

Press information on the Kick-Off-event of the EU-Project

IRON-AGE-DANUBE - MONUMENTALIZED EARLY IRON AGE LANDSCAPES IN THE DANUBE RIVER BASIN

The Hallstatt culture extended from 800 till 450 before Christ from the northeast of France to the northwest of the Balkan Peninsula. Today it is put in context with the appearance of innovative technologies, social upheavals and commercial networks through whole Europe. During the Hallstatt culture iron became established as raw material instead of Bronze in middle and eastern parts of Central Europe. The Iron brought wealth and a new upper class was formed. This was manifested in fortified hill-top settlements and tumuli necropolises with sporadic, richly equipped 'chieftains' graves'. Today ceramic and metal finds from such settlements and graves are part of the most valuable stocks of the whole European Prehistory and are often the highlights of museums.

Until now there were little attempts made to look at the Hallstatt culture or the Early Iron age as a European-wide phenomenon and to use the research results to create a cross-country programmes for tourists. That is the objective of the project "Monumentalized Early Iron Age Landscapes in the Danube River Basin" ("Iron-Age-Danube"). The project officially started just a few days ago with a Kick-Off-event in Graz, where the lead partner the Universalmuseum Joanneum is located. The project lasts from the 1st of January in 2017 till the 30th of June in 2019 and is part of the Interreg Danube Transnational program of the European Union. It is funded by the European Union with about 2.169.200 EUR on funds of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). These ERDF resources make 85% of the total project volume which is about 2.552.000 EUR.

Objectives of the project

It is the objective of the project to push the research, protection and sustainable use of the most important Iron Age landscapes in Austria (AT), Croatia (CRO), Hungary (HU), Slovakia (SVK) and Slovenia (SI) forward, among them the micro-regions of Großklein (AT), Strettweg (AT), Jalžabet (CRO), Kaptol (CRO), Poštela (SI), DolenjskeToplice (SI), Százhalombatta (HU), Süttő (HU) and Sopron (HU).

Under the direction of the lead partner Universalmuseum Joanneum ten project partners and nine associated partners came together to make this project work. Among the partners are the universities of Graz, Vienna, Ljubljana, Maribor, Zagreb, Budapest and Nitra, museums and archaeological parks in Maribor, Novo Mesto, Zagreb, Százhalombatta and Budapest as well as Austrian, Croatian, Hungarian and Slovenian national monument protection services and ministries, research institutions and tourism organizations (see Fact Sheet_Iron-Age-Danube).

Main parts of the Iron-Age-Danube-project are archaeological field camps. They will take place in specific micro-regions as international research and promotion camps with visitor programs for schools, groups and individual visitors in the spring and summer of 2017 as well as 2018. During these camps members of all partners will be present to share information and experiences with each other and the public. Before the start of the excavations modern non-destructive methods like LiDAR-Scans, geomagnetic, ground radar will be used for the prospection of the area and the mapping of possible tumuli and settlements. This data will also be used later on for 3-D presentations and augmented-reality-visualisations. The interdisciplinary research results from the field work and knowledge won from the contact with visitors during the field camps will be used to develop new touristic tools and programs, e. g. E-learning-tools, apps or presentation boards.

The field work begins in Styria (Austria). The focus of activities lies on the landscapes around Großklein and Judenburg. From the end of May till the End of June 2017 archaeological research will take place there. These areas are internationally well known because of their 'chieftains' graves' (Fürstengräber) in Kleinklein and Strettweg and the grave goods found inside of them. Among them are the bronze mask which was found in the Kröllkogel (Kleinklein) and the Cult Wagon that came to light in Tumulus I (Strettweg). Parallel excavations in the necropolis of Strettweg and in the further area around the hill-top settlement on the Burgstallkogel are planned. The objectives are to gather new research results on human burial practises and the network of settlements close to a Hallstatt period centre. The excavations are accompanied by weekly public "open door days" with workshops, lectures and guided tours.

It is the goal to communicate a lively image of archaeological research to the visitors and to make the importance of archaeological monuments for the human history known. For a clear understanding of this, there is a need for different approach than just scientific excavation of

historic objects. For a sustainable research a professional prospection and protection of sites and landscapes as a well as an accurate documentation are necessary.

In contrast to some former research projects Iron-Age-Danube ignores borderlines between the countries and treats the whole Iron Age landscape in Central Europe as one thing. The mapping of Hallstatt period remains in the micro-regions will create new insights on the complex use of the landscape and the resources in one region during the Hallstatt period. Another output is detailed data for the protection of these monuments and their sustainable use for tourism. Today monumental walls, terraces and plateaus of some hill-top settlements as well as massive mounds of numerous tumuli are threatened by agricultural use and building projects. Because of this danger for the monuments national protection and increased attention of the local residents is needed.

Another output of the project is a database which will be filled with the research results and put in a GIS-context. In the end the database will be an open-access international public webpage. Other activities are planned to strengthen the local tourism, like the revitalisation of already existing archaeological parks or trails as well as the development of new visitor programs in the museums. The international promotion and the touristic use of the network of important Iron Age landscapes - which was created in the course of the project - is the main topic of an international conference in Zagreb. It will take place close to the end of the project during the 6th and the 10th of May in 2019.

Kick-Off-event

The public Kick-Off-event of the Iron-Age-Danube-project took place on the 31st of January at Styrian Archaeology Museum in Palace Eggenberg in Graz. It was accompanied by the first meeting of all project partners and a small excursion to Großklein on the following two days (see picture material_Iron-Age-Danube).

The program of the Kick-Off-event was quite diversified. In the forenoon different workshops and guided tours for pupils occurred. In total about 200 pupils from Styria and Slovenia had the chance to get an impression on different fields of research and to broaden their knowledge of the Hallstatt period. The workshops covered different parts of Archaeology; there were Anthropology, Restoration, Experimental Archaeology and Virtual Archaeology.

The real kick-off happened in the afternoon in front of a large audience. It started with the welcome speeches of Mag. Patrick Schnabl, head of department 9 Culture, Europe, External Relations in the Styrian government, Hofrat Dr. Wolfgang Muchitsch, Director of the Universalmuseum Joanneum and Mag. Karl Peitler, head of the department Archaeology & Coin Cabinet. As guests of honour the ambassadress of the republic Croatia in the Republic of Austria, DDr. Vesna Cvjetković, the county prefect of Požega-Slavonia, Alojz Tomašević and the mayors of the Styrian and Croatian municipalities Großklein, Jakšić and Kaptol, Johann Hammer, Ivica Kovačević and Mile Pavičić could be welcomed.

Following the welcome Dr. Marko Mele, project leader of the Iron-Age-Danube-project, gave a short overview of the project and its objectives. Afterwards he was the moderator during the short introductions of the different partners. A kind of teaser for the research of the following months Dr. Karina Grömer, expert for Textile Archaeology from the Natural History Museum Vienna, performed a lecture with the title “Clothing and Identity in the Bronze- and Iron Age Central Europe”. The lecture was accompanied by a fashion show. The models wore clothes from the Bronze and Hallstatt Ages; those were reconstructed after original finds of textiles. The musical framework was arranged by the group ArchäoMusik Vienna. They used reconstructed music instruments from the Iron Ages. With a small reception in the evening the first day ended and provided the attendees with an opportunity to get to know each other and to talk about the project.

Webpage

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/iron-age-danube>

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