**European Heritage Volunteers Programme, GERMANY**

For many years, the European Heritage Volunteers have organised highly successful “Traditional Crafts in Practice” courses. Between 2022 and 2024, the NGO ran 22 courses in 14 European countries, including 11 EU member states and three candidate countries. These were delivered in 37 separate editions, welcoming more than 430 participants from 67 countries worldwide and involving over 40 technical instructors from 17 nations.

The courses have been hosted at a wide variety of heritage sites, ranging from UNESCO World Heritage Sites to industrial monuments, places of worship, and clusters of vernacular buildings. Many locations are selected for their neglected or marginal condition, with the aim of revitalising heritage assets often overlooked in mainstream conservation practice.

Each course runs for two weeks and follows an informal, practice-based structure. The approach focuses on international groups of students and emerging heritage professionals, typically composed of around 12 to 14 participants, to ensure intensive collaboration and individual mentoring. Instruction covers a broad spectrum of traditional crafts, including carpentry, masonry,

mortars and plasters, fresco restoration, vernacular techniques, textile arts, and others. Sessions are jointly led by experienced heritage professionals, master craftspeople, and local practitioners facilitating direct intergenerational and intercultural exchange.

The courses are based on detailed research on local history, materials, and construction methods, with many activities taking place in public or semi-public spaces. This open format encourages participation by local communities, who are often involved as co-instructors, partners or audience members during public presentations and site events. Community engagement extends further, through partnerships with local authorities, activists and NGOs, who contribute to planning, dissemination and follow-up actions after the courses end. The programme’s grassroots approach and cost-effective structure enables broad participation and makes it possible to deliver recurring activities with limited resources, benefiting greatly from in-kind support and local collaboration.

A specific aspect of the courses is the focus on the “living connection” between heritage sites, practitioners and communities. The training does not simply aim to preserve techniques for their own sake, but to demonstrate how traditional methods and materials can be adapted for use in contemporary conservation and building projects. The use of local, natural materials highlights the environmental sustainability of many traditional crafts, offering practical lessons for climate resilience and resource efficiency.

The recurring nature of the training programme, together with its transnational network, has created a robust framework for ongoing collaboration. A significant number of participants have returned to subsequent editions, and the network of instructors continues to expand, contributing to a wider European dialogue on practical restoration skills and community-based conservation. Further courses and new partnerships are planned for the coming years, supporting the ongoing transfer of knowledge and skills across generations and borders.

“*The training programme’s highly international character, engaging motivated participants from across Europe and supported by recognised local experts, is a key strength*,” the Awards’ Jury stated.

“*Regular courses validate and promote heritage and craft practices, while strong planning and management have built an extensive and resilient network of skilled participants*,” the Jury added.

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**Summary for the publication**

The European Heritage Volunteers organises “Traditional Crafts in Practice” training courses at heritage sites across Europe, involving participants from countries worldwide. The European Heritage Volunteers Programme is cost-effective and grassroots in nature, bridging generations and cultures, revitalising neglected sites, and demonstrating the value of hands-on, community-based heritage practice.