European Heritage Hub

Policy Review

1st Report:
October 2023 - February 2024

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Co-funded by
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1. Introduction

On 29 February 2024, the Policy Team of the European Heritage Hub was delighted to launch the Hub's Policy Monitor. The objective of the Monitor is to gather and analyse policies affecting cultural heritage from across Europe. The information found will be stored in the Monitor and by the end of the pilot phase of the Hub, this information will be used to draft a series of research publications. The findings will also inform a series of policy recommendations which the Hub will deliver to the European Commission to guide the next phase of decision making at EU-level on cultural policy.

So far, the Policy Team has started preliminary research in 18 countries in Europe, and the EU. More information will follow for other countries in Europe with uploads in May 2024 and again in September 2024. After each upload, the Policy Team will continue to analyse information coming from all across the European continent. But given that the research publications and policy recommendations will not be completed until the end of the pilot phase of the Hub (Spring 2025), the Policy Team will use these regular reviews to share their preliminary observations and findings so far.

Each report will be curated by a different Hub partner with a different thematic approach. The purpose here is not to critically analyse the policies found so far - this will be done in research publications - but to observe trends, spot gaps and over time inform on the policy landscape that exists in Europe. This first report has been curated by Europa Nostra, and includes contributions from all Hub partners. It includes a snapshot of data collected by the Policy Team from their first meeting in October 2023 until the launch of the monitor in February 2024.

2. Methodology

The search for information in the Policy Monitor is being guided by the Five Pillars of the Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage, and takes into consideration the concepts of the Triple Transformation, the overarching theme for all the Hub's activities. Based on both of these concepts, the following key categories have been developed to gather information: Digital Transition; Green Transition; Heritage Preservation; Inclusion and Accessibility; and International Cultural Relations.

A selection of information found and currently available in the Monitor is presented below under these five categories. Based on this preliminary information, it is possible to observe some preliminary trends in Europe at European, national and local level, as well as spot potential gaps, which will be further explored in the Observations section.

3. Analysis

Digital Transition

We are living through one of the fastest periods of change in history, and the digital transformation of our societies is evidence of this. Though there is sometimes concern with the pace of this change, these concerns should not overshadow the potential benefits that a digital transformation can bring to our societies.

In an effort to highlight this, the institutions of the European Union in 2023 proclaimed a joint Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade to put citizens at the centre of this transition, reinforce European values and EU fundamental rights, reaffirm universal human rights, and ensure that the transition benefits all individuals, businesses, and society as a whole. Beyond this, the Monitor has uncovered many other interesting policies with a "digital" dimension being adopted at all levels of government and involving many stakeholders.

In Serbia, in 2024 cultural heritage institutions have been coming together with policy-makers at the regional and national level to develop best practices and guidelines, such as the Guidelines for the Digitisation of Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Serbia. And Belgium's Flemish Government has been elaborating forward-looking instruments seeking to safeguard the role of cultural heritage in society, while taking into account the "digital" dimension, as demonstrated in the 2022 vision statement Towards a powerful cultural sector in digital times.

Many policies so far uncovered are also crosscutting, and cover many other categories used in the Monitor in our search. For instance, the Agreement between the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Digital Transformation, the Ministry of Culture and the National Innovation Company aims to harness the full potential of culture to foster innovation, creativity, employment, and growth, while enabling the transition to the digital market. Similarly, the Dutch Archive Law can be seen to marry the digital transition with heritage protection, mandating that government organisations establish and maintain archives, meanwhile ensuring their authenticity, reliability, as well as accessibility via digitisation.

Green Transition

2023 was the warmest year on record, and while it is undeniable that climate change is placing heritage at great risk, there are also sustainable solutions provided by cultural heritage. This sentiment has been underscored at a European - indeed international - level, through the 2023 Emirates Declaration on Cultural-based Climate Action. Though a non-binding declaration, it nonetheless outlines commitments by several European and non-European states to integrate culture into climate action and to promote culture-based responses to the climate crisis at the UNFCCC.

There are many policies originating from the EU level which will have notable implications on the climate crisis and with this in mind, not all policies that impact on heritage need to be explicitly heritage related. The [Commission Recommendation (EU) 2019/1019 of 7 June 2019 on building modernisation](#) sets forth guidelines to underscore the necessity of adopting a comprehensive and integrated approach to improve building energy performance. For heritage professionals, the guidelines can have direct implications for their work in the preservation of historic buildings. Similar policies can also be found at national level, such as Greece's [Law on the New General Construction Code](#) which underscores the importance of environmental and traditional characteristics for building codes.

