and multi-sensory interpretation systems
- M4.3.** Development and deployment of augmented and virtual reality interpretation
- M4.4.** Cross-border metaverse and digital twin infrastructure



SO5

PROMOTE TRANSFER AND REUSE OF THE FORTIC APPROACH IN THE WIDER ADRIATIC AND INTERREG SPACE THROUGH CAPITALIZATION, POLICY INTEGRATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY

- M5.1** Capitalisation of high potential FORTIC solutions
- M5.2** Local action plans as instruments of continuity and reuse
- M5.3** Policy integration and networked governance for capitalisation





SO1 – SAFEGUARD, REVITALIZE AND ENHANCE THE CULTURAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUES OF ADRIATIC FORTIFICATIONS THROUGH INTEGRATED CONSERVATION

Fortifications and military heritage possess specific conservation challenges that are qualitatively distinct from those encountered in other categories of architectural heritage. Typological characteristics, complex stratigraphic sequences, extensive earthworks, masonry structures, hydraulic networks embedded in landscape systems, and territorial scope extending well beyond physical perimeters, require methodological frameworks developed specifically for their nature and scale. In the Adriatic cross-border area, the complexity is amplified by the diversity of construction traditions and materials, by the effects of maritime climate, and by varying levels of institutional capacity among site custodians.

The conservation of Adriatic fortifications cannot be addressed solely at the level of individual structures. The value of systems lies, to a significant degree, in their territorial organization in the visual corridors, defensive lines, associated maritime infrastructure, and cultural landscapes that together give meaning to individual forts, towers, and bastioned cities. The value of the system is greater than the specific value of each of its parts, all of which require the same protection regardless of their perceived value. The territorial reading, operationalized through a cultural landscape approach, is indispensable for the formulation of conservation strategies that are coherent across the cross-border area.

Beyond the challenge of material conservation, Adriatic fortifications face an accelerating threat from climate change. The conditions demand not only technical adaptation, but a fundamental shift in the conceptual framework governing maintenance: away from episodic restoration toward continuous, monitoring-based, ecologically informed governance. Preservation is therefore not a state to be achieved but an ongoing process, and restoration must always be accompanied by a long-term maintenance plan adjusted in response to evolving environmental conditions.



M1.1 — Continued engagement with European networks on conservation standards

Partners will continue to engage with European networks dedicated to fortified heritage conservation (EFFORTS, Forte Cultura, ICOFORT), contributing to ongoing work on conservation standards, intervention criteria, and climate-responsive techniques for fortified architecture. Through participation in networks, partners will exchange experience specific to Adriatic fortification typologies and work to ensure that international conservation principles reach national and local practice. Partners will also promote wider participation in networks among heritage institutions, conservation professionals, and site managers across the Adriatic region, encouraging engagement with European-level dialogue on fortified heritage stewardship. This includes facilitating knowledge transfer between European frameworks, national heritage authorities, and site-level practitioners, making guidance accessible and applicable to diverse institutional and environmental conditions.

M1.2 — Advocacy for enhanced recognition and protection of fortified heritage at national level and cross-border level

Stakeholders across the Italy–Croatia cross-border area will advocate for the strengthened recognition of fortified heritage within national heritage protection frameworks, spatial planning policies, and cultural tourism strategies. Fortifications often face institutional challenges stemming from complex ownership structures (state, military, municipal, private), unclear jurisdictional responsibilities, and inadequate legal protection compared to other heritage typologies. Heritage institutions, local authorities, professional networks, and civil society organizations will work with national heritage authorities, ministries of culture, and defence ministries to:

- promote the formal recognition of fortified heritage as a distinct and significant category of cultural heritage requiring specialized conservation expertise
- advocate for the clarification of ownership and management responsibilities, particularly for sites transitioning from military to civilian use
- support the integration of fortification landscapes into national heritage inventories, spatial planning instruments, and cultural tourism development strategies
- encourage national-level funding mechanisms that address the specific conservation needs and adaptive reuse potential of fortified sites





M1.3 — Support for site-level conservation planning and climate-adaptive maintenance

The long-term preservation and sustainable use of fortified heritage in the Adriatic cross-border area depend on consistent, well-structured care at site level. Fortified complexes are extensive and exposed, and their condition is affected by their fabric and structure, earthworks, access areas, and the surrounding terrain. Without clear priorities and regular maintenance, deterioration accelerates, risks to users increase, and future conservation works become more intrusive and expensive. Strengthening planning and maintenance is therefore a basic condition for keeping these sites safe, legible, and usable over time. The strategy supports the development of site-level conservation frameworks that place maintenance at the centre of practice and are proportionate to available capacity. Where conditions allow, site custodians are encouraged to prepare or update conservation plans aligned with recognised international approaches. Plans should address the historical development of the site, current structural and material condition, landscape and setting, climate-related risks, visitor use, and the recurring maintenance needs arising from these factors. Where the preparation of a full conservation plan is not yet realistic, the strategy supports lighter instruments that still provide structure for day-to-day management. These may include maintenance schedules, lists of priority interventions, simple inspection and monitoring routines, and concise guidelines for routine works. Well-defined maintenance, even at this basic level, can significantly slow decay and reduce the frequency of emergency measures.

M1.4 — Cultural landscape approach and territorial protection

Stakeholders across the Italy–Croatia cross-border area will encourage adaptation of a cultural landscape approach that extends conservation priorities beyond the physical area of individual structures to encompass the territorial system of which they form part. This includes the identification and protection of dominant viewpoints, visual corridors, associated maritime and coastal features, and the spatial relationships between non-adjacent components of fortification networks. Buffer zone regulations should be reviewed and, where necessary, strengthened in coordination with relevant planning authorities. Heritage Impact Assessment should also be systematically applied to evaluate the potential effects of development proposals, including tourism infrastructure, urban expansion, and renewable energy projects, on the values and integrity of the fortification landscape.



M1.5 — Cross-border knowledge exchange on heritage management

Practitioners, conservation professionals, site managers, and institutional custodians working with fortified heritage across both shores of the Adriatic share a common material, environmental, and governance reality, including shared challenges in balancing conservation with contemporary use. The shared condition makes cross-border exchange not only valuable but natural. The strategy encourages and facilitates regular encounters, both formal and informal, between heritage professionals across the cross-border area, creating space for the exchange of practical knowledge on conservation practices, maintenance techniques, climate-responsive interventions, adaptive reuse strategies, but also visitor management, governance models, stakeholder engagement, and funding approaches.

Exchanges may take the form of joint site visits, technical workshops, peer consultations, professional gatherings organized around specific management challenges, and other. The strategy promotes a culture of openness in sharing lessons learned, recognizing that practical knowledge accumulated at individual sites is a collective asset for the cross-border area as a whole. Documentation of approaches and outcomes is encouraged where institutional capacity allows, making findings accessible to others working on similar challenges across the region.





SO2 - INTEGRATE FORTIFICATIONS INTO SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CROSS-BORDER ROUTES, DE-SEASONALIZATION, AND SMART VISITOR MANAGEMENT

The Italy–Croatia cross-border area exhibits a profoundly uneven geography of tourism development. The pattern generates twin dysfunctions: overtourism in saturated nodes, where heritage fabric is subjected to unsustainable pressure, and under tourism in overlooked sites, where the lack of visitor income forecloses the investments necessary for maintenance and revitalization.

Fortifications, if appropriately positioned within a planning framework, are uniquely capable of addressing both dysfunctions simultaneously. Distinctive typological character, historical depth, landscape, and spatial generosity, supports a wide range of contemporary uses compatible with heritage integrity. Geographic distribution of fortified heritage along the Adriatic coast creates the precondition for itineraries that can redistribute visitor flows, extend the tourism season into shoulder periods, and offer genuinely differentiated experiences beyond the congested beach-and-historic-center formula that dominates current regional tourism. At the same time, fortifications are not self-evidently touristic assets: they are complex sites whose potential is realized only when they are supported by appropriate management systems, interpretive frameworks, mobility infrastructure, and product development capacities.

The challenge, therefore, is not simply to promote fortifications more effectively, but to integrate them strategically into a sustainable territorial development model, one that links heritage conservation with economic diversification, reduces seasonal vulnerability, distributes benefits more equitably across the territory, and maintains the heritage qualities that give these sites their fundamental value.

M2.1 — Shared understanding and documentation of the Adriatic fortification system

A sustainable tourism role for fortifications in the Italy–Croatia cross-border area presupposes a clear and shared understanding of what constitutes the fortified heritage, how its components relate to one another, and which values they represent. At present, knowledge and



Italy – Croatia



documentation are unevenly distributed: some sites are extensively studied and interpreted, while others remain less documented, and the network dimension across the Adriatic has only partially been addressed.

This strategy therefore places the improvement and sharing of knowledge at the foundation of cross-border tourism development around fortifications. Priority is given to identifying, organising, and, where possible, making accessible existing documentation, studies, surveys, historical sources, previous projects and management experiences, using shared parameters that facilitate comparison and joint interpretation. Rather than creating a new central archive, the emphasis is on connecting institutions that already hold relevant materials (municipal services, archives, libraries, museums, universities) and on ensuring that essential information is available to those involved in planning, management, education, and tourism.

On this basis, interpretive frameworks are developed that present fortifications in the cross-border area as elements of a wider Adriatic and Mediterranean defensive landscape, highlighting both common patterns and local specificities. Frameworks can inform the design of cross-border itineraries, educational activities, communication materials, and digital content, and help stakeholders situate individual sites within a broader narrative of shared history, transformation from military infrastructure to civic asset, and contemporary cross-border cooperation.

M2.2 — Development of cross-border fortification itineraries within existing mobility and tourism systems

Cross-border itineraries linking fortified sites across the Italy-Croatia area are promoted as a strategic instrument for reducing spatial and seasonal concentration of visitor flows and for bringing into view sites that are currently marginal in the tourism offer. The emphasis is on valorising existing heritage and mobility assets: identifying components with the strongest attraction potential, defining thematic narratives that connect them, and integrating these narratives into current regional and local excursions, and established tourism products.

In line with approaches already tested on other fortification systems, the goal is to increase both the cultural value and the actual use of fortified sites, generating positive spillovers for surrounding areas in a sustainable development perspective. Thematic frameworks draw on historical logics already recognised in expert and planning documents (for example, Venetian defensive systems, Austro-Hungarian coastal fortifications, twentieth-century military landscapes), and are articulated as coherent visitor experiences that can be communicated and adopted by different stakeholders, even when sites are not physically contiguous.



Routes are conceived primarily as interpretive and programming frameworks rather than continuous physical trails. Municipalities, DMOs, cultural institutions, schools, and private operators can activate individual segments through their own offers, guided visits, educational trips, combined packages, and integrate fortifications with other cultural and natural attractions. In this way, itineraries help to situate site-specific projects within a broader cross-border narrative and gradually consolidate a shared perception of Adriatic fortifications as a connected cultural landscape.

M2.3 — Promotion of de-seasonalized programming at fortified sites

Seasonal concentration of tourism in a small number of coastal destinations increases pressure on heritage and infrastructure in peak periods, while leaving many fortified sites underused for large parts of the year. The strategy positions fortifications as venues for cultural, educational, and civic activities that can help rebalance this pattern within a sustainable tourism perspective, broadening the range of experiences associated with these sites beyond the summer season.

Stakeholders across the cross-border area are encouraged to programme small and medium-scale activities at fortified sites in spring and autumn, such as thematic guided visits, school programmes, study trips, artist residencies, local festivals, and community events. These “immaterial” initiatives strengthen community participation and awareness, deepen knowledge of the fortification system as a whole, and support the emergence of new cultural and creative sectors linked to fortified heritage, without requiring major new infrastructure.

By gradually aligning such activities around shared periods and themes, a recognizable seasonal rhythm associated with fortification heritage can emerge at transnational level. Coordination can rely on existing partnerships, twinning, and educational networks, while sustainability principles and heritage sensitivity guide decisions on scale and logistics. In this way, de-seasonalized programming contributes simultaneously to heritage conservation (by reducing pressure on peak days), to local cultural life, and to more balanced tourism economies.

M2.4 — Visitor management based on carrying capacity principles

Integrating carrying capacity principles into the management of fortified sites is essential to ensure that tourism remains compatible with conservation, authenticity, and the quality of the visitor experience. Experience from World Heritage and other major heritage destinations shows that the absence of explicit thresholds and management responses leads either to uncontrolled impacts or to ad hoc restrictions that are difficult to communicate and justify.



Italy – Croatia



The strategy therefore supports the progressive use of carrying capacity concepts, adapted to the characteristics and resources of each site. Initial steps include identifying areas most vulnerable to pressure (narrow passages, fragile surfaces, viewpoints, surrounding paths), defining simple thresholds for acceptable use, and linking them to clear management responses: adjusting group sizes, sequencing visits, rearranging routes, or temporarily resting specific areas.

At sites experiencing higher levels of visitation, these elements can be consolidated into structured visitor management plans, drawing on established methodologies that link indicators, standards, monitoring, and management actions. Where technically and institutionally feasible, such plans can be connected with existing ticketing, booking, or guided-tour systems. In all cases, the objective is to move from reactive crowd control towards an anticipatory, evidence-based management of tourism impacts that protects both the material integrity of fortifications and the intangible values associated with them.

M2.5 — Linking fortified heritage with maritime and coastal economies

Fortified heritage in the cross-border area is closely associated with ports, navigation routes, fishing communities, and coastal landscapes, reflecting its historic role in organising and controlling maritime space. Today, this positioning offers an opportunity to connect cultural heritage with contemporary maritime and coastal economies in ways that support diversification, identity, and resilience.

The strategy encourages municipalities, port authorities, tourism organisations, and local operators to develop low-impact products and services that link fortifications with maritime culture: interpretive routes connecting forts and harbours, joint initiatives with maritime museums and archives, visits that combine historic sea routes with present-day sailing or rowing, or collaborations with small-scale fisheries and coastal communities. Such initiatives can contribute to new business ecosystems around fortified sites, where cultural, tourism, and local economic actors co-create value while recognising heritage as a shared resource.

Priority is given to solutions that rely on existing structures and facilities, minimise new physical interventions, and are framed within planning and regulatory tools that explicitly consider heritage impact and landscape values. In this way, the integration of fortifications into maritime and coastal economies reinforces their role as reference points in the territorial structure, rather than reducing them to background scenery for generic tourism.



M2.6 — Use of existing digital tools to improve cross-border visibility and access

Digital media are recognised as key enablers for strengthening the visibility, accessibility, and interpretive quality of fortified heritage, both for residents and for visitors. At the same time, the current digital landscape is fragmented: some sites experiment with VR, interactive guides, or rich online content, while others are represented only through basic listing information. The strategy responds to this situation by promoting a more coherent and network-oriented use of existing digital tools, rather than creating a new dedicated platform.

Priority actions include ensuring consistent and prominent representation of fortified sites on destination websites and tourism portals; harmonising essential information (access conditions, opening hours, safety requirements, interpretation highlights) and making it available in multiple languages; and integrating fortifications into existing itinerary planners, destination apps, and booking systems wherever technically and institutionally feasible. In parallel, digital interpretation is encouraged to refer not only to individual sites but also to their relationships within the wider fortification system, for example by situating each fort in the broader historical and territorial context. Where VR or other immersive tools have been developed, they can serve as focal points for such cross-border narratives: content can include references to other fortifications, links to shared themes, and signposting to further information, thereby contributing to the perception of the Adriatic fortification landscape as a connected whole. This incremental, ecosystem-oriented approach allows digital tools to support both local reuse strategies and the emerging cross-border identity of fortified heritage, without imposing new long-term operational burdens.





SO3 - STRENGTHEN PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP THROUGH MULTI- STAKEHOLDER PROCESSES

Effective long-term management of complex heritage sites cannot be achieved by public authorities acting alone. The experience of fortifications across Europe consistently demonstrates that the sites which perform best over time, in conservation outcomes, in social relevance, and in economic sustainability, are those where governance authority is genuinely shared across multiple categories of stakeholder: public owners and heritage authorities, local communities and civil society organizations, private enterprises and cultural operators, educational institutions and volunteer networks. This multi-actor model generates dividends that no single stakeholder can produce independently: public authorities provide legitimacy and regulatory capacity; communities provide local knowledge, social embeddedness, and voluntary contribution; enterprises provide operational efficiency and commercial viability; universities provide research expertise and critical perspective.

For the Adriatic fortification system, which spans two national jurisdictions and multiple administrative layers, the construction of effective participatory governance faces structural challenges beyond those encountered in nationally contained sites. The development of shared management instruments, transnational memoranda of understanding, cross-border governance protocols require sustained commitment and institutional investment that transcends individual project lifecycles. At the same time, the aspiration to transform fortifications into socially owned heritage assets, embedded in the daily life of their surrounding communities, demands interpretive approaches that are genuinely sensitive to the complex histories that these structures embody. Military heritage is inherently associated with conflict, and responsible interpretation requires methods that acknowledge plural narratives, promote reconciliation, and resist the reduction of complex histories.

The circular economy dimension of this objective addresses a distinct but related challenge: the need to develop new economic functions for fortifications that are environmentally sustainable, generate local employment, and reduce dependence on public subsidy. Fortifications, with large open spaces, imposing structures, and extraordinary landscapes, are natural candidates for



functions at the frontier of circular innovation: creative industries and cultural production using adaptive reuse spaces, ecological education and research, etc.

M3.1 — Establishment of multi-stakeholder governance processes

Effective governance of fortified heritage in the Italy–Croatia cross-border area calls for governance structure bringing together the full range of actors with a stake in the site's future: public heritage authorities, local government bodies, civil society organizations, private cultural and tourism enterprises, educational and research institutions, disability and inclusion organizations, and representatives of identified heritage communities. The strategy therefore promotes the establishment and consolidation of governance platforms which should operate through transparent procedures, published agendas, documented decisions, regular public reporting, that build trust and accountability among participants. Conflict resolution mechanisms should be established to manage the inevitable tensions between competing interests: conservation versus use, community access versus tourism development, public ownership versus private investment, so that decisions are framed within a shared understanding of heritage values and territorial objectives.

M3.2 — Heritage communities and plural narratives

Fortified heritage in the cross-border area concentrates multiple layers of memory and identity: military history, phases of urban and territorial development, experiences of conflict and occupation, subsequent periods of neglect, and more recent processes of reuse and reinterpretation. In line with the Faro Convention, the strategy underlines the importance of recognising and engaging “heritage communities” – groups of people who, today, attribute particular value to these sites and wish to see that value acknowledged and transmitted within the framework of public action.

Stakeholders are encouraged to develop context-appropriate instruments for involving such communities in the interpretation, programming and care of fortified sites. This may include participatory mapping of memories and contemporary uses, co-creation of interpretive content, involvement in cultural and educational initiatives, and forms of voluntary contribution compatible with conservation standards. Particular attention is paid to communities whose relationship with fortified heritage is marked by ambivalence or under-representation – for example, residents of neighbourhoods shaped by former military zones, descendants of groups historically associated with construction, service or defence, or communities for whom fortifications have long been experienced as barriers rather than resources. Opening space for these perspectives supports the development of more inclusive and nuanced narratives and reinforces the social legitimacy of decisions on access, reuse and investment.



M3.3 — Youth and next-generation stewardship

Structured programmes are encouraged to engage young people as the next generation of heritage stewards, combining formal learning with direct experience of fortified sites. Educational and cultural institutions across the cross-border area are invited to integrate fortifications more systematically into their activities, treating them as resources for learning about history, architecture, landscape, citizenship and environmental change.

This can include study visits, project work, summer schools, field laboratories and cross-border exchanges that allow pupils and students to work on real situations in and around fortifications, in dialogue with the professionals responsible for their conservation and management. Cross-border educational activities – such as joint summer schools, co-design workshops and thematic studios involving students from universities and training centres on both sides of the Adriatic – are particularly encouraged, as they introduce young people to the full complexity of fortification management: conservation, governance, sustainable tourism, digital interpretation and inclusive programming.

At higher and vocational education levels, cooperation between universities, training providers and heritage organisations is promoted for the development of modules and practice-based experiences directly applicable in the heritage sector, including maintenance, site management, interpretation and community engagement. In this way, the strategy supports the gradual emergence of a new generation of actors who are familiar with the specific challenges and opportunities of fortified heritage in the Adriatic context and who are connected through professional and peer networks that extend beyond individual projects or study cycles.

M3.4 — Inclusive and participatory approaches to reuse and programming

Decisions on the reuse and programming of fortified sites have direct implications for accessibility, social inclusion and the distribution of benefits generated by heritage-based development. The strategy therefore advocates for planning approaches that integrate consultation and co-design with a diversity of user groups, with particular attention to those whose needs and perspectives are often under-represented in heritage processes: persons with disabilities, children and young people, older residents, recent migrants, and groups in situations of socio-economic vulnerability.

Stakeholders are encouraged to employ participatory methods proportionate to their capacities and to the scale of the decisions at stake: for example, targeted interviews and workshops, participatory walks, testing of proposed uses and layouts with future user groups, or feedback cycles on draft plans and designs. The outcomes of these processes should inform the definition



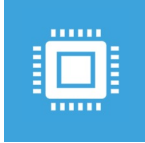
Italy – Croatia



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of functions, access arrangements, interpretive approaches and service offers, helping to ensure that fortified sites evolve as inclusive public spaces and that their revitalisation contributes to broader objectives of social cohesion and quality of life in the cross-border area.





SO4 - FOSTER INNOVATION, DIGITAL INTERPRETATION, AND UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY

The transformation of Adriatic fortifications from defensive military structures into open platforms for culture, education, and civic life requires interventions on multiple, simultaneous axes. Physical accessibility, understood as the ability to overcome architectural barriers that have historically characterized structures impeding movement, is a precondition for meaningful inclusion, but is not, by itself, sufficient. Genuine accessibility encompasses the full range of dimensions through which people may be excluded from cultural heritage: physical, sensory, cognitive, linguistic, economic, and digital. An integrated approach to universal accessibility recognizes these dimensions as interdependent and insists on design solutions that address all of them coherently, rather than treating each as a separate technical problem.

The digital dimension of accessibility and interpretation has acquired strategic centrality in the contemporary heritage landscape. Digital technologies, immersive extended reality environments, virtual and augmented reality applications, metaverse platforms, digital twins and three-dimensional documentation systems, have expanded the repertoire of interpretive instruments available to heritage managers, offering new possibilities for reaching distant audiences, representing temporal change and spatial complexity, and engaging visitors in active learning rather than passive consumption. For fortifications in particular, whose spatial logic is often difficult to apprehend at ground level and whose historical significance is inseparable from territorial systems invisible to contemporary visitors, digital interpretation offers uniquely powerful possibilities. At the same time, the development and deployment of these technologies carry risks: of privileging spectacular presentation over rigorous interpretation, of creating experiences accessible only to technology-comfortable visitors, and of producing digital assets that become rapidly obsolete without sustained maintenance investment.

The FORTIC partnership has directly tested a range of digital interpretation approaches, developing concrete experience with the practical requirements, technical, financial, curatorial, and institutional, of implementing metaverse showrooms, augmented reality layers, sign-language tour content, and immersive educational programs at Adriatic fortification sites. This experience provides a realistic foundation for the formulation of measures that are both technically ambitious and operationally grounded.



