Project HERCULES' First Milestone:
The Knowledge Hub is Operational

The objective of HERCULES' ("Sustainable futures for Europe's HERitage in CULtural landscapES") is to develop advanced tools and technologies for mapping, assessing, protecting and managing cultural landscapes in rural areas. With launching the Knowledge Hub, the project has reached its first major milestone.

The main idea of Knowledge Hub is to act as a general database so that ideas, reports, thoughts, and outcomes of the project can be used and re-used to serve different needs, thus avoiding the subsequent data collection, which is so often in modern research. For datasets to be used by different stakeholders, presenting their stories quickly and efficiently, we built a powerful visualization engine, which makes it possible to show data from different angles. The Knowledge Hub is thus a two-fold system: it is a state-of-the-art data repository, oriented towards spatial, alphanumerical and temporal data and an interactive mapping web platform.

The Knowledge Hub strives to protect, manage, and plan for sustainable landscapes at local, national, and Pan-European scales. It provides the means for combining information on landscape practice, land use, land cover, biodiversity, soils & geology, social issues & existing policies, legal constraints, history, archaeology, etc., from both experience-based local insights and scientific knowledge.

As shown in the picture, the Knowledge Hub does not limit its usage to professionals, but strives for the empowerment of both public and private actors. It allows its users not only to access, use, archive, share and distribute data produced throughout the study, but by being freely accessible to all, also enables anyone to contribute their own data. This data can be fused with existing models and results for new and innovative approaches to landscape management. It thus provides the means for collecting input and feedback from the general public and can act as a toolkit for the communication of (the project's) insights between various parties.

We believe the Knowledge Hub is a platform where everybody can participate. As it has become operational, it is of utmost importance for the Knowledge Hub to be used, since a hub only works if it is at the centre of something. Its virtual landscape should be filled with data and "landscape stories" through the web platform. Only then will the repository become truly useful and all those with an interest in landscape will have, finally, their own platform linking all interests that have for so long been separated. Knowledge Hub today is the start of an iterative process of customisation of the application based on actual needs. Extending the Knowledge Hub into a platform for research analyses (automatic or semi-automatic modelling, supported by change detection, pattern recognition, time series analysis and future dynamics forecasting) is already foreseen in the continuation of the HERCULES project.

We hope the "knowledge" part of the hub will grow and expand within the timeframe of the HERCULES project as well as afterwards, and we will take care that the "hub" part will remain aligned with actual needs.

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Discover the Knowledge Hub at www. hercules-landscapes.eu