The Monitor has so far found similar instruments in other countries, such as Croatia's [Recommendations for implementation of energy efficiency measures on built heritage](#), or guidelines in Ireland on [Improving Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings](#). In Portugal, the [Long-term Strategy for the Renovation of Buildings](#) aims to meet national and EU carbon neutrality targets and energy transition goals, as well as to foster economic growth through measures such as the conservation and valorisation of built heritage. Azerbaijan's [Forest Law](#) has natural heritage in its sights and outlines obligations to protect forest areas and reserves, emphasising sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, and the protection of valuable ecosystems.

Looking to the regional level, in recent years the devolved administrations in the UK have been demonstrating the extent to which environmental protection is a priority: the [Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004](#) focused on land management to promote biodiversity, habitat preservation, and sustainable heritage practices in Scotland; while the [Environmental Impact Assessment (Fish Farming in Marine Waters) Regulations (Northern Ireland) Act 1999](#) seeks to safeguard heritage sites and landscapes by legislating for sustainable practices and responsible development in the context of fish farming activities in marine waters.

Heritage Preservation

The protection, preservation and valorisation of heritage is a priority topic at national and international level for many governments and has been for many decades. This is clearly demonstrated by the sheer depth of policies already found by the Monitor. One important instrument at EU level is [Regulation (EU) 2019/880 on the introduction and the import of cultural goods](#). Passed in 2019, it comes fully into force in 2025 and will for the first time mean that certain cultural objects entering the EU will need an import licence.

EU Member States have been active in this area too. In 2022 the Lithuanian Government introduced [Rules for the Export of Movable Cultural Goods](#) to regulate the movement of cultural goods from Lithuania. The importance of moveable heritage objects, and the need for their protection, is also underscored by candidate country Serbia in the [Law on Cultural Property](#) which defines cultural goods as objects and creations not just of material value, but spiritual and cultural importance and of general interest to the country. Ireland too has heritage

protection in its sights and the Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 will see the largest overhaul of Irish heritage protection legislation in decades.

Immovable heritage is the focus of the new 2023 Law on Hungarian architecture which outlines the principles, criteria, and processes for architectural heritage. In the UK, the National Heritage Act 2002 outlines the roles and powers of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, and it has expanded the scope of protection for ancient monuments across the whole of the UK. However, separate legislation has been passed since then in Wales and Scotland. The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 provides for the preservation of sites and buildings of national importance. In Scotland, since the Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014, Historic Environment Scotland, a separate authority from the government, is in charge of heritage protection. Its principles and policies are outlined in the Historic Environment Policy for Scotland of 2019.

Heritage, and its protection and valorisation can also have important implications for national and cultural identity, as well as reconciliation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite is highly decentralised government structure, Annex 8 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dayton Peace Agreement), Agreement on the Commission to Preserve National Monuments, reflects the importance of preserving national monuments not only as a means of honouring cultural identity but also as a fundamental aspect of post-conflict recovery and reconciliation.

Inclusion and Accessibility

When discussing the importance of cultural heritage, what is sometimes overlooked is its potential to contribute positively to people's lives and their wellbeing. The recent report by the European Commission, Get inspired! Culture: a driver for health and wellbeing in the EU, has demonstrated the profound impact of culture on mental health and the initiatives driving policy changes at EU, national, regional, and local levels.

According to a poll of surveyed Europeans, culture ranked highest among factors likely to foster a sense of community, surpassing history, geography, and religion. However, more than a third of Europeans reported not participating in cultural activities at all. To stress the importance that cultural policies have on the unity of the social fabric, a working group of EU Member States' experts compiled a list of recommendations for enhancing the contribution of culture to social cohesion: From social inclusion to social cohesion - the role of culture policy. In the same line, the European Parliament passed a resolution on the role of culture, education, media and sport in the fight against racism.

At a national level, in Portugal, the National Arts Plan - published in June 2019 - proposes measures to contribute to the valorisation of arts and education in the lives of communities. Marginalised communities are the scope of Albania's 2012 Legislation for Persons with

Disabilities which aims to ensure equal participation in cultural activities for disabled persons. In the Netherlands, the recently enacted Integration Law acknowledges the role of cultural heritage in civic identity and society and seeks to promote respect for cultural diversity. And some regional administrations have also been leaning on heritage as catalysts for bottom-up community participation. In Basilicata, Italy, the regional law of November 2018 describes how ecomuseums are veritable community houses, where communities gather to preserve, interpret, and manage their own heritage.

For cities, social inclusion and citizen engagement factors play an important role when shaping urban development plans or cultural strategies. Turin's Regulation on Governing The Urban Commons in the City outlines the principles, methodologies, and processes involved in the shared governance and care of common urban resources. It emphasises the importance of public consultation, outlining the steps involved in identifying urban commons for collaboration, guidelines for their regeneration, and proposals for their management. Another example from Barcelona, the Interculturality Plan for 2021-2030, outlines the process for the municipality to promote intercultural perspectives in all municipal policies. The plan aims to strengthen intercultural dialogue, participation, and representation in decision-making processes to create a fairer and more inclusive city.