M4.1 — Physical accessibility improvements across Adriatic fortifications

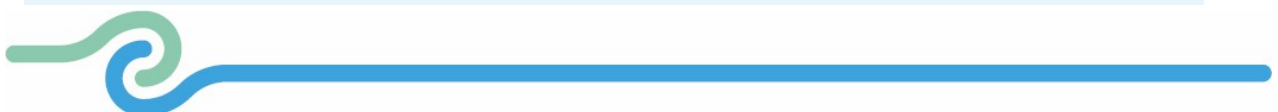
Barrier-free access should be progressively implemented at partner sites, but also across fortified heritage sites in the wider Croatia–Italy cross-border area, through interventions designed to respect heritage integrity while enabling equitable use. Access improvements should also be guided by universal design principles, anticipating the needs of the full spectrum of potential users rather than retrofitting minimum compliance measures. Specific solutions will include: accessible pathways and routes using compatible materials and gradients appropriate to heritage contexts; improved entrances and threshold transitions; accessible sanitary facilities; rest areas with appropriate seating and shading; and tactile orientation systems for visually impaired visitors. All physical accessibility interventions will be subject to heritage authority approval, ensuring that improvements do not compromise the authenticity or integrity of the fortification fabric.

M4.2 — Multilingual and multi-sensory interpretation systems

Interpretive systems across the Adriatic fortification network should be developed to serve audiences of diverse linguistic backgrounds and sensory capabilities. Multilingual signage and digital guides (covering Italian / Croatian, and English, with additional languages added progressively) should ensure basic orientation and site understanding for international visitors. Sign-language video tours will be produced in Italian and Croatian national sign languages for visitors with hearing difficulties. Audio-described tours will be developed for visually impaired visitors, supplemented by tactile relief models at key sites enabling non-visual engagement with spatial complexity. All interpretive content should be developed in collaboration with representatives of the communities whose accessibility needs it addresses, and will be evaluated through structured user testing before deployment.

M4.3 — Development and deployment of augmented and virtual reality interpretation

Augmented reality applications should be developed and deployed across the fortification network, using mobile platforms to overlay historical reconstructions, animated interpretive content, and spatial diagrams onto contemporary site conditions. AR experiences should be designed to communicate the spatial logic of defensive systems, the relationship between individual structures, the territorial extent of defensive perimeters, the visual corridors that were operationally essential, in ways that are legible to non-specialist visitors. Virtual reality content should extend engagement to audiences unable to visit physical sites, through immersive photogrammetric reconstructions that communicate the sensory qualities of fortified spaces.



Development standards will prioritize long-term maintainability: content should be produced in formats compatible with multiple platforms, and technical documentation should be maintained to support future updates and adaptations.

M4.4 — Cross-border metaverse and digital twin infrastructure

A cross-border digital environment should connect fortified sites in a virtual space that functions as both a public interpretation platform and a professional management tool. Public-facing functionality should enable users worldwide to navigate a virtual representation of the Adriatic fortification network, encounter the heritage of each site through interactive multimedia content, and engage with the network as a coherent transnational landscape. Professional functionality should support site managers, conservation professionals, and researchers with high-resolution three-dimensional documentation, structured condition monitoring data, and comparative analysis tools. Interoperability standards should ensure that the digital infrastructure can accommodate new partners and can communicate with broader European cultural heritage data systems.





SO5 - PROMOTE TRANSFER AND REUSE OF THE FORTIC APPROACH IN THE WIDER ADRIATIC AND INTERREG SPACE THROUGH CAPITALIZATION, POLICY INTEGRATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY

Within this Joint Strategy, capitalisation is understood as a structured and iterative process through which tested approaches to the management and reuse of fortifications are made available to a wider community of practice. It mediates between the analytical and project-based work presented in Chapters 1–3 and the partner local action plans in Chapter 5, so that knowledge, methods and lessons learned do not remain limited to a single funding period but circulate as shared resources for the Adriatic region and for comparable territories within the Interreg framework. In this sense, transfer and reuse are conceived not as the simple dissemination of individual outputs, but as a progressive convergence of practices, standards and interpretive frameworks around a common understanding of fortified heritage as a key vector for sustainable and inclusive territorial development. Institutional continuity and policy integration are recognized as fundamental conditions for the sustained effectiveness of this repertoire. When approaches are not anchored in stable institutional mandates, clearly identified reference bodies and coherent links to regional, national and European policy frameworks, capitalisation tends to remain episodic and tied to individual projects, rather than contributing to the gradual, long-term evolution of heritage governance in the Adriatic context.

M5.1 — Capitalisation of high-potential FORTIC solutions

Among the various approaches tested within FORTIC, a selected group of solutions with the highest potential for transfer and reuse is consolidated in this Joint Strategy and its accompanying digital resources and presented as a common set of example models that other Adriatic and Interreg territories can draw upon when developing their own approaches to fortified heritage. For these high-potential solutions, the Strategy provides a concise description of aims, principal components and indicative conditions of application, together with clear links to the partner institutions that act as primary reference points for their further adaptation and dissemination.



M5.2 — Local action plans as instruments of continuity and reuse

Within the overall management framework proposed by this Strategy, partner local action plans function as key instruments through which strategic directions are translated into time-bound, site-specific commitments. Each plan situates selected high-potential FORTIC solutions within the particular legal, institutional and community context of the fortifications concerned, and defines the concrete steps by which these approaches will be consolidated, adapted or further developed in the coming years.

M5.3 — Policy integration and networked governance for capitalisation

In order for the most mature and widely applicable FORTIC models to support long-term improvements in heritage management in the Adriatic context, they should be progressively integrated into broader policy and planning frameworks at regional, national and European levels, including those relating to cultural heritage, tourism and territorial cohesion. Policy documents and planning instruments should, where appropriate, refer to these models as illustrative examples of integrated approaches to fortified heritage, sustainable tourism and inclusive governance.

In parallel, a light but enduring form of networked governance, drawing on existing European fortification networks and, where relevant, dedicated coordination mechanisms – should provide a platform for maintaining shared principles and standards, facilitating dialogue and mutual learning between participating territories, and sustaining the visibility of FORTIC as a reference contribution to heritage-led territorial development.





4.3 INDICATORS

Strategic objective	Indicator	Target by 2030
 SO1 – SAFEGUARD, REVITALISE AND ENHANCE THE CULTURAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUES OF ADRIATIC FORTIFICATIONS THROUGH INTEGRATED CONSERVATION	Number of fortification sites in the programme area with up-to-date documentation and a basic conservation / maintenance plan (including climate-risk aspects)	At least 1 priority site per partner city
	Number of partner cities/regions with a defined coordination structure for fortification management (formal or informal)	At least 5 partner administrations
	Number of joint cross-border knowledge-exchange events on fortification conservation or management per year	Minimum 1 event per year
 SO2 – INTEGRATE FORTIFICATIONS INTO SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CROSS-BORDER ROUTES,	Number of operational cross-border fortification itineraries promoted through official tourism and mobility channels	At least 3 itineraries
	Share of visitors coming outside the main summer season at selected pilot sites (compared to baseline year)	Relative increase of at least 10–15% at each pilot site

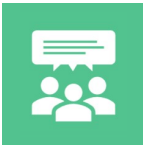




Strategic objective	Indicator	Target by 2030
DE-SEASONALISATION, AND SMART VISITOR MANAGEMENT	Number of fortified sites in partner cities with regular off-season cultural or educational programming (outside peak summer months)	At least 1 site per partner city or municipality (min. 5 sites)
 SO3 – STRENGTHEN PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP THROUGH MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PROCESSES	Number of multi-stakeholder governance platforms for fortifications established or consolidated (local or regional level)	At least 4 platforms
	Number of participatory activities per year (workshops, co-design sessions, community events) directly linked to fortress planning, reuse or programming	Minimum 10 activities per year across the partnership
	Estimated number of participants from local communities involved annually in fortress-related participatory processes	At least 300 participants per year across the partnership (adjustable)
 SO4 – FOSTER INNOVATION, DIGITAL INTERPRETATION, AND UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY	Number of fortification sites in the partnership with improved physical and/or content accessibility (e.g. Access measures, multi-sensory or multilingual interpretation)	At least 1 site per partner city, not including universities





Strategic objective	Indicator	Target by 2030
 SO5 – PROMOTE TRANSFER AND REUSE OF THE FORTIC APPROACH IN THE WIDER ADRIATIC AND INTERREG SPACE THROUGH CAPITALISATION, POLICY INTEGRATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY	Number of fortification sites represented in shared digital tools (AR/VR, metaverse, digital twin, unified platforms) and annual users of these tools	At least 10 sites represented and >10,000 cumulative users by 2030 (adjusted to data)
	Number of educational institutions (schools, universities, training centers) that use FORTIC-related digital content in their regular programmes	At least 10 institutions across the programme area
	Number of policies, plans or projects outside FORTIC that explicitly reference or reuse FORTIC approaches, tools or models	At least 5 documents / initiatives (HR and IT combined)
	Number of local action plans formally adopted and actively used as guidance after project end	All FORTIC partners with an adopted LAP and evidence of at least 1 measure launched by 2030
	Number of external territories or organizations (beyond original partners) that join Night of fortresses or similar initiatives inspired by FORTIC	At least 10 additional participants by 2030



5. THE WAY FORWARD - PARTNER LOCAL ACTION PLANS FOR INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY

The final part of the Strategy translates the common framework into concrete partner-level action. For each participating city or institution, it sets out a concise local profile and a set of priority projects, short-term activities, timelines, indicative costs and opportunities for capitalisation, building directly on the knowledge, socio-economic analysis and stakeholder inputs generated within FORTIC.

The local action plans are conceived as an integral part of this Strategy and share its time horizon up to 2030, while recognising that implementation will continue beyond this period. For this reason, the proposed measures focus on what is realistically achievable in the observed period, but are framed so as to support longer-term development of fortified heritage and its surroundings.





LOCAL ACTION PLAN

CITY OF PULA-POLA (LP)



LP - CITY OF PULA-POLA

Pula, located in the southern part of Istria, is the region's largest urban center, with approximately 50,000 inhabitants. The Bay of Pula, a naturally formed harbor, along with the gently undulating terrain and the agricultural potential of the surrounding area, historically favoured the concentration of population in this region. Historically, Istria's position along the maritime route between major Western and Eastern centers contributed to the area's present-day cultural richness.

Pula contains one of the most complex and extensive defensive systems in the Mediterranean: a three-ring system of Austro-Hungarian fortifications. The defensive network includes approximately fifty forts, towers, military barracks, and other military infrastructure, with twenty-five located within the city's administrative boundaries. Of these, the City of Pula directly manages five sites, while the remaining fortifications are under the authority of the national government.

The earliest defensive structures in Pula reemerged during the Roman period, when the city was formally established on the site of fortified settlements from the Bronze and Iron Ages. Over subsequent centuries, various rulers enhanced Pula's strategic significance. The Venetians constructed the Kaštel fortress as their central defensive point, supplemented by smaller forts and towers, while the French under Napoleon built additional fortifications, such as the stronghold on the island of St. Andrew. A significant transformation occurred when Pula became part of the Habsburg Monarchy and, from the mid-19th century, served as the main naval base of the Austro-Hungarian Navy. Rapid military construction expanded upon existing structures, resulting in a series of three defensive rings that protected the naval base with artillery towers, coastal batteries, circular and horseshoe-shaped forts, and extensive defensive infrastructure along the coast and surrounding islands. **The fortification system was developed to safeguard the main naval port of the Habsburg Monarchy, with construction occurring in three phases between 1823 and 1918.** The first phase (approximately 1823–1870) focused on building circular fortifications and artillery towers. The second phase (1872–1889) introduced standardized circular and segmental forts with inner courtyards. The third phase (1892–1918) marked a technological shift, as the invention of high-explosive shells rendered circular forts obsolete, leading to the adoption of polygonal fortifications integrated into the terrain.



Italy – Croatia



Certain structures such as Fort Bourguignon were constructed to control access to the port, illustrating the empire's transition to modern polygonal fortification systems and the deployment of heavy coastal artillery. Additional forts, including Fort Muzil, Fort St. George, Fort Munida, Fort Cassoni Vecchi, and the later Punta Christo fortress, demonstrate the evolution of military technologies and architectural forms. Spanning seven hundred square kilometers, this system became the most complex Austro-Hungarian fortification network in Europe and represents the pinnacle of 19th-century European fortification architecture. By the early 20th century, Pula's defense network incorporated trenches, wire obstacles, minefields, supply railways, guard posts, and both permanent and mobile batteries, organized into seventeen defensive sectors that protected both land and sea approaches. **During the First World War, elements were unified into the "Fortress Pula," which extended from the Lim Channel to the Raša Channel and Premantura, encompassing Brijuni and outposts as distant as Mali Lošinj.**

After the fortifications lost their defensive function in the mid-20th century and came under the administration of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), their status changed significantly. **Former military zones became areas of "special purpose", while the fortifications themselves were used as storage facilities, dumping grounds, or simply left to deteriorate.** The demilitarisation of the Pula Bay after 1990 opened up the possibility of a different relationship towards this heritage, but also exposed a series of accumulated problems, from physical degradation and vandalism to unresolved ownership issues between the state and the city, as well as the absence of a long-term and sustainable strategy for their use and protection. Despite the exceptional heritage, landscape and ecological value of the fortification system, many of the structures remain difficult to access, are only rarely used or interpreted for public purposes, particularly in relation to tourism, **and continue to exist largely at the margins of the city's everyday life and development.** Although in some cases the fortifications have gradually become physically embedded within surrounding neighbourhoods, the system as a whole has yet to be meaningfully integrated into the wider urban fabric, whether through public use, cultural programming, or strategic urban development. Spatial planning documents and conservation practice gradually began to recognise the Austrian fortifications as built heritage of exceptional cultural value; however, the emphasis largely remained on general preservation objectives, while concrete programmes and management models developed only sporadically, often depending on individual initiatives. The system also possesses exceptional ecological and landscape value since each fortification represents an architectural-natural ensemble in which the built structure is complemented by defensive moats and camouflage vegetation. **The fortifications were designed in accordance with the terrain's topography and the military logic of the time, making use of the natural advantages of each location.**





Over the past two decades, within objectively limited financial and ownership-related constraints, the City has gradually established the minimum conditions necessary for a more substantial approach to the fortification system.

In cooperation with state authorities and the conservation service, several of the most important structures were entered into the Register of Cultural Goods, formally acknowledging their heritage value and enabling access to national and European funding mechanisms. At the same time, historical design documentation was obtained from archives in Vienna, while a series of architectural surveys, conservation studies, main design projects and cost estimates were prepared for individual structures. Within spatial planning documents, the fortifications were recognised as a distinct category of heritage subject to the highest level of protection, with clearly designated cultural and public uses, thereby establishing a framework that, at least in principle, prevents the most severe forms of degradation.

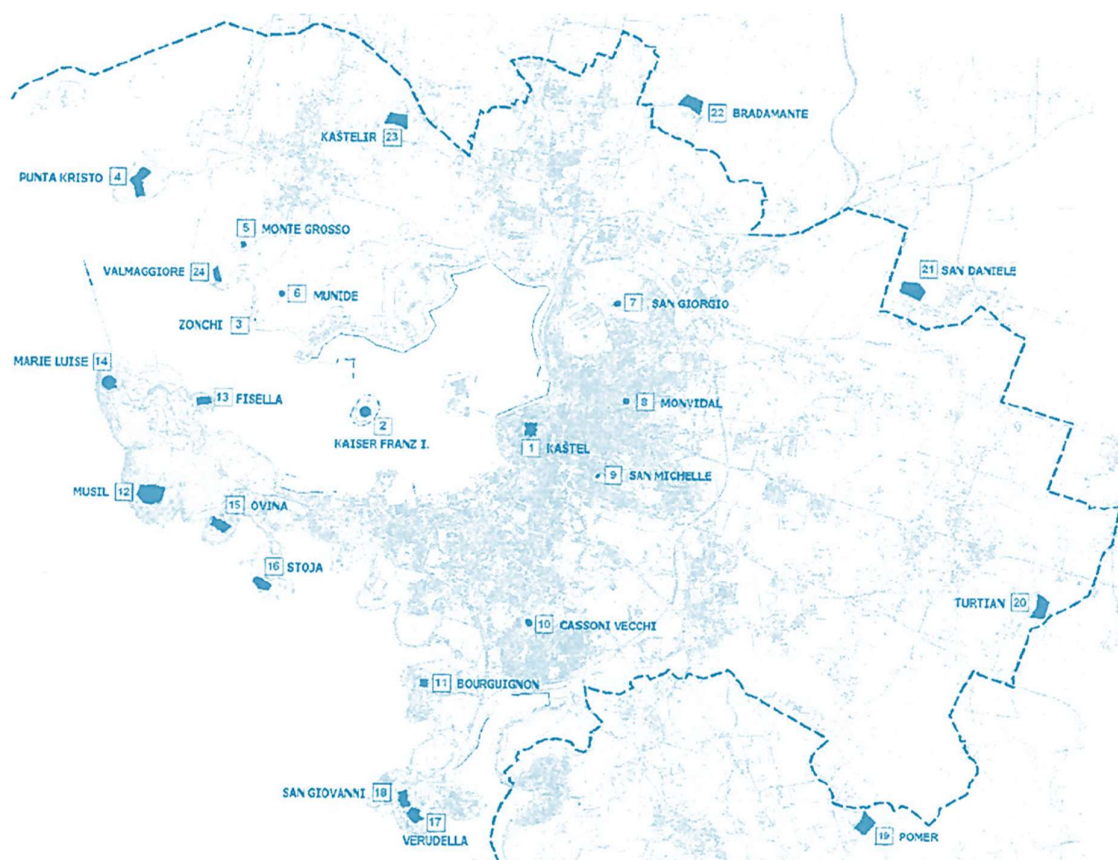


Fig. 1: Overview of major fortification structures in the city of Pula and its immediate surroundings



Italy – Croatia



In practice, the City was able to act primarily in cases where it held ownership or a clearly defined management role. On several sites in the Štinjan Bay area, a pilot project funded through a IT-CRO cross-border cooperation programme enabled the clearing of overgrown areas, mitigation of basic safety risks, arrangement and marking of pedestrian routes, installation of information panels, and provision of minimal visitor infrastructure. However, following changes in ownership relations, whereby Fort Punta Christo became property of the Republic of Croatia, the continued maintenance and further development of the project outcomes unfortunately did not materialise. **In several cases, fortifications were assigned for long-term use to public institutions or civil society organisations, which subsequently developed new cultural and tourism-related programmes,** while a number of remaining sites continue to function only provisionally, as venues for occasional events or spaces awaiting a clearer programme framework. At the same time, recognising that unresolved ownership issues and transfers to state ownership substantially limited further interventions on site, the City concentrated its main strategic effort on a project for which it could assume full responsibility: the creation of an interpretation centre for the entire fortification system through the development of the interpretation centre in one of the fortress, Kaštel, and its underground. Financed through the ITI mechanism, the project was aimed at presenting the fortification complex as a new cultural and tourism product.

It is within this broader continuity that the City's involvement in the FORTIC project should be understood. Building on the knowledge accumulated so far and an established network of partners, **the City sought to initiate a more systematic process of fortification revitalisation, improve governance models, and strengthen long-term capacities for the stewardship of this segment of heritage.**



illustrative examples of good practice:

The Pula Fort Centre

The Pula Fort Centre is an Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) mechanism project that activated **Kaštel**, the Venetian castle that houses the Historical and Maritime **Museum of Istria** and functionally linked it with the **Zerostrasse**, a system of underground shelters. It now offers an integrated cultural-tourist product of themed exhibitions, panoramic views of the city, and the **Pula Fort Centre** itself. It was arranged as a knowledge and documentation center with an interactive multimedia exhibition interpreting the local fortification system, supported by a catalogue that highlights the entire network of forts. The project restored the eastern curtain wall, created accessible facilities, adapted interior spaces for new exhibitions, installed a partially panoramic lift connecting Zerostrasse and the Kaštel courtyard, upgraded tunnel infrastructure, introduced a new visitor-flow and ticketing system and a new website. In cooperation between city authorities, the museum, the University of Pula and other stakeholders a **FORTIC visit to this best practice site (D.3.3.3)** was organized highlighting this transformation that activated underused heritage. Combining physical refurbishment with new cultural and educational program It produced tangible spatial improvements and demonstrated that fortifications can support both local quality of



Figure 8. Kaštel aerial view – photo: Pula Fort Center

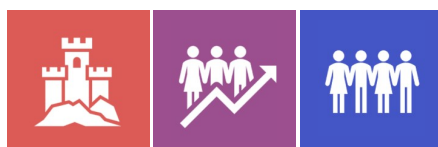


Figure 9. Pula Fort Center interior – photo: Pula Fort Center





MEASURE 1. – REVITALISATION OF FORT BOURGUIGNON - TOWARDS A NEW CULTURAL ROLE



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO1**, **SO2** and **SO3** by combining phased conservation and design, structural stabilization, participatory programming, and long-term management, the measure directly advances the project's goals of safeguarding fortified heritage, integrating it into territorial development, strengthening community ownership, enhancing accessibility, and enabling transfer and reuse across the wider Adriatic space.

Fort Bourguignon is one of the bigger structurally preserved fortifications owned by the City of Pula, situated on a prominent location it creates considerable spatial potential to be integrated into cultural and public life of the city.

The City's vision for Fort Bourguignon is as an open, multi-purpose public infrastructure where heritage interpretation, contemporary cultural programs, and everyday urban life are integrated. The interpretive framework may address the evolution of Pula's defensive system, the relationship between military and civil history, and the broader processes of converting former military spaces for public and cultural use. Future uses should remain flexible to accommodate interpretive elements, spaces for small- and medium-scale events such as exhibitions, performances, and screenings, as well as educational and residency programs, commercial activities. Open areas of the fort, particularly its surroundings, should be kept for informal and daily visitation. The development of a conservation study and the commencement of design works under the FORTIC project create the conditions for a systematic approach to Fort Bourguignon and its revitalisation.

All interventions and usage models should prioritize the preservation of the fort's primary heritage values, including its circular plan, two-storey casemates, the spatial relationships among the inner courtyard, ditch, and caponiers, as well as the fort's impact on the Monsival landscape and the broader coastal panorama of Pula. Project documentation should address structural needs through targeted interventions, including consolidation of the structure and stone elements, resolving moisture issues, improving access, and introducing necessary infrastructure. Revitalization should proceed incrementally, in phases, while maintaining the ongoing presence of programs and users. Temporary activities, including the Night of Fortresses, workshops,



Italy – Croatia



guided tours, and pilot programs organized by cultural institutions and civil society organizations, should continue during the preparation phases, as permitted by the building's current condition.

Given the financial and technical requirements of reconstruction, efforts to secure necessary funding should begin as early as the process of project documentation design, with possible sources such as ITI mechanism, other national and European funding instruments, in alignment with the City's capacities. At the same time, a model for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the investment should be developed by clearly defining the City's role, encouraging partnerships with civil and private sectors, and also by establishing a viable management framework.

