

## Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T

### A worldwide awarded project of sustainable cultural and natural heritage management in Chalandri (Athens)



#### Event Overview<sup>1</sup>

Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. stands for Cultural Hidden Identities ReAppear Through Networks of WaTer. It is an Urban Innovative Actions' project, co-financed by the European Commission, the Municipality of Chalandri and the Greek Green Fund. Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. (henceforth CH) regards the regeneration of the Roman times' Hadrian aqueduct as a common cultural, water and urban resource in a sustainable way applying circular economy practices and participatory planning and management.

CH started in July 2020 and will end in June 30, 2024. In its (co-)design and implementation seven more partners are involved -from architectural firms to the Attica water operator, and from the ephorate of antiquities to universities- and most importantly several local stakeholders. Among the latter critical has been the engagement of the Citizens Association for the Protection of the 'Rematia' river-stream, of the Oral History Group of Chalandri and of the Chalandri Schools' Parents Association which gave access to school communities involving more than 700 people (primarily students) in the project's participatory design workshops.

During Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T.'s life-span the subterranean and abandoned Hadrian aqueduct:

- a. re-emerges as an ancient and in harmony with nature technical work and monument,
- b. is utilized as a modern water resource with the construction of a new 4k long non-potable water pipelines, saving energy and 25.000 cubic meters of water annually, while promoting eco-friendly and sustainable water consumption and management,
- c. its history along the centuries (built in 2nd c. AD) is highlighted and its relationship with the local community is documented 'from below' with the creation of [www.archalandri.gr](http://www.archalandri.gr),
- d. becomes the means of green and blue regeneration of four Chalandri neighborhoods (21,400 sq.m. in total) transformed into new open public-use spaces while they counter the effects of global warming locally,
- e. becomes a source of inspiration and artistic creativity related to water and the environment, cultivating ecological awareness by organising each summer the HIDRANT festival
- f. functions as a platform for active citizenship, with local inhabitants engaging in participatory regeneration planning, founding the Local History Archive Group and the Hadrian (water management) Community of Chalandri, co-organizing the HIDRANT festival.

The project's innovative and integrative approach to Hadrian aqueduct's regeneration combined with its participatory methodology have been recognized internationally by receiving various distinctions. More recently it has been nominated by the European Heritage Hub /Eurocities as one of the ten best examples of innovative cultural heritage management in the EU that promote the aims of 'triple transformation' (green, digital, social) of our societies. CH has also been shortlisted in three more international awards winning the prestigious 6th International Urban Innovation Awards of Guangzhou in the category of sustainable cultural heritage management. Besides, it has been invited and took part in international policy-making conferences on cultural heritage and urban water resources management (Creative Flip - Brussels, UIA Eurocities 2023 - Turin, Global Mayors' Forum - Canton).

<sup>1</sup> Event overview edited by Christos Giovanopoulos  
Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T.'s project manager.

The Guangzhou awards are one of the most important processes for distinguishing urban management programs and policies around the world. They are co-organized every two years by the Municipality of Guangzhou (Canton, China) and two international organizations, UCLG (Union of Cities and Local Governments) and Metropolis (Union of Large Metropolis). Two municipal and regional authorities' networks that act as consultants at UN level in urban policies making, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (New Urban Agenda) which were the main criteria for the selection of the awards' winners. CH and the Municipality of Chalandri stood out as one of the best examples of sustainable management of urban, cultural and natural resources among 274 other nominations from 193 cities around the world, as decided by a 11-member international committee consisting of distinguished mayors, local governors and experts in urban policy.

The Guangzhou awards are combined with the Global Mayors Forum and this year took place in 7-9 December, 2023. This international conference is a meeting place for hundreds of cities, local government bodies, scientists and experts in urban policy matters, giving the opportunity to make known innovative projects and practices of urban management, to strengthen collaborations and exchange know-how. The delegation of CH and the Municipality of Chalandri, as one of the award-winning cities, was honored in various ways throughout this three-day event. Vice-Mayor Mr. Gerolymatos, who headed Chalandri's delegation, took part in the opening panel of the Global Mayors' Forum, and the next day in an open public event organized in the impressive new building of the municipal Guangzhou library. Mr. Gerolymatos held also various press conferences and interviews with the local and regional Chinese media, which focused primarily on the innovation of a program that brings back to life an ancient monument in an environmentally sustainable way and on the possibility of transferring know-how and developing relationships with other cities.

In addition CH's project manager Mr. Chr. Giovanopoulos took part in the Global Mayors' Forum thematic event "Sustainable management of urban and cultural resources", where he discussed with mayors and representatives from the cities of Guangzhou (China), Cairo (Egypt) and Antalya (Turkey).

CH and Chalandri's participation in such an event, highlighted the innovative importance of Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T.'s integrative approach and participatory methodology to tackling urban and environmental challenges, and gave the chance to the municipality of Chalandri to establish relations with a wide array of city authorities and urban policy makers from all over the world, broadening the perspectives of its role and contribution to local urban governance.