Many policies relating to intangible heritage were also founded under this category, including the Audiovisual Action Plan which outlines the role of Irish visual heritage in shaping cultural identity and fostering social cohesion, further emphasising the need for strategic investment and regulatory reform. While both Romania and Turkey have legislation to place emphasis on the role of stakeholders and to protect intangible heritage, via the Cultural and Natural Assets Protection Law and the Law regarding the protection of intangible cultural heritage, respectively.

International Cultural Relations

Cultural heritage plays a significant role in international affairs, and this has been recognised by the EU through the Implementation of the European agenda for culture and of the EU strategy for international cultural relations and the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026, which both consider international relations essential in protecting heritage as well as promoting mutual understanding.

At national level, cultural heritage can often be the focus of bilateral engagement (such as the Greek Ratification of the Agreement between the Federal Council of the Swiss Confederation and the Government of the Hellenic Republic on the import, transit and repatriation of cultural goods) or used as a conduit for mutual understanding between different communities both within and across borders (such as the Bosnia and Herzegovina's Rulebook on the Activities of the National Commission to Preserve National Monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina as Regards International Cooperation).

Similar actions can be found at national level across Europe. In Portugal, the CPLP Multilateral Cultural Cooperation Strategic Plan emphasises the importance of cultural collaboration among member states of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, and this non-binding instrument serves as a roadmap for international cultural relations in the Lusophone world. Further initiatives from Portugal include the Ordinance for the Internationalization, Modernization and Digital Transition of Books and Authors which aims to promote the modernization and internationalisation of the cultural sector.

The Serbian diaspora is just one focus of the Strategy for the Development of Culture in the Republic of Serbia from 2020 to 2029 which commits Serbia to protecting and promoting Serbian cultural heritage and creativity, both domestically and among the Serbian communities living outside Serbia.

4. Observations

In the first few months of research, a rich array of policy information, emanating from European, national and regional/local level, which has significant and far-reaching impacts on heritage has been found. Many policies found are not necessarily culture or heritage specific yet have clear impacts on the cultural heritage sectors. There is a significant level of crosscutting between policies too. Though not a new finding, these observations would continue to support the conclusion that heritage policies are indeed being increasingly mainstreamed across all other aspects of government policy throughout Europe, and that many other realms of policy impact significantly on heritage.

As mentioned in the introduction, the data gathered by the monitor will contribute in part to the publication of evidence-based research papers and policy recommendations. For that reason the scope of this review is intentionally uncritical and takes a more observational and holistic narrative. Still, enough information has already been gathered to observe some interesting trends, in particular:

- As expected, *Heritage Preservation* is a category that already has a considerable amount of findings, and represents the lion share of information already found. From across the countries already observed, there is a wide selection of policies that relate the protection of movable and immovable heritage. This is true both at a national level, as well as at the European level.
- Policies relating to *Green Transition* as well as *Inclusion & Accessibility* are also plentiful, but not as much as *Heritage Preservation*. Concerning the *Green Transition,* it is with this category that we can clearly see the impact of broader green topics on heritage. Many policies found so far do not necessarily originate from a cultural or heritage view point but their impact on heritage is clear. In the category of *Inclusion & Accessibility,* most policies found so far focus on community engagement and accessibility which can demonstrate the growing recognition that exists that culture plays an important role in wellbeing.

- For the categories *Digital Transition* and *International Cultural Relations* less policy information was found on these areas. Further research into these categories over the coming month may help ascertain why.
- Finally, all the policies gathered so far are associated with certain keywords, the Top 15 are, in decreasing order: 1) Conservation; 2) Heritage Preservation; 3) Sustainability; 4) Accessibility; 5) Museums; 6) Preservation; 7) Intangible; 8) Restoration; 9) Art; 10) Community; 11) Heritage Protection; 12) Digital Cultural Heritage; 13) Participation; 14) Education; and 15) Climate Change.

5. Conclusion and Next Steps

The above preliminary observations - particularly the concentration of Heritage Preservation policies and the irregularity of those from the Digital Transition and International Cultural Relations - could lead us to surmise that there are gaps in existing policies at European, national and regional/local level. This is of course an ongoing mapping exercise, and so further research in the coming months will help us ascertain if these initial findings are accurate.

Nonetheless these initial and tentative observations will already help shape the direction for the next phase of research on the Monitor. The Policy Team will continue its search for information in the coming months, with the next review expected in May/June 2024 (tbc). This 2nd review will cover the period from February 2024 and include a snapshot of the findings from the next countries due to be analysed.