The next step is to prepare a feasibility study and management model that takes into account the capacities of municipal institutions, the potential of partners, and available co-financing from national and European funds. Fort Bourguignon should serve as a reference point for the planning, development, and management of fortifications owned by the City of Pula, as a clear demonstration that fortification heritage can be responsibly planned, conserved, and utilized.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead	Funding Source	Indicative Cost
PROJECT DESIGN DOCUMENTATION	Technical documentation in compliance with regulations, developed in phases; overseen by the Conservation Department; part of FORTIC Deliverable D.1.1.1	2026-2027	City of Pula	FORTIC, City budget, EU funds	€100,000
UTILITY CONNECTION TECHNICAL DOCUMENTATION	Preparation of project and technical documentation for connecting the fortress to municipal water, sewage and electricity networks, in coordination with utility providers	2027+	City of Pula, HEP, Vodovod Pula	City budget	€25,000 + VAT
BASIC CLEANING AND SAFETY WORKS	Targeted cleaning, minor repairs and basic safety measures to enable limited	2027+	City of Pula	City budget	€30,000



Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead	Funding Source	Indicative Cost
FEASIBILITY STUDY AND MANAGEMENT MODEL PARTICIPATORY CONCEPTUAL PROCESS APPLICATIONS TO EU AND NATIONAL FUNDING PROGRAMMES INTERIM PROGRAMMING AND CULTURAL ACTIVATION FULL INVESTMENT REVITALISATION	use of the site for events (e.g. Night of Fortresses) pending full revitalisation				
	Analysis of revitalisation financing models; definition of the programmatic concept; comparative review of similar heritage reuse cases	2027–2028	City of Pula	City budget	€30,000
	Participatory design workshop to define the programmatic and spatial concept, with broad stakeholder involvement	2027–2028	City of Pula	City budget	€25,000 + VAT
	Preparation and submission of project documentation to MRRFEU, Ministry of Culture	2028–2029	City of Pula	EU funds (Interreg, ERDF), national schemes	-
	Continuation of temporary programmes (Night of Fortresses, workshops, guided tours) throughout preparation and construction phases	2026–2030	City of Pula, civil society organisations	City budget, Tourist Board	€100,000
	Conservation and construction works for full public and cultural use, subject to feasibility study	2029+	City of Pula	EU structural funds, Ministry of Culture, City budget	€3,500,000**

*Amounts are indicative, do not include VAT and refer to the full period, not annual allocations

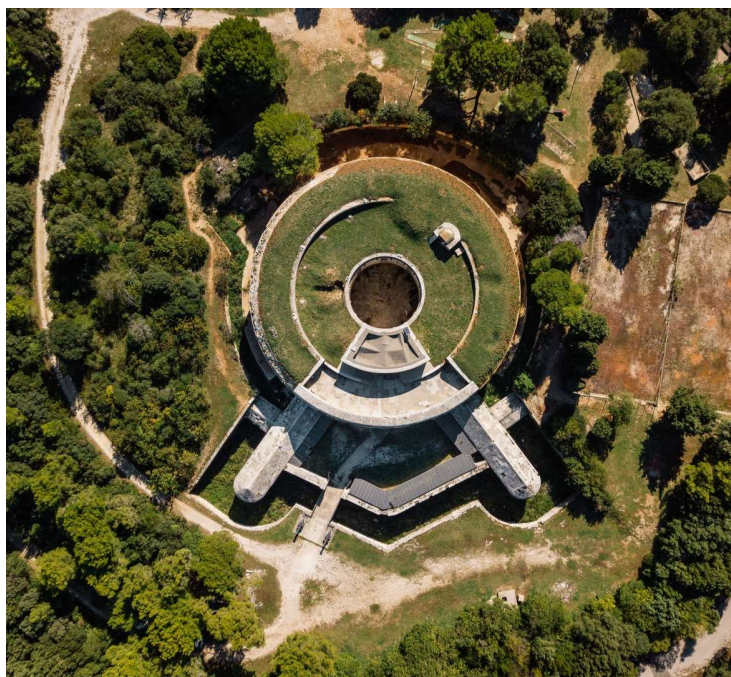


FORT BOURGUIGNON



ARCHITECTURAL AND SPATIAL FEATURES

The fort is a circular coastal artillery work situated 42 meters above sea level, with a deep dry ditch, casemated interior spaces on two levels, thick load-bearing masonry and concrete walls, and a central courtyard. It was built in several phases between the early 1850s and mid-1860s and presents a smaller circular “Pula tower” type fort, with a diameter of about 27 meters, and an internal courtyard, later enveloped by a larger ring of casemates with an overall diameter of 45.5 meters. The complex includes two caponiers and galleries in the counterscarp and is completed by the Monsival artillery battery on the south-western defensive embankment adjacent to the fort.





Relationship with settlement and landscape

Fort Bourguignon is located on the Monsival hill on the Verudela peninsula south of Pula, within a green belt that still clearly reads as part of the historic defensive landscape. It commands wide views towards the open sea and the entrance to Pula Bay, while from the shoreline and coastal paths the fort appears as a dominant stone volume emerging from vegetation. Although it is surrounded by tourist accommodation zones, it remains spatially separated from residential fabric and is reached by a single access road.



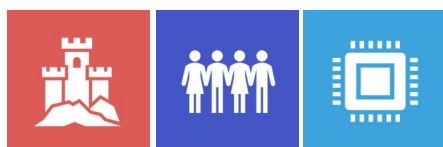


OWNERSHIP AND CURRENT USE

Fort Bourguignon is in the ownership of the City of Pula and is individually protected as an immovable cultural property (Reg. No. Z-4024) within the broader system of Pula fortifications. Built as a coastal artillery fort and later used as barracks and storage within successive military systems, after the Second World War it functioned mainly as an auxiliary facility within the JNA zone, before gradually being taken over by local cultural and community initiatives. Today the fort is only partially accessible: parts of the interior are used as storage space by the Archaeological Museum of Istria, while other areas are periodically opened for concerts, club nights, alternative music events and community programmes, which continue the more recent tradition of the fort as an informal cultural venue. Large sections of the building nonetheless remain underused and in need of structural repairs and conservation works in order to meet the standards required for regular public use in line with its protected status.



MEASURE 2: DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR FORTRESS MANAGEMENT



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO1**, **SO3** and **SO4** by establishing a strategic, city-wide framework that guides prioritisation, management responsibilities, partnerships with state and private actors, maintenance protocols and funding strategies, it creates the governance and decision-making conditions needed for coordinated protection, revitalisation, sustainable reuse and inclusive participation across the whole fortification network.

Effective management of the fortress system extends beyond the maintenance of individual structures; it is a tool for advancing protection, revitalisation, and integration of fortifications into the city's public and cultural life.

In the absence of an institutional framework that coordinates knowledge, resources, and decision-making, interventions might remain isolated and time-limited. However, this issue is not unique to Pula. European experience demonstrates that successful conversions of individual fortifications typically occur as stand-alone projects rather than as outcomes of systemic efforts. However, Pula possesses significant potential in this regard, as the City already has relevant experience, expertise, and examples of good practice related to heritage management.

The initial step does not require the immediate creation of a new institution or the formalisation of a dedicated structure. Instead, it necessitates a clear vision and strategic direction. Key questions should be addressed, such as the City's ten-year objectives for its fortifications, the prioritisation and sequencing of site development, the identification of sustainable long-term use models, and the definition of responsible management within the context of Pula. A well-defined framework should enable the development of concrete priorities, projects, and financial plans.

The precise structure of the future management model, whether it remains within the existing municipal framework, or in other formats, does not require immediate determination. The needed consideration is that decisions regarding capacity building and responsibility sharing are made incrementally, aligned with the City's available resources and informed by experience from specific projects.

The ownership structure introduces additional complexity. Of the approximately thirty fortification sites within Pula's system, only a minority are owned by the City, with the majority



Italy – Croatia



under the authority of the state or other public entities. Under these circumstances, managing system development is not feasible without ongoing, structured dialogue with state institutions. This dialogue must address both individual sites and a shared understanding of the fortifications' role in the city's spatial and cultural development. Consequently, municipal policy on fortifications must operate on two levels: internally, by gradually establishing capacities and management practices for city-owned sites, and externally, by building partnerships with state owners that may lead to use agreements, joint investments, or the transfer of specific management responsibilities over time.

A successful management framework also encompasses practical, day-to-day considerations. In the absence of clear protocols for inspections and preventive maintenance, even recently repaired structures can deteriorate more rapidly than the City can address. Regular condition surveys, prompt responses to damage, and clearly assigned responsibility for operational costs are needed prerequisites for ensuring that investments yield lasting benefits.

In this context, prioritising the revitalisation of individual fortresses should not rely solely on intuition or technical readiness. Heritage management experience indicates that projects are frequently initiated where obstacles are minimal, such as when ownership, spatial planning status, and documentation are partially resolved. While this approach is understandable, it may not align with the system's actual needs. The fortresses most technically prepared for intervention are not always those whose restoration is most critical for the city or community.

A more integrated approach requires multiple layers of assessment. The first layer should address the condition and potential of each site, including preservation status, values to be protected, urban context, accessibility, and an initial estimate of the work required for safe and meaningful use. The second layer should evaluate strategic and programmatic relevance, such as the potential for sustainable use that meets community needs, enhances cultural and tourism offerings, and integrates with the broader network of public spaces. The third layer considers feasibility and capacity, including ownership status, alignment with spatial planning documents, opportunities for phased implementation, and the ability of the City and its partners to complete the project.

In addition to these considerations, financial factors have an important role, serving not only as constraints but also as planning tools. The revitalisation of fortifications typically exceeds the capacity of the municipal budget, making the ability to secure external co-financing an important criterion during the priority-setting process. It is therefore needed to systematically monitor opportunities provided by European structural funds, Interreg programmes, and other EU programs, and national schemes for culture and heritage. Advance consideration should be given to which project phases and sites are best matched to specific funding instruments. Accessing



Italy – Croatia



these sources requires prepared documentation, a programme and management model, and reliable partners. This further outlines the need for strategic framework as a foundational element.

In this context, openness to public-private partnerships represents a pursuit of viable models for sites requiring significant investment and long-term management, rather than a departure from the public interest. European practice recognises various forms of cooperation, including concession-type arrangements for specific functions and formal investment-management partnerships, provided that heritage protection standards, public access, and community involvement are clearly defined. For Pula, this implies that potential cooperation models with private and civil society actors should be integrated into feasibility studies and strategic documents from the outset, rather than adopted as ad hoc responses to individual investors or funding opportunities.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
DIGITAL INVENTORY AND ARCHIVING OF WHOLE FORTIFICATION SYSTEM	Systematic listing and geolocation mapping of all fortifications within the city integrated into GIS (ownership, basic physical condition, current use, legal status, accessibility, basic volumetric data), with a simple visual structural condition check, available archival material, and photo survey documentation	2027–2028	City of Pula	City budget, EU funding for Smart City or digitalisation projects	€75.000
INVENTORY AND ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF CITY OWNED FORTIFICATIONS	Systematic mapping of the city owned fortifications combined with a more detailed architectural survey (basic plans and sections, photo documentation, preliminary assessment of structural condition)	2027–2028	City of Pula, conservation authorities	City budget, EU funding	€220.000



Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND PRIORITISATION METHODOLOGY	Preparation of a strategic document that defines the vision, objectives and main guidelines for fortification management, together with a simple multi-criteria methodology for determining the sequence of revitalisation (condition and potential of each site, strategic/programme role, feasibility and financing framework).	2027–2028	City of Pula	City budget, EU funds	€40.000
	Based on all previous Measures: selection of several priority fortifications for the future revitalisation and, for each selected fort, preparation of a basic operational plan (intended use, programme concept, indicative management model, estimate of maintenance costs and potential revenues).	2028–2029	City of Pula, competent ministries	City budget	50.000€
	Establishment of regular, structured dialogue with state owners (Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Physical Planning, etc.) on use, joint investments and possible transfer of certain competences.	2026 onwards	City of Pula, competent ministries	City budget	



Italy – Croatia



FORTIC

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
COOPERATION WITH ASSOCIATIONS AND FORT USERS	Continuation and structuring of cooperation with associations, cultural actors and other users already active in the forts: regular meetings, joint monitoring of conditions, information exchange and involvement in planning of content and management models.	2026 onwards	City of Pula, associations, public institutions, conservation authorities	City budget, programmes for CSOs	5.000€

*Amounts are indicative, do not include VAT and refer to the full period, not annual allocations



MEASURE 3: POPULARISATION OF THE FORTIFICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMMES FOR CITIZENS AND VISITORS



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO2** and **SO3** by turning the fortification system into a connected network of learning, recreation, and cultural spaces. By building long-term community engagement and shared stewardship through programmes such as Fort Centre Pula, Aquarium Pula interpretation and the Night of Fortresses. By gradually expanding activities and integrating existing uses and setting common rules of engagement with this heritage.

Although elements of the fortification system are highly recognisable, they are still largely perceived in public, and especially by tourist, without a clear understanding of the fortifications as a system and of its unique value.

Pula's fortification system represents one of the defining features of the city's spatial and historical identity, yet the potential is underrecognized. This is particularly the case because part of the network of fortifications remains outside the city's everyday life and use. At the same time, the hidden nature of the fortifications may be what makes them Pula's most valuable hidden itinerary, creating a sense of intrigue and curiosity among both residents and visitors.

Following demilitarisation and the withdrawal of the military, a long transitional period emerged during which citizens spontaneously began using abandoned military spaces, ranging from early cultural events to festival activities. This measure therefore starts from the fact that the fortifications are already deeply embedded in the collective image of the city and, to some extent, in its everyday practices, and that this potential should be transformed into a clear, accessible and diverse network of spaces intended for both citizens and visitors. This is particularly important given that interest in military architectural heritage, especially cultural assets such as those found in Pula, is currently experiencing renewed recognition and growth, while Pula itself has yet to fully articulate and present its fortification story.

The aim of the measure is to gradually connect the fortification system into a network of places for learning, recreation, culture and social interaction, while respecting the different forms of use that have developed over time. In the initial phase, the focus is placed on increasing the visibility of sites that already serve a public and social function. In terms of recognition and visibility among



Italy – Croatia

FORTIC

visitors, this primarily refers to Kaštel, which originated as a Venetian fortress built on the remains of a hillfort, roman castrum and medieval castle. Although it dates from a different historical period than the rest of the city's fortifications that form part of Pula's fortification system, it nevertheless represents its organic point of origin.

Today, Kaštel houses the Historical and Maritime Museum of Istria, including the recently established Fort Centre Pula visitor centre, whose purpose is to introduce visitors to the city's fortification system and from which users can continue towards other fortifications. The most visited attraction located within the fortifications is Aquarium Pula, situated in the Austro-Hungarian Fort Verudela and Battery San Giovanni, which attracts more than 200,000 visitors annually. It represents an example of successful revitalisation of forts for scientific, educational and cultural-tourism purposes, as well as a centre for the protection of endangered plant and animal species. Nevertheless, the public and visitors rarely perceive it primarily as a successfully revitalised Austro-Hungarian fortification. Instead, the focus tends to be on its exotic and Mediterranean exhibition setting, while it is seldom recognised or interpreted as part of the broader narrative of the city's fortification system. A significant step forward in this regard lies in the planned intervention within the Aquarium complex, where a smaller exhibition space dedicated to Austro-Hungarian fortifications is expected to contribute to a better understanding of the city's rich military history and further enrich the visitor experience of Aquarium Pula.

These two locations, and potentially Fort Bourguignon, depending on its future function and redevelopment, are seen as key points from which the narrative can expand towards other fortifications, particularly in relation to visitors and tourists. Fort Centre Pula retains the role of the main interpretation point, where visitors gain an overview of the entire system, become familiar with the historical development of the defensive network and understand contemporary forms of fortification use. The measure proposes expanding the digital component of Fort Centre with new research, project results and examples of different models of social use, so that it can function as a single online entry point containing information about the entire system. This could be achieved, for example, through one major annual update, especially since the location already possesses both an established audience and the necessary technical infrastructure. In this way, any new content related to the fortifications could be brought together in one place, rather than being dispersed across multiple disconnected platforms and applications.

In later phases, the intention is to gradually expand the network to new locations through routes, programmes and events, while ensuring the provision of basic infrastructure and accessibility so as not to create a false impression of accessibility where conditions are not yet adequate. The popularisation of the fortifications therefore requires both reliance on the city's existing "cultural geography" and the creation of a new network of itineraries. Thematic walking and cycling routes focused on fortification architecture could be organised into several sections, such as the urban



Italy – Croatia



circuit Kaštel–Monvidal–St. Michael, the northern ring Monte Grosso–Punta Christo–Katelir, and the coastal line Verudela–Stoja–surrounding batteries.

This does not imply the construction of entirely new paths, but rather the mapping of existing routes, the preparation of simple maps and the testing of itineraries through pilot walks and guided tours, combined with minimal signage interventions where access is safe. Due to the complexity of ownership relations, the poor condition of some fortifications and limited municipal resources, more substantial interventions must be planned and considered within the broader framework of future interventions on the fortifications.

The development of programmes within this measure is based on the assumption that the primary users of the fortifications are the residents of Pula. Occasional educational and awareness-raising programmes for citizens, modelled after the Night of Fortresses event, may be developed in cooperation with the University, museums, Aquarium Verudela and civil society organisations, and distributed across different fortifications according to their spatial and programme capacities. The intention is for the Night of Fortresses event, initiated within the framework of FORTIC, to remain the key tool for popularisation and to serve as a platform for opening new locations and testing future programme possibilities.

The Night of Fortresses can gradually expand to multiple locations within the system, initially focusing on those that already meet basic safety and infrastructure conditions, offering guided tours, family programmes, workshops, small concerts, screenings and interpretative walks. In this way, the event acts as an annual “window into the system”: increasing the visibility of the fortifications, testing audience interest and gathering experience for future programme development. At the same time, it is clearly acknowledged that the Night of Fortresses alone cannot resolve infrastructural or ownership-related issues. Its primary role is to open spaces and demonstrate potential, while long-term changes depend on separate investments and agreements.

Fortifications have always served as spaces for cultural, artistic, recreational and social programmes, ranging from small-scale festivals to places where music, theatre and film content is created and presented, as well as venues for workshops, meetings and sports activities. The intention is for them to retain this role in the future, while taking into account the spatial capacities of individual sites and avoiding overburdening certain locations. This requires consideration and visibility of the annual programme calendar at the level of the entire system, in which different fortifications are activated at different times and with different types of content.

The popularisation and development of programmes cannot ignore the legacy of civic self-organisation. Some fortifications became recognisable precisely because communities and



Italy – Croatia



independent cultural scenes appropriated them before formal programmes existed, often in conditions of spatial and legal uncertainty. This measure therefore does not seek to suppress existing practices, but rather to recognise and integrate them into a broader framework through public calls, programme agreements with associations and independent organisations, shared use of spaces, and clearly defined standards of conservation, safety and accessibility agreed upon by the City, conservation authorities and the state, where necessary, together with users.

At the same time, it is openly acknowledged that negotiations regarding standards and conditions of use may at times be conflictual. The measure does not promise the elimination of these tensions, but rather the establishment of minimum common rules that allow the continuation of existing scenes while reducing risks for both spaces and users. In this way, a continuous and recognisable offer is created for citizens, ranging from subcultural and experimental content to family-oriented and educational programmes, which is a prerequisite for residents to perceive the fortifications as their own places.

Finally, the measure emphasises that the popularisation of the fortifications must remain aligned with the spatial, financial and governance capacities of the system. The focus must therefore remain on solutions that enable long-term use: the gradual expansion of the network of routes and programmes in line with resolving ownership relations and ensuring basic infrastructure, as well as the development of governance models connecting the City, the state, public institutions, the University, the Tourist Board and civil society.

In this context, popularisation is understood as a long-term process through which the fortifications gradually transition from abandoned military infrastructure into a clearly organised network of public and commercial spaces and programmes that are accessible and attractive to residents and visitors of different interests and age groups. Nevertheless, the systematic branding of Pula as a “city of fortifications” and the development of an integrated tourism product will only become possible once selected locations meet the basic conditions of visitor safety, accessibility and minimum infrastructure. Until then, efforts can focus on the selective popularisation of individual, safety-approved locations and on building the broader narrative, while clearly communicating existing limitations and avoiding expectations that exceed the current conditions on the ground.



Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
REGULAR UPDATING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FORT PULA DIGITAL INTERFACE AS THE MAIN PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL “ENTRY POINT” TO THE FORTIFICATION SYSTEM	Annual updating of the Fort Center with new research results and examples of ongoing programmes and educational content. The emphasis is on a single, shared interface rather than multiple unconnected applications.	2026–2030: periodic upgrades (e.g. one major revision per year)	Historical and Maritime Museum of Istria / Pula Fort Center	City / Museum budget (culture)	5.000 EUR
ESTABLISHMENT OF 2-3 PILOT WALKING AND/OR CYCLING ROUTES WITH MINIMAL SIGNAGE AND BASIC INTERPRETATION	Mapping of existing paths, preparation of simple maps and online materials, marking of key stops (signposts, basic interpretive panels, QR codes), organisation of pilot walks and guided tours to test interest and verify safety. Larger infrastructural works are not included in this activity and remain part of separate measures.	2028-2030	City of Pula and Pula Tourist Board	City budget, Tourist Board budget, partly EU projects (e.g. Interreg, national active-mobility programmes)	20.000 EUR
PLANNED EXPANSION OF THE NIGHT OF FORTRESSES EVENT TO MULTIPLE LOCATIONS, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ANNUAL PACKAGE OF PILOT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES	Annual selection of “new” locations; preparation of tailored formats (guided tours, family programmes, small concerts, screenings, workshops)	2026–2030: annually, with a gradual increase in the number of participating locations	City of Pula, museums, Pula Tourist Board, local associations, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, educational institutions	City budget, Tourist Board budget, EU programmes for education and heritage	30.000 EUR





Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
PROGRAMME AGREEMENTS WITH ASSOCIATIONS AND INDEPENDENT ORGANISATIONS ACTIVE ON THE FORTS	Definition of minimum conservation, safety and accessibility standards for fortification spaces; conclusion of multi-annual agreements that acknowledge existing scenes but introduce clear rules and structured dialogue with the City and conservation services.	and through the year continuous	City of Pula, group of associations with involvement of the conservation service	City and national budget, possible EU projects on participatory governance	50.000 EUR

*Amounts are indicative, do not include VAT and refer to the full period, not annual allocations





LOCAL ACTION PLAN

JURAJ DOBRILA UNIVERSITY OF PULA

(PP2)



PP2 - JURAJ DOBRILA UNIVERSITY OF PULA

Juraj Dobrila University of Pula is a public university founded in 2006, building on several decades of higher-education activity in Istria. It brings together several faculties and departments covering diverse scientific, artistic and professional fields, while the Faculty of Economics and Tourism “Dr. Mijo Mirković”, contributes expertise in economics, tourism and heritage-related activities within the FORTIC project. Over the past decade, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula (UNIPU) has become a main academic point of reference for the study and management of Pula’s fortifications. In the FORTIC project, the university contributes research, comparative overview and methodological guidance for partner cities, linking the situation in Pula with European debates on governance, interpretation and sustainable tourism. The fortifications are viewed as a continuous historical landscape, approached through several disciplines and used as a context for teaching, planning and local cooperation. The focus is also placed on heritage management and use knowledge transfer, capacity building, and methodological support for partner cities.

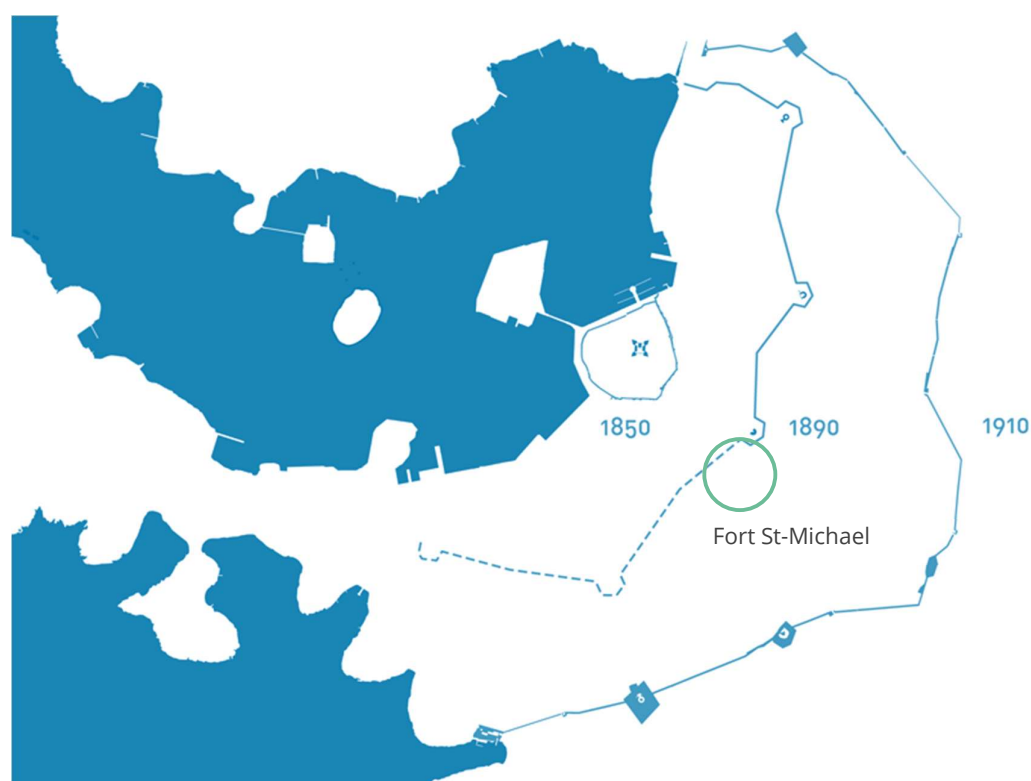


Fig. 2: Extension of the City during Austro-Hungaric period shown through different layouts of defence lines

Source: Zadruga Praksa, 2014.



