

Press Release

Promoting Europe's Cultural Heritage and Diversity – Who? How? With Whom?

On the occasion of the Federal Republic of Germany's six-month Presidency of the Council of the European Union (July-December 2020), experts have called for greater recognition of cultural heritage in EU funding programmes and for greater weight to be given to cultural heritage sites and historic locations in the reconstruction of Europe. The online conference with more than 100 speakers and participants from across Europe took place under the guidance of ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, on 13 and 14 July 2020 at the European Academy Berlin.

European towns, cities and regions are robust, having developed over centuries in the face of constant social change. The Corona pandemic is an accelerator of such development and will lead to profound transformations of our towns and cities; as what we need from our living and working environments changes, new directions will arise – in retail, the food-service industry, tourism, transport and other sectors. Demographic change, climate change and digitalisation will be equally significant. Against the background of the current Corona pandemic and the programmes required to revive Europe's economy and culture, experts regard heritage as being of acute importance in the present moment.

The conference focused on International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) recommendations and selection criteria for the sustainable funding of cultural heritage by the European Union and its Member States. The discussion was based on the European Quality Principles for EU-Funded Interventions with Potential Impact upon Cultural Heritage document developed for the European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018. These quality principles were placed under scrutiny and examined for their practicability and ability to achieve their targets. The experts settled on seven key principles for future approaches to architectural heritage in terms of planning, building structure and finance, under cooperation of all stakeholders:

1. **Knowledge-based:** Understanding that research and taking inventory are the first steps
2. **Common good:** Being aware that in the present, we are responsible for future generations

3. **Compatibility:** Maintaining the spirit of places and locales
4. **Proportionality:** Change as much as required, but as little as possible
5. **Discernment:** Use skills and experience
6. **Good governance:** The form of process and participation chosen are also decisive in ensuring success
7. **Sustainability:** Ensuring consistency in change

The EYCH – European Year of Cultural Heritage alone motivated millions of people to dedicate themselves to architectural heritage, with thousands of events and projects taking place across 32 countries. These powerful actions are to be seen as a motor and drive for the preservation and continuing development of our towns, cities, regions and cultural-historical landscapes. A quality-assured approach, from the initial planning to the completion of construction, requires financial resources – and these will be discussed and decided on over the coming months for the upcoming EU funding period (2021-2027). It is thus vital to identify quality standards in good time and to clearly state the need for adequate funding at the national and the European levels. Heritage and funding experts from across Europe came together to work towards this, supported by voices from the culture and creative industries alongside stakeholders from civic and voluntary heritage movements. Together they are working dedicatedly towards an impetus-giving, sustainable heritage funding policy that strengthens cultural heritage and, at the same time, provides economic impetus and protects jobs.

The event was sponsored by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media and supported by Baden-Württemberg's State Ministry for Economic Affairs, Labour and Housing. The event was co-hosted by the Association of State Heritage Conservationists in the Federal Republic of Germany (VDL), the Association of State Archaeologists in the Federal Republic of Germany (VLA), Baden-Württemberg's State Office for Heritage Preservation and the Council of German Towns and Cities' Working Group for Municipal Heritage Preservation (DST). The ICOMOS Europe Group, the European Heritage Head Forum (EEHF), European Heritage Legal Forum (EHLF), the German National Committee for Heritage Protection (DNK) and the European Academy Berlin were represented as partner organisations.

“Heritage objects and historic sites make the diversity and togetherness of Europe particularly visible to its inhabitants but also to those outside Europe. In addition to the euro, it is above all cultural heritage that represents Europe's shared history and identity. Especially in times of crisis, the historic building stock has been a key resource for sustainability and climate ecology, as well as for jobs and tourism. Cultural heritage connects us together and is at the same time the bridge that links the past up with the present and the future. Architectural heritage belongs to all of us, and we all bear responsibility for preserving it and continuing to develop it in keeping

with the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities”, explains Professor Jörg Haspel, President of ICOMOS Germany.



Speakers in front of Europäische Akademie Berlin, v. l. n. r.: D. Ernst, M. Harzenetter, J. Haspel, G. Schellenberger, U. Plate, Ch. Johann. Foto: ICOMOS Germany.

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