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# Cisterscapes – Cistercian landscapes connecting Europe

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## Abstract

The LEADER Transnational Cooperation Project „Cisterscapes – Cistercian landscapes connecting Europe“ takes places from 2019–2022. The article gives an overview of the project, the project partners, aims and results and where to follow them.

## Keywords

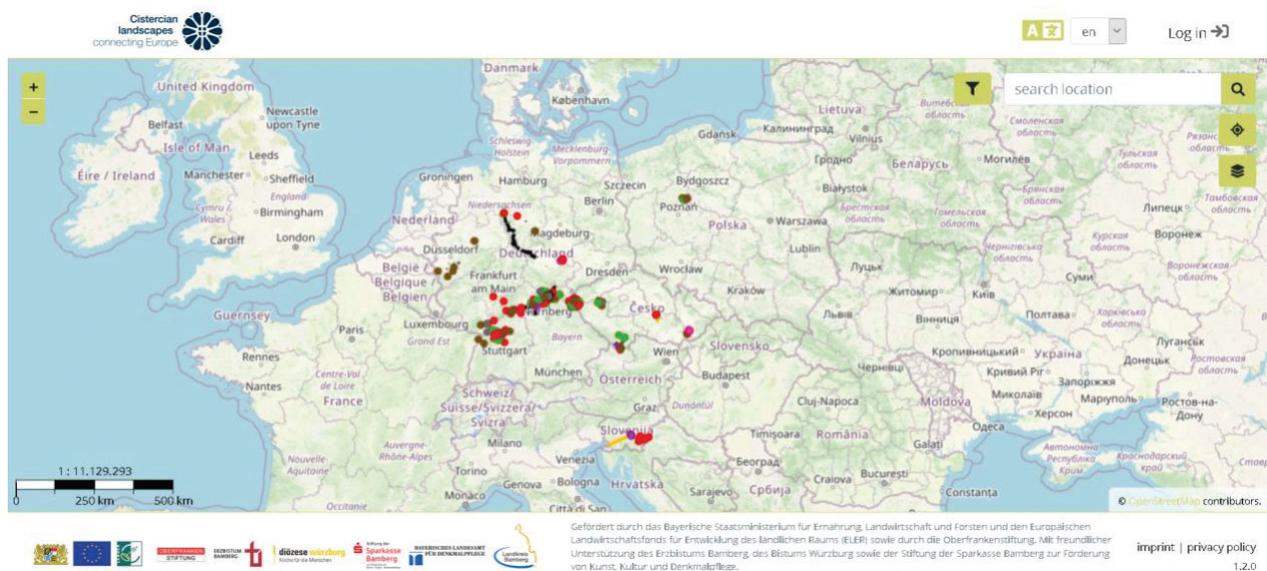
Cistercian landscape, Cultural landscape, European cultural heritage, European Heritage Label, GIS database, landscape model, LEADER, long distance hiking trail, monastic landscape, rural development