Fortifications are integrated in a number of study programmes, and several recurring formats have been set up, including spring schools on fortified landscapes, cross-border summer schools, joint studios with international faculties and field courses with local cultural institutions. Through the UNESCO-UNITWIN network “Culture, Tourism, Development”, membership in European fortification networks such as EFFORTS and cooperation with World Heritage and ICOMOS experts, the university has hosted workshops and seminars on cultural landscape management and tourism pressures, using Pula’s defensive system as a case. Within FORTIC this role continues in socio-economic analyses, reviews of governance models, metaverse-related work and activities on inclusive tourism, with the expectation that these results inform decisions on investment, use and management.

illustrative examples of good practice:



Figure 10. BIP Erasmus+ spring 2026. - photo: unipu.hr



Figure 11. BIP Erasmus+ spring 2026. - photo: fet.unipu.hr

Department for International Relations, Science and EU Projects

Through its Department for International Relations, Science and EU Projects, the Juraj Dobrila University of Pula maintains a wide network of bilateral agreements. In Pula, this collaboration has already resulted in recommendations addressing the city’s fortification system. During a short online and on-site programmes, participants visited forts such as Fort Bourguignon, Muzil and Fort St. Michael, analysed their current condition and potential, and prepared reuse scenarios. The programmes show how a university can use its regular teaching and mobility tools to bring international attention to local fortifications, generate new ideas for their reuse and gradually build wider interest in Pula’s military heritage.



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Italy – Croatia



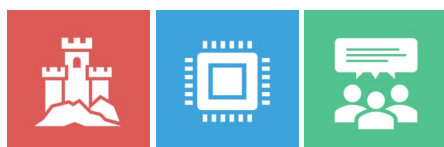
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Within this context, Fort St. Michael (San Michele) is the principal site addressed by UNIPU. The fortress is state-owned and has been placed under the management of the university. It is not in current active use. In the project it is treated as a teaching and research case, where staff and students examine its spatial structure and consider options for environmentally sensitive, community-oriented and educational use, primarily for university programmes and student activities. Documentation prepared under FORTIC will set out the legal and technical conditions for intervention. On this basis, Fort St. Michael can in a later phase be taken forward as a location for revitalisation serving the university and its partners.





MEASURE 1. – REVITALISATION OF FORT ST- MICHAEL - TOWARDS AN EDUCATIONAL ROLE



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO1**, **SO4** and **SO5** by prioritizing completion of the conservation study, defining an educational and community-oriented programme concept, and developing a phased revitalization approach, it lays the groundwork for safeguarding the fort's key heritage values while creating an exemplary, scalable model of university-led fortress reuse ready for further implementation.

The importance of Fort St. Michael for future planning lies not only in its great heritage value, but also in its possibility of becoming integrated part of the universities everyday functioning.

Fort St. Michael is an inner-city fortification within Pula's wider Austro-Hungarian defensive system, publicly owned at the national level and entrusted to Juraj Dobrila University of Pula for management and development, which creates the possibility for an experimental approach with educational, institutional and public-interest objectives managed through the university's long-term role in the city.

The vision for Fort St. Michael is to develop it as an educational and community-oriented heritage site, conceived as living infrastructure. In this model, the fort is treated as a platform for teaching, applied research, heritage interpretation, workshops, manuals, pilot learning formats, and hybrid programmes that combine on-site activity with digital and metaverse-based content. The site should support the university's educational role while also opening space for broader community use, social activation, and public engagement.

Future interpretation may address several layers of significance: the evolution of Pula's inner defensive system, the transformation of military architecture from the mid-19th to early 20th century, the relationship between the fort and the former Benedictine sacral complex demolished during fortress construction, and the contemporary reuse of military heritage for educational and civic purposes.

All future interventions should prioritize the preservation of the site's primary heritage values, including the horseshoe-shaped plan, the earlier two-story core tower, the internal circular courtyard, the frontal tambour court, and the fort's visual and spatial relationship with the surrounding urban landscape. Given that the interior is currently inaccessible and the



Italy – Croatia



conservation process is underway, the first strategic priority is not investment construction, but the completion of the missing conservation study required for further planning, restoration design, and future applications to co-financing calls on a realistic short-term horizon. No major investment works are expected in the next three years because funding is not yet secured and the conservation prerequisites have not been completed. During this period, the priority is to establish the knowledge base, conservation framework, governance model, and programme concept needed to position Fort St. Michael as a credible candidate for future phased revitalization through national and European support mechanisms.

In operational terms, the next step is to procure and complete the conservation study under the FORTIC framework, in line with the project documentation foreseen for Fort St. Michael. On that basis, the University and public authorities should prepare a phased development concept and preliminary design approach that translates the educational vision into realistic uses, identifies minimum safety and access conditions, and defines future implementation scenarios once funding opportunities become available.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead	Funding Source	Indicative Cost
DOCUMENTS FOR FORT ST. MICHAEL	Development of documentation; overseen by the Conservation Department; part of FORTIC Deliverable D.1.1.2	2026	Juraj Dobrila University Pula	FORTIC	€25,000
STRUCTURAL STABILISATION AND ACCESS WORKS	Addressing structurally compromised elements; securing minimum conditions for safe access and initial public presentation of the site	2026–2027	Juraj Dobrila University Pula, Ministry of Culture	FORTIC	€10,000



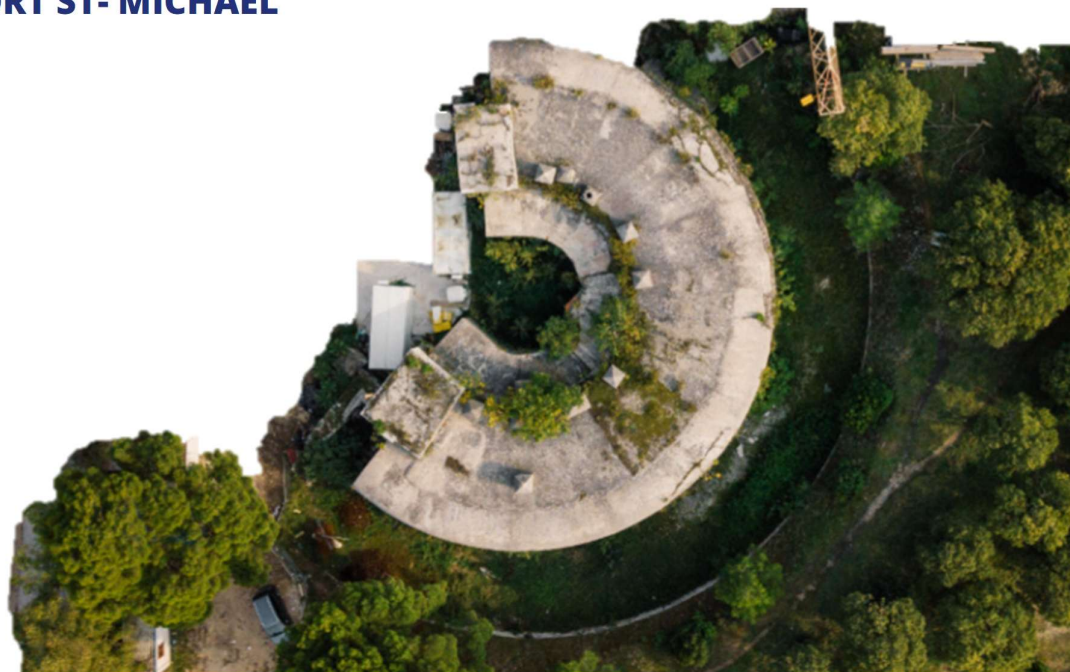
Italy – Croatia



FORTIC

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead	Funding Source	Indicative Cost
MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE	Regular condition inspections, emergency interventions and minimum preventive maintenance measures	2026 -	Juraj Dobrila University Pula	University budget	€1,000
KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES ON FORTIFIED HERITAGE	Knowledge on fortified heritage will continue to be integrated into the curriculum through teaching activities, workshops and field visits to fortifications and good practice examples, fostering interdisciplinary learning and sustainable heritage management.	2026-	Juraj Dobrila University of Pula	University budget	-



FORT ST- MICHAEL**ARCHITECTURAL
AND SPATIAL
FEATURES**

Fort St. Michael – Svetog Mihovila - San Michele is a horseshoe-shaped artillery tower built around a two-story segmented “Pula Tower,” featuring an internal circular courtyard and a frontal tambour court. Its current diameter of approximately thirty meters with artillery posts is situated on a hill

thirty-five meters above sea level. Its structure follows typological principles of artillery defense, with a compact form adapted to the hilltop terrain and its strategic positioning. The fort’s interior spaces are currently not accessible due to poor physical condition, while the exterior remains clear and visible from the streetscape.





RELATIONSHIP WITH SETTLEMENT AND LANDSCAPE

The fortress St. Michael is positioned within the integrated urban context of Pula. Located on the hill of the same name at an elevation of 35 m above sea level. It is embedded in the urban landscape as the area has been part of the Civil Hospital from 1896 to the present day. Compared to more prominent coastal fortifications, its location reflects a supporting defensive role within the inner coastal part of the ring system. Today, it exists with immense potential for stronger connections to wider university needs and ability for community use creating public space activation.





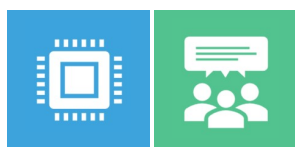
OWNERSHIP AND CURRENT USE

The site, publicly owned at the national/regional level, has been entrusted to the University for management and development. The Fort St. Michael is protected as individually protected cultural heritage, part of the broader cultural heritage system under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and Media. Management of the site has been for educational purposes and is now the focus of the university focused on a proposed vision of the fortress as living infrastructure, a potential hybrid social technical center supported by metaverse environments and community-oriented programming. To date, preliminary activities have included external cleaning works carried out in two phases, with the second phase conducted under ministerial supervision. However, further development is currently limited by the absence of a conservation study, a prerequisite for restoration and future funding applications.





MEASURE 2. – FORTIFIED HERITAGE VALORISATION - KNOWLEDGE DISEMINATION



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO4** and **SO5** by positioning UNIPU as a long-term knowledge hub organizing scientific work, summer schools, conferences, incubators and network participation into a coherent mission with dedicated coordination and repositories, it creates the institutional conditions for ongoing knowledge dissemination and capitalization, turning FORTIC results into durable resources that support local governance, management models and cross-border cooperation on fortress reuse.

Fortified heritage valorisation and knowledge dissemination should be treated as a defined part of UNIPU's mission in heritage, culture, and public engagement.

In Pula, where both the city and the university operate in a territory marked by a dense system of military heritage and where future revitalisation depends on sound documentation, clear governance and stable partnerships, this measure plays a concrete coordinating role. It connects academic work with the City of Pula's strategic needs and ensures that knowledge generated through FORTIC and related initiatives is structured, reusable, and directed toward future conservation, programming, and investment decisions.

The measure is organised around three groups of activities: scientific and research work on fortifications; dissemination and education through summer schools, exchanges, conferences, and networks; and continuation of project activities through governance support, stakeholder cooperation, and institutional capacity building. Together, these groups define the university not only as a project partner, but as a long-term knowledge actor that can support the city, connect local and international stakeholders, and convert project results into future action.

The first activity group focuses on the scientific aspects: **research, documentation, and the production** of practical knowledge on fortified heritage. Through FORTIC, UNIPU leads or co-leads several core deliverables that are directly relevant for future planning, including the documentation for Fort St. Michael (D.1.1.2), the compendium of management models linked to the Korčula catalogue (D.1.1.6), the joint socio-economic study on fortified heritage (D.2.1.1), and the metaverse development plan (D.2.2.3). These outputs position the university as a support structure for evidence-based planning, especially in cases where the City of Pula or other public



Italy – Croatia



actors need technical and comparative knowledge for future applications, management models, or site programming. This research role should also include a clearer internal system for processing and storing results. Interviews and background materials indicate that fieldwork results, workshop documentation, and expert studies often remain underprocessed, even when they have clear value for conservation decisions and funding preparation.

The second activity group concerns **dissemination and education**. Within FORTIC, this is already structured through the cross-border summer school in Pula (D.1.3.1), the high-level scientific international conference in Pula (D.1.4.1), the joint project conference in Šibenik (D.1.4.2), the final conference in Pula (D.1.4.4), and related capacity-building formats such as the Green Outdoor Incubator (D.1.2.1), CB Green Lab (D.1.2.2), and the branding workshop in tourism hosted by UNIPU (D.3.3.6). These formats are not only dissemination tools; they are also mechanisms for building new knowledge networks, testing methods, and introducing students and stakeholders to fortifications as active educational resources.

UNIPU's summer schools are one of the most useful and repeatable outputs of the project. The intention is to continue architecture exchanges, strengthen cooperation with Italian schools and related fields, and include fortress study visits in the curriculum as a continuation of existing practice.

The final activity group is focused on **network continuation** after the current project cycle: governance support, stakeholder coordination, and institutional anchoring of what has been developed through FORTIC. Network participation is an important part of this same activity group. Through EFFORTS, UNESCO-UNITWIN, and networks strengthened through FORTIC, UNIPU can access comparative cases, expert knowledge, and future partners, particularly from Italy. This matters because future revitalisation in Pula will depend not only on local initiative, but also on the ability to stay connected to European examples, co-financing opportunities, and cross-border cooperation formats. This measure should ensure that summer schools, Erasmus+ activities, workshops, architecture exchanges, and conference participation do not end as isolated project outputs, but become recurring elements of UNIPU's educational and civic role. In this sense, knowledge dissemination is not an add-on activity, but a support function for future revitalisation measures, including those related to Fort Bourguignon, Fort St. Michael, and other sites in Pula's fortification system. This continuation role also has a direct governance dimension. By gathering management-related knowledge and examples of good practice through continued collaboration with existing project partners and to deepening the existing networking with Italy. In this way UNIPU can support the City of Pula and other stakeholders with material that can be used in management planning, business model development, stakeholder engagement, and funding applications. while the FORTIC structure itself relies on common thematic working



Italy – Croatia



groups, shared coordination, and long-term reuse of outputs after project completion. Interview material points clearly to a wish to

A key condition for this role is internal capacity. Current feedback indicates that UNIPU does not yet have a dedicated internal unit focused on fortification heritage, which means continuity depends too heavily on individual initiative. For these measures to function effectively, the university should gradually establish at least a minimal institutional structure: a designated coordinator, a shared repository for documentation and outputs, and a clear mandate for continuing work on fortified heritage in cooperation with the city and external partners. Measures undertaken should therefore be understood as the university's operational framework for fortified heritage valorisation through knowledge. Its purpose is to produce usable research, circulate it through education and professional exchange, and keep it active after the end of individual projects by linking UNIPU, the City of Pula, and wider European partners. In practical terms, this measure creates the base from which later concrete actions, investments, and management steps can be defined with more consistency and stronger institutional support.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead	Funding Source	Indicative Cost
CONTINUATION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SUMMER SCHOOLS	Building on the FORTIC crossborder summer school model and the Erasmus+ spring school experience; securing funding for recurring annual or biennial summer schools focused on fortified landscapes and sustainable reuse, with site visits to Pula's fortifications integrated into the curriculum as standard practice	2026–2030	UNIPU	Erasmus+, Interreg, University budget	
ERASMUS+ EXCHANGE DEVELOPMENT AND JOB SHADOWING	Strengthening Erasmus+ capacity for young professionals and students in heritage-related disciplines; developing job shadowing opportunities and study placements with partner universities	2026–2029	UNIPU	Erasmus+	



Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead	Funding Source	Indicative Cost
UNESCO-UNITWIN NETWORK ENGAGEMENT AND CONFERENCE ACTIVITY	Hosting and co-organising scientific events in Pula; active contribution to network outputs and publications; exploration of Pula's role as a case study site within the network's research agenda	2026–2030	UNIPU	University budget, UNESCO-UNITWIN framework	
PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF FORTIC OUTPUTS	Elaboration and publication of the results of FORTIC activities, including the catalogue of fortification and cultural elements, the compendium of management models, socioeconomic study findings, and the metaverse development plan; preparation of accessible formats for professional, academic, and public audiences	2026–2027	UNIPU	FORTIC, University budget	
INTEGRATION OF FORTIFICATION THEMES INTO UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM	Formalising the study of fortified heritage within UNIPU's regular academic programmes — building on the existing course on Croatian Cultural Heritage — including development of elective modules, field courses, and thesis topics focused on Pula's fortification system and its management	2026–2028	UNIPU	University budget	





Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead	Funding Source	Indicative Cost
INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES	Within the biennial International Scientific Conference organised by the Faculty of Economics and Tourism “Dr. Mijo Mirković”, topics related to fortified heritage will be included alongside economic, tourism and other interdisciplinary themes, enabling the continuation of knowledge exchange initiated through the FORTIC project.	2028	UNIP U, City of Pula	EU funds, University budget, City budget, sponsors	





LOCAL ACTION PLAN

FORTRESS OF CULTURE ŠIBENIK

(PP3)



PP3 - FORTRESS OF CULTURE ŠIBENIK

Šibenik developed on the slopes above a natural harbour at the mouth of the river Krka, along the narrow and strategically important St Anthony Channel on the eastern Adriatic coast. Over the Middle Ages and early modern period, the city took shape as a compact stone core encircled by walls rising from the waterfront towards a chain of hilltop fortifications. Within this setting, a dense system of land and sea defences was gradually formed: hilltop fortresses above the town, bastions and towers on the rim of the historic core, and a series of coastal works controlling approaches from the channel and the open sea, with St Nicholas Fortress at the entrance to the bay now recognised as part of the UNESCO serial property of the Venetian Stato da Mar.

The first written mention of Šibenik in 1066 refers to a fortified settlement, a castrum, on the hill above the harbour. Over time initial medieval stronghold was expanded and consolidated, while the transition to Venetian rule brought a systematic restructuring of the defensive arrangements. Landward and seaward fronts were reinforced with bastions, curtain walls and earthworks in line with contemporary fortification practice, and successive Venetian–Ottoman conflicts in the 17th century led to the construction of new positions on dominant heights. In a relatively short period a new star-shaped defensive line was developed on the northern edge of Šibenik, which provided the main framework for the city's defence during the sieges of 1646 and 1647. With the loss of direct military function, Šibenik's fortifications were progressively withdrawn from active use during the 19th and 20th centuries. Sections of the walls were demolished or overgrown, individual forts passed between different military authorities, some structures were partially repurposed, while others were left to deteriorate. Although they remained a salient element of the city's image, the fortifications were for a long period only partially researched and under-maintained. In parallel, Šibenik was predominantly perceived as an industrial and port city, strongly associated with its factories and shipyard, with tourism comparatively less developed than in many neighbouring coastal towns and cultural life concentrated in a limited number of institutions and flagship events.

The contemporary phase of restoration began in the early 21st century and unfolded in several steps. Following preparatory documentation and feasibility studies, the City of Šibenik implemented major EU-supported investment projects for the revitalisation of St Michael's Fortress (2012–2014) and Barone Fortress (completed in 2016), and later for St John's Fortress (project implementation from 2016, opening for the public in 2022). These projects included structural rehabilitation of walls and slopes, conservation of cisterns and underground spaces, adaptation of access routes, and the installation of contemporary infrastructure such as an open-air stage at St Michael's and an interpretation centre with augmented reality content at



Barone. In parallel, basic visitor infrastructure and safety measures were introduced, and cultural and educational programmes were piloted in the first seasons of operation. Fortress of Culture Šibenik was established in 2016 as a public cultural institution of the City of Šibenik, building on the earlier department within the Šibenik City Museum that had managed St Michael's Fortress since its opening in 2014. The institution successively took over the management of St Michael's Fortress and Barone Fortress, later expanded its remit to St John's Fortress and the House of Arts Arsen, and today operates a multi-site system that also includes the City Point in the historic core and the Croatian Coral Centre in Zlarin. This consolidation created a single operational and

illustrative examples of good practice:



Figure 12. Evening event Barone Fortress - photo: tvrdjava-kulture.hr



Figure 13. NOF Šibenik Barone – photo: tvrdjava-kulture.hr

Fortress of Culture Šibenik as a reference governance model

Fortress of Culture Šibenik is widely regarded as Croatia's leading example of how to revitalise and manage fortification heritage. Established in 2016 as a public cultural institution, it now runs three revitalised fortresses, St Michael's, Barone and St John's, and acts as a recognised national and European player in the cultural and creative sectors. Its work is based on long-term care for Šibenik's fortifications, contemporary interpretation of heritage and continuous production of cultural and educational programmes. Fortresses operate as daily-accessible heritage sites and as venues for open-air concerts, film and performing arts seasons, while structured educational activities and audience-development programmes strengthen ties with schools, local residents and visitors. The Friends Club adds a participatory layer to this model by building a stable local community around the sites and reinvesting membership contributions into restoration and exploration of lesser-known fortification locations.

Fortress of Culture Šibenik offers a mature governance and programming model for inclusive, financially responsible management of fortified cultural heritage.



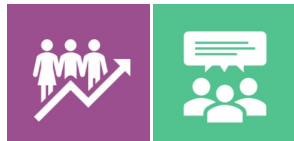
Italy – Croatia



programming framework for the fortresses and related cultural infrastructure, supported by a professional multidisciplinary team and a diversified financial structure.

Today Šibenik has just over 40,000 inhabitants and functions as the administrative, service and cultural centre of Šibenik-Knin County. More than a decade ago the city was still closely identified with its industrial profile, and tourism had a subordinate role in relation to other coastal destinations. In the intervening period, investments in the restoration of fortifications and other heritage assets, the establishment and subsequent strengthening of Fortress of Culture Šibenik as a dedicated public institution, and the expansion of festivals and cultural programmes have redirected the city's development trajectory towards a model in which culture and heritage have almost central position. Restored sites are open for regular daily visits, host open-air concert seasons, film and performing arts programmes, and provide settings for educational activities and community events across the year.

MEASURE 1: NIGHT OF FORTRESSES – COORDINATION, THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO2** and **SO5** by consolidating the coordinating role of Fortress of Culture Šibenik, introducing thematic editions like “Goes Green”, providing common branding and digital infrastructure, and supporting partners in Italy and neighboring countries to recruit and mentor new locations, the measure ensures the event's long-term continuity.

Fortress of Culture Šibenik expected to maintain the role of Night of Fortresses coordinator and further consolidate the network, while working in close cooperation with project partners and other participating institutions.

From a pre-season cultural event it has, in five editions, evolved into a shared platform connecting several dozen fortified sites in a growing number of European countries, including partners in the Italy-Croatia area.

Fortress of Culture Šibenik continues to act as its coordinator with these measures aiming to ensure the long-term continuation of Night of Fortresses. The emphasis is placed on: (1) the



Italy – Croatia



introduction and implementation of thematic editions (such as Night of Fortresses Goes Green and future cycles), supported by clear guidelines for local organisers; (2) gradual qualitative improvement of programmes and audience engagement, using common branding, communication tools and evaluation methods; and (3) structured support to the expansion and stabilisation of the network, in particular in Italy and neighbouring countries, through cooperation with project partners who will promote and adapt the model in their own areas.

