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THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF CULTURAL HERITAGE 2018: A POLICY PERSPECTIVE

When the European Year of Cultural Heritage (EYCH) 2018 was officially opened at the European Culture Forum in December 2017 in Milan, Italy, it was thanks to the efforts and commitment by the members of the European Parliament and the EU Member States and it marked the culmination of an increasingly prominent place for cultural heritage in the EU's cultural policy.

Cultural Heritage in EU Cultural Policy

Cultural heritage has been a key element of EU cultural policy since the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. While it is primarily a matter of national, regional and local authorities, the EU can still play a role in protecting cultural heritage. Now a part of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU), the European Union (EU) aims to "respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and […] ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced".[1] Furthermore, the so-called Culture-Article which was first introduced with the Treaty of Maastricht stipulates that "the Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore".[2] Especially since the adoption of the first European Agenda for Culture in 2007, cultural heritage has become a priority in EU cultural policy. It was the first time that the European Commission outlined a cultural policy strategy. The European Agenda for Culture acknowledges the contribution of culture to the strategic objectives of the EU – prosperity, solidarity, security – and proposes objectives in cultural policy to be achieved by the EU institutions, the EU Member States and civil society.[3] New working methods in

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1   Treaty of the European Union, Article 3.3.

2   Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 167.

3   Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world, COM(2007) 242, 10 May 2007.

cultural policy were established through the European Agenda for Culture: the Open Method of Coordination (OMC)[4] for the coordination of Member States and the Structured Dialogue with civil society. The Council Work Plans for Culture running for three-year periods determine the topics for further exchange between Member States. Both, the European Agenda for Culture and the Council Work Plans, have deepened exchange and collaboration on cultural heritage through topics such as participatory governance in cultural heritage or skills, training and knowledge transfer in cultural heritage.[5]

In 2014, cultural heritage became an increasingly relevant topic for the EU institutions. The conclusions of the Council *Cultural heritage as a strategic resource for Europe* from May 2014 invite the Commission to develop a strategic approach to cultural heritage. According to the conclusion:

> "Cultural heritage consists of the resources inherited from the past in all forms and aspects – tangible, intangible and digital (born digital and digitized), including monuments, sites, landscapes, skills, practices, knowledges and expressions of human creativity, as well as collections conserved and managed by public and private bodies such as museums, libraries and archives. It originates from the interaction between people and places through time, and it is constantly evolving."[6]

This description/definition has since been reiterated to determine what the EU regards as cultural heritage. The European Commission reacted to the Council conclusions as well as stressed that cultural heritage is a "powerful instrument that provides a sense of belonging amongst and between

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4 The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is a format for EU Member States to discuss cultural policy. In an OMC group, experts from ministries of culture and national cultural institutions meet several times per year to exchange on good practice and produce policy manuals or toolkits which are widely shared throughout the EU.

5 "Participatory governance of cultural heritage" was the topic of an OMC group in 2015–2016 and of the Structured Dialogue with civil society in 2015. "Skills, training and knowledge transfer in cultural heritage" was the topic of the Structured Dialogue in 2017. An OMC group in 2017–2018 addressed the topic of "Skills, training and knowledge transfer: traditional and emerging heritage professions".

6 Council conclusions of 21 May 2014 on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe, published in the Official Journal C 183/36 on 14 June 2014.

European citizens".[7] Thereby, it points to the European aspect of heritage while simultaneously emphasising its local, regional or national character: "heritage is always both local and European".[8] The Communication of the Commission *Towards an integrated approach for cultural heritage in Europe* from July 2014 takes stock of the activities of the EU on cultural heritage – including the European Agenda for Culture, the current Work Plan for Culture as well as the different funding programmes – but also explores what the EU can do to enhance heritage's intrinsic value and take advantage of its economic and societal potential.[9]

2014 also marked the start of a new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and, consequently, new funding programmes running from 2014 until 2020. Not only the culture sub-programme of Creative Europe but also other programmes and funds provided direct or indirect opportunities for cultural heritage initiatives, for instance the funding scheme European remembrance in the Europe for Citizens programme (EACEA) or through urban regeneration in the European Regional Fund for Development (ERDF).

At the end of 2014, the Council also adopted *Conclusions on participatory governance for cultural heritage.* In response to increased demand by some Member States and the public, the Council invited the European Commission to present a proposal for a European Year of Cultural Heritage with these conclusions. At the time, the European Commission had halted the declaration of further thematic years for an analysis of their efficiency. However, the European Parliament was particularly supportive of the idea of a European Year of Cultural Heritage. Especially, members of the Committee for Culture and Education voiced their support for the idea which was confirmed in the Committee's report from June 2015 supported by statements from the Committees for Tourism and Regional Development.[10] The report outlines ideas on an integrated approach, European funding, governance models and the economic and strategic potential of cultural heritage. In September 2015, the plenary

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7   Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe, COM(2007) 477, 22 July 2014.

8   Ibid.

9   Ibid.

10 European Parliament: Report towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe, A8-0207/2015, 24 June 2015.

of the European Parliament confirmed these ideas by adopting a resolution *Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage* in which it recommends the European Commission to designate 2018 as a European Year of Cultural Heritage "with an adequate budget and with the aim, amongst other things, of disseminating and increasing awareness and education among future generations in respect of the values of the European cultural heritage and its protection".[11] A sense of belonging, identity, sense of community and appreciation for the common heritage should be the motivations but also objectives of a European Year of Cultural Heritage, according to the European Parliament.[12]

More than the Council conclusions or the communications from the Commission in the years prior, the resolution of the European Parliament makes references to intangible heritage: "[…] points out the importance of preserving cultural landscapes and, in particular, intangible cultural heritage which represents a living culture and fuels traditional crafts, and calls on the Commission to include this to a larger extent in the respective programmes".[13]

After the initial proposal from the European Commission from August 2016 was deliberated by the other EU institutions, the final decision was adopted in May 2017 to designate 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage[14], making it the only thematic year during the Juncker-Commission.

