

# THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF CULTURAL HERITAGE 2018: A TURNING POINT FOR THE CITIZENS' MOVEMENT SUPPORTING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN EUROPE

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## Abstract

The last years have paved the way for the significant development and better structuring of a pan-European movement of civil society supporting cultural heritage. The designation of 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage – the only thematic year of the Juncker Commission – marked a turning point for this ever-growing movement. Firstly, because it represented a true milestone for the public recognition of cultural heritage as a unique resource for Europe. Secondly, because it saw an unprecedented Europe-wide and bottom-up mobilisation of heritage stakeholders. And thirdly, as it provided a playing field to put collective knowledge into practice, through effective multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral approaches. This article highlights the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 as a huge opportunity for civil society action in the heritage field, and conversely, civil society action as a driver for heritage policy development in Europe. It also identifies three main challenges to be addressed in the future in order to sustain the legacy of the European Year. Firstly, to continue raising awareness and reaching out to citizens and stakeholders at the local level. Secondly, to find an adequate formula for a permanent cooperation and co-ordination on cultural heritage policies at EU level. And thirdly, to sustain and increase funding for cultural heritage in future EU programmes.

## Keywords

Cultural heritage, civil society, civil society organisations, advocacy, cultural heritage policy, EU policy.

## 1. Foreword

As the voice of civil society dedicated to cultural heritage in Europe, Europa Nostra strongly supported the first-ever European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018. Not only did Europa Nostra passionately advocate for its designation - together with other civil society and institutional stakeholders - but it also actively contributed to its preparation, implementation and, therefore, to its success. Thus, it is with a shared sense of pride and accomplishment that we write these pages looking back to and ahead of this historic European Year.

Back in 2017, as the European Year was about to be launched, Europa Nostra had the honour and pleasure of contributing to a special edition of the *CartadItalia* (Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, 2018) publication dedicated to this important initiative. In that article, we highlighted the European Year as a unique opportunity 'to make a real difference in the real world', and to find practical and hands-on solutions to many of today's challenges by

tapping into the potential of our shared cultural heritage. Today, six months after the European Year of Cultural Heritage has come to an end, it is a timely moment to look back at what we have collectively achieved and ask ourselves: what difference *did* we make?

## 2. Introduction

Civil society organisations play a crucial role in policy-making in the heritage field. Formally, the Treaty of Lisbon provides the legal framework for the participation of citizens and their representative associations in EU actions by means of regular exchange and open dialogue with the EU institutions<sup>1</sup>. In practice, the work of civil society organisations is much more than that: it is a backbone for a well-functioning democracy.

Being part of their communities, civil society organisations are best placed to know the

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<sup>1</sup> Article 11(1) and (2) Treaty of European Union.

population's needs and concerns. Thus, they are instrumental in making EU policies and actions relevant for Europe's citizens, reducing the so-called 'democratic deficit'<sup>2</sup>. Also for this reason, civil society organisations are natural partners for policy-makers in the essential but challenging task of reaching out to citizens, with the European Year providing an ideal opportunity for it. Other contributions by civil society organisations in the field include fulfilling a 'watchdog' role of EU action and providing practice-led and specialized knowledge that is critical to improve heritage policy-making (Tocci, 2018).

Although there has been little research on the topic (Van der Auwera, Schramm 2010), the last years have paved the way for the significant development and structuring of a *pan-European movement of civil society for cultural heritage*. By means of illustration and not limitation, two examples are relevant here: Europa Nostra<sup>3</sup>, the pan-European federation of heritage NGOs founded in 1963, and the European Heritage Alliance 3.3<sup>4</sup>, an informal advocacy platform of heritage networks founded in 2011.

Europa Nostra is composed of 342 member organisations, mostly non-governmental, as well as cc. 1000 individual members spanning over 48 countries in Europe and beyond, with a combined membership that can be estimated at above 6 million citizens supporting the cause of cultural heritage. The European Heritage Alliance 3.3 is an informal platform gathering around 50 international and European civil society networks active in the field of cultural heritage in its broadest sense: from industrial to digital heritage, landscape or privately owned, to name a few.

These numbers might appear relatively modest, yet the work and impact of this growing pan-European civil society movement for cultural heritage in the past years have been prolific. In this article, we want to point out how and to what extent the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 was an *incentive for civil society action* in the heritage field, and conversely, to what extent is civil society a *driver for heritage policy development* in Europe.

