

**European Heritage**  
**Shared experience and regional specificities**  
*Cultural Heritage Conference*



10.04.2019 – 13.04.2019  
Sighișoara, Mureș County, Romania

**Working methods**

*Conference structured in working thematic sub-sessions and plenary panels  
+ relevant Side Event*

**Rationale**

The overarching question is: How can European cooperation support the Member States and the sector to better protect and promote Europe's heritage?

How to achieve a more coherent outlook of Member and Partner States in respect to cultural heritage approach and practice, and how to level disparities, while maintaining cultural specificities? Is it possible to harness the ground-breaking recent developments in matters of heritage theory and policy achieved by pan-European and EU actors and structures, while not addressing the differences, the errant practices? What is regional specificity and what is lack of a shared European approach, when it comes to cultural heritage? In spite of their apparent lack of prominence, these are crucial issues to address in view of progressing towards a balanced and consistent approach to cultural heritage practice across Europe.

We wish to address these questions by returning to the more particular issue of Quality in conservation, which was given the right attention within the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, and in the new Work Plan for Culture 2019–2022. By furthering the inquiry and reflection on this issue, in view of placing it at the centre of Europe-wide exchanges, peer-learning and action, we aim to achieve the desired level of coherence, the balance we seek in European cultural heritage practice, along with the safeguarding of defining regional or local specificities.

The expected outcome of the conference is a set of conclusions on criteria and necessary measures to be taken by participant parties and the EU, in order to increase quality and guide the following funding mechanisms.

The conclusions shall be presented to the Ministers of Culture of Member States at their next informal meeting to take place in Bucharest on April 16, within the Romanian Presidency of the Council of European Union.

**Themes**

The themes selected for the panels are all among the 'Drivers of Quality' - not just as strengthening factors, but also as enablers – and they lay the ground for building Quality-based and Quality-producing practices. They all need to be addressed both within the Cultural Heritage framework, but also within their own sectorial frameworks – especially Education and training, Research, Development, Environment, but also Labour or Agriculture – so as to ensure the most effective actions that drive quality.

Each theme shall be approached by presentations of case-studies and current practices – successful or not – and by moderated debate.

**1A Education and training**

Starting from the conclusions of EYCH, we will seek to look into the distribution of needs and capacities, and into the differences in current systems and programmes across Europe, so as to identify disparities, hotspots and required actions, on all levels. Where do we lack capacities for education and training, and where do we use the existing capacities in an inadapted way? We need to compare formal and informal programmes and actions, institutional and independent, large and small scale, and draw ideas and solutions from these interrogations. Finally we aim to identify ways to better EU mechanisms that can increase exchanges between and joint

actions of cultural heritage education and training institutions and operators across Europe, to enhance capacities where they are needed and to increase the quality level of programmes that are on offer.

**1B Research for conservation**

Research capabilities targeted at cultural heritage need to be increased and new methods of cooperation, exchange and knowledge transfer need to be embedded in EU funding mechanisms, with the explicit aim of levelling disparities and enabling quality action. The session's approach should not be insistently pointed to innovation, at the expense of 'routine' research, as all research carried out in order to inform and guide cultural heritage projects or actions is absolutely necessary and needs to be enabled both before and during the conservation and restoration processes. What are the current experiences and practices across Europe in this regard, and what are the needs for the forthcoming EU programming period?

**1C Developments in conservation theory**

Providing the conceptual framework for any project or action, the developments in theory are determinant factors for the quest for quality. What are the contemporary theories of conservation, and how do they impact the reality on the ground? Do other sectors – like development, business, or tourism – adhere to conservation theories, acknowledge and apply conservation principles and conditions, such as authenticity? Is there a dividing line between theoretical reflection, and the practice, in various parts of Europe? We will look into the ways in which theoretical approaches can coexist and can be better reflected into EU funding mechanisms.

**2A The wider perspective**

The issue of quality cannot be properly managed unless it is placed in a wider perspective, beyond the cultural heritage sector, to assess how it is influenced by other contexts - from physical setting to political contexts. Urban planning, real estate development, environmental protection, agriculture practices, labour policies, all need to be connected to the objectives of cultural heritage protection and enhancement. This transversal approach shall be investigated through presentation of case-studies and positions by professional from or connected to other sectors, in order to draw conclusions on how EU instruments can better contribute to quality.

**2B The social impact and community factor**

Cultural heritage is a reflection on how communities define themselves and can responsibly contribute to its preservation. The connection to the social sphere is an absolute necessity for any sustainable cultural heritage project. We need to address this theme not just by looking on how community and society determines the way we deal with cultural heritage, but also in reverse - how our cultural heritage practices influence the society. Relevant examples and case studies aimed at the quality approach in heritage practices should be presented in order to illustrate social impact of heritage and the importance of the community factor.

**2C Legal and administrative frameworks**

Recent evolutions in institutional systems – especially the widespread reductions in cultural heritage administration staffing - need to be compensated by better use of new technologies (IT systems) and by more extensive and effective involvement of professionals and civil society (participatory instruments). How much is such a change enabled by current legal systems, and how do the most recent legal instruments developed or under development in different European countries deal with these issues? We seek to identify potential answers to be applied on all levels, and moreover to indicate how EU instruments can contribute to this transformation and improvement of legal and administrative frameworks, in order to reach the desired level of quality in all practices.

**Special Side Event**

The side event organized in partnership with Europa Nostra – under the title 'Best practice examples' – will complement the conference, based on a selection of the European projects and actions recently awarded the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / The Europa Nostra Awards. A session of presentations from the award winners will open the ground for professional and public debate, and an exhibition will be presented in the special venue of this event, The Church on the Hill, a 2004 winner of a prize in category „Conservation”.

## Target outputs

- Further recommendations and guidelines on the wider issue of quality in cultural heritage practice, to guide the following EU funding mechanisms, in the context of a shared European approach to cultural heritage, and also of local specificities;
- Recommendations for actions to be taken at local, regional and national level, and at EU level, so as to ensure a more balanced and consistent cultural heritage practice across Europe.

The Conference and its Side Event will involve professionals from other fields and will open the discussion to a wider public, breaking the closed circle of professional events and raising one of the topical issues of current practice in Europe: how to define, attain and maintain Quality.