An infrastructure for heritage interpretation, preservation, documentation and management

E-RIHS
European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science

TYPE: distributed
COORDINATING COUNTRY: IT
PROSPECTIVE MEMBER COUNTRIES: BE, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FR, HU, IT, NL, PT, UK

PARTICIPANTS: BG, BR, CY, DK, IE, IL, PL, SE, SI

TIMELINE
• ESFRI Roadmap entry: 2016
• Preparation phase: 2016-2019
• Construction phase: 2020-2021
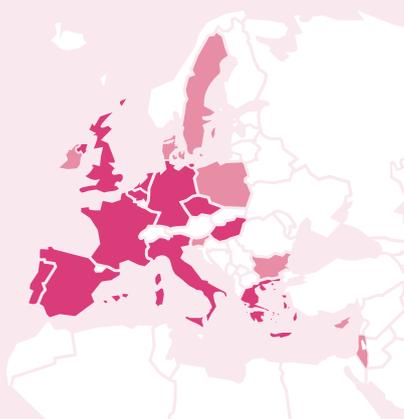• Operation start: 2022

ESTIMATED COSTS
• Capital value: Not Available
• Preparation: 2 M€/year
• Construction: 4 M€ (Central Hub)
• Operation: 5 M€/year

HEADQUARTERS
Proposed in Florence, Italy. To be finalized in the Preparatory Phase with possibly the involvement of ICCROM-International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

WEBSITE
www.e-rihs.eu

ITALY

Description

The European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science (E-RIHS) will support research on heritage interpretation, preservation, documentation and management. It will comprise: E-RIHS Headquarters and National Hubs, fixed and mobile national infrastructures of recognized excellence, physically accessible collections/archives and virtually accessible heritage data. Both cultural and natural heritage are addressed: collections, buildings, archaeological sites, digital and intangible heritage. E-RIHS will provide state-of-the-art tools and services to cross-disciplinary research communities advancing understanding and preservation of global heritage. It will provide access to a wide range of cutting-edge scientific infrastructures, methodologies, data and tools, training in the use of these tools, public engagement, access to repositories for standardized data storage, analysis and interpretation. E-RIHS will enable the community to advance heritage science and global access to the distributed infrastructures in a coordinated and streamlined way.

Background

Heritage Science has brought about the need of structuring the net of infrastructures operating throughout Europe. Fragmentation, duplication of efforts, isolation of small research groups put at risks the competitive advantage of European heritage science research, promoted so well by the unique cultural heritage. The long-term tradition of this field of research, the ability to combine with innovation, and the integration promoted by EU-funded projects such as EU-ARTECH, CHARISMA and IPERION CH in conservation science, and ARIADNE in archaeology represent the background of E-RIHS.
E-RIHS exploits the synergy of the cooperation among the academy, research centers and cultural institutions. The global lead that the EU holds in this research field, so precariously supported by a combination of national and EU measures, requires a joint and resolved effort. This has been fully recognized by the European Union with the continuous and reiterated support of initiatives aimed at integrating existing Heritage Science infrastructures, as well as, with a focus on Member States' national research programs, the JPI on Cultural Heritage, coordinating efforts of 17 EU national funding bodies supporting heritage science. The enthusiastic reviews of these initiatives testify the success of their action to advance knowledge and to establish a research community, acknowledged as "advanced" in official EU documents concerning conservation, or quickly growing in the field of archaeology as shown by the performance indicators of the relevant project ARIADNE.
This demonstrates beyond any doubt both the scientific and the socio-economic importance connected with Heritage Science: it is a sector and a research community that has achieved the maturity necessary to make the leap towards a permanent European Research Infrastructure that will impact broadly on society and economy.

Steps for implementation

E-RIHS is expected to lead a Preparatory Phase in the years 2016-2019 which will be used to address legal status and governance/management organization. This will lead to application to ERIC (or to other suitable legal form). The establishment of a legal structure and governance and the refinement of the business plan for long-term sustainability will be the three most important deliverables, together with demonstrators of users access as implemented by the consortium availing of the existing infrastructure projects.
Preliminary work will also be done in the framework of the H2020 IPERION-CH project started in May 2015.
E-RIHS will be launched as a stand-alone RI in 2020. Further developments are planned for connecting and including partners and facilities outside EU, and gradually reaching the status of a global distributed research infrastructure.