While looking back and knowing where we

stand, most important is to look ahead: *What are the next steps? What challenges are to be addressed? How can we build on and upscale the positive dynamics initiated by the European Year? And what is the role and responsibility of civil society actors in contributing to these challenging tasks?*

### 3. The European Year of Cultural Heritage: a turning point

The designation of 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage – the only thematic year of the Juncker Commission – was a historic achievement and marked a turning point for the ever-growing citizen's movement for cultural heritage in Europe, primarily for three reasons:

1) Firstly, because it represented a true milestone for the public recognition of cultural heritage as a unique resource for the future of Europe;

2) Secondly, because it saw an unprecedented Europe-wide and bottom-up mobilisation of heritage stakeholders;

3) And thirdly, as it provided a playing field to put collective knowledge into practice, through effective multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral approaches.

In the following subchapters, we will explain and illustrate each one of these three achievements from the perspective of the organised civil society: how did the European civil society movement for cultural heritage *contribute to* and *benefited from them*? Finally, as conclusion, the fourth and last subchapter will look at the challenges ahead.

#### 3.1 Civil society on the frontline: advancing new policy developments in the heritage field

The European Year galvanised public recognition of cultural heritage as a strategic resource for Europe and thus as a cross-cutting priority in different EU policies. It was a strong political message, acknowledging cultural heritage as a shared resource that, by connecting peoples and communities across time and space, has an enormous potential to give a deeper meaning to the European project.

But the European Year did not occur in a vacuum. Rather, it followed a series of important policy developments in the heritage arena at EU

<sup>2</sup> Term used to argue that the EU institutions and their decision-making procedures suffer from a lack of democracy and seem inaccessible to the ordinary citizen due to their complexity (Eur-Lex Glossary).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.europanostra.org>

<sup>4</sup> <http://europeanheritagealliance.eu/>

level over the past few years<sup>5</sup>. These developments resulted in an increased recognition of the value of cultural heritage for Europe and its citizens and in the advancement of more people-centred approaches in its management. In this process, civil society actors like Europa Nostra and the European Heritage Alliance 3.3, in their role as bridge between the people and the political level, carried out the crucial tasks of raising-awareness, advocating for a more prominent role of cultural heritage in the political agenda and actively contributing to the policy debate and heritage policy-making<sup>6</sup>.

The now widely recognised landmark study 'Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe'<sup>7</sup> (2015), co-authored by Europa Nostra along with five European key partners, served as an exceptional evidence-based advocacy tool to support and advance these developments. Indeed, the study was quoted in the initial proposal (European Commission, 2016) from the European Commission on a European Year of Cultural Heritage back in 2016 as a *key source of knowledge and expertise on which the Year would build upon*. The Study provides compelling evidence that cultural heritage - with its positive impacts on our economy, society, culture and the environment - is a precious but underused resource for a sustainable, prosperous and inclusive Europe.

Later on, the European Year offered a fitting stage to promote and implement these findings, as well as the conclusions of other similar research projects and the principles outlined in latest European policy developments in the field.

### 3.2 Civil society in action: the upscaling of the pan-European mobilization

The Year initiated an unprecedented

European mobilisation, a collective effort involving a myriad of actors, both public and private, operating at all levels of governance: local, regional, national, European and international.

The demand for such a Year came by the sector itself, and it was the result of a *bottom-up* process in which civil society played a protagonist role. A proof thereof was the wide mobilisation by Europa Nostra and the European Heritage Alliance 3.3 to support the organisation of a year dedicated to cultural heritage, following the initial proposal by the German Cultural Heritage Committee (Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Denkmalschutz, DNK) back in October 2014.

Following the official designation (Decision (EU) 2017/864 ) of the European Year in 2017, the work of Europa Nostra and the Alliance did not stop; on the contrary, it intensified.

The common advocacy campaign of the European Heritage Alliance included, among others, lobbying leaders of EU Member States to ensure adequate financial resources for the Year<sup>8</sup>, and intensively and positively supporting the preparations by the EU Institutions involved in crafting and drafting its legal and organisational framework.

Throughout 2018, the Alliance made a major contribution to the European Year, and its members deployed all their available resources to further its impact and achieve its objectives. For all the members of the Alliance as well as for Europa Nostra in its role of coordinator and founding member of this platform, such an orchestrated, large-scale action was a major milestone.