Fortress of Culture Šibenik remains responsible for the central digital infrastructure of the event (website, database of locations and programmes), for coordination and communication with participating sites, and for translating strategic documents such as the branding strategy and Goes Green guidelines into practical tools (webinars, templates, short manuals) that partners can use in their local contexts. Project partners, in turn, support the process by recruiting and mentoring new locations in their regions, sharing feedback on the applicability of tools and contributing to joint promotion and knowledge exchange, so that the burden of development does not fall solely on the coordinating institution.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost*
COORDINATION OF ANNUAL NIGHT OF FORTRESSES EDITIONS	Maintain overall coordination of the Night of Fortresses, including annual call for participation, registration of locations, basic support to local organisers.	2026–2030 (annually)	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, with project partners and participating institutions	Institutional budget, municipal and national culture funds, EU projects	30,000 EUR per year
DEVELOPMENT AND UPDATING OF SHARED TOOLS AND GUIDELINES	Adapt and regularly update branding guidelines and related toolkits for use by local organisers.	2026–2029 (one main update per year)	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, with support from selected partners and experts	Institutional budget, EU projects, national and regional cultural-heritage programmes	5,000 EUR per year



Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost*
CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR LOCAL ORGANISERS	Design and implement a regular cycle of short online and on-site capacity-building activities (webinars, workshops, Q&A sessions) for participating sites.	2027–2030	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, project partners	EU programmes (cooperation, training), institutional and partner budgets	10,000 EUR per year
JOINT PROMOTION AND DOCUMENTATION OF GOOD PRACTICES	Organise joint promotion of Night of Fortresses (press, professional conferences, sectoral events) and systematically collect case studies from different countries (short reports, videos, photo stories) to document good practices and support future editions.	2026–2030	Fortress of Culture Šibenik (communication), with project partners and participating sites	Institutional communication budget, municipal and regional tourism and culture funds, sponsorships	25,000 EUR per year

* the information on costs contained within this chart is indicative cost, not committed budget

Note: For the organisation of the Night of Fortresses, an indicative amount of €30,000 is foreseen, with funding sources including institutional budgets, municipal and national cultural funds, and EU projects.

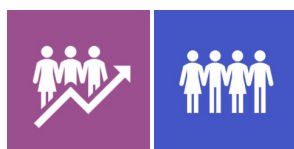
As the Night of Fortresses generates benefits for all participating partners and members of the network, financial responsibility for its implementation, coordination, and further development should be shared.

In cases where dedicated project funding is not secured, partners are expected to plan and allocate part of their own resources to cover the basic costs of maintaining and developing the event. This includes website maintenance, communication tools, promotional activities, coordination, preparation of shared guidelines, and other activities outlined in this action plan.





MEASURE 2: EDUCATION, CAMPUS AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO2** and **SO3** by combining staff-led courses with formats hosted by external experts, and encouraging partners to co-design summer schools, workshops and seminars, it builds a durable community of practice in which different institutions learn from Šibenik's experience while contributing their own approaches, reinforcing community ownership, professional capacity and sustainable use of historic sites.

The aims to use the fortifications as a shared resource for education and knowledge exchange in the field of fortification heritage, cultural management and sustainable use of historic sites.

Open both to project partners and to the wider Night of Fortresses network. Fortress of Culture Šibenik has in the past decade developed a wide range of educational and audience-development programmes, and since the opening of the campus building at St John's Fortress it has at its disposal a dedicated space for trainings, summer schools and professional meetings.

Two basic models are envisaged: in the first, Fortress of Culture Šibenik staff share their own experience and working methods (including lectures, study visits and on-site learning at St Michael's, Barone, St John and other locations); in the second, external experts and institutions use the campus as a venue for their own education programmes, in agreement with Fortress of Culture Šibenik. In both cases, the institution works together with partners to design formats that are feasible in terms of time and resources, and that respond to concrete needs in areas such as fortification heritage, audience development, accessibility and inclusion, and project development.

The measure therefore positions the Šibenik fortresses, as one of the reference points for training and peer learning within the Italy-Croatia area and the wider Night of Fortresses community. Partners are encouraged to co-design and co-host summer schools, workshops and seminars, so that the responsibility for content is shared and the campus becomes a place where different experiences and approaches to fortified heritage can be presented and discussed.

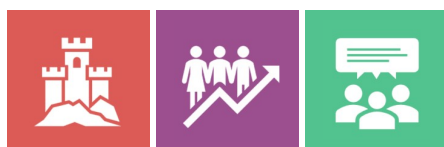


Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
SUMMER SCHOOLS AND SHORT COURSES	Design and implementation of short summer schools and courses, focusing on fortification heritage, cultural management, audience development and sustainable tourism.	2027–2030 (1–2 editions per year)	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, with project partners and universities	EU education and cooperation programmes, institutional and university budgets	10,000 EUR per year
STUDY VISITS AND PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGES	Structured study visits and exchange programmes, including on-site presentations at St Michael's, Barone and St John's Fortress and meetings with different TKŠ departments.	2026–2030	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, participating institutions	Interreg and other EU projects, institutional budgets	20,000 EUR per year
EXTERNAL USE OF THE ST JOHN'S CAMPUS	Provision of the St John's Fortress campus as a venue for training programmes, workshops and small conferences organised by external institutions.	2026–2030	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, external partners	Participation fees, institutional budget, project funding	15,000 EUR per year
ONLINE AND BLENDED TRAINING FORMATS	Development of a small set of online and blended training formats (webinars, recorded lectures, short modules) based on existing TKŠ and FORTIC materials.	2027–2029	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, with project partners	EU digital and training programmes, institutional budgets	15,000 EUR in total





MEASURE 3: COMPLETION AND INTEGRATION OF INTERVENTIONS ON FORTIFICATIONS



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO1**, **SO2** and **SO5** by linking prepared documentation and the forthcoming management plan with realistic funding strategies, incremental implementation and coordination across all sites, it ensures that future investments consolidate past revitalization efforts, maintain high standards of care and access, and integrate new interventions into a coherent long-term programme for the entire fortification system.

One of the objectives for Fortress of Culture Šibenik is the preparation of documentation for future interventions on the Šibenik fortifications, particularly the unrefurbished north-eastern tower sections of St Michael's Fortress.

This objective is pursued alongside ongoing work on St John's Fortress and other sites. The current measure addresses the subsequent phase: the gradual implementation of these interventions within realistic financial and organisational constraints, and their integration into the broader programme of works on the fortresses.

These works are understood as one of the final larger phases needed to complete the overall revitalisation of St Michael's Fortress in architectural and conservation terms, while at the same time continuing to strengthen infrastructure and care on the other fortifications under the management of Fortress of Culture Šibenik. In the coming period, the focus is on securing the necessary funding, including institutional income, support from the City and State and European programmes, and on phasing the interventions in a way that is compatible with the everyday operation of the sites.

Over the past decade, significant resources have been allocated to the restoration, activation, and ongoing maintenance of the Šibenik fortifications. Building upon these investments, the next phase will prioritise safeguarding the current level of conservation and use, as well as planning additional interventions identified through the prepared documentation and the forthcoming management plan. Measure is structured to connect recent and future works into a coherent sequence, without predetermining specific new functions, and to situate further investments in



Italy – Croatia



FORTIC

fortifications within a balanced approach to heritage conservation, infrastructure, and programme development.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
PREPARATION OF FUNDING APPLICATIONS AND FINANCING STRUCTURE	Preparation of funding applications and financing plans for the interventions on the St Michael's Fortress (the north-eastern tower, in coordination with the City of Šibenik and relevant heritage authorities.	2026–2028	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, City of Šibenik	Municipal and national heritage funds, EU programmes	20,000 EUR (preparation costs)
IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECTED INTERVENTIONS ON ST MICHAEL'S FORTRESS	Implementation of the selected interventions on St Michael's Fortress, based on the existing documentation and in line with conservation requirements, as one of the final major phases of its revitalisation.	2027–2030	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, City of Šibenik	Municipal and national heritage funds, EU programmes, institutional resources	500,000–700,000 EUR (indicative range)



Italy – Croatia



FORTIC

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
CONSOLIDATION OF MAINTENANCE AND PLANNING FOR FUTURE INTERVENTIONS	Systematic review of the condition of the Šibenik fortifications, building on the investments of the past decade, and establishment of a framework for regular maintenance and for planning additional interventions that emerge as necessary from existing documentation and the future management plan.	2026–2030	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, City of Šibenik, heritage services	Institutional budget	Included in management plan costs



ŠIBENIK - ST. MICHAEL'S FORTRESS, ST. JOHN'S FORTRESS, BARONE FORTRESS



ARCHITECTURAL AND SPATIAL FEATURES

St Michael's, St John's and Barone form the inland fortification belt of Šibenik. They belong to different building phases but are constructed predominantly in local stone, with massive walls and a restrained use of decorative elements, which gives them a relatively homogeneous visual character.

St Michael's Fortress stands on a rocky ridge about 70 metres above sea level, directly above the old town. The plan follows the form of the rock. The central element is the castle courtyard, enclosed by towers and high walls. Around this core, later phases added outer elements: falsabragas along the south and north-east flanks, an artillery platform on the north-west side and a double wall leading towards the sea. These parts show the adaptation of the fort to changes in warfare and to the needs of communication with the town and harbour.





St John's Fortress and Barone Fortress date from the mid-17th century. Both use irregular star plans, angled bastions and sloping ramparts designed for artillery defence. St John's stands on the highest hill to the north, with a large central open space and a tenaille on the side facing the hinterland. The layout reflects depth and flanking as described in modern fortification theory. Barone is smaller in scale, with a compact courtyard. The southern sector housed barracks and magazines; the northern sector has two demi-bastions linked by a curtain wall, forming the main artillery position, reinforced by earth mounds around the bastions.

RELATIONSHIP WITH SETTLEMENT AND LANDSCAPE

The three fortresses define the relationship between Šibenik, the Krka estuary and the Adriatic. St Michael's Fortress rises directly above the historic core and marks the point from which the settlement developed. From its upper levels, one can see the dense stone fabric of the old town, the harbour basin and the St Anthony Channel.

St John's and Barone stand on higher ridges further inland and form a second line above St Michael's. Their position shows the organisation of defence in depth: first the castle above the



town, then two more fortresses further back, with visual and firing lines towards the approaches from the hinterland. From St John's, at around 120 metres above sea level, the view reaches over the bay, the Krka mouth and the surrounding hills, and illustrates how the fortifications are tied to the wider cultural landscape. Seen from the sea, the channel or the main land approaches, the fortresses frame the skyline of Šibenik and support its current designation as a "city of fortresses".





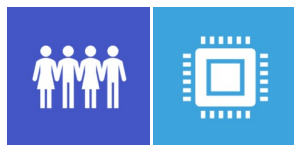
OWNERSHIP AND CURRENT USE

St Michael's Fortress and St John's Fortress are in state ownership; Barone belongs to the City of Šibenik. The City established the public cultural institution Fortress of Culture Šibenik to manage all three sites. Its statute defines responsibilities in the areas of heritage conservation, cultural programming and tourism.

The fortresses are connected to city infrastructure and form part of the regular cultural and tourism offer. St Michael's functions as the main open-air stage with fixed seating and technical equipment and hosts concerts, festivals and guided visits. Barone serves as a viewpoint and interpretive centre, with exhibition space, digital content, a café and facilities for smaller events and educational activities. St John's includes open green areas and a campus-type complex used for workshops, conferences and programmes for children, students and older visitors.



MEASURE 4: ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO3** and **SO4** embedding accessibility and inclusion into all aspects of Fortress of Culture Šibenik's work, from staff skills and audience engagement to the design of programmes and events through combining internal capacity-building, co-created inclusive formats with local associations and gradual improvements accessibility at the fortresses, it ensures that future heritage, education and network activities are accessible to a wider and more diverse range of users.

Consolidating accessibility and inclusion efforts as something that will cut across work on fortifications, education, and network activities.

Fortress of Culture Šibenik has in recent years systematically integrated accessibility and inclusion into its programme and organisational development, through staff training, adapted guided tours, cooperation with associations of persons with disabilities and the introduction of inclusive formats within Night of Fortresses. This measure aims to

In line with the framework of FORTIC, Fortress of Culture Šibenik will continue to develop accessibility and inclusion at three levels: (1) internal capacity-building, including training in accessible communication and inclusive mediation of heritage; (2) programme formats, such as inclusive guided tours, co-created activities with under-represented groups and dedicated inclusive components within Night of Fortresses; and (3) gradual improvement of physical and information accessibility at the fortresses, with a focus on realistic, small-scale interventions that can be implemented within existing resources and management constraints. Project partners and local associations are expected to contribute as content partners and co-organisers, especially in the design and testing of inclusive formats that can later be shared across the wider network. In practical terms, this means that new programmes, educational formats and smaller investments on the fortresses will be planned with accessibility and inclusion in mind from the outset.



Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
STAFF TRAINING IN ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVE MEDIATION	Continued training of TKŠ staff, with emphasis on sign language, accessible communication and inclusive interpretation of heritage, and extending participation to front-line staff and project partners where feasible.	2026–2029	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, with specialised organisations	National and local cultural and social-policy funds, EU projects	10,000 EUR per year
INCLUSIVE TOURS AND CO-CREATED PROGRAMMES	Development and implementation of inclusive guided tours, workshops and small-scale programmes in cooperation with organisations representing persons with disabilities and other under-represented groups.	2026–2030	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, local associations, project partners	Institutional budget, municipal and regional funds, EU inclusion programmes	20,000 EUR per year
SMALL-SCALE IMPROVEMENTS TO PHYSICAL AND INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY	Identification and implementation of priority small-scale measures to improve accessibility at selected fortresses, in line with conservation and management constraints and with support from competent authorities.	2027–2030	Fortress of Culture Šibenik, City of Šibenik, competent authorities	Municipal and national heritage funds, EU heritage programmes	80,000 EUR in total
INTEGRATION OF ACCESSIBILITY	Inclusion of basic accessibility and inclusion criteria as topics in future	2026–2028	Fortress of Culture	Institutional budget, EU	10,000 EUR in total

Italy – Croatia



FORTIC

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
CRITERIA INTO NETWORK TOOLS	cooperations, so that participating sites are encouraged to address these aspects in their own programmes.		Šibenik, project partners	cooperation projects	





Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia

LOCAL ACTION PLAN

CA' FOSCARI UNIVERSITY OF VENICE

(PP4)



PP4 - CA' FOSCARI UNIVERSITY OF VENICE

Ca' Foscari University of Venice is a public university founded in 1868 and based in the historic centre of Venice. It specialises in humanities, social sciences, economics and environmental studies, and works strongly across disciplines on questions of cultural heritage, tourism and territorial change. The university operates in a coastal and lagoon setting where ports, fortifications and historic towns pressures from mass tourism, climate change and demographic shifts, which gives its work on heritage and tourism a clear territorial and policy dimension.

On fortified and coastal heritage, Ca' Foscari has been involved in a series of European and cross-border projects that directly link cultural heritage, tourism governance and sustainable territorial development. Building on ADRIFORT – Adriatic Fortresses and Military Areas (Interreg IPA Adriatic), the university has developed and tested tools to understand the socio-economic role of fortified and coastal heritage in the Adriatic area. Through Interreg Italy–Croatia projects such as BLUTOURSYSTEM and related initiatives, Ca' Foscari has contributed to knowledge platforms and decision-support tools for blue and cultural tourism, focusing on business ecosystems, stakeholder skills and innovative governance arrangements. Horizon 2020 project SMARTCULTOUR and Interreg MED / Euro-Med projects AlterEco Plus and TO CARE MED have further strengthened this line of work by introducing and mainstreaming carrying-capacity approaches, impact monitoring and community-based cultural tourism models across Mediterranean destinations. Together, these projects provide concrete methods and datasets for analysing how heritage assets influence regional economies, how tourism pressure can be measured and managed, and how destination strategies can move from extractive to more inclusive, sustainability-oriented models.

Within FORTIC, Ca' Foscari has two main functions, both already underway. First, together with Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, it co-leads the work on the business ecosystem of fortified sites, through a joint socio-economic study that examines how fortifications contribute to local economies, how they interact with small enterprises and services, and where there is space for new activities and partnerships. This provides the partnership with a shared analytical baseline and shifts discussion from general statements about “potential” to a clearer picture of what fortifications already do and what they can realistically support in the future.

Second, the university leads the technological and methodological development of the metaverse component. In cooperation with UNIPU it has prepared the metaverse development plan and coordinates the prototype of a virtual showroom of Adriatic fortifications, bringing together existing digital materials and new 3D models in a single online environment. This reflects earlier work at Ca' Foscari on digital decision-support tools for cultural tourism, where



Italy – Croatia



ICT and data were used to test scenarios, visualise options and support managers, not just to produce marketing content. In FORTIC, the same logic applies: the purpose is not to replace physical visits, but to test how virtual tours, avatars and augmented-reality itineraries can stimulate interest in real sites, facilitate contact between fortress managers, investors and professionals, and open up new formats for cooperation and promotion, building on earlier projects where digital tools and data were used to support decision-making in cultural tourism and heritage reuse rather than as purely promotional add-ons.

Beyond these specific outputs, Ca' Foscari also plays an integrative role in the project. By comparing management approaches and business models from pilot sites such as the Šibenik fortresses, Cervia, Vieste and Korčula, and by connecting them with its wider work on coastal tourism, cultural routes and territorial agendas, the university helps to frame FORTIC's results as a transnational reference for the sustainable reuse of fortified heritage. In the longer term, the same expertise can support new research cycles, targeted training for fortress managers and additional joint summer schools or specialist courses linked to the evolving needs of the FORTIC network, keeping the link between academic work, territorial policies and day-to-day management of fortified sites.



illustrative examples of good practice:

MOSAICO – Ca' Foscari innovation network

The network connects research, teaching and the wider innovation ecosystem as a point of access between the university and external actors, MOSAICO translates territorial and sectoral challenges into shared projects and enables continuous circulation of knowledge, ideas and talent around topics such as sustainable tourism, cultural heritage and circular economy.

One of them is CLab “Venezia Città Plurale” that brought together students from different disciplines and local stakeholders to rethink Venice as a “plural city”, balancing its complex heritage and contemporary challenges related to depopulation and mass tourism, and produced the children’s book “Elena ti presento Venezia” promoting slow, more responsible tourism and a richer understanding of the city. At the same time, MOSAICO supports collaborative research that links sustainability, technology and local production systems, showing that academic work can generate new solutions for economies.

MOSAICO demonstrates that Ca’ Foscari already has tested mechanisms for moving from ideas to prototypes, from laboratory to application and from educational experiment to social or economic impact.



Figure 12. Venezia città plurale - photo: unive.it

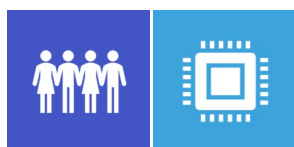


Figure 13. book: Elena presents Venice - photo: unive.it





MEASURE 1: DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE FORTIC METAVERSE



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO3** and **SO4** by defining a decade-long vision, governance and funding framework, phased site integration, maintenance and update protocols, and options for public-private cooperation, it creates the conditions for the platform to support real conservation, tourism and business decisions across the Adriatic fortified-heritage ecosystem and to be capitalized as a transferable model beyond the project.

The metaverse developed under FORTIC can be more than a one-off digital experiment; a strategic tool for visualising, promoting and managing fortified heritage at cross-border scale.

In contrast to traditional project websites or one-site virtual tours, the platform is designed as a shared B2B/B2C environment in which visitors explore fortifications in 3D, while operators and investors view available spaces and initiate contact with site managers. Without a clear framework for its long-term development, governance and financing, this potential risks remaining limited to a prototype phase. European experience with digital heritage platforms shows that many pilots are technically impressive but remain isolated once project funding ends; FORTIC partners, and UNIVE in particular, seek to avoid this pattern by treating the metaverse as a strategic infrastructure for the Adriatic fortified-heritage ecosystem.

The starting point is not the immediate creation of a new organisation to run the metaverse, but a shared vision of what the platform should achieve in the next decade. Key questions include the functional scope of the metaverse (visitor engagement, investor relations, data hub for fortifications), the geographical coverage and sequence of site integration, and the balance between public-interest objectives and commercial services. A well-defined framework should make it possible to prioritise content development, identify target user groups, and align the technical roadmap with realistic funding and business models. This framework must also clarify how the metaverse complements – rather than substitutes – on-site revitalisation, conservation and tourism development.

The precise institutional form of future metaverse management does not need to be fixed immediately. What is crucial is that decisions about responsibility-sharing and capacity building are taken step by step, based on experience from FORTIC and subsequent projects. In the short



Italy – Croatia



term, UNIVE and UNIPU will retain the lead on technical development, content standards and research, with site managers and cities providing data and 3D material. In the medium term, different options can be considered, ranging from continued university stewardship to forms of public-private partnership in which a specialised operator provides hosting, maintenance and commercial services, while public partners retain control over heritage standards, access conditions and data governance.

A robust strategic framework must also address practical questions of maintenance and updating that are often overlooked in discussions of innovation. Without clear protocols for adding and reviewing content, ensuring interoperability with other systems, and monitoring platform performance, even a well-designed prototype can quickly become obsolete. Regular technical checks, security updates, and quality control of 3D models and metadata are prerequisites for keeping the metaverse usable, while clear allocation of responsibilities for operational costs – server infrastructure, licences, support staff – is necessary if investments are to generate lasting benefits. In parallel, mechanisms are needed for continuous feedback from users, site managers and investors, so that the platform evolves in response to real needs rather than purely technological possibilities.

In this context, the further development of the metaverse should not be driven only by what is easiest to digitise or by the availability of ready 3D models. A more balanced approach requires several layers of assessment, analogous to those used for physical revitalisation. The first layer concerns the suitability of each site for inclusion: the quality and completeness of available digital material, the clarity of property and usage rights for virtual representation, and the potential to link online content with on-site visitor experiences. The second layer addresses strategic and programmatic relevance: sites whose inclusion can strengthen cross-border narratives, support inclusive tourism and business-ecosystem development, or fill current gaps in the geographical or typological coverage of the metaverse. The third layer focuses on feasibility and capacity, including the readiness of local partners to supply and maintain content, and the possibility of phasing integration so that the platform can grow in manageable, well-supported steps.

Financial considerations are central, not only as constraints but as planning instruments. The continued operation and expansion of the metaverse will exceed what can realistically be covered by a single project budget or university resources alone. Systematic monitoring of opportunities in European structural and investment funds, Interreg and Horizon-type calls, and national digital-innovation and tourism programmes will be necessary, alongside the exploration of revenue-generating services compatible with public-interest objectives. These may include professional B2B features for site marketing, consultancy and training modules, or white-label solutions for other regions. Accessing such sources will require prepared technical roadmaps,



Italy – Croatia



governance schemes and demonstrable usage data, reinforcing the need for a strategic framework as the base for future funding and partnership decisions.

