



Inspiring Rural Heritage:
Sustainable Practices
to Protect and Conserve
Upland Landscapes and Memories

Project IRIS - Inspiring rural heritage: sustainable practices to protect and conserve upland landscapes and memories

Closing Conference

19-21 October 2023, Kolašin, Montenegro

REPORT

The Closing Conference of the European project IRIS “Inspiring Rural Heritage: Sustainable practices for the protection and preservation of mountain landscapes and memories” was organised in Kolašin, Montenegro, from 19-21. October 2023.

Background

The **IRIS project** has been implemented since October 2020 in five European countries: France, Italy, Montenegro, Spain, and the United Kingdom, with the aim to improve the socially and ecologically sustainable conservation through use of mountain areas and their unique natural and cultural heritage. The project explores and develops a "living heritage" approach, promoting "protection through use" of mountain territories and neighboring rural areas.

The IRIS project is co-financed through the Horizon 2020 framework program of the European Union for research and innovation, and is implemented by a consortium consisting of: University of Genoa from Italy as coordinator the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS) and the University of Toulouse from France, the University of Granada from Spain and the University of Durham from United Kingdom. The implementation of the IRIS project in Montenegro is coordinated by the Laboratory for Environmental Geography (GEODE), CNRS and the University of Toulouse in close collaboration with the University of Montenegro contributing with an interdisciplinary team of researchers and professors composed by historians, agro-economists, ecologists and lawyers.

The closing conference of the IRIS project aimed to present the results of the activities implemented by the project partners in the five countries, in the pilot areas of Enveigt in the Eastern Pyrenees in France, Eastern Ligurian Apennines in Italy, Sinjajevina in Montenegro, Guadix region at the north of the Sierra Nevada in Spain and Cheviot Hills between Scotland and England in the north-east of United Kingdom. At the same time, the goal of the conference was to be a platform for exchanging experiences and good practices with decision makers related to mountain areas, while building new dialogues for their protection through use. Part of the closing conference was specifically focused on **Sinjajevina, the pilot area of the IRIS project in Montenegro**. Sinjajevina, which is the largest pasture mountain in Montenegro and one of the largest in Europe, with seasonal mountain settlements - katuns is still used by a significant number of herders, the most important pastoral community in the country.

The IRIS project closing conference lasted three days, and consisted of:

- 19 October 2023, Thursday - **Field trip to Sinjajevina**
- 20 October 2023, Friday - **Sinjajevina workshop and The opening of the IRIS exhibition**
- 21 October 2023, Saturday - **IRIS results presentations**



The JPI Cultural Heritage project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 699523

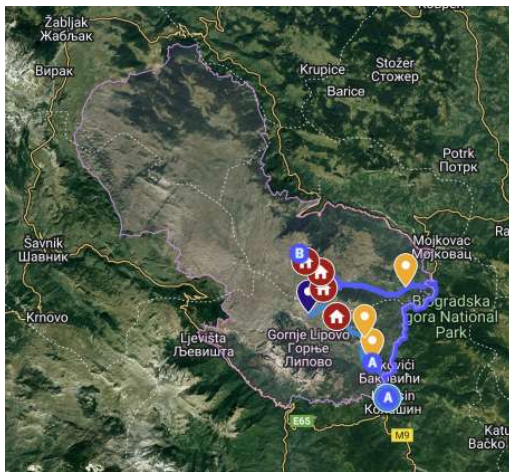




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Day 1: Thursday, 19th October 2023 - Field trip to Sinjajevina

The closing conference commenced with a field trip to Sinjajevina, the pilot area of the IRIS project in Montenegro. Participants, over 20 international scientists visited the highlands of Sinjajevina, with its pastures and pastoral settlements - katuns, to witness the traditional pastoral life and the unique cultural heritage of the area. Field visit was organised in collaboration with Save Sinjajevina civic initiative. Participants visited katuns: Okrugljak, Bunarine and Potrk, as well as abandoned Martinički katun. In Okrugljak meeting and discussion with Mileva Gara Jovanović, representative of herders, was organised. Participants visited Margita place, where Save Sinjajevina members organised protests against planned military polygon on Sinjajevina. A notable aspect was the traditional lunch prepared by a local family in Katun Potrk, offering insights into the local cuisine and lifestyle.



Route of the field trip to Sinjajevina



Visit to katun Okrugljak, Ružica church



Participants of the field trip in katun Bunarine



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Day 2: Friday, 20th October 2023 - Sinjajevina workshop and the opening of the IRIS exhibition

The key day of the IRIS project closing conference was Friday, October 20, when the Sinjajevina Workshop was organised at the Hotel Bianca conference hall. The **goal** was to use this workshop as a platform for discussion with key actors and various experts about the future potential protection, heritage enhancement and community centered and participated sustainable development of Sinjajevina, which could also be an inspiration for other mountain areas of Montenegro and the Balkans.