An important mobilisation of heritage stakeholders during the European Year took place within the very first European Cultural Heritage Summit in Berlin (June 2018). The Summit was organised by Europa Nostra together with the German Cultural Heritage Committee (DNK), coordinating the European Year in Germany, and the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (SPK). Bringing together more than 1,500 participants from all over Europe, and with 67 events organised by around 85 partners, the Summit was by far the largest event of the European Year.

On this occasion, the three-co-hosting organisations launched the Berlin Call to Action

<sup>5</sup> These policy developments include, notably, the Council conclusions (2014) on participatory governance of cultural heritage (OJ C 463), the Council conclusions (2014) on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe (OJ C 183), and the European Commission Communication (2014) Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe.

<sup>6</sup> Including through institutional mechanisms put in place for this purpose, such as the Structured Dialogue between the European Commission and the cultural sector.

<sup>7</sup> 'Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe' Report (2015) by Europa Nostra, ENCATC, Heritage Europe, the Heritage Alliance, the International Cultural Centre and the Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation at the University of Leuven.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.europanostra.org/european-year-cultural-heritage-needs-adequate-fundings/>

“Cultural Heritage for the Future of Europe”<sup>9</sup>, an awareness raising and advocacy tool that has been widely endorsed and duly acknowledged both at the political level and in among professional circles<sup>10</sup>. The Berlin Call to Action built on the input and support of the Stakeholders Committee of the European Year, as well as of members of the European Heritage Alliance 3.3.



Fig. 1: Signature of the Berlin Call to Action by Presidents of the 3 co-hosting organisations of the Summit. Credit: Derdehmel

The Berlin Call to Action built on the momentum created by the European Year to put forward concrete actions with tangible results for Europe and its citizens. Among others, it called upon EU institutions to develop an ambitious European Plan for Cultural Heritage to ensure the legacy of the Year. The Berlin Call to Action proved to be successful, and the institutions responded with the European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage, published by the European Commission in December 2018. This important document features prominently the Berlin Call to Action as a *key example of stakeholders' mobilisation* raising the need for such strategic framework (Commission Staff Working Document 491, 2018). Moreover, it is a concrete example of how civil society organisations and other stakeholders can influence policy-making by engaging in a two-way communication with public authorities.

<sup>9</sup><http://www.europanostr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Berlin-Call-Action-Cultural-Heritage-Future-Europe.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> An example of support from the sector was the statement prepared by ViMM – Virtual Multimodal Museum as a response and endorsement of the Berlin Call To Action from the perspective of digital cultural heritage and related digital technologies.

### 3.3 Civil society as a constructive partner: multi-stakeholder and cross-sectorial cooperation

The European Year saw the implementation of an effective multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance framework where civil society organisations were closely involved, together with EU institutions, national authorities and international bodies.

The European Commission set-up a Stakeholders' Committee<sup>11</sup>, composed of civil society actors and networks, to advise and assist in the design and implementation of the European Year. Among the 37 selected organisations, half of them are members of the European Heritage Alliance 3.3, which further illustrates the role and influence of this platform in heritage policy-making at EU level. This Committee also periodically exchanged with national authorities coordinating the Year in EU Member States and associated countries. This real dialogue and close cooperation between EU Institutions, national administrations and civil society was a *sine qua non* condition for the success of the European Year. By putting into practice the principles of participatory governance<sup>12</sup> to manage the European Year, the whole process resulted indeed greater than the sum of its parts.

The Stakeholders' Committee played a crucial role throughout the European Year, multiplying its impact and bringing it closer to citizens' through their large European networks of local stakeholders. Unfortunately, there is no sufficient quantitative data on the work and impact of this Committee<sup>13</sup>. Nevertheless, many highly visible and participatory initiatives were implemented by these networks, which contributed to raising-awareness on cultural heritage among citizens and policy-makers alike<sup>14</sup>. Likewise, members of

<sup>11</sup> Complete list in [http://www.voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Stakeholder-committee\\_web\\_October18.pdf](http://www.voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Stakeholder-committee_web_October18.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> See 'Participatory governance of cultural heritage' (2018). Report of the Open Method of Coordination working group of EU Member States' experts.

