

Foreword

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For many readers of this publication, there is no doubt that “Heritage Counts”. It is the soul of our cities and countryside and also the source of the sense of belonging and identity for our communities and citizens. But we all know too well that there are still too many people who are indifferent to cultural heritage, or who are simply not sufficiently aware of its value. This is a real challenge. Europe’s citizens are so used to the surrounding historic urban and rural environment often forgetting that heritage needs a lot of care.

Apart from many threats to heritage caused by man-made or natural disasters, there are other, less obvious yet pernicious threats to heritage. Wherever and whenever investment in cultural and heritage policies is reduced, heritage is in danger. Unfortunately, because of the economic crisis, we see this happen a lot. We therefore need swift action, starting with the introduction of an evidence-based approach to cultural policy-making in the EU and its Member States. But this is not enough. We need to enhance our policy action at all levels, including the European one. This was the European Commission’s intention last year, when we published our strategy “Towards an integrated approach to heritage policies”. We proposed a way forward for tapping into the huge potential of our cultural heritage as a strategic resource for the

sustainable development in Europe. This will be the EC’s roadmap for the next five years.

And with new funding opportunities and programmes such as Creative Europe, Horizon2020, Erasmus+ and the EU’s structural funds, the EU can stimulate the whole cycle of heritage preservation. We are also promoting high standards and high-quality skills in conservation practice through the European Heritage Awards run in partnership with Europa Nostra. We are engaging Europe’s citizens in a deeper reflection on the roots and the meaning of European identity. The main challenge now is to take full advantage of these opportunities. It is time to develop a truly integrated approach to heritage, maximising the impact of heritage policies on the local economy and society.

The European Commission has just started work with Member States on improving the governance of heritage policies. Good governance can contribute to a virtuous cycle of economic growth and social progress. But for this, public and private actors, local communities and stakeholders must all be active in managing and maintaining heritage. We are therefore currently busy identifying innovative models for participatory governance for cultural heritage. There is indeed a wealth of good practices across the EU from which we can learn.

I am confident that the many academic studies in this publication will be extremely useful for the future development and implementation of EU's integrated approach to cultural heritage. The European Commission looks forward to a continuous dialogue with all public and private stakeholders to ensure the best possible participatory governance of our shared heritage and welcomes the vital input provided by the "Heritage Counts" conference organised by the

Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation from the University of Leuven, as a contribution to the final Report of the "Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe" project which was supported by the Culture Programme of the European Union.



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