There were about 50 **participants** at the closing conference, including representatives of IRIS project partners from France, Italy and the UK along with international experts from Croatia and Albania, as well as different local actors related to Sinjajevina including representatives from Ministry of Culture, Administration for Heritage Protection, Environmental Protection Agency, University of Montenegro, municipalities of Kolašin, Mojkovac, Žabljak and Danilovgrad, National park Biogradska gora, different NGOs and representatives of local communities. At the conference there were also representatives from the donor Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage and Global Change (JPI CH), secretary general and chair that was at the same time representative from the French Ministry of culture.

The day began with a **welcome speeches** by: IRIS project global coordinator, Sebastiano Salvido from the University of Genoa; Vasilije Ivanović, Vice-mayor of Kolašin Municipality; Pablo Dominguez from GEODE, the IRIS project coordinator in Montenegro; Ivan Laković, IRIS coordinator of the University of Montenegro team and Milica Martić from the Directorate of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture and Kolašin Municipality.

Following this, Pascal Liévaux, **Chair of the Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage and Global Change (JPI CH)** and representative of French Ministry of Culture, presented JPI CH programme and possibilities for multilateral and bilateral collaborations in research valorization and intangible cultural heritage in Europe.





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The first session was focused on **Presentation of results of the IRIS project in the case study area of Montenegro – Sinjajevina**. Coordinator and members of the IRIS project team, from GEODE and University of Montenegro, that worked in Sinjajevina presented results of the project on the various aspects of Sinjajevina's living heritage. Pablo Dominguez, project coordinator, gave overall view on local community governance and conservation; Aleksandra Kapetanović spoke about identification and mapping of katuns and elements of cultural heritage on Sinjajevina; Ivan Laković gave historic overview on Traditional transhumance in Sinjajevina mountain; Milana Tomić spoke about Legal aspects for protection of Sinjajevina that were analysed together with Maja Kostić Mandić; Milan Marković spoke about Traditional animal husbandry at the Montenegrin katuns and Jelena Lazarević presented research about Pastoral ecology of Sinjajevina implemented together with Dušica Radonjić and Ana Topalović .



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The midday sessions addressed **Opportunities for Sinjajevina** by national actors centered on nature protection, cultural heritage, rural tourism, and protection of katuns. Duško Mrdak from the Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro, spoke about protection of nature and Sinjajevina as a planned Regional Nature Park. Tanja Vujović from the Administration for Protection of Cultural Property spoke about protection of cultural heritage. Jelena Krivčević from Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica Komovi and Prokletije, spoke about rural tourism and potentials for protection of katuns, especially through FAO GIHAS.



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The first part of the afternoon sessions was dedicated to **Local perspectives**. First representatives from local selfgovernments - municipalities that are linked to Sinjajevina shared their views on challenges and perspectives: Mile Glavičanin from Municipality of Kolašin, Darko Smolović from Municipality of Mojkovac, Stanojka Vemić from Municipality of Žabljak and Marija Radonjić Ćupić from Municipality of Danilovgrad. Afterwards Milan Sekulović and Novak Tomović from the Save Sinjajevina Civic Initiative adressed challenges and perspectives for local communities of Sinjajevina.





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International perspectives session featured interesting and important presentations from the international context. Francesca Pasetti presented UN's International Year for Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP), as a Chair of the European Regional Support Group of IYRP. She spoke also about the Transhumance as part of the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This was especially important for Montenegro, having in mind that The Administration for the Protection of Cultural Property of Montenegro has accepted initiative for protection of *Katunovanje* or *tradition of ascension to katuni*, that can become later part of the mentioned UNESCO Representative List. Iris Beneš, from Brod Ecological Society and ICCA Consortium member from Croatia, presented Euro-Mediterranean ICCAs: Commons for Nature Conservation and the Gajna Grasslands Experience (Croatia) as a possible inspirations for Sinjajevina.



The Workshop on Sinjajevina was finalised with the **work in groups**, where participants of the closing conference discussed together about **key issues related to Sinjajevina**:

- **Legal and management issues** of upland pastures (katun), katun ways of life and their traditional commons.
- **Protection of nature and biodiversity**, future Regional Nature Park.
- **Protection of living heritage** and sustainable eco-agro-ethno-tourism.
- **Agro-economy**, LAG Sinjajevina and future EU LEADER projects.



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After the joint work representatives of groups presented key issues and recommendations to all participants. Those key issues and recommendations are elaborated as a conclusion of the conference, and they are in the annex to this Report.





Opening of the exhibition "Future through tradition: Inspiring living heritage for the protection and promotion of European mountain landscapes"

As part of the conference, the opening of the exhibition "Future through tradition: Inspiring living heritage for the protection and promotion of European mountain landscapes" was organized on October 20 at 19:00, in cooperation with the Cultural Center of Kolašin, in the Local Museum of Kolašin. The exhibition shows five examples of living landscapes in pilot sites of the five countries, through which the concept of "protection through use" of mountain areas is promoted.