<sup>13</sup> A quarterly monitoring exercise was put in place by the European Commission to assess the Stakeholders' Committee work during the Year in terms of events organised, people reached and other indicators. However, the data collected was not sufficient nor uniform enough to make any conclusions. Out of the 37 members of the Stakeholders' Committee, only 11 provided data for at least 3 quarters of the year.

<sup>14</sup> Examples include but are not limited to the #Ode2Joy Challenge by Europa Nostra, the Torch Initiative by Future for Religious Heritage, the thematic months developed by E-

the Stakeholders' Committee made important policy contributions to the European Year. Few examples are the drafting and adoption of the Leeuwarden Declaration<sup>15</sup> on the adaptive re-use of built heritage and the Barcelona Declaration<sup>16</sup>, on tourism and cultural heritage "Better places to live, better places to visit" which both set principles to guide current and future action on their respective fields. Civil society organisations also collaborated with relevant national and European authorities in the development and promotion of key policy documents and declarations such as the Davos Declaration<sup>17</sup> and the ICOMOS document on European quality principles for EU-funded interventions with potential impact upon cultural heritage<sup>18</sup>.

Last but not least, the European Year successfully incited cross-sectoral and cross-policy cooperation, resulting in the recognition of a real integrated approach to cultural heritage at EU level. Civil society organisations -including Europa Nostra and members of the European Heritage Alliance 3.3 - have for long and systematically advocated for the mainstreaming of cultural heritage in EU actions and funding<sup>19</sup>, and the European Year provided a playing field to put this principle into practice.

According to a draft monitoring report<sup>20</sup> (2019) on the implementation of the European

Year prepared by the European Commission, cultural heritage was mainstreamed in at least 14 policy areas: from education to tourism, regional development, audiovisual policy and research. As an illustration, through Horizon 2020, the EU programme for research and innovation, circa EU 66 million were invested in heritage-related research and innovation projects (European Commission, 2019). Creative Europe, the EU programme for the cultural and creative sectors allocated additional EU 5 million to heritage-related projects on the occasion of the Year, and other programmes such as the EU flagship programme Erasmus + prioritized funding for initiatives aligned to the Year's objectives (European Commission, 2018).

#### 4. The legacy of the European Year of Cultural Heritage: what are the next steps?

A lot has been achieved during the historic European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 and, as illustrated throughout this article, civil society organisations have been a real driver for change throughout this process. *How can we build on and upscale the positive dynamics initiated by the European Year? And what is the role and responsibility of civil society actors in doing so?*

Now that the European Year of Cultural Heritage has come to an end, we see three main challenges that need to be addressed in order to sustain the Years' long-lasting impact in the future. These challenges correspond to each one of the three major achievements aforementioned. Notably:

- 1) To continue and strengthen the awareness-raising efforts on the value of cultural heritage for Europe, as well as continue reaching out to citizens and stakeholders at the local level;
- 2) To find an adequate formula for a more permanent cooperation and co-ordination platform on cultural heritage policies at EU level;
- 3) To sustain and increase EU funding directly or indirectly related to cultural heritage in the future.

The European Year marked a milestone in the political recognition of cultural heritage as a strategic resource for Europe and its citizens. Yet a first key challenge for the future is to bridge the gap between *policy* and *practice*. How to better *translate* the latest policy developments and make them relevant in the field? And particularly: how to improve the understanding of the European value of cultural heritage among local

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FAITH (European industrial and technical heritage volunteers and voluntary associations), the European Private Heritage Week or the Political Internships in Museums by NEMO (Network of European Museums Organisations) among many more.

<sup>15</sup> On the initiative of Architects' Council of Europe-ACE and supported by Europa Nostra, Future of Religious Heritage (FRH), the European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH) and the European Federation of Fortified Sites (EFFORTS).

<sup>16</sup> Developed by the Network of European Regions for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism -NECSTOUR in cooperation with Europa Nostra, the European Travel Commission and the European Cultural Tourism Network, with the support of the European Heritage Alliance 3.3.

<sup>17</sup> <https://davosdeclaration2018.ch/> an initiative of the Swiss Government

<sup>18</sup> Prepared by an expert group assembled by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) under the mandate of the European Commission.

<sup>19</sup> By the means of awareness raising, communication and evidence-based advocacy. Illustrative examples are the statement "Cultural Heritage as a key resource for EU's future Cohesion Policy" by Europa Nostra, as well as the Berlin Call to Action "Cultural Heritage for Future of Europe".

