

REDUCING BARRIER FOR ACCESS TO EUROPEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE: Eu-ARTECH - Access Research and Technology for the conservation of the European Cultural Heritage



EU-ARTECH is a unique Integrated Infrastructure Initiative of the 6th F.P. (2002-2006) dedicated to the conservation of the European cultural heritage. It consists of a consortium of 12 leading institutions, including prestigious European museums, universities and research centres from 8 different countries developing together programs of networking, joint research, and transnational access.

The main objective is to improve effective coordination among European countries, enhancing the quality of the research in artwork conservation, developing new applications, and offering new opportunities for advanced training of young scientists and scholars in the field.



Preservation of European cultural heritage for the benefit of future generations

“Research in conservation has largely been developed during the last years in many qualified laboratories distributed all over Europe. Excellent results have been obtained, however, much more can be done to optimize analytical procedures, to extend the use of advanced resources, to better actuate conservation treatments and to disseminate information. The way to achieve this goal is to tighten the collaboration among European institutions and scientists, improving the access to advanced resources and know-how, and defining and diffusing common reliable good practices”.

The coordinator, Prof. Brunetto Giovanni Brunetti, University of Perugia, told us the history of EU-ARTECH. The process started within the thematic network LabS TECH (Laboratories on Science and Technology for the

conservation of the European Cultural Heritage) which was funded under the 5th Framework Programme (2001-2004).

From the long term collaboration of the project that involved a first nucleus of 6 European institutions, new ideas of cooperation emerged that led to the formulation of EU-ARTECH which involved 12 partners.

The successful presentation of EU-ARTECH was due to the excellent work conducted by a team of the University of Perugia in close collaboration with the other members of the LabS TECH consortium. The University of Perugia has experience in European projects and is also member of the Agency of Promotion of European Research (APRE) that hosts national contact points for "Research Infrastructure" within the 6th and 7th Framework Programmes.

Benefits for various European users



MOLAB working at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Antwerp, on the three panels of the painting "Christ surrounded by angels" by H. Memling

European researchers, conservator-restorers, archaeologists and art historians can benefit from the EU-ARTECH networking results. Success has been obtained in the promotion of interdisciplinary encounters among different professionals, in the exchange of knowledge among institutions and in the formulation of common protocols dedicated to favor rapid exchange of information, good comparison of results and rational use of resources. After an enquiry on needs to improve interdisciplinary cooperation, a **handbook for conservator-restorer**, especially designed to spread knowledge on potentialities of analytical techniques among conservators/restorers, has been published with contributions from more than 50 international scientists.

To strengthen the most advanced research in Europe and promote integration, **Transnational Access was offered** through Peer Review selection to two specific resources: the fixed laboratory AGLAE and the mobile facility MOLAB.

AGLAE is a single laboratory at the *Palais du Louvre* in Paris, staffed by a unique team of art historians, restorers and scientists with special expertise in art conservation. During the 5 years of Eu-ARTECH development, 66 users' projects have been developed through access to AGLAE, leading to results that gave rise to numerous relevant publications in the international scientific literature of the field. Different types of objects have been investigated,

including sets of pigments, ancient metal point drawings, Visigothic gold objects, Egyptian jewels from mummies of the late 17th dynasty, Limoges enamels, Renaissance ceramics, Byzantine coins, glasses from Italian paleochristian churches, mosaic tesserae from *S.Marco in Venezia* and others.

The second facility offered for access through EU-ARTECH is **MOLAB**, a unique collection of portable instrumentation for non-invasive in-situ measurements provided by a unified group of 4 Italian institutions based in Perugia and Firenze. During the 5 years of EU-ARTECH, 37 users' projects have been carried out in the same site where the artwork is located or exhibited, through measurements that did not require neither sampling nor contact with the examined object. Through this activity several relevant artworks have been studied by users, such as paintings of Leonardo (at the National Gallery of London and at the Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg), modern paintings of Cezanne, Mondrian and Munch (at the Courtauld Art Institute Gallery of London, the Gemeentemuseum of Den Haag and the Munch Museum in Oslo), Renaissance majolica (at the V&A Museum and Wallace Collection in London), Byzantine mural paintings (at the St.Euthymios Chapel in Thessaloniki), ancient manuscripts as The Book of Kells or the Psalter Manuscript (at the Trinity College Library in Dublin and the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge) and many other prestigious objects.

Joint Research Activity was dedicated to develop innovative conservation methods and advanced instrumentation. In particular, five new instrumentations for non-invasive in-situ measurements have been set-up and validated, based on spectroscopy and multispectral imaging techniques. The long term aim was the improvement of the performance of the consortium infrastructure and, therefore, of the opportunities to be offered through access to the European researchers.

Additional information

EU-ARTECH : <http://www.eu-artech.org/>

Prof. Brunetto Giovanni Brunetti : <http://www.chm.unipg.it/chimgen/mb/exp2/brunetti.html>