## What is Cisterscapes?

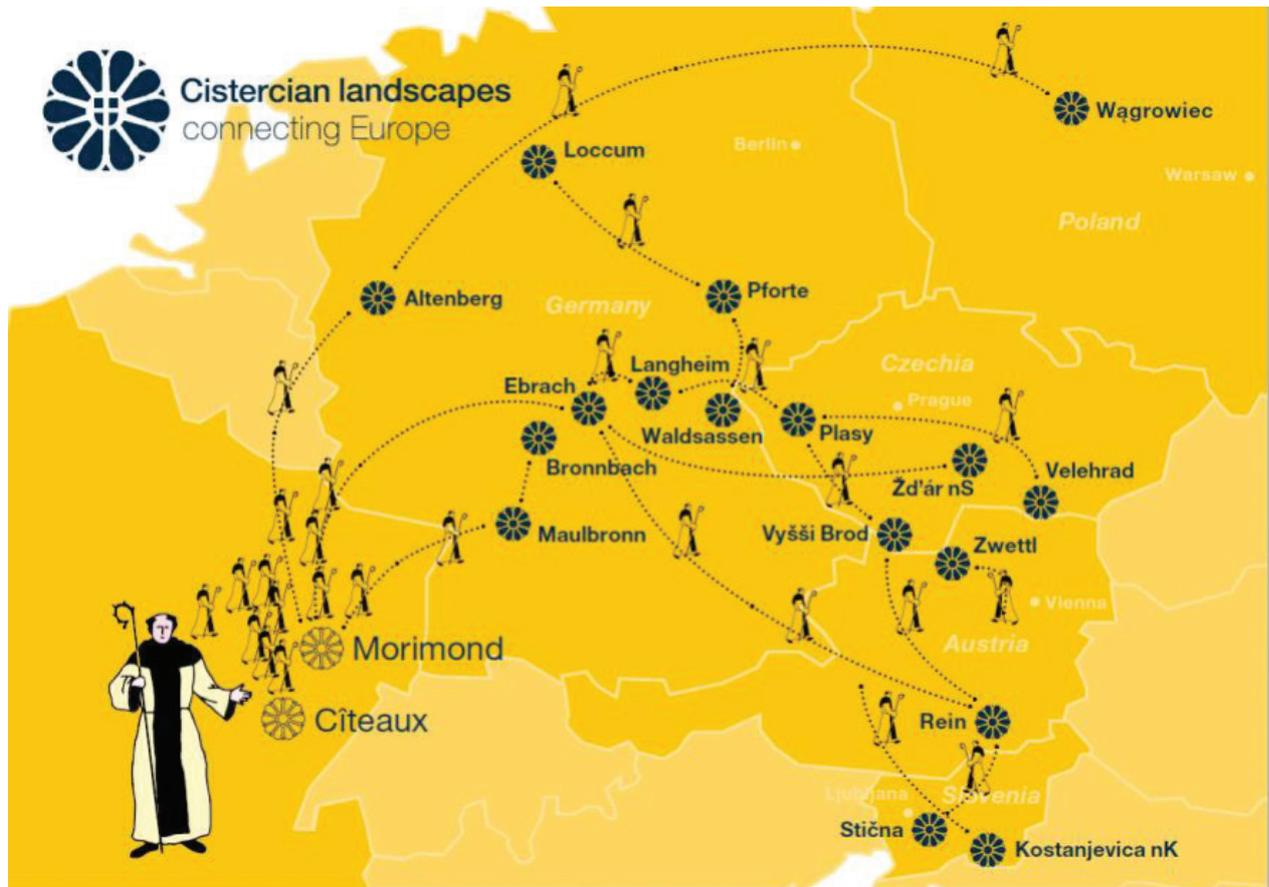
Cisterscapes is a network of 17 important representative Cistercian monastic landscapes in Central Europe under the lead of the county of Bamberg.

During the high Middle Ages, the Cistercians were the most important order networked throughout Europe, which, due to its constitution, especially its self-sufficien-

cy, and a network of advice and control on spiritual and economic aspects, was highly influential on the landscape. Through the codification of rules, this led to uniformity in the internal and external organisation of the monasteries, with adaptations to the specific local conditions. The formula “unity in diversity” sums this up. The communities



**Figure 1.** Screenshot from the Cisterscapes online GIS database (working version, expected to be available for public in 2025), County of Bamberg.



**Figure 2.** Graphic representation of the Cisterscapes network with its 17 monastic landscapes in 5 European countries, County of Bamberg.

also drew on resources far outside the monastery complexes. They thus shaped the surrounding landscapes in a specific way, which is still very visible in many places today.

The Cistercians' landscape development is significant for Europe, because their migration process and cultural exchange had a decisive influence on the medieval urban-rural structure in Europe.

Cistercian monastic landscapes reflect the forms and techniques of land use and settlement policy of the Cistercians, their adaptation to natural conditions and spiritual guidelines. The cultural landscape character can still be seen in the landscape in a wide radius around the monasteries today, as inventories of elements and structures from the Cistercian period show. Therefore, cultural landscape inventories were carried out for all 17 monastic landscapes in order to identify these structures.

The following elements are characteristic:

- An elaborate hydraulic engineering system for the supply and disposal of water to the monastery and for energy production (wells, kitchen, latrines in the monastery, brewery, mills);
- Extensive pond management due to the fasting regulations;
- Granges, specialised farmyards with correspondingly large plots of land for agriculture and livestock breeding as the economic basis of the monastery economy;

- Large forests for timber and firewood;
- Viticulture for religious purposes, but also for trade;
- Fruit and hop growing;
- Town courts as marketing places for the surpluses.