<sup>20</sup> The report provides an account of the different initiatives implemented during the European Year at EU level. It was prepared by the European Commission and submitted to the Stakeholders Committee on March 2019.

stakeholders and citizens of all ages, and youth in particular? Addressing this challenge is a joint responsibility for civil society actors and public authorities, and sustaining the legacy of the European Year in the long-term will rely on these joint efforts. Possible tools to do this include awareness-raising, education and research.

As proved during the European Year, awareness-raising initiatives such as the European Heritage Awards/ Europa Nostra Awards<sup>21</sup>, have a great potential to improve public understanding of the European value of cultural heritage and foster a sense of belonging to a wider European community. This and other similar initiatives<sup>22</sup> are to be continued and strengthened, and their outcomes researched and disseminated. On the other hand, there is a need for the EU to further investment in education and research with a view of allowing citizens – particularly the young ones – to better understand and interpret Europe's shared history, memory and heritage in a wider European context, with a special emphasis on multiple perspectives of history (Europa Nostra, 2019)<sup>23</sup>.

The European Year saw the implementation of an effective multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance framework involving EU institutions, civil society organisations, national authorities and international bodies. As this governance structure is no longer in place, a second major challenge is to build on the learnings of this model to find an adequate and permanent platform for future cooperation and exchange. How to bring together the manifold and diverse actors and networks operating in the field in a *coordinated* and *continuous* way?

The 'Cultural Heritage Forum'<sup>24</sup>, established in the European Framework for Action (2018) is expected to contribute to this need and is up to a great challenge. Naturally, the due involvement and representation of civil society actors in this Forum is expected and crucial. At the same time,

it will be of utmost important to ensure that synergies are created with existing civil society platforms in the heritage field, notably with the European Heritage Alliance 3.3, and that resources are invested to sustain these platforms in the future.

Moreover, civil society organisations shall continue developing and consolidating spaces to discuss and advance heritage policy debate in Europe. With this aim, Europa Nostra will organise the European Cultural Heritage Congress from 27 – 31 October 2019 in Paris, France. Moreover, we are committed to continuing to organise a yearly gathering of heritage stakeholders with a view to incite an open and critical exchange on timely subjects and policies related to the field.

Finally, sustaining and increasing investment for cultural heritage in future EU funding programmes is the third major challenge ahead. How to *capitalise* on the investments made during the European Year? And how to *continue* and *increase* such investments, in particular in a changing EU political landscape?

On the one hand, EU institutions will have the responsibility of ensuring this continuity. On the other hand, civil society organisations shall carry on and intensify their advocacy efforts towards the new European Parliament, Council and Commission and demand for an adequate funding for cultural heritage across policies in the future. Likewise, a continuous dialogue and cooperation with other EU Institutions such as the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, as well as with European Institutions and International organisations like the Council of Europe are necessary to enhance resources and support for cultural heritage.

The European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage, as the first document of its kind, and including over 60 EU actions for the benefit of cultural heritage is in itself already an achievement. As of now, the collective challenge is to ensure its effective implementation and make the most out of this ambitious document. This will entail much more than merely the execution and completion of the tens of actions there included: the Framework should '*be alive*' and serve as a strategic roadmap for coordinated action on cultural heritage in Europe. Civil society organisations have the responsibility of both

<sup>21</sup> Award scheme jointly organised annually by Europa Nostra and the European Commission.

<sup>22</sup> For example the European Heritage Label initiative by the European Commission.

<sup>23</sup> Europa Nostra (2019) Statement on the strategic direction of heritage-related research within the future Europe Horizon Programme.

<sup>24</sup> The Cultural Heritage Forum is an Informal Expert Group that will be established by the European Commission as a follow-up to the European Year. One of the main responsibilities of this Group will be to monitor the implementation of the Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage.

contributing to and monitoring the proper implementation of the Framework.

While the European Year achieved what seemed years ago unimaginable, much more can and shall be done collectively in the future. Civil society is increasingly becoming a decisive actor in heritage policy-making at European level, yet its impact will depend greatly on a sustained,

close cooperation with public authorities. In this sense, the European Year shall be seen only as the *beginning* of a renewed and prolonged period of a much stronger and more coherent commitment of public and private stakeholders to cultural heritage, hopefully leading to a lasting partnership based on shared goals and a shared sense of responsibility.

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