

Danube Ruralscapes Kicks Off with a Shared Vision for Rural Transformation Across Borders

With a sense of purpose and creative energy, the **Danube Ruralscapes** project officially kicked off on 28–30 May 2025 in Budapest, Hungary. Over three days of lively exchange, the event brought together an inspiring mix of partners, experts, and institutional voices - not only to launch a new Interreg initiative, but also to strengthen ties with its sister project, **PlaceCRAFT**, forming a shared platform for collaboration across borders.

Backed by the Interreg Danube Region Programme, Danube Ruralscapes is all about breathing new life into village clusters - by linking local heritage with sustainable planning, architectural identity, and inclusive decision-making. With representatives from six countries and seven pilot regions at the table, the kickoff marked the beginning of a journey to turn rural challenges into shared solutions - rooted in place, shaped by people, and guided by a common vision for the future.

"This project is about more than preservation - it's about empowerment. We are creating tools that let communities shape their own future, grounded in who they are and where they come from.," said Dr. Balint Kadar, representing the project's lead partner, the Budapest University of Technology and Economics.

A Strong Foundation, A Shared Future

Danube Ruralscapes builds on the strong legacy of the DANUrB and DANUrB+ projects, which pioneered cross-border cooperation in heritage-based development across the Danube. Now, Ruralscapes continues that work with sharper tools, stronger local engagement, and closer alignment with EU green, cultural, and territorial policies. Working in tandem with its sister project **PlaceCRAFT**, the initiative creates a powerful alliance for integrated rural renewal - combining architectural identity with creative placemaking and community co-design.

From Ideas to Implementation

Highlights from the kickoff event included:

- Public workshops on rural identity, traditional materials, sustainable planning, and participatory design
- Keynote contributions from EU programme and academic representatives
- Pilot region presentations, showcasing the diversity and common challenges across the Danube basin
- Co-creative sessions aimed at launching the development of Action Plans and Architecture and Rural Landscape Identity Guides and other shared outputs
- A reunion of the DANUrB International Association, strengthening cross-project continuity and stakeholder engagement

Field Visit: Walking the Talk in the Ipoly Valley

The event ended with a joint **study trip to the Ipoly Valley**, where partners explored living examples of heritage-based rural innovation - from restored landscapes and sustainable tourism sites to cultural infrastructure repurposed with local materials.

About the Project

"Danube Ruralscapes - a Network of Professional Support for Self-organized Village Clusters Achieving Sustainable Heritage-based Ruralscapes" project (2025 - 2027) is an Interreg Danube Region Programme project, led by the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (HU). It aims to support and empower village clusters in the Danube Region through heritage-based, climate-conscious, and community-driven development, by creating tools, strategies, and governance models that preserve identity while fostering sustainable rural transformation. The initiative builds on the legacy of the Interreg DTP DANUrB and DANUrB+ projects, which laid the groundwork for transnational cooperation in heritage-based development along the Danube. Through Ruralscapes, that foundation is evolving - with new tools, deeper rural engagement, and a stronger alignment with EU green and cultural policy priorities!

Project website: <https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/danube-ruralscapes>

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Danube Ruralscapes - Building Heritage-Based Future Along the Danube