Today, only an association of European Cistercian monasteries with their surrounding monastic landscapes can reflect the network that flourished in the Middle Ages. To show the organisational principle of the order, it is important to look at individual filiation lines (founding lines of daughter monasteries). Cisterscapes thus represents a section of the filiation of the primary abbey of Morimond, France.

## Project partners

### Germany:

- Monastic landscape of Ebrach (Bavaria, County of Bamberg);
- Monastic landscape of Bronnbach (Baden-Württemberg, County of Main-Tauber-Kreis);
- Monastic landscape of Langheim (Bavaria, County of Lichtenfels);
- Monastic landscape of Loccum (Lower Saxony, County of Nienburg / Weser);

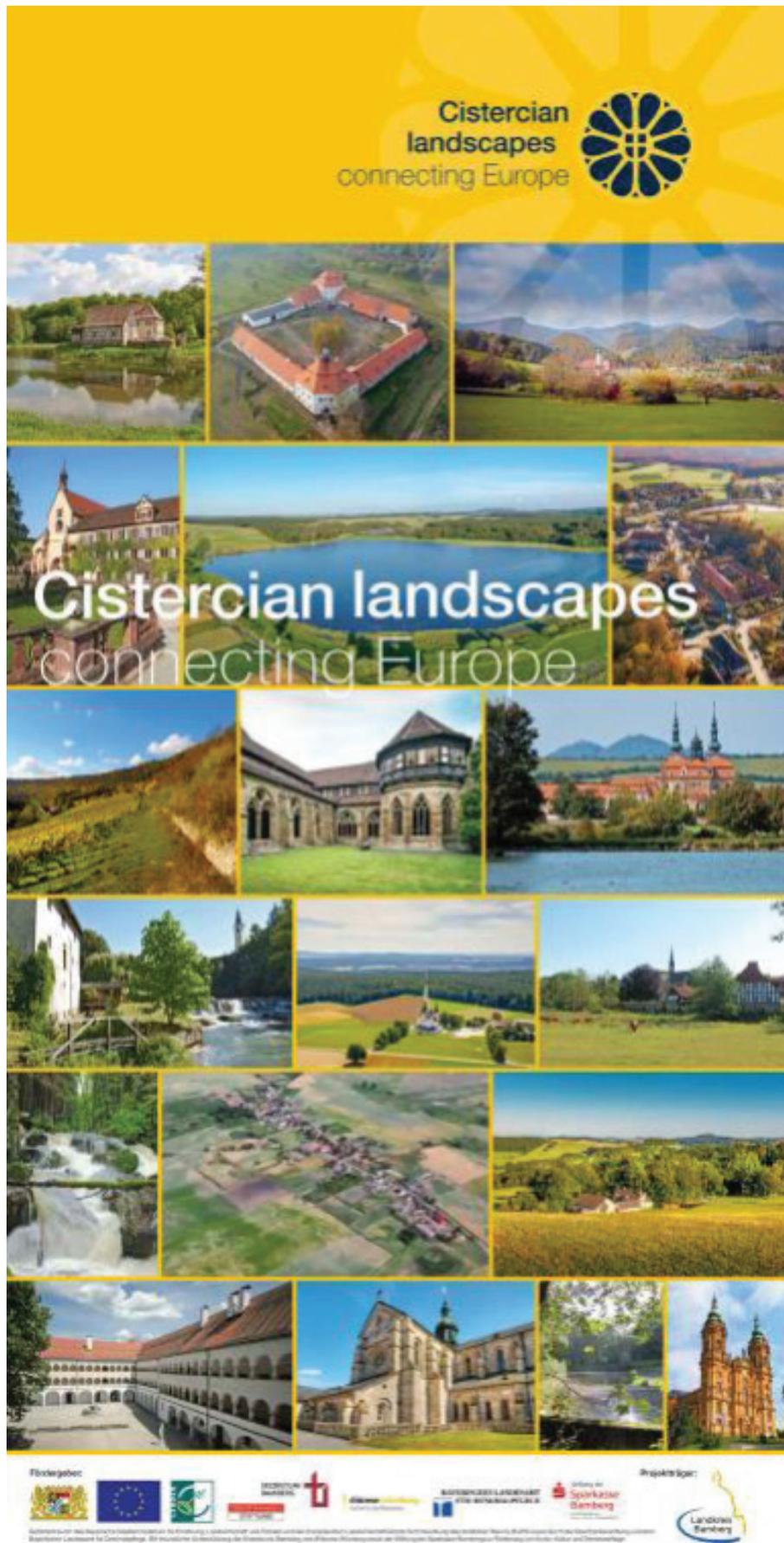


Figure 3. Graphic representation of images from all 17 Cisterscapes monastic landscapes, County of Bamberg.