At the opening of the exhibition, Draginja Kujović, ethnologist from the Kolašin Local Museum, Pablo Dominguez, coordinator of the IRIS project in Montenegro, as well as Davor Sedlarević from the Culture Center, head of the research station Ethno-camp Kolašin, will speak, and then the female group "Đude" from KUD "Mijat Mašković" from Kolašin will make a traditional singing.

The exhibition's opening featured speeches from: Draginja Kujović, an ethnologist from the Kolašin Local Museum; Pablo Dominguez, the Montenegrin coordinator for the IRIS project and Davor Sedlarević, representing the Culture Center and the head of the Ethno-camp Kolašin research station. The event was enriched by a traditional singing performance by the female group "Đude" from KUD "Mijat Mašković" from Kolašin, who performed traditional songs from Sinjajevina and its surroundings.



Along with the exhibition "Future through tradition: Inspiring living heritage for the protection and promotion of European mountain landscapes" short video with the material from the exhibition is produced. The exhibition and video are placed also online on the IRIS project web page <https://iris-jpi.eu/exhibition.html>.



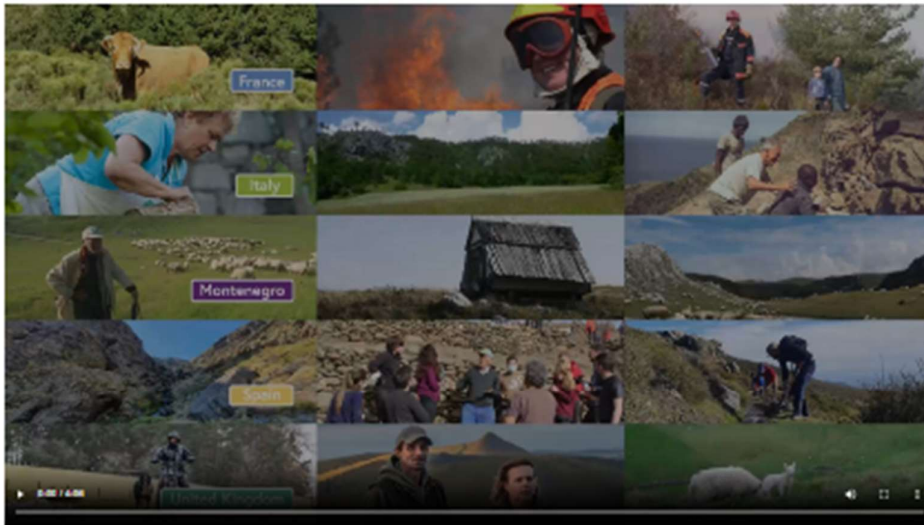
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THE EXHIBITION

Future through tradition

Inspiring living heritage to protect and promote European mountain landscapes



INVITATION TO THE EXHIBITION

IRIS is an international collaborative project supporting the sustainable use and development of rural landscapes incorporating all four pillars of sustainability – cultural, social, economic and environmental.

Marginal and forgotten upland territories are the heart of this exhibition. For millennia, these territories have been cradles of cultures and economies which developed intensely and in strong balance with the nature they depended on, and many are still nowadays thriving in spite of impending menaces such as depopulation, abandonment, the loss of traditional skills, and land-use change driven by the climate emergency, detrimental planning decisions and global economic trends. They persist now thanks to the enduring of local communities, benefiting society at large through their cultures and know-how, contributing a powerful example for the future.

IRIS web page



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Day 3: Saturday, 21st October 2023 - IRIS results presentations

Final day of the IRIS project closing conference was focus on the presentation of the IRIS project results.

Sebastiano Salvido and Anna Stagno from the University of Genoa, global project coordinator, presented main issues of **the IRIS project: origins, global aims, objectives and general results.**

The **results in the case study area of Italy: *Stratified landscapes and rural practices in Liguria*** were presented by Rebekka Dossche, Sabina Ghislandi, Alessandro Panetta and Caterina Piu from the University of Genoa.

The **results in the case study area of UK: *Hill farming heritage in the Cheviot Hills*** were presented by Chris Gerrard from the University of Durham and Chris Dalglish and Skye McAlpine Walker from INHERIT.

The **results in the case study area of France: *Controlled burning practices - The mountain of Enveitg, Eastern Pyrenees*** was presented by Vanessa Py-Saragaglia from GEODE.

At the end Alexandre Caussé, JPI CH Secretary General, presented in detail **Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage and Global Change (JPI CH)** and spoke about exploiting results and future opportunities.





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The conference concluded with the **IRIS project Executive Board/General Assembly Meeting**, discussing the progress and finalization of project activities.



The conference successfully brought together various stakeholders, offering a platform for sharing insights, discussing challenges, and exploring future collaborations. It emphasized the importance of rural heritage and sustainable practices in conserving upland landscapes and memories, setting a positive trajectory for future initiatives in this realm.



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