A tour with a twist

This Erasmus+ project transformed the traditional guided tour in order to spread the cultural heritage to a wider audience.

Europe’s cultural heritage is our common wealth, but it has traditionally been the language of experts, which jeopardises its transmission to new audiences and future generations.

The Heritage Interpretation & Innovative Practices project aimed to counter this by developing new and larger audiences in cultural interpretation. For two years, 63 cultural heritage guides from France took part in 114 job-shadowing and training sessions in cultural interpretation across 11 EU countries.

Project coordinator Vincent Soccodato from Abbaye aux Dames, la cité musicale, in Saintes, France, said:

‘Through our work, we have created better conditions for dialogue on cultural heritage between experts and non-experts and people from different cultural backgrounds.’

Participants, who were professional guides, cultural managers, social workers or volunteer staff, developed their cultural and hospitality skills by embracing new sensory, creative and interactive methods of presenting cultural heritage. Through a critical analysis of their own work, they became more aware of their own potential and creativity.

They were inspired by what they learned, and many returned to France with new ideas and methodologies. The French guides who are traditionally scientific in their approach, have embraced the experience.

A particularly memorable moment for Vincent was when he learned about a ‘greeter’ tour participants took in Berlin, which involved a previously homeless man showing them his past life on the streets.

A follow-on Erasmus+ project running until September 2019 is focused on innovative practices in heritage interpretation with a particular focus on building a network of greeters across Europe.