Within this framework, openness to public-private partnerships is not a retreat from public responsibility, but a search for viable models that can secure long-term operation, scaling and innovation of the platform. European practice offers multiple forms of cooperation, from service contracts for hosting and development, through revenue-sharing arrangements for advanced B2B features, to broader investment-management partnerships that bundle digital and physical services for fortified sites. For the FORTIC metaverse, this implies that possible cooperation models with technology firms, creative industries and tourism operators should be analysed early, embedded in feasibility studies, and evaluated against clear criteria: protection of cultural-heritage values, data sovereignty, accessibility for vulnerable groups, and the platform's role as a public good at cross-border scale.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead	Funding source	Cost
METaverse PLATFORM EXPANSION AND TECHNICAL MAINTENANCE	Gradual expansion of the Metaverse to additional fortified sites in and beyond the Italy–Croatia area, and basic technical maintenance (hosting, security updates, minor UX improvements) so that the platform remains usable and up to date.	2026–2031	UNIVE (Dept. of Economics and IT services) in cooperation with UNIPU and site managers	Follow-up EU and national programmes (e.g. Interreg, Creative Europe, EUSAIR) and co-funding by participating cities and site managers	€80,000–€150,000 over five years, plus a modest annual maintenance cost shared among partners
CO-CREATION OF DIGITAL EXPERIENCES WITH PILOT SITES	Targeted support for pilot sites and interested partners to design, test and update a limited number of virtual experiences (3D/VR/AR/360° content and narrative paths), including simple	2026–2030	UNIVE, UNIPU, partner cities and site managers	Project-based grants (EU, national) and local co-financing by participating sites.	€40,000–€80,000 over four years

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead	Funding source	Cost
RESEARCH ON METAVERSE ECONOMICS, METHODS AND IMPACTS	guidelines, workflows and basic staff training.				
	Continuous research using the Metaverse as a living lab to study fortified-heritage economics, user and investor behaviour, digital-marketing methods and tourism/economic impacts, producing datasets, publications and policy briefs and supporting planning by cities and fort managers.	2026 onwards	UNIVE	UNIVE	Covered through existing research lines and future project funding
PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS	Design and testing of a small number of sponsorship and partnership models (for example co-branded digital experiences, joint campaigns or events) that can support the long-term operation of selected services	2026–2031	UNIVE with public partners and private operators	Corporate sponsorships, tourism boards, Erasmus+	€50,000–€100,000 for preparing and piloting models, with further costs covered directly by participating partners





CROSS-BORDER - METAVERSE

HISTORY

Cross-border – Metaverse emerged within the FORTIC project as a response to the need for a shared tool that could connect dispersed Adriatic fortresses into one coherent environment. Building on previous research into the socio-economic impact of fortified heritage and the challenges of seasonality and fragmented promotion, UNIVE and UNIPU designed the Metaverse as a core project output rather than a secondary communication product. Within FORTIC it is developed through a dedicated Metaverse development plan and a pilot prototype, conceived from the outset as a line of work that should continue and expand after the project ends.



VIRTUAL AND SPATIAL FEATURES

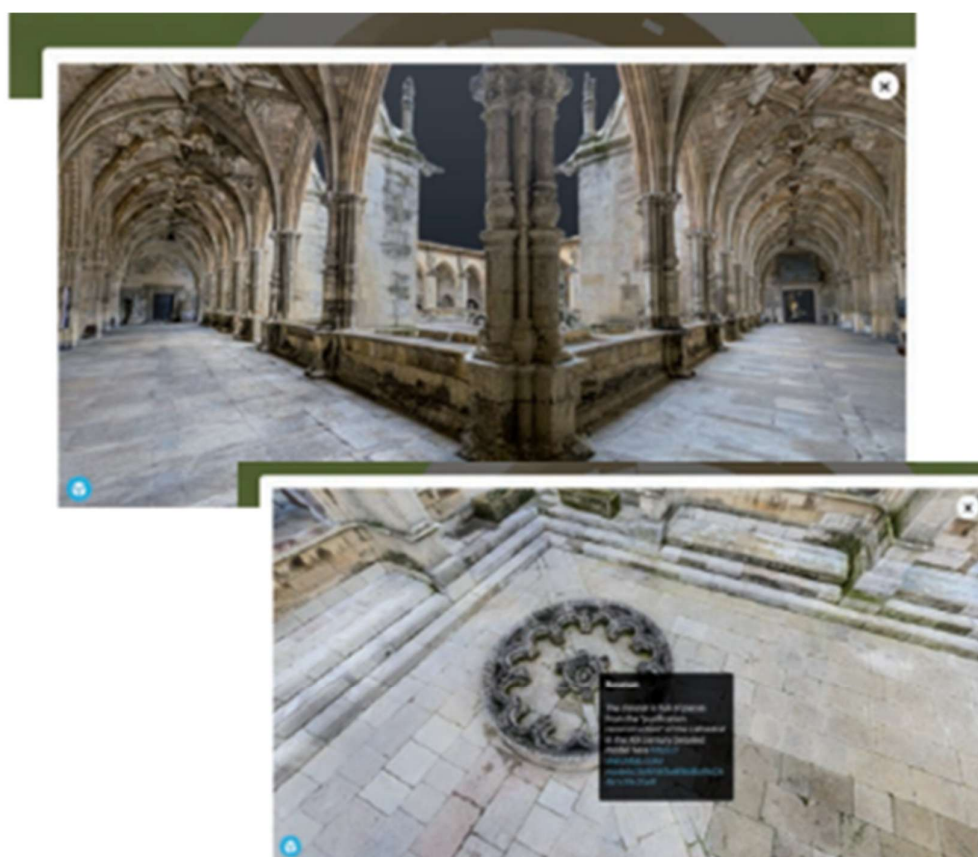
In functional terms, the Metaverse is a virtual B2B/B2C platform where users navigate a digitally constructed “landscape” of fortifications, closely tied to FORTIC locations in Pula, Šibenik, Cervia, Vieste and Korčula, which supply the initial digital content and scenarios. Each physical fortress is represented through a profile that links its history, architecture, landscape setting and current uses to specific 3D models and narrative paths inside the virtual space. Visitors can explore individual sites in 3D, move through VR/AR/360° environments, access layered storytelling and



Italy – Croatia



digital archives, and experience simulated views and spatial sequences that mirror the real fortresses. **For professional** users, the platform highlights key spatial zones – such as event terraces, courtyards, interiors and access routes – and associates them with basic data on capacity, services and possible uses. This dual design allows the Metaverse to operate simultaneously as an immersive interpretive environment and as a structured information space



that supports investment decisions, programming and management. **For audiences**, this creates a cross-border “route” that can be experienced regardless of national borders or travel limitations, while still encouraging on-site visits by showcasing views, access points and programme offers. **For local communities** and managers, the platform provides a shared arena where they can see how their sites appear alongside others, test new storylines and tourism products, and engage with remote visitors, students and vulnerable groups who might otherwise not reach the physical locations.





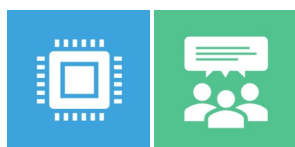
OWNERSHIP AND CURRENT USE

The Metaverse is developed and coordinated by UNIVE and UNIPU on behalf of the FORTIC partnership, with all partners contributing data and virtual material for their respective sites. During the project, it functions as a joint pilot infrastructure financed from Interreg resources, used for cross-border promotion, teaching, research and stakeholder engagement, particularly in the context of WP2's business-ecosystem work. In the short term, access is primarily oriented toward project partners, invited professionals and test audiences, while the medium-term ambition is to open the platform more widely and grow its user base. Looking ahead, UNIVE envisages a governance model in which the Metaverse continues as a shared public resource operated under university or consortium oversight, but with the possibility of public-private cooperation for technical operation and feature development, ensuring long-term maintenance, expansion beyond Italy-Croatia and eventual commercial services that remain compatible with public-interest and heritage-protection goals.





MEASURE 2. – FORTIFIED HERITAGE VALORISATION – ECONOMIC ANALYSIS AND TOOLS



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO4** and **SO5** by positioning UNIVE as a long-term knowledge hub organizing scientific work, summer schools, conferences, incubators and network participation into a coherent mission with dedicated coordination and repositories, it creates the institutional conditions for ongoing knowledge dissemination and capitalization, turning FORTIC results into durable resources that support local governance, management models and cross-border cooperation on fortress reuse.

Fortified heritage valorisation and knowledge dissemination should be treated as a defined part of UNIVE's mission in heritage, culture, and public engagement.

In the northern Adriatic, where cities face strong tourism pressure but also need to diversify their economies, this measure gives UNIVE's work on cultural economics, sustainable tourism and digital innovation a coordinating role at cross-border scale. It helps to keep knowledge and tools structured and reusable, so they can inform future decisions on investment, management and digital transformation of fortified sites.

The measure is organised around three main strands: analytical work on business ecosystems and governance, dissemination and education through conferences and workshops, and continuation of related research lines. Together, these strands position UNIVE as a long-term knowledge partner that can support cities and site managers, link public and private stakeholders, and translate project results into future cross-border initiatives.

The first strand centres on scientific and analytical work. Through FORTIC, UNIVE co-leads the joint socio-economic study of fortified-heritage business ecosystems (D.2.1.1), mapping economic effects, key actors and scope for new services, and coordinates the integrative management plan (D.2.3.1), which brings together governance and investment models from Šibenik, Cervia, Vieste and Korčula into a shared strategy. These outputs make the university a reference point for evidence-based planning and digital business solutions around fortifications. To keep their value over time, datasets, models and digital assets need to be systematically processed, archived and made available for future projects, teaching and policy support.



Italy – Croatia



The second strand focuses on dissemination and education. Within FORTIC, UNIVE contributes to cross-border summer schools and conferences and organises thematic workshops under WP2 on business-ecosystem analysis, investor engagement and digital tools. These activities are not only channels for presenting results; they also function as laboratories where students, practitioners and researchers test methods and explore new forms of economic and digital use of fortified heritage. Integrating FORTIC topics into courses, project seminars and thesis work at the Department of Economics ensures that fortified-heritage questions and metaverse applications enter UNIVE's regular teaching offer.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead	Funding Source	Indicative Cost
CONTINUATION OF CROSS-BORDER RESEARCH ON FORTIFIED HERITAGE ECONOMICS	Building on the FORTIC socio-economic study (D.2.1.1), continuation of research on the economic effects, business ecosystems and governance conditions of fortified sites in the Adriatic area; development of comparative datasets and analytical tools to support cities and fort managers in planning, management models and funding applications.	2026–2030	UNIVE	University budget	Covered through existing research lines and future competitive projects



Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead	Funding Source	Indicative Cost
DISSEMINATION THROUGH CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND NETWORK ENGAGEMENT	Organisation and participation in scientific conferences, thematic workshops and network meetings focused on cultural-heritage economics, digital valorisation and fortified-site governance; presentation of FORTIC results and Metaverse developments to academic, professional and policy audiences.	2026–2030	UNIVE	University budget, project budgets, sponsorships	Covered through existing research lines and future competitive projects
ONGOING RESEARCH ON METAVERSE METHODS, DIGITAL MARKETING AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS	Continuous research programme using the Metaverse as a living laboratory to test new methods of digital display and marketing for fortified heritage, analyse user and investor behaviour, and assess economic and tourism impacts; includes publications, policy briefs and cooperation with other UNIVE research lines.	2026–2030	UNIVE	Research grants, Horizon Europe, University budget	Covered through existing research lines and future competitive projects





COMUNE DI CERVIA

LOCAL ACTION PLAN

MUNICIPALITY OF CERVIA

(PP5)



PP5 - MUNICIPALITY OF CERVIA

Cervia developed between the saltpans, the pinewoods and the Adriatic shore of Romagna, at the junction of inland agricultural landscapes and the coastal belt that would later become one of Italy's most important seaside regions. The present town developed in the early modern period as a planned "new Cervia", relocated from the earlier settlement of Ficocle and conceived as a fortified salt-workers' town. Its compact quadrilateral of houses, arranged along rectilinear streets, together with the imposing salt warehouses and the watch-tower of San Michele, formed a distinctive defensive and industrial ensemble that controlled the production and export of salt towards Ravenna, Venice and other Adriatic ports. Over time a complementary maritime quarter, the Borgo Marina, developed along the canal harbour, with shipyards, small workshops and a fleet of working boats, some of which are still preserved with their traditional "vele al terzo".

Over the twentieth century Cervia shifted from this salt-based industrial and harbour towards a predominantly seaside economy. Nine kilometres of sandy beach were gradually urbanised with hotels, bathing establishments and promenades, and the neighbouring Milano Marittima became one of the key coastal resorts of Romagna. At the same time the Second World War left a dense layer of military remains: bunkers and anti-tank obstacles were constructed along the seafront and around strategic points, adding a modern defensive stratum to a landscape already shaped by earlier fortifications and infrastructural works linked to the salt industry. After the war many of these structures lost their operational role or were only partially reused, while the town as a whole came to be recognised primarily as a balneary destination within the wider Visit Romagna system, with tourism emerging as its main economic sector and the population stabilising at just under 30,000 inhabitants.

In the last decade Cervia has deliberately begun to re-read and re-activate this layered heritage. The recent investments have focused on the restoration and reuse of the salt heritage, the enhancement of the bunker line within the pedestrian seafront promenade, and the development of digital storytelling tools such as the "Immagina Cervia" application, beacon-based routes and virtual-reality content, often realised through EU and regional funding. Interventions are closely coupled with participatory processes and a dense fabric of volunteer associations, from the salt-workers' cultural association and groups dedicated to Second World War heritage, as well as with regional tourism strategies that aim to integrate seaside appeal with cultural, environmental and community-based experiences. In this setting the heritage linked to fortification and defence, from the planned "città nuova" to the bunker lines along Milano Marittima, is gradually being repositioned as a resource for interpretation, education and diversified tourism



illustrative examples of good practice:

Ecomuseum of Salt and Sea



the Ecomuseo del Sale e del Mare di Cervia was established to preserve the natural and urban landscape, local culture and collective memory. Created as part of Interreg Central Europe's CULTURECOVERY project. This ecomuseum approach links open-air sites, museum spaces and community practices, a networked model in which different civic associations, or *antennas*, take responsibility for distinct layers of local heritage, working under formal agreements with the municipality. Such as the Cervia Salt Workers' Association that operates the Salt Museum and ensures that the history of salt production is disseminated to new generations. Alongside this, the CRB 360° association takes care of Second World War remains in the area, while other associations focus on the wider cultural and wartime landscape. This creates a diversified but coordinated ecosystem. The ecomuseum is managed through organised participatory activities, storytelling and co-design processes that involve residents in decision-making and interpretation. By integrating, the ecomuseum into destination branding, coordination and promotion, the process helps balance economic interests with local needs.

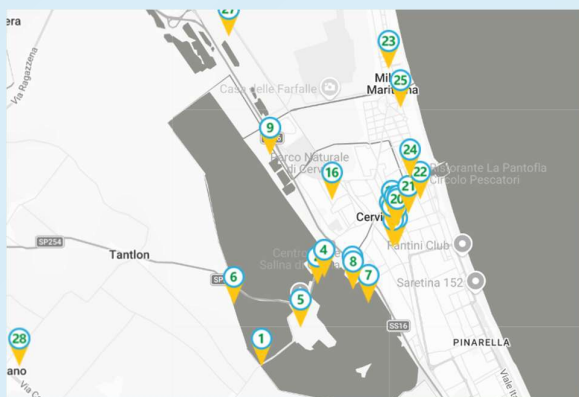


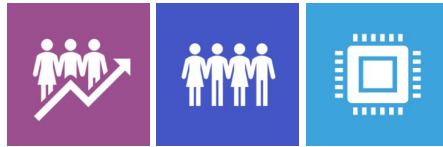
Figure 14. Ecomuseum antennas - photo: ecomuseocervia.it



Figure 15. participatory approach - photo: ecomuseocervia.it



MEASURE 1: INTEGRATED NARRATIVE FOR CERVIA'S DEFENSIVE ARTIFACTS AND OVERALL HERITAGE



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO2, SO3 and SO4** by structuring how municipal services, the Ecomuseum, associations and partners jointly interpret, communicate and educate around these sites, it makes this embedded military heritage more visible and meaningful without heavy physical intervention, and provides a reference point for future investments in signage, digital tools and programmes that support an integrated, community-based understanding of Cervia's past.

Over recent decades, the municipality and its partners have systematically redefined the city's relationship with its cultural landscape by putting emphasis on salt heritage, maritime traditions, the historic town, and surrounding environments.

The eco-museum has functioned as a laboratory for developing working methods, community mapping, and collaborative content production, which have been progressively extended to encompass new themes and project cycles. Within this integrated perspective, the dissonant and fortified heritage of Cervia is significant, yet often difficult to discern. Unlike other Adriatic cities among the project partners, Cervia does not have a dominant fortress system or continuous walls. Towns historical narrative is distributed across the planned grid of Cervia Nuova with Torre San Michele, where the quadrilateral, fortress-like perimeter encloses workers' houses and warehouses, and along the coastline, where Second World War bunkers and 'dragon's teeth' mark the Galla Placidia defence line. Although these elements are present in the urban and coastal fabric, they are frequently overlooked in daily life, particularly the Second World War defensive artifacts. As participants in the FORTIC project observed, both visitors and residents tend to recognize heritage primarily when it is accessible as a dedicated monument or museum, while much of Cervia's heritage remains embedded in its urban fabric, awaiting interpretation.

From a heritage management perspective, there is an opportunity to demonstrate that remnants of the military past should be understood not only as isolated structures, but as integral layers contributing to the meaning of the contemporary city. These are closely linked to the history of salt production, settlement patterns, and coastal development. Addressing this requires a carefully constructed narrative to guide interpretation, education, and programming across



Italy – Croatia



various sites and stakeholders. Such a narrative can reveal the significance of objects, places, features, or events, and foster intellectual and emotional connections with the city.

This measure addresses the identified need by aiming to develop a unified narrative framework that systematically relates fortifications to other aspects of local heritage. The framework is designed for joint use by municipal services, the Ecomuseum of Salt and Sea, local associations, and regional partners. It explicitly builds on methods tested in previous projects and leverages a collaborative culture in which associations and local residents participate from the earliest stages in site selection, story collection, and interpretive decision-making. Measure provides clearer structure and visibility to practices that have already demonstrated effectiveness in other thematic areas.

By consolidating this narrative framework, the measure seeks to achieve several heritage-related outcomes. It aims to make Cervia's dissonant and fortified heritage more visible and comprehensible to a broader audience without necessitating extensive physical interventions. Additionally, it is intended to support educational initiatives and provide a reference for assessing future investments in signage, digital tools, or spatial projects, ensuring their contribution to an integrated understanding of the city and its past.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
ALIGNMENT OF ROUTES	Align existing thematic routes (salt, maritime, environmental) and the dissonant heritage dimension within a single narrative framework.	2026–2027	Municipality of Cervia, Cervialn Foundation, Ecomuseum of Salt and Sea	City budget, regional culture/tourism funds	10.000 EUR
CORE STORYLINE	Prepare a concise interpretive storyline for Cervia defensive artifacts to be used consistently.	2026–2028	Municipality of Cervia, Cervialn Foundation, local associations (CRB 360 and other NGOs)	City budget	15.000 EUR



Italy – Croatia



FORTIC

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
GUIDED WALKS AND SCHOOLS	Design and pilot guided walks and school programmes that connect the historic centre, salt pans and bunkers in a single visit experience.	2027–2030	Municipality (culture/education), associations (CRB 360), Ecomuseum	City budget, education programmes	10.000 EUR
INCLUSION IN WIDER PROMOTION	Integrate the new narrative into regional and national promotion tools (Emilia-Romagna, Po Delta Park, ATRIUM and similar platforms).	2027–2030	Municipality, CerviaIn Foundation, Regione Emilia-Romagna	Tourist Board and regional promotion funds	10.000 EUR



CERVIA - DEFENSIVE QUADRILATERAL, SAN MICHELE TOWER, WWII BUNKERS

ARCHITECTURAL AND SPATIAL FEATURES

The **San Michele tower** is a massive square structure built to counter pirate attacks with thick masonry walls, minimal openings, and a rooftop terrace for surveillance. With a square plan with a side of 13.5m, height of 22.5m and walls 3m thick, the Tower was a real fort, equipped with fireplaces, external water collectors, showers, drainage systems, and other utilities. Its numerous openings, windows, and slits were equipped with armaments. Its robust, vertical form overlooks the canal of Cervia, contrasting with the flat coastal landscape and nearby repurposed salt warehousing infrastructure. **Cervia**



Nuova is not the typical fortification, a defensive quadrilateral is a structure formed of salt workers houses arranged in a 280m by 180m rectangular perimeter. Houses in the corners are slanted forming triangular bastion like protrusions fortifying the corners. This structure encloses four city blocks and the town square with the city hall and the cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta. **German bunkers and dragon's teeth** located along the beach form a defensive line, now connected by a pedestrian promenade. **Regelblau**, being the most important bunker of the Milano Marittima promenade, anchors a new system of public green spaces that were recently restored into an open-air promenade. The interior of the bunker has been set up as a museum accessible only during guided tours.



RELATIONSHIP WITH SETTLEMENT AND LANDSCAPE

Cervia's sites are located within the urban environment and present a wide variety of functions. Located north of the historic center and near the canal port overlooking salt handling warehouses, the **San Michele tower** visually anchors the town's connection to the sea and the salt-pan landscape. The defensive quadrilateral of **Cervia Città** forms the historic urban core of the city. Complemented by other nearby historic defensive structures and salt warehouses forms the core of the city's defensive system, and identity. Separated from this historic core is the world war **bunker defense system** is located along Milano Marittima seaside promenade north of the center where hotels, seaside resorts, bars, shops are abundant.



OWNERSHIP AND CURRENT USE

Cervia Città forms the lived urban core, as it is built of privately owned properties the city cannot influence. Inside it and in its immediate vicinity, there are a fair number of restaurants, bars, shops, B&B, and hotels, as well as hosting the annual Cervia Città Giardino event. All other heritage sites are municipally owned. **San Michele Tower** hosts the Tourism Information office. Publicly owned, it now functions as a cultural and exhibition space, hosting events, educational programs, and tourism services. The **salt warehouses** were transformed into the salt **Museum (MUSA)**, complemented with a multipurpose space **Magazine Totte** devoted to conferences, arts exhibitions and events and in a multifunctional building **Magazzino Darsena**, municipally owned and privately rented, hosting a restaurant, spa, bar, exhibition, shows space, and radio/music production space. MUSA represents an identity element for the whole city. Publicly owned and managed by the local salt workers association according to a convention with the local authority. The museum is also one of the outposts of Cervia's **Ecosystem of Salt and Sea**. The Ecomusem acts as a facilitator helping to coordinate, organize, and gather cultural institutions of the city into a unified system. Gathering multiple citizens and cultural associations of the whole region into one management structure helps keep the city's memory, traditions, and identity alive.



MEASURE 2: ACCESSIBLE WEB-BASED PLATFORM FOR INTEGRATED STORYTELLING AND VISITOR ORIENTATION



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO2** and **SO4** by transforming Cervia's earlier digital-interpretation experience into a more durable, user-friendly web platform that makes heritage routes, practical information and access points across the city and wider region easier to understand and use. By integrating dispersed digital content and redirecting users from a single online entry point to existing museums, visitor centers and booking systems, it strengthens the visibility, accessibility and long-term maintainability of Cervia's heritage offer while reducing fragmentation and dependence on short-term, app-based solutions.

Heritage-related offer must be more legible, and pathways to them more straightforward through a single online "entry point" to Cervia's heritage system.

Cervia's work on digital interpretation predates FORTIC and forms an integral part of its broader strategy. Through projects such as CULTURECOVERY and Arc Adriatica, the municipality and its partners developed ImmaginaCervia, a mobile application that connects outdoor itineraries with audio visual stories, interviews and archival images collected together with residents, associations and schools. These experiences confirmed the value of developing physical routes with digital content, but also revealed some limitations: the technical and financial burden of maintaining a native app (annual updates, changing devices), and the risk of multiplying tools that are difficult for users and institutions to sustain over time.