- Monastic landscape of Maulbronn (Baden-Württemberg, County of Enzkreis);
- Monastic landscape of Pforte (Saxony-Anhalt, County of Burgenlandkreis);
- Monastic landscape of Waldsassen (Bavaria, County of Tirschenreuth).

#### **Austria:**

- Monastic landscape of Rein (Styria);
- Monastic landscape of Zwettl (Lower Austria).

#### **Poland:**

- Monastic landscape of Wągrowiec/Łekno (Region of Wielkopolska).

#### **Slovenia:**

- Monastic landscape of Kostanjevica na Krki (Region of Dolenjska);
- Monastic landscape of Stična (Ivančna Gorica, Region of Dolenjska).

#### **Czech Republic:**

- Monastic landscape of Plasy (County of Plzeň, Bohemia);
- Monastic landscape of Velehrad (County of Zlín, Moravia);
- Monastic landscape of Vyšší Brod (County of Český Krumlov, South Bohemia);
- Monastic landscape of Žďár nad Sázavou (County of Vysocina, Moravia).

## **Aims of the project**

The project aims at establishing concepts and measures to raise awareness of research, mediation and valorisation of European Cistercian landscapes in order to enhance the value of these regions for science, tourism, regional development and public relations work and to highlight their importance for European history and future. A European network of regions and stakeholders is to be created, established and preserved for the future.

To this end, educational measures are to be implemented incorporating communication with the help of modern technologies.

In order to strengthen and preserve these achievements, to increase range and reach more people all over Europe with the message of Cisterscapes, the network is currently applying for the transnational European Heritage Label. The application has been submitted to the Bavarian State

Ministry for Science and Arts on 1 September and is now taking its course through German and European institutions for evaluation and a possible award in 2024.

## **Project's results**

The project is currently ongoing (until 2022). In case of the award of the European Heritage Label, the network will continuously launch new measures and activities to promote the European significance of its cultural heritage.

In the ongoing LEADER Transnational Cooperation Project, the following results are to be achieved by the end of 2022:

As a basis for all subsequent activities, all project partners conducted a cultural landscape inventory in their monastic landscapes in order to identify characteristic landscape elements of Cistercian origin (in a radius of approximately 50 km around the respective monastery). In order to collect all the elements in the same form and place, a joint online GIS database has been established. In a next step, the database is to be made accessible to public users to promote citizen science in the field of cultural landscape research and inventory.

Starting from the material in the database, 3D visualisations of the monastic landscapes will be established in the form of landscape models with AR markers implemented indoors or outdoors on site at the local project partners. An additional app will deliver further information about Cistercian monastic landscapes and their typical individual elements.

A professional landscape film with aerial shots of characteristic monastic landscape elements and structures, interviews and stories from locals is being conceived and produced. It will serve as educational material for schools, museums and regional and national media and contribute to a European understanding and appreciation of the importance of our cultural heritage.

For the purpose of illustrating the interconnection between the individual monastic landscapes and project partners across Europe through the filiation of the Cistercian order, a European long distance hiking trail named „Way of the Cistercians“ is conceived connecting the 17 monastic landscapes with the Cistercian mother monastery in Cîteaux, France, using three lines (North line coming from Poland / central line coming from Moravia / south line coming from Slovenia). With this, sustainable tourism and a slow and conscious experiencing of the landscapes is promoted. The Way of the Cistercians is to be included in the outdooractive online services and made hikeable via GPS.

Additional educational programmes for schools as well as trainings for teachers and local hiking guides are developed.

A project website, joint public relations work as well as Cisterscapes channels on Facebook, Instagram and Youtube help to raise awareness and communicate on our common cultural heritage all across Europe.

## Where to follow the results of the Cisterscapes network:

Project website: [https://cisterscapes.eu/?page\\_id=46&lang=en](https://cisterscapes.eu/?page_id=46&lang=en)

Cisterscapes Facebook channel: <https://www.facebook.com/Zisterzienserlandschaft/>

Cisterscapes Instagram channel: <https://www.instagram.com/cisterscapes/?hl=de>

Cisterscapes Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJHQc09vBnk15Aeb3mF8Fkw>

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