Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe

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PURPOSE: presentation of a Communication proposing an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe.

BACKGROUND: cultural heritage is a shared resource, and a common good. It can be vulnerable to over-exploitation and under-funding, which can result in neglect, decay and, in some cases, oblivion.

It is, therefore, our common responsibility, while heritage protection is primarily a matter for national, regional and local authorities. The European Union has no less a role to play in line with the EU Treaties and in respect of the principle of subsidiarity.

This is why the Commission proposes this Communication, which has been informed by several years of dialogue with EU Presidencies and stakeholders, responding to the invitation of the Council to "pursue the analysis of the economic and social impact of cultural heritage in the EU and contribute to a development of a strategic approach".

The overall objective is to examine available information on the economic and social impacts of cultural heritage, as well as plans to improve the evidence base and to explore the challenges and opportunities for the heritage sector.

The communication sets out the tools available at EU level, complementing national and regional programmes, to help protect and enhance the intrinsic and social value of heritage, to strengthen its contribution to economic growth and job creation, and develop its potential for the EU's public diplomacy.

CONTENT: the European experience shows that it is possible to progress from an appreciation of the uniqueness of one's own heritage to an interest in and respect for the heritage of others. In this context, the Communication describes the measures available to strengthen policy cooperation at different levels, and projects being developed to support new models of heritage governance.

The overall aim is to help Member States and stakeholders make the most of the significant support for heritage available under EU instruments, progress towards **a more integrated approach at national and EU level, and ultimately make Europe a laboratory for heritage-based innovation**.

Economic base of cultural heritage: according to the most recent statistics (France, 2011), heritage generated EUR 8.1 billion and UK studies have shown that the historic environment can offer a high return on investment: each £1 invested generating up to £1.60 of additional economic activity over ten years. In the area of tourism, heritage is estimated to contribute EUR 415 billion to the EU GDP and 3.4 million tourism enterprises account for 15.2 million jobs – many linked to heritage, directly or indirectly. In 2013, 52% of EU citizens visited at least one historical monument or site and 37% a museum or gallery in their respective countries, while 19% visited a historical monument or site in another EU country.

Heritage, therefore, has great capacity to promote social cohesion and integration, through regeneration of neglected areas, creation of locally-rooted jobs, and promotion of shared understanding and a sense of community.

However, to increase understanding of the actual and potential role of heritage in policy development, it is important to improve systematic data on its economic and social impacts.

Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage: to strengthen Europe's position in the field of cultural heritage preservation, restoration and valorisation, the Commission proposes to:

- encourage the modernisation of the heritage sector by actions **raising awareness and engaging new audiences**;
- apply a strategic approach to **research and innovation**, knowledge sharing and smart specialization;
- seize the opportunities offered by **digitisation**; to reach out to new audiences and engage young people in particular;
- identify skills needs and **improve the training of heritage professionals**; and
- continue developing **more participative interpretation and governance models** that are better suited to contemporary Europe, through greater involvement of the private sector and civil society.

To achieve these objectives, several actions are envisaged including actions relating to:

Research and innovation: pooling resources in order to apply the latest technologies and stimulate new scientific approaches can greatly improve the understanding, preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage. To this end, the Horizon 2020 programme for research and innovation (with nearly EUR 80 billion available from 2014 to 2020) will further reinforce the EU's position in the field of cultural heritage preservation, restoration and valorisation.

Digitisation: the digitisation of heritage contributes to the European Agenda for Culture, by improving public access to different forms of cultural and linguistic expressions. The **Europeana** cultural platform (www.europeana.eu) now provides access to some 30 million cultural objects from more than 2,500 organisations. However, much remains to do to rare and old material, including film. Initiatives are proposed within the framework of a parallel communication on the digitisation of cinematographic works.

Raising awareness: the new programme "Creative Europe" will support cross-border cooperation to promote the modernisation of the heritage sector. It will also improve civil society capacity to operate transnationally by supporting networks and platforms. Other initiatives will contribute to the awareness of common European heritage such as the "European Capitals of Cultural" (ECC), the European Heritage Label, or even the programme "Europe for Citizens" which seeks to encourage reflection on the causes of totalitarian regimes in modern European history.

Local and regional development and cultural heritage: the EU's cohesion and rural development policies can be instrumental in promoting the restoration of cultural heritage, supporting cultural and creative industries and financing the training and upgrading of skills of cultural professionals. Conserving, promoting and managing cultural heritage is currently well supported under the EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). In 2007-2013, the European Regional Development Fund allocated EUR 3.2 billion for protecting and preserving cultural heritage, EUR 2.2 billion to develop cultural infrastructure and EUR 553 million for cultural services, which also benefited cultural heritage. Cultural heritage will remain eligible, under certain conditions, to benefit from ESIF investments in heritage in 2014-2020.

Promoting tourism and strengthening training: the EU provides grants for the creation or improvement of European cultural routes crossing several countries and joining them in a common narrative. The Commission also intends reviving old skills and developing new ones. To achieve this, it aims to increase the attractiveness of heritage-related professions and to provide more opportunities for continuous training, taking advantage, for instance, of the opportunities provided by the European Social Fund.

In addition, building on the achievements of the Lifelong Learning Programme, the Erasmus+**programme** will provide increased opportunities for learning mobility and tackle skills gaps by supporting transnational partnerships between entreprises.

Strengthening the cooperation in external relations: the EU and its Member States are active in multilateral fora and organisations that address cultural heritage policies, such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

Initiatives are also planned to fight against illicit trafficking (notably in Africa) as well as to strengthen the policy dialogues that the Commission conducts with the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), China, India, Brazil, and the European Neighbourhood Policy countries.

Strengthening cultural governance: cooperation at EU level can and does make a decisive contribution towards heritage policies and governance at national and local levels. Legislative action has already been taken in areas of EU competence. In addition, the recent revision of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Directive 2014/52/EU) strengthens the requirement for Member States to assess the effects of certain public and private projects on material assets and cultural heritage.

The **next Council Work Plan for Culture** starting in 2015 offers the opportunity to step up cooperation between the Member States within the Open Method of Coordination (OMC).

Heritage will also feature in the Commission's structured dialogue with civil society (for example: within the framework of the European Expert Network on Culture).

Next steps: the Commission now invites all stakeholders to jointly look into how public policies at all levels, including the EU, could better be marshalled to draw out the long term and sustainability value of Europe's cultural heritage, and develop a more integrated approach to its preservation and valorisation.