In parallel, there are different forms of fragmentation. The city's and regional main visitor sites, the Salt Museum, the city visitor center, the Po Delta Park, the House of Butterflies and others, are managed by different entities, each with their own website, contact channels and booking systems. While this reflects the diversity of operators involved, it complicates the visitor's journey. Even when information is available, it is dispersed; the tourist office can advise, but cannot always mediate access to all experiences. This situation was identified by the city administration: if Cervia is to maintain its competitiveness beyond seasonal beach tourism, heritage-related offers must be more legible, and pathways to them more straightforward.



Italy – Croatia



Therefore, this measure formalizes the intention to integrate fragmented digital components into a broader, web-based platform. Its aim is to establish a single, accessible online "entry point" to Cervia's and the wider region's heritage system.

From a heritage management perspective, the platform could serve several functions. It could offer an organizing structure that clearly distinguishes different thematic itineraries while presenting them within an overall narrative of Cervia. It could provide basic orientation and practical information, while redirecting users to the websites and booking systems of individual operators, thus respecting existing web pages. And it could also translate years of project-based experimentation in digital storytelling into a more stable, maintainable infrastructure, reducing dependency on short-term project funding for core interpretive tools.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
CONVERSION OF IMMAGINA CERVIA	Complete the conversion of Immagina Cervia from a native mobile app to a responsive web platform, ensuring long-term maintainability, accessibility from standard browsers and alignment with municipal ICT standards.	2026–2027	Municipality of Cervia (ICT/tourism)	City budget, EU funds	20.000 EUR
INTEGRATION OF FORTIC CONTENT	Integrate FORTIC-generated content (WWII coastal route, bunkers, metaverse/VR materials) into the platform, alongside existing salt, maritime and environmental itineraries, within a common structure and visual language.	2027–2028	Municipality, CRB 360, Ecomuseum, associations	City budget, EU funds	5.000 EUR
VISITOR ORIENTATION	Develop a visitor orientation module, an interactive map and	2027–2029	Municipality, CerviaIn	City and Tourist	10.000 EUR



Italy – Croatia



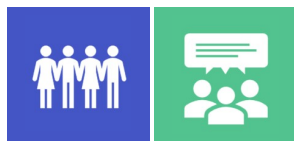
FORTIC

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
AND INTERACTIVE MAP	a “plan your visit” section that provides an overview of main sites and directs users to the booking systems and contacts of individual operators.		Foundation, site managers	Board budgets	





MEASURE 3: COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE AND REGIONAL NETWORKING FOR DISSONANT HERITAGE AND INCLUSIVE TOURISM



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO3** and **SO5** by formalizing Cervia's collaborative governance model for dissonant and fortified heritage, ensuring that municipal, associative, academic and tourism actors jointly shape how sensitive sites are interpreted, accessed and reused in line with wider European debates on contested heritage and inclusive tourism. Anchoring existing partnerships in clearer cooperative arrangements and aligning them with regional and EU frameworks.

Cervia's approach to heritage is defined by sustained, long-term collaboration among public bodies, associations, and academic institutions, that can serve as a transferrable reference.

The Ecomuseum of Salt and Sea, fishing and maritime groups, FESTA facilitators, and the CRB 360 and archaeology associations each play recognized roles in researching, interpreting, and promoting various aspects of the city's heritage.

Cervia's involvement in broader networks focused on dissonant heritage, particularly ATRIUM, and participation in events such as the Night of Fortresses, has enabled the city to test its developing narrative on fortifications and to compare practices with other regions. These experiences indicate that Cervia's model, which connects defense artifacts with salt and maritime heritage through project-based collaborations, may be relevant beyond the local context. Through cooperation with the Emilia-Romagna Region's accessible-tourism initiatives can be implemented within a wider regional system of disability associations and information on accessible routes and sites. The current measure seeks to strengthen this position by formalizing existing cooperative arrangements and by more clearly aligning local initiatives on dissonant heritage and inclusive tourism with regional and European frameworks.

From a heritage perspective, the measure aims to ensure that decisions regarding the interpretation, access, and reuse of sites associated with conflict and complex histories are made in settings where municipal, associative, academic, and visitor-oriented perspectives are represented and articulated. Additionally, it seeks to establish conditions that allow issues of professionalization and equitable distribution of responsibilities to be addressed systematically.



Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
COORDINATION GROUP	Establish a regular coordination group (municipality, Ecomuseum, key associations, Po Delta Park, Cervialn Foundation) to align narratives, programmes and communication across sites and avoid fragmentation of initiatives.	2026–2030	Municipality of Cervia	City budget	5.000 EUR
FRAMEWORK AGREEMENTS WITH ASSOCIATIONS	Prepare framework agreements or memoranda of understanding with key associations, formalising roles in research, content development, guided visits and maintenance of artefacts.	2027–2029	Municipality, Ecomuseum	City budget	5.000 EUR
PARTICIPATION IN NETWORKS AND NIGHT OF FORTRESSES	Continue and gradually expand participation in dissonant-heritage networks and the Night of Fortresses, using them as platforms for joint events, exchange of practice and visibility.	2026–2030	Municipality, Ecomuseum, associations	City, Tourist Board, EU culture and heritage programmes	10.000 EUR
JOINT PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	Develop at least one joint project proposal with regional or cross-border partners, directly building	2027–2030	Municipality (EU office)	EU territorial cooperation programmes	–

Italy – Croatia



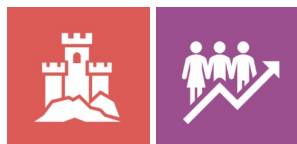
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Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
	on Cervia's FORTIC experience and testing governance and programming models at a wider scale.				





MEASURE 4: COMPLETING THE “LIVED FORTIFICATION” NARRATIVE – WORKERS’ SALTHOUSE AND PROMENADE BUNKER



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO1** and **SO2** by completing Cervia’s “lived fortification” narrative through small-scale, feasible works that open at least one workers’ salthouse and a seafront bunker as clearly legible, accessible heritage points within the wider salt-town and coastal itineraries. By gradually integrating a new site into the museum system and upgrading a selected bunker with basic works, it consolidates previous conservation and tour initiatives into a coherent sequence of domestic and coastal experiences, strengthening both heritage preservation and the attractiveness of thematic routes for residents and visitors.

This measure provides ground for the gradual inclusion of at least one workers’ house in the municipal cultural system.

In recent years Cervia has taken a series of steps to make its defensive structures accessible and visible. Bunkers and “dragon’s teeth” along the seaside promenade have been consolidated and included in thematic walks and guided visits, with association CRB 360 involved in research, maintenance and guiding. Access remains limited, but these structures now function as identifiable points along the coastal front.

In this context, the next step is to work with the elements that are already present but not yet fully used: the salt workers’ houses in the quadrilateral and the bunkers on the promenade. The workers’ houses still form the outline of Cervia Nuova, but for visitors they remain a continuous frontage rather than a lived interior. The “house of salt” (Magazzino Torre / MUSA) explains how salt was produced and traded; a salt workers’ house fitted out as an additional section would show how that work was reflected in everyday life inside the perimeter. On the coast, a bunker along the promenade has a similar potential. It is visible, accessible and already included in walks, yet its explanation on site is minimal and there is no dedicated digital support. With limited works and well-designed virtual content, it could become a stronger, easier-to-read point along the seaside itinerary.



Italy – Croatia



The municipality has already expressed the intention to purchase and refurbish a former salt workers' house as an additional section of the salt museum, and, through FORTIC, to refurbish a bunker near the promenade and prepare virtual content to support access. This measure groups these intentions into a single set of actions. It provides for the gradual inclusion of at least one workers' house in the municipal cultural system as a small, restored annex linked to the "house of salt" and the quadrilateral, and for the completion of basic works and interpretation on the selected bunker. The aim is to complete the "lived fortification" narrative on both the domestic and coastal sides with a small number of focused, feasible interventions.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
FRAMEWORK FOR A SALT WORKERS' HOUSE	Identification of 1–2 priority workers' salthouses in the quadrilateral and preparation of a short decision paper summarising ownership and legal status, condition, suitability as part of eco-museum, indicative investment needs and funding options.	2026–2027	Municipality of Cervia, The Ecomuseum of Salt and Sea, CerviaIn	City budget	10.000 EUR
ACQUISITION FOR PUBLIC USE	Negotiation and purchase of at least one selected salthouse for public and cultural use. Contracts to state its role as an extension of the salt civilisation narrative within the quadrilateral.	2028–2029	Municipality of Cervia, CerviaIn, The Ecomuseum of Salt and Sea	City budget, regional instruments	200.000–400.000 EUR
DESIGN FOR CONSERVATION AND REUSE	Preparation of a conservation-oriented project for the acquired building, in agreement	2028–2029	Municipality, Soprintendenza, Ecomuseum of Salt and Sea	ERDF/PNRR, regional culture	80.000–120.000 EUR



Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
WORKS AND PHASED OPENING	with the Soprintendenza and in collaboration with the Ecomuseum and the salt workers' association. Definition of preserved spaces, reconstructed domestic interiors and areas for light exhibition and small-group use.	2029–2031	Municipality of Cervia, specialised firms	funds, city budget	400.000–700.000 EUR
	Implementation of priority structural and conservation works and basic services, followed by minimal furnishing sufficient for guided visits and pilot educational activities. Phased opening, with further refinement subject to additional resources.			ERDF/PNRR, city and regional budgets	
PROGRAMMING AND SYSTEM INTEGRATION	Definition of opening arrangements, visit formats and responsibilities, and inclusion of the salthouse in the eco-museum network, school programmes and existing routes linking the “house of salt”, the quadrilateral and the seaside. Alignment of content with existing digital tools (ImmaginaCervia, VR platform).	from 2030	Municipality, Ecomuseum, CerviaIn, associations	City budget, education and culture funds	30.000 EUR





Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
COMPLETION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE PROMENADE BUNKER	Finalisation of cleaning, minor structural and safety measures and discreet on-site explanation for the selected bunker. Development of a small set of virtual materials (e.g. 360° / VR sequences, short interpretive modules, testimonies) accessible via ImmaginaCervia and on-site QR codes.	2028– 2030	Municipality of Cervia, CRB 360	Interreg / ERDF lines, city budget	50.000– 80.000 EUR





LOCAL ACTION PLAN

MUNICIPALITY OF VIESTE

(PP6)



PP6 - MUNICIPALITY OF VIESTE

Vieste is a coastal town in Puglia, on the Punta San Francesco promontory, where the historic centre stands on a rocky peninsula under the Swabian Castle. The area has been inhabited for a very long time and the traces of polygonal walls from the 4th–3rd centuries BC show that this was an organised settlement with a clear street layout. In the Middle Ages Vieste became one of the main strongholds on the Gargano. The castle was the heart of the fortified town and was repeatedly reinforced as power shifted between Byzantines, Lombards, Normans, Venetians, Swabians, Angevins and the Spanish crown. The Swabian phase, linked to Frederick II, followed serious damage in the first half of the 13th century, and further works in the 16th century responded to renewed attacks from the sea. A chain of coastal towers, completed the system, watching over the coastline and relaying signals between headlands. Earthquakes, Turkish raids and later conflicts repeatedly altered this defensive landscape, and the castle remained in military use into the 20th century, still garrisoned and even hit by naval fire during the First World War.

Today Vieste is a medium-sized town, with just over 13,000 inhabitants, whose daily life is not limited to tourism. Fishing, small agriculture, local services and crafts are still present, and many households do seasonal work in hospitality with other jobs. Schools, shops, parish and civic activities and a dense network of associations structure everyday life throughout the year. The town is closely linked to the wider Gargano area, from inland villages and olive groves to the Umbra Forest, so that its identity and economy are shared between the sea and the hinterland. Tourism, however, has become the main source of income. In recent years Vieste has hosted more than 360,000 arrivals and around 2.1–2.2 million overnight stays annually, with an average stay close to six nights and a clear predominance of Italian family holidays. The town offers over 20,000 beds, with more than half of all nights spent in campsites, holiday villages and other open-air or extra-hotel structures. Around two thirds of all overnight stays are recorded between June and September, with July and August alone accounting for a very high share. This brings strong short-term benefits but also highly uneven pressure on infrastructure, public space and the environment, and leaves the local labour market and many businesses dependent on a short peak season.

In response, the municipality and local partners have begun to adjust the existing model. New routes through the historic centre and along the coastline are being planned, some cultural activities and events are moving beyond the main summer months, and recent projects have brought greater attention to questions of seasonality, environmental pressure and local value retention. Strategic and planning documents point to the need for Vieste to move step by step



Italy – Croatia



from a strictly seaside resort towards a destination in which cultural heritage, landscape and the local community play a stronger role, and where tourism supports more balanced development throughout the year. In this context, the castle and coastal fortifications are no longer viewed only as relics of a militarised past, but as places where history, community life and economic activity can meet. They are increasingly used and planned as shared spaces for cultural and educational programmes, small enterprises and associations, and as gateways to routes connecting the old town, the coast and the Gargano hinterland. At the same time they add depth to the tourism offer, linking sea, heritage and landscape and helping to extend visitor interest beyond the high summer months. The action plan builds on this dual role, treating Vieste's fortifications both as long-standing anchors of the town's identity and as practical tools for re-orienting the destination towards a more diversified, resilient and community-centred model.



Fig. 3: Historical centre of Vieste – main cultural attractions

Source: D.3.2.4 Tourism for disabled people and vulnerable groups



Italy – Croatia



Today, Vieste is a consolidated tourist destination on the Gargano, with a long tradition of predominantly summer, family and camping tourism. Its identity is shaped by the sea, the distinctive coastline with long beaches and sea caves, the Pizzomunno rock, the historic core with the cathedral and the castle, and by elements such as the trabucchi and the coastal line of towers. At the same time, the current destination model remains strongly single-product and seasonal: most activities and revenues are concentrated in a short summer period, with high pressure on the shoreline and limited links between tourism and other local sectors. Despite its strong market position, there are visible signs of saturation and fragility.

In recent years the municipality and local partners have begun to adjust the existing model. New routes through the historic centre are being planned, and some cultural activities are taking place outside the main summer months. Work on projects has also brought more attention to the question of how to reduce seasonality and how to link tourism more clearly with social and environmental needs. In parallel, particular attention is now being given to accessibility and inclusiveness, including the introduction of targeted training courses for front-office staff, receptionists, guides and other visitor-facing personnel on how to welcome and communicate with diverse publics, including people with disabilities increasingly using disability associations they trust and belong to as primary channels for tailored information on accessible routes, services and events. Planning documents point to the need for Vieste to move step by step from a strictly seaside resort towards a destination where cultural heritage, landscape and the local community play a stronger part, and where tourism supports a more even development over the whole year, including through cooperation with regional accessible-tourism initiatives that frame visit opportunities at a wider territorial level.



illustrative examples of good practice:

Polo Culturale Vieste and San Felice Tower



Established in 2017 as an integrated management system for the town's cultural heritage with the goal to connect the main cultural attractions of the municipality, such as the M. Petrone Civic Archaeological Museum, the La Salata necropolis, the Convent of San Francesco, the lighthouse and the cave of Venus Sosandra on the islet of Sant'Eufemia, the castle, the traditional trabucchi, the historic centre, the Malacological Museum, and the coastal towers of San Felice and Porticello, into one coordinated network that promotes protection and public knowledge of Vieste's historical, archaeological and environmental heritage. The Cultural Pole supports these sites through projects, research, guided tours, demonstrations and cultural events, aligning opening times and visitor services so that a dispersed set of locations becomes a coherent cultural itinerary for residents and visitors.

Within this wider framework, the San Felice coastal tower stands out as a concrete example of how targeted cross-border funding and integrated management can reactivate an individual fortification. Through the Interreg Greece-Italy 2014-2020 Coastal Heritage Network (CoHeN) project, the tower was recently reopened as an accessible viewpoint over the coastline and a curated exhibition space. Thus becoming interpreted and reinserted into a broader cultural-tourism narrative.



Figure 16. Polo Culturale di Vieste - photo: viesteturismo.com

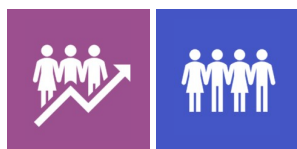


Figure 17. Torre di San Felice – photo: viesteturismo.com





MEASURE 1: DE-SEASONALISED SLOW AND CULTURAL TOURISM



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO2** and **SO3** by establishing a strategic, city-wide framework that guides how Pula's fortress system is conserved, prioritized, and integrated into urban, cultural and community life over the long term. By defining clear ten-year goals, criteria for prioritization, management responsibilities, partnerships with state and private actors, maintenance protocols and funding strategies, it creates the governance and decision-making conditions needed for coordinated protection, revitalization, sustainable reuse and inclusive participation across the whole fortification network.

High potential for transition from a strictly seaside-oriented model to an integrated hospitality system with high potential for slow tourism, outdoor activities, cultural events and experiential products.

Vieste's tourism system is characterized by very high visitor numbers concentrated in a short summer period, with July and August accounting for the majority of overnight stays and strong pressure on coastal areas and services. At the same time, demographic data and stakeholder consultations indicate depopulation trends, especially among younger cohorts, and concerns about a possible "city of tourists only" during the peak months and an empty town in the rest of the year.

The Business Plan proposed a transition from a strictly seaside-oriented model to an integrated hospitality system that links the fortified centre, coastal landscape, Gargano National Park and rural hinterland. It highlights the potential of slow tourism, outdoor activities, cultural events and experiential products related to local gastronomy and traditions, especially in spring and autumn. Working with young residents within this project, confirms this direction and calls for new forms of tourism that are less dependent on a single season, more attentive to the environment and more closely connected to community needs. In this perspective, fortifications and fortified landscapes are seen not only as heritage assets, but as anchor points for itineraries and events that can redistribute flows over time and space.

The measure translates these strategic orientations into a series of coordinated actions. Its purpose is to design and test slow tourism itineraries linking the fortified city with surrounding landscapes, to establish an off-season cultural calendar that uses heritage sites and requalified spaces, and to structure targeted offers for specific visitor groups whose travel patterns are



Italy – Croatia



compatible with shoulder seasons. The measure also intends to strengthen local value chains by involving farms, small producers, guides, associations and the tourism school in the design and delivery of these products. In this way, de-seasonalisation is not treated as a purely quantitative objective, but as a qualitative rebalancing of the relationship between tourism, territory and community.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
SLOW TOURISM ITINERARIES	Design and pilot a set of slow tourism itineraries (walking and cycling routes) connecting the fortified centre with the Gargano National Park, rural landscapes and coastal towers. Prepare modular proposals for 2–5-day stays in spring and autumn.	2026–2028	Municipality of Vieste, Gargano National Park, guides and associations	Regional tourism and environmental funds, EU programmes	50,000 EUR
OFF-SEASON CULTURAL CALENDAR	Establish an annual off-season cultural calendar (autumn–spring). Include at least one expanded Night of the Fortresses event and a series of smaller thematic weekends and educational co-developed activities.	2026–2029	Municipality of Vieste, schools, associations	Municipal budget, regional culture funds, sponsorships	30,000 EUR per year
SEGMENTED OFFERS AND LOCAL VALUE CHAINS	Develop targeted offers for seniors, educational groups and cultural/slow travellers (accommodation and transport packages,	2027–2029	Tourism office, business associations, tourism school	Municipal and regional tourism funds, private co-financing	50,000 EUR



Italy – Croatia



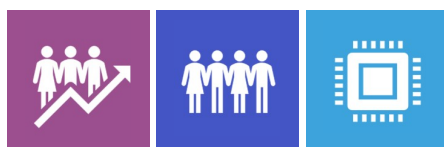
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Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
	guided experiences, gastronomy and craft components), with a focus on spring and autumn periods. Ensure participation of local SMEs and producers,				





MEASURE 2: ACCESSIBLE ITINERARIES AND INCLUSIVE URBAN REQUALIFICATION IN THE FORTIFIED CITY



This measure primarily aligns with strategic objectives: **SO2**, **SO3** and **SO4** by using Vieste's Accessible Itineraries plan, targeted urban requalification and the gradual opening of the Swabian Castle to build an inclusive fortification system and linking it to social investments in public space used by disadvantaged groups, the measure connects universal-design principles with tourism strategy and social objectives, providing a practical model that can be monitored locally and transferred to other Adriatic fortified towns facing similar constraints

The Vieste castle is an important point on accessible routes and as a space that should be gradually opened to the public.

The historic centre of Vieste is a compact fortified settlement with steep streets, steps, and narrow passages. It concentrates a large part of the town's architectural and cultural heritage, but also many physical barriers. Access for people with disabilities, older residents, families with children and other vulnerable groups is limited, both for everyday activities and for the enjoyment of cultural sites.

Within FORTIC, the Municipality has prepared an Accessible Itineraries plan. The plan identifies routes in the historic centre, defines rules for their use and gives technical indications based on universal design and Design for All principles. It is accompanied by recommendations for small-scale interventions along these routes. The first intervention, a ramp and an elevator connecting street level with a future museum space, has been realised in a central, high-traffic area and will be in use from the coming season. This intervention shows that accessibility can be improved in a fortified context with limited but visible works.

As part of the project, a conservation report was prepared for the Swabian Castle. The report describes the condition of the fortification, its historical phases and basic guidelines for future works. This gives the castle a more defined role within the system of fortifications and in planning access, uses and interpretation.

In the action plan, the castle is treated as an important point on accessible routes and as a space that can be gradually opened to the public: first through occasional programmes such as Night of the Fortresses and guided tours, and later, where possible, through more permanent uses that follow the conservation guidelines.



Italy – Croatia



In parallel, the project foresees an investment in Urban requalification for vulnerable groups. This investment targets areas of the historic centre where economically disadvantaged groups live. It aims to improve public spaces, strengthen social inclusion and support a less seasonal and more conscious tourism model, in line with the city's tourism strategy and regional objectives. The Sustainability Lab and the Business Plan both underline that tourism development and community well-being must be addressed together, and that fortifications and related itineraries can help to extend the tourist season while engaging residents, especially young people.

The action plan uses this measure to give these elements an operational sequence. It clarifies what will be done, in which order and with which tools. The Accessible Itineraries plan becomes a reference document for all future interventions in the fortified centre. The network of routes is extended and linked to specific requalification actions in streets and squares used by vulnerable groups. The measure thus connects technical design, social objectives and tourism strategy. It also provides a clear basis for monitoring and for transfer to other fortified towns in the Adriatic area that face similar constraints.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
EXTENSION OF ACCESSIBLE ITINERARIES	Complete and adopt the Accessible Itineraries plan as a municipal reference document. Identify at least three priority routes connecting the future museum space, Swabian Castle, cathedral, coastal towers and main squares.	2026–2028	Municipality of Vieste	Municipal budget, regional funds, EU (Interreg, ERDF)	40,000 EUR
URBAN REQUALIFICATION FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS	Implement the first phase of the Urban requalification for vulnerable groups investment in streets and squares of the fortified centre. Introduce inclusive urban furniture, small shading and rest areas.	2027–2029	Municipality of Vieste	Municipal budget, regional social inclusion programmes, EU funds	100,000 EUR





Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
ACCESSIBLE SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING	Develop and install a basic system of signage for accessible routes and requalified spaces. Include directional signs, simple interpretive panels and regulatory signs, with attention to clarity, multilingual information and compatibility with heritage protection rules.	2027– 2029	Municipality of Vieste, local guides' and heritage associations	Municipal budget, regional tourism funds	40,000 EUR



VIESTE – SWABIAN CASTLE, CITY WALLS AND PORTICELLO TOWER

ARCHITECTURAL AND SPATIAL FEATURES

The castle in Vieste has a triangular ground plan with thick stone walls and sharp, projecting corners. Earlier Norman and Swabian building phases are included in this later fortification on the cliff above the town. The terraces and angled fronts for artillery cover the approaches from the sea and the coastline below.

The Norman–Swabian city walls were built as a defensive line in the 11th century and were reinforced in the time of Frederick II. The remaining sections show the route of the former enclosure around the early hilltop settlement and give an idea of the scale of the medieval defence.

