

PRESS RELEASE

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Multiplying and sharing knowledge: International consortium of research institutions launches project to save Pompeii for posterity

Pompeii is one of the most visited archeological sites in the world, but its future is uncertain. Exposure to wind and weather is causing more and more irreparable damage to the ruins of the ancient city and threatens to wipe out all traces of its existence. To fight this process of degradation, a group of leading European research institutions has united in the Pompeii Sustainable Preservation Project, coordinated by the Fraunhofer Institute for Building Physics IBP and the Chair of Restoration at Technische Universität München (TUM). Together, they aim to define new strategies for the sustainable conservation and long-term preservation of the site. In addition to carrying out urgently needed restoration work on the buildings, the two other objectives of the project are to train young conservators and to research new methods and materials. After developing these new methods in Pompeii the aim is to employ them to preserve historical artifacts at sites of antiquity throughout the world. The researchers are now looking for sponsors willing to contribute funds to help them realize these goals.

In the year 79 A.D., the city of Pompeii was buried under a thick layer of ash and lava produced by the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The ruined city remained untouched for almost two millennia until, toward the end of the 18th century, archaeologists started the first excavations that would reveal this lost world to future generations. No fewer than 2.5 million tourists visit the site each year, making Pompeii one of the world's most visited archaeological sites.

"It is our duty to preserve this site for posterity, not only because it is part of our cultural heritage but also because it will help us to develop new ideas. An ancient monument can be a miniature university if its restoration is accompanied by training and top-class research in the arts and sciences," says Professor Dr. Klaus Sedlbauer, director of Fraunhofer IBP and spokesman for the Pompeii Sustainable Preservation Project, describing the three pillars of the project: training, top-class research, and restoration.

Aims of the Pompeii Sustainable Preservation Project

The principal partners in the project – the **Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft**, Fraunhofer IBP's parent organization, and **Technische Universität München**, with its Chair of Restoration, Art Technology and Conservation Science – recently signed a joint

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memorandum of understanding with the **International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM)**, which is attached to UNESCO. These institutions will lead the project in collaboration with **Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei** and **Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro**, which is attached to Italy's Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities. Support on the research side will be provided by the University of Oxford's **School of Geography and the Environment**, the **Department of Ancient History** at the Historicum of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU München), the **Deutsche Archäologische Institut (DAI)** in Rome, the **University of Pisa**, and the **Istituto per i Beni Archeologici e Monumentali** at the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR). The shared aim of the participating institutions is to establish Pompeii as a research center for the long-term, sustainable conservation of ancient architecture.

The researchers have drawn up an ambitious program, which they aim to begin as soon as possible using an insula –the basic unit of the urban system in Pompeii – as a showcase. "Alongside exemplary restoration and long-term preservation of these ancient buildings, the team is looking to develop innovative methods and strategies for how to prevent their continued deterioration. One aspect of this will be to come up with new concepts for protective structures and how to erect them without damaging the ruins or stopping visitors from coming to the site, as well as how to replant the ancient gardens in a way that is compatible with their cultural heritage status," explains Professor Erwin Emmerling of TUM's Chair of Restoration. All this is to be carried out with the active participation of young restorers and conservators, who will complete a part of their training in Pompeii. In addition, the idea is to give restorers from other cultural backgrounds an opportunity to gain experience in dealing with ancient monuments.

A scientific initiative with private backing

The Pompeii Sustainable Preservation Project will commence work in the summer of 2014 and is initially set to run for ten years. Over this time it will require funding to the tune of some 10 million euros if it is to carry out all the planned work steps to the necessary level of quality.

This project will complement and expand on the urgent measures currently being undertaken at Pompeii as part of the Grande Progetto Pompei initiative, which is funded by the Italian State and the European Union. This ancient city at the foot of Mount Vesuvius is large, with excavations undertaken across 44 of its 66 hectares. This explains why the partners in the Pompeii Sustainable Preservation Project are looking for sponsors who are just as committed to preserving this site as they are, unparalleled as it is in importance both as a center of European culture and as a focus for research and training.

For more information visit the project website at www.pompeii-sustainable-preservation-project.org

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Pictures



Each year, Pompeii receives 2.5 million visitors. This makes the ancient city one of the world's most visited archaeological sites.



Pompeii's appearance is sadly also marked by notable damage. With its three pillars of training, cutting-edge research, and restoration, the Pompeii Sustainable Preservation Project is set to help put a stop to further deterioration.

Images: iStock

Building physics is one of the keys to a successful building project. The **Fraunhofer Institute for Building Physics IBP** focuses its work on research, development, testing, demonstration and consulting in the various fields of building physics. These include noise control and sound insulation in buildings, the optimization of auditoria acoustics and solutions for improving energy efficiency and optimizing lighting technology. Fraunhofer IBP's work also covers issues of climate control and the indoor environment, hygiene and health protection, building material emissions, weatherproofing and protection against heat and moisture, preservation of building structures and the conservation of historic monuments.

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