

## Heritage Education as a Driver of Sustainable Tourism: An Empirical Study from Hungary with a European Typological Context

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### **Abstract**

The sustainability of tourism depends not only on regulatory and economic mechanisms but also on visitors' responsible conduct and host communities' sense of ownership, pride, and interpretative engagement with their heritage. Heritage education is widely recognized as a key instrument in fostering these attitudes, and it occupies a prominent position in the strategic frameworks of UNESCO and the European Union. This study investigates the legislative and institutional contexts of student-oriented heritage education in Hungary, situating the analysis within a broader European comparative perspective. Particular attention is paid to structural and operational factors that enhance or constrain programme effectiveness. Beyond examining access to on-site heritage education initiatives, the research analyzes how sustainability is conceptually framed by programme providers, assessing whether educational design is informed by an explicit and theoretically grounded understanding of environmental, cultural, and social sustainability dimensions. The methodology integrates document analysis, semi-structured interviews with heritage site professionals, and questionnaire surveys administered to teachers accompanying student groups. The findings identify critical gaps and development needs while highlighting transferable national and international good practices that may strengthen the long-term sustainability of heritage education and tourism.

### **Index Terms**

Sustainable Tourism; Heritage Education; Cultural Sustainability; Mixed-Methods Research; Hungary