Porticello Tower is a late 16th-century coastal watchtower, built in solid masonry. It stands between two bays in a position that allows direct visual control of the shore. The upper platform offers clear sea views and is now used occasionally for small cultural activities.



RELATIONSHIP WITH SETTLEMENT AND LANDSCAPE

The castle stands on a limestone spur directly above the old town. It shapes the outline of Vieste and offers wide views over the sea. Its position on the edge of the cliff makes it a key reference point in the townscape.

The Norman–Swabian city walls once followed the rocky edge of the medieval core. They marked the limit between the built area and the sea and helped define the compact form of the early town. The surviving stretches still indicate this historic boundary.





Porticello Tower lies north of Vieste, between Molinelli and Scialmarino. It stands in an open coastal landscape, close to beaches and a traditional fishing structure (trabucco), with views towards the Gargano coast and the sunset line. Its location reflects its former role in the chain of coastal watchtowers.

OWNERSHIP AND CURRENT USE

The castle is in public ownership. Part of the complex is still used for military purposes, so access is limited. The site is opened to the public only on certain occasions and for specific exhibitions, while some areas remain closed.

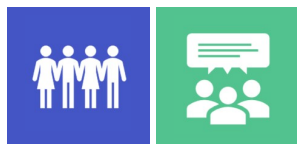
The remains of the Norman-Swabian city walls are part of the public urban fabric and can be seen and used as elements within the old town. They function mainly as visible traces of the historic defence line.

Porticello Tower is publicly owned and has recently been made accessible. After restoration and basic service works, it now hosts exhibitions and cultural events. It operates as a small cultural site, with limited external services due to its isolated position.





MEASURE 3: GOVERNANCE, PARTICIPATORY STRUCTURES AND CAPACITY FOR INCLUSIVE HERITAGE TOURISM



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO3** and **SO5** by giving Vieste a more regular, structured framework for participatory tourism governance through establishing a recurring forum, strengthening the role of the tourism office and a small EU-projects unit, and providing focused capacity-building for staff, guides, teachers, associations and young people, it turns existing ad hoc collaboration into an operational system that connects community input, project development and funding, and that can be sustained and replicated in the wider Adriatic context

There is a clear interest in making fortifications and related spaces more open, more inclusive and more present in the everyday life of residents and visitors.

Vieste has already taken several steps in the field of inclusive heritage and tourism. These experiences also suggest some practical needs. Cooperation between municipal staff, schools, guides, associations and operators has proved useful when it has been organised around concrete tasks, such as designing itineraries, preparing events or testing new tools. Young people have shown that they can contribute ideas on tourism, environment and community life when given a structured role. Small and medium-sized tourism businesses have indicated that they require clear channels and limited, well-defined engagements if they are to participate in joint initiatives. The measure responds to these observations. It proposes to give a more regular form to participatory work on tourism. It foresees a forum in which municipal services, schools, associations, youth groups and business organisations can meet at set intervals, share information and agree on a small number of priorities. It also proposes that a tourism office and a small project unit gradually take on the task of coordinating calendars, following projects related to accessibility and de-seasonalisation, and maintaining contacts with regional and cross-border partners. It also proposes development of a small EU projects unit in Vieste municipality, so that decision-making, implementation and funding are coherently connected.

Capacity building is understood in a concrete way. The measure encourages short, focused training sessions for municipal staff, guides, teachers and association members on inclusive and accessible tourism, management of fortified sites and simple monitoring tools. It also encourages joint work with young people and schools on programming linked to the Night of the Fortresses



Italy – Croatia



FORTIC

and other cultural events, so that youth participation is not limited to consultation but extends to co-creation. Supporting associations and business organisations, for example through platforms for SME participation and co-creation workshops, is treated as a practical task rather than a general intention.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
PARTICIPATORY FORUM ON FORTIFICATIONS AND TOURISM	Establish a permanent forum devoted to fortifications, accessible itineraries and tourism. The forum will bring together municipal departments, schools, associations, guides and business representatives.	2026–2029	Municipality of Vieste	Municipal budget, regional participation schemes	5,000 EUR
TOURISM OFFICE AND DESTINATION MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS	The office should manage the annual calendar of events, maintain an overview of itineraries and accessible routes, collect basic data on visitor flows and act as contact point for cooperation with regional and international partners.	2026–2030	Municipality of Vieste	Municipal budget, regional administrative support	150,000 EUR (start-up and two years of operation)
EU PROJECTS AND CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMME	Organise a small unit responsible for preparing and managing projects. Develop a modest programme of training activities for municipal staff, guides, teachers and association members on topics such as inclusive tourism, management of fortified sites and simple monitoring tools.	2027–2029	Municipality of Vieste, partner institutions	EU cooperation projects, regional training funds	120,000 EUR





LOCAL ACTION PLAN

CITY OF KORČULA

(PP7)



PP7 – CITY OF KORČULA

Korčula is a small coastal town, with the administrative title of City, located on the eastern side of the island of the same name, Korčula. Facing the Pelješac Channel and lying on one of the main north-south routes in the eastern Adriatic. The historic center stands on a narrow stone peninsula with a planned herringbone street pattern, surrounded by the sea on three sides and backed by a low hill that rises towards Forteca, a 19th-century Martello tower (locally known as *Forteca*), which forms part of the island's later defensive system. The town is an important economic centre for trade and services on the island, while administrative functions are distributed across several local government units. It is also one of the ferry and catamaran ports connecting the island with the mainland and other Adriatic destinations. Around the fortified core newer neighbourhoods and coastal areas cluster with hotels, apartments and marinas reflecting how tourism has reshaped settlement over recent decades.

Korčula is strongly marked by its compact historic core, a long tradition of maritime activities and a tourism economy that has significantly diversified in recent years. The Old Town, with its walls, towers, cathedral and loggia, remains the main image of the destination and concentrates many cultural institutions and events. Everyday life, however, extends into the surrounding parts of the town, where residents work in local administration, services, small crafts, construction and tourism, often combining year-round employment with seasonal activities. Tourism continues to generate important income, with a season now extending from April to the end of October and supported by a wider range of offerings, including eno-gastronomy, outdoor activities such as cycling and hiking, and pilgrimage routes. The cultural calendar has also expanded significantly, with numerous festivals, concerts and events taking place throughout the year.

The fortifications of the Old Town and the hill of Forteca with its Martello tower, a small circular 19th-century coastal fort designed for artillery defence. These two elements are the most recognisable elements of the townscape. They were built and reinforced between the 13th and 19th centuries, in periods when Korčula belonged to the Venetian Stato da mar and later to Habsburg and British rule, in order to control movements along the channel and protect the town. Today the preserved southern wall and the row of towers still strongly shape the coastal panorama, but most interior spaces have no regular use, are not equipped for safe access and are only partly integrated into cultural or community activities. The town has limited financial and technical resources, so larger works on the fortifications usually depend on external funding and project partnerships, which has led to slow and uneven progress.

In recent years the town has strengthened the basic documentation and planning framework for these structures. Inventories and catalogues of fortifications and other cultural elements give an



overview of the main sites, their history, condition and current uses, and a local-level cultural-heritage development document is being prepared to link the Old Town walls and Forteca with wider cultural, tourism and spatial-planning policies. Earlier design and conservation studies for several towers and for Forteca, together with more recent cost-benefit analyses and project applications, offer a technical basis that can be activated when suitable funding calls appear. Participation in cross-border projects such as FORTIC has also brought Korčula closer to other Adriatic towns with similar issues and has introduced tools such as socio-economic analysis, business-ecosystem mapping and digital interpretation.

illustrative examples of good practice:



Figure 18. project conference - photo: korcula.hr



Figure 19. project exhibition – photo: korcula.hr

Revitalization of the fortifications of the City of Korčula



The project “Revitalizacija obrambenih utvrda grada Korčule” demonstrates a well-designed operation to prepare an entire portfolio of fortification investments. Instead of focusing on a single construction site, the City as lead partner and the Korčula Tourist Board and development agency KORA d.o.o. as partners used the 2014–2020 call “Priprema i provedba integriranih razvojnih programa temeljenih na obnovi kulturne baštine” (OP Konkurentnost i kohezija) to finance a set of comprehensive project documentation for a whole group of key locations.

Within this project, architectural and technical documentation was prepared for the revitalisation of the Governor’s Towers, the Revelin Tower and Land Gate, the southern city wall, the summer stage, the Prince’s Palace, and Forteca with its bastion, while the Tower of All Saints underwent archaeological investigations. Although the initial intention included implementation works, rising construction costs led the City to concentrate resources on producing high-quality documentation, thus positioning all these sites closer to



MEASURE 1: PHASED FORTIFICATION REVITALIZATION



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO1**, **SO2** and **SO5** by fast-tracking flagship investments in active interpretation and community use, and positioning Forteca and the Prince's Towers as phased, implementation-ready projects by completing remaining preparatory steps, clarifying a sequencing logic and linking each site to realistic financing paths and future functions.

Korčula's fortified urban landscape is one of the city's strongest heritage assets, but most fortification elements are still used mainly as visual landmarks rather than as active public spaces.

The goal of this set of measures is the revitalization of the Tower of All Saints as an interpretation center and preparation of Forteca and the Prince's Towers for phased implementation. Local workshop material prepared within FORTIC indicates that the Tower of All Saints has advanced furthest in terms of project readiness, with new documentation prepared through the ITP island pipeline, while most other towers remain without secured investment funding. In contrast, the other priority fortifications do not currently have a defined financing pipeline, even though they are recognized as key sites for future reuse. Forteca already has an architectural-conservation study and a full implementation project with cost estimates, so do Velika and Mala Kneževa kula, treated as a single unit with a construction documentation and a valid building permit for reconstruction, yet neither investment has secured funding.

Within the ITP, the islands are included under the area "Development of smart and sustainable islands", **Specific Objective 5.2** "Fostering integrated and inclusive social and economic development, local development in the fields of environment, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and safety in non-urban areas". This creates a clear basis for fast-tracking the Tower of All Saints from the other fortifications in the action plan. The measure treats the tower as a distinct investment priority because it already has a concrete financing path through the 2026 call **"ITP za otoke - Valorizacija kulturne baštine i razvoj turističke infrastrukture na otocima,"** which is intended to address the specific problems and challenges of Croatian islands, and its implementation supports the construction, revitalization and equipping of cultural-heritage buildings and tourism infrastructure for island development in all seven coastal-island counties including Dubrovnik-Neretva County.



Italy – Croatia



The strategic purpose of the measure is to transform the tower into a multifunctional interpretation and community space operated by the Town Museum. In addition to interpreting the fortification system of Korčula and its wider Adriatic role. The tower should become a space that can host small exhibitions, talks, workshops, educational activities and selected civic programmes, thereby strengthening local identity, adding year-round indoor use and functioning as a gateway to the wider system of fortifications, including Forteca and the Prince's Towers.

The measure therefore focuses on completing the remaining preparatory steps, structuring phased investment logic, and identifying realistic funding models. This approach reflects the wider FORTIC logic that technical documentation, management planning, and reuse strategies should form the basis for later investment, particularly in places where local budget capacity is limited and external financing is essential. The objective is not only to preserve the structures, but to move them from passive heritage assets to spaces with defined future functions. Forteca should be positioned as a phased heritage and public-use project with priorities in access, safety, and programming, while the Prince's Towers should be framed as implementation-ready assets for social, cultural, and educational use under future ERDF, national heritage or island-focused funding opportunities.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF ITP INVESTMENT APPLICATION	Finalise and submit the ITP island application for the revitalisation of the Tower of All Saints, building on existing technical, economic and CBA documentation and aligning the project with public-use, museum and tourism objectives.	2026	City of Korčula, Korčula Town Museum	ITP za otoke; City co-financing; possible county support	To be confirmed from prepared investment documentation [file:3][web:27]



Italy – Croatia



FORTIC

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
REVITALISATION AND EQUIPPING OF THE TOWER	Carry out construction, rehabilitation and equipping works needed to establish the interpretation centre, including exhibition infrastructure, interpretation tools, basic accessibility improvements and technical equipment for public use.	2027–2029	City of Korčula	ITP za otoke; City budget; possible county co-financing	To be confirmed from prepared investment documentation [file:3][web:29]
INTERPRETATION AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING	Develop the permanent interpretive concept and annual programme of exhibitions, talks, workshops and museum-linked activities, while also allowing selected use by local associations and community groups.	2028–2030	Korčula Town Museum, City of Korčula, local associations	Municipal budget; Ministry of Culture; sponsorships; project funds	40,000–80,000 EUR
UPDATE OF PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AND PHASING PLAN	Review the existing documentation for Forteca and the Prince's Towers, confirm legal and technical validity, define realistic implementation phases and prepare updated investment briefs for funding applications.	2026–2027	City of Korčula, external conservation and design experts	Municipal budget; Ministry of Culture support; technical assistance calls	40,000 EUR





Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
FUNDING MODEL AND APPLICATION PIPELINE	Prepare a financing roadmap for both sites, including screening of future ITP island opportunities, ERDF and national heritage calls, and possible hybrid models for phased implementation.	2026–2028	City of Korčula, Korčula Town Museum, development support institutions	Municipal budget; EU project preparation funds	25,000 EUR
PILOT PROGRAMMING AND TEMPORARY ACTIVATION	Test low-intensity public uses, guided interpretation and occasional cultural programmes at or around the sites where safety and conservation conditions allow, in order to build visibility and support future investment.	2027–2029	City of Korčula, Korčula Town Museum, local associations	Municipal budget; Ministry of Culture; sponsorships	20,000–50,000 EUR



KORČULA - OLD TOWN WALLS: THE LARGE AND SMALL GOVERNOR'S TOWERS, TOWER OF ALL SAINTS; FORTECA

ARCHITECTURAL AND SPATIAL FEATURES

The system is made of two main parts the fortified city core and **Forteca** - the British tower Fort Wellington on the hill above Korčula. The Old Town features a gridded medieval street plan, accessed through a fortified gate with a drawbridge. The cities double walls are strengthened by eight round and semi-round towers: **Large Governor's Tower** from 1496 and **Small Governor's Tower** from 1448, Kanavelic Tower built 1485-88, Zakrjan Tower from 1483, the **tower of All-Saints** built in 1493 the Tower of the Southern Land Gate, the Tower of the Western Sea Gate, and finally the Small Redoubt. Limestone masonry and simple Venetian details define the character of the city fortification. Fortress and archaeological site **Forteca**, previously known as Fort Wellington or Sveti Vlaho, consist of the **English Tower**, the Venetian **bastion-type fortress**, and the remains of the medieval **church of Gospe od Vrtova**. The fort was built in just one month in 1617 using local dry-stack stone construction techniques. The walls of the fort form an irregular polygonal shape with corners reinforced by triangular protrusions, a sign of the influence of bastion architecture. In the middle of the bastion-type the fortification is a tower erected in 1813, a circular "Martello tower" type structure tapering towards the top.



RELATIONSHIP WITH SETTLEMENT AND LANDSCAPE

The walls encircle the small peninsula old town sits on, creating a powerful silhouette visible from the sea. While the wall towers still stand the wall itself was mostly removed or integrated within the urban fabric of narrow streets and public spaces. The wall segments still visible around the perimeter of the old town help create a characteristic identity and unique waterfront silhouette. Fortress and archaeological site Forteca are located on the hill of St. Blaise southwest of the historic center of Korčula providing panoramic views from the top viewing deck towards the city and surrounding landscape.





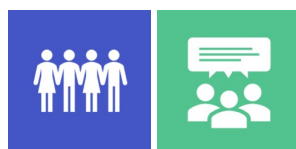
OWNERSHIP AND CURRENT USE

The walls are publicly owned by the city of Korčula as a series of individually protected cultural assets recognized by the Ministry of Culture and Media, which are now and fully integrated into the living historic core. The urban area of the core itself is also protected as a cultural history asset. In 2019, as part of the EU project “Revitalization of the fortifications of the Town of Korčula”, the restoration and equipping of Fort Forteca and the Great and Small Governor’s Towers started. Other towers and walls are being reconstructed, including the Tower of All Saints, the Governor’s Gate, the Arsenal, and the Revelin Tower. The Governor’s Court area is being transformed into a cultural interpretation center. The **Forteca** above the city houses a fort interpretation center and lookout point in it the tower, with additional outdoor seating capacity for outdoor events, and small outdoor café accessed via a renovated forest trail. In the city core **All Saint’s tower** is being turned into an entry point for the city as well as an interpretation center. The **Large and Small Governor’s towers** remain unused, requiring extensive reconstruction work after acting as drinking water storage in the 20th century and await implementation of a plan. The aim of all interventions was to support tourism, cultural events, guided tours, and heritage interpretation, as elaborated in **Cultural heritage development plan (D.1.2.5)**.





MEASURE 2: STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR FORTRESS MANAGEMENT AND YEAR-ROUND PUBLIC PROGRAMMING



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO3** and **SO5** building a more permanent governance and capacity-building framework in which the City of Korčula and the Town Museum and the Tourist Board by creating year-round exhibitions, guided tours, screenings and workshops in museum and tower spaces to a coordinated programme line that supports long-term reuse of fortifications.

Most of Korčula's fortification spaces are already in city ownership, which creates a relatively favorable basis for coordinated management compared with places where ownership is fragmented.

The workshop notes also state that the long-term governance model is expected to rely on cooperation between the City of Korčula and the Korčula Town Museum, but that local budget capacity is limited, and stronger project management and external financing pipelines are needed. Korčula already participates in the Night of Fortresses and has used the event as a platform for exhibitions, open days and educational activities in the Town Museum, city towers, and the Marco Polo Interpretation Centre. The 2026 city programme confirms that the event took place on 8 and 9 May in the historic core and included museum and tower activities focused on the city's defensive and cultural history.

FORTIC gives additional support to this direction because it identifies the museum as a key local knowledge holder, the Korčula Tourist Board as an interpretation and visitor-experience partner, and the project as part of a wider cross-border structure of universities, heritage institutions and local communities working on sustainable tourism, digital tools and inclusive heritage use. The same project documentation also stresses the importance of knowledge transfer, management models, and long-term reuse strategies as prerequisites for sustainable heritage activation.

The FORTIC project also frames Night of Fortresses as a cross-border mechanism for strengthening cooperation among fortified sites, testing new formats, and widening the audience



Italy – Croatia



for heritage beyond the peak season. For Korčula, this provides a practical basis for converting a successful annual event into a broader programme line that links citizens, visitors, the museum, and future revitalized fortification spaces.

This measure translates those needs into a local capacity-building framework. Its purpose is to ensure that the city and museum do not operate through isolated one-off projects, but through a more stable pipeline of partnerships, project preparation, programming, and external funding applications linked to the city's cultural heritage development plan and tourism management priorities .

The measure therefore combines continuation of the event with gradual expansion of other fortification related year-round cultural programming. To support the use of newly created cultural infrastructure through exhibitions, guided tours, film screenings, workshops, and small thematic events as tools for public engagement, interpretation testing, and stronger integration of fortifications into local cultural life.

Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
CITY-MUSEUM COORDINATION FRAMEWORK	Establish a regular coordination mechanism between the City and Korčula Town Museum for fortification planning, programming, project preparation and division of responsibilities.	2026–2027	City of Korčula, Korčula Town Museum	Municipal budget	5,000 EUR
PROJECT PIPELINE AND PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	Build a structured pipeline of future projects for fortifications, including concept notes, partner mapping and preparation for EU, national and county funding calls.	2026–2030	City of Korčula, Korčula Town Museum	Municipal budget; technical assistance; EU project support	40,000 EUR



Italy – Croatia

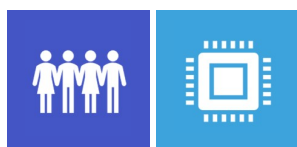


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Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
CAPACITY-BUILDING AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE	Organise targeted training and peer exchange with FORTIC partners and other relevant networks on heritage management, interpretation, funding applications and inclusive visitor use.	2027–2030	City of Korčula, Korčula Town Museum, FORTIC partners	EU cooperation projects; municipal budget; Ministry of Culture	20,000–40,000 EUR
ANNUAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGHT OF FORTRESSES	Maintain Korčula's annual participation in Night of Fortresses and gradually expand the programme across the Town Museum, existing towers and other suitable sites in the historic core.	2026–	Korčula Town Museum	Municipal budget; FORTIC follow-up projects; sponsorships	8,000–15,000 EUR per year
OFF-SEASON CULTURAL CALENDAR	Establish an annual off-season cultural calendar (autumn–spring). Include at least one expanded Night of the Fortresses event and a series of smaller thematic weekends and educational co-developed activities.	2026–2029	City of Korčula, schools, associations	City budget, regional culture funds, sponsorships	30,000 EUR per year
CROSS-BORDER CO-CREATION AND NETWORKING	Cooperate with other Night of Fortresses partners and FORTIC stakeholders on shared formats, promotion, exchange of know-how and possible future joint project applications.	2026–2030	City of Korčula, Korčula Town Museum, partner institutions	EU cooperation projects; municipal budget	10,000 EUR



MEASURE 3: DIGITAL INTERPRETATION AND METAVERSE PRESENCE OF KORČULA FORTIFICATIONS



This measure aligns with strategic objectives: **SO3** and **SO4** by working on augmented reality and the shared FORTIC metaverse into a coherent digital-interpretation framework that keeps fortifications present in everyday life and tourism while remaining technically and financially sustainable. By maintaining and updating AR content within the cross-border platform, linking digital narratives to museum interpretation and future physical investments, and using these tools to support education, tourism diversification and fundraising for sites like Forteca and the Prince's Towers, it turns digital innovation into a practical instrument for long-term heritage activation.

Digital interpretation is one of the clearest development directions expected to have the strongest effect in tourism and for the local community by showing towers as lived spaces rather than only as static remains.

This direction is already identified for Korčula within FORTIC documentation stating that Korčula is responsible for preparing augmented-reality elements for interpretation of its fortification system, while workshop notes describe the AR component and web viewer as one of the project activities expected to have the strongest effect in tourism and for the local community by showing towers as lived spaces rather than only as static remains.

At the same time, the wider FORTIC metaverse concept is being developed by UNIVE and UNIPU as a virtual showroom of Adriatic fortifications with avatars of site managers, B2B exchange functions and 3D materials that can support visibility, networking and investment interest. Korčula is explicitly included in this shared digital ecosystem through provision of virtual material and AR itineraries.

For Korčula, the next step is not to create a separate digital platform, but to maintain and expand its local content within this cross-border framework. The measure therefore focuses on keeping AR content updated, linking digital narratives to museum interpretation and future physical investments, and using digital tools as a practical bridge between heritage promotion, education, tourism diversification and future fundraising for still-unrealized sites such as Forteca and the Prince's Towers.



Activity	Description	Timeline	Lead entity	Funding source	Indicative cost
MAINTENANCE AND EXPANSION OF AR CONTENT METaverse COORDINATION AND PROMOTION OF FUTURE INVESTMENTS INTEGRATION WITH MUSEUM AND FUTURE INTERPRETATION CENTRE	Maintain and update the existing AR itineraries and web-based interpretation of the southern wall and key fortification points, with gradual addition of new layers and stories.	2026–2030	City of Korčula, Korčula Town Museum, technical providers	Municipal budget; EU follow-up projects; tourism board support	20,000–40,000 EUR
	Continue cooperation with UNIVE, UNIPU and other partners in the cross-border metaverse showroom and use the platform to present Korčula's fortification system, prepared projects and partnership opportunities.	2026–2030	City of Korčula, Korčula Town Museum, FORTIC partners	FORTIC follow-up projects; EU cooperation funds; municipal budget	10,000–20,000 EUR
	Connect digital content with museum exhibitions and with the future programme of the Tower of All Saints so that physical and digital interpretation reinforce each other.	2027–2030	Korčula Town Museum, City of Korčula	Municipal budget; project funds; Ministry of Culture	15,000–30,000 EUR



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