European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018: Aims and Implementation

The aim of the European Year of Cultural Heritage was to encourage more people to discover and engage with Europe's cultural heritage and to reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space. In particular, the objectives of the year were as follows:

- ◼ Contribute to promoting the role of Europe's cultural heritage as a pivotal component of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue;
- ◼ Enhance the contribution of Europe's cultural heritage to society and the economy;

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11 European Parliament resolution of 8 September 2015 towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Decision (EU) 2017/864 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on a European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018).

◼ Contribute to promoting cultural heritage as an important element of the relations between the Union and third countries.

The decision on a EYCH also outlines 14 specific objectives of the year, such as promoting innovative models of participatory governance, promoting cultural heritage as a source of inspiration for contemporary creation and innovation as well as raising awareness on the importance of Europe's cultural heritage through education and lifelong learning. The demand of the European Parliament for an adequate budget, however, was not fulfilled; only   5 million were designated at the EU level for a special call in the frame of the Creative Europe programme.

The European Commission – more precisely the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) – managed the EYCH, with active involvement and organisation of various events of other EU institutions such as the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee. For closer cooperation with civil society organisations, the European Commission launched a special call of the Structured Dialogue to bring together a Stakeholders' Committee for the 2018 EYCH. 38 organisations working in the field of cultural heritage and culture more broadly – such as Europa Nostra, the European Music Council (EMC) and Culture Action Europe – met six times over the course of two years (2017 and 2018) to share their expertise and ideas for the preparation and implementation of the EYCH. A lot of activities associated with the EYCH were organised on the national, regional and local levels. In the Member States, national coordinators implemented the year and coordinated these projects and events. A label for the EYCH (consisting of a logo, slogan and hashtag) was created to give more visibility to events contributing to the objectives of the year. By the end of 2018, over 10 000 initiatives on local, regional, national and the European levels had received the label.

To ensure long-term results, the Commission, in collaboration with the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other partners, ran ten European initiatives centred on four principles: engagement, sustainability, protection and innovation. The initiatives are based on the idea that cultural heritage has a clear European dimension and that it needs to be addressed through many EU policies besides cultural policy, such as education, regional development, social cohesion and environment. The initiative *Heritage at school* includes a joint EU-UNESCO project funded by Creative Europe and will map heritage education tools in schools, with a focus on intangible heritage. A special call for Creative Europe

cooperation projects related to the EYCH was launched at the end of 2017. 29 projects were selected, with intangible heritage being the most represented area. For instance, the project *Unearthing the Music* aims to shed new light on creative and forward-thinking music made under non-democratic regimes in the second half of the 20th century in Europe. Besides the special call, the regular funding for cultural heritage initiatives through Creative Europe continued, such as the *European Heritage Awards/Europa Nostra Awards* and the *European Heritage Label*. Among the recipients of the *European Heritage Label* in 2018 were the Musical Heritage Sites in Leipzig, Germany.

Cultural Heritage in EU Policy Beyond 2018

2018 also brought about new developments in cultural policy at the EU level. Although these were unrelated to the EYCH, the increased awareness for cultural heritage was clearly reflected in the proposals and the outcomes. The European Commission adopted a New European Agenda for Culture in May 2018.[15] It has three strategic objectives, with social, economic and external dimensions. Protecting and valorising cultural heritage is included as a cross-cutting action and proposes three activities for the conclusion of the EYCH. The most significant one is the presentation of an Action Plan for Cultural Heritage while asking the Member States to draft similar plans on the national level and following up the ten initiatives with the Council Work Plan on Culture. The other cross-cutting action Digital4Culture includes several activities related to cultural heritage such as proposals for the next steps for *Europeana*.

At the end of 2018, the Member States adopted a new Council Work Plan for Culture 2019–2022.[16] Sustainability in cultural heritage is one of five priorities of the Work Plan. Further activities and specified topics are defined through four actions, including an OMC group on adaptation to climate change and a workshop hosted by the European Commission on alternative funding for cultural heritage.

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15 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A New European Agenda for Culture, COM(2018) 267, 22 May 2018.

16 Council conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022: OJ C 460 p. 10, 21 December 2018.

The New European Agenda for Culture and the Council Work Plan for Culture 2019–2022 include various objectives and activities related to cultural heritage which shows what effects a thematic year can have. The promised Action Plan on Cultural Heritage was presented by the European Commission in the form of the European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage in December 2018 at the closing event of the EYCH in Vienna, Austria.[17] In five pillars, the future activities for cultural heritage on EU level are outlined:

- Cultural heritage for an inclusive Europe: participation and access for all;
- Cultural heritage for a sustainable Europe: smart solutions for a cohesive and sustainable future;
- Cultural heritage for a resilient Europe: safeguarding endangered heritage;
- Cultural heritage for an innovative Europe: mobilising knowledge and research;
- Cultural heritage for stronger global partnerships: reinforcing international cooperation.

The foreseen actions connected to these five pillars will be launched in 2019 and 2020. For example, in 2019, the European Commission will conduct research and studies on the carrying capacity at sensitive sites including intangible cultural heritage practices with the support of the Creative Europe programme.[18]

While it may be still too early to discuss the long-term results of some of the projects initiated during the year, the policy developments throughout the year have been influenced by the theme and will shape EU cultural policy as well as other policy fields for years to come.

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17 European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage: SWD (2018) 491, 5 December 2018.

18 Ibid., Annex.