

# **HORIZONS FOR HERITAGE RESEARCH TOWARDS A CLUSTER ON CULTURAL HERITAGE**



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## **SYMPOSIUM**

### **Horizons for Heritage Research Symposium - Towards a Cluster on Cultural Heritage**

REACH - RE-designing Access to Cultural Heritage for a wider participation in preservation,  
(re-)use and management of European culture

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# **Report on the Symposium Horizons for Heritage Research – Towards a Cluster on Cultural Heritage**

Written by Tanja Vahtikari

The author would like to extend her gratitude to everyone who contributed to the organisation of the Symposium and the realisation of this report, especially the members of the expert panel:

Neil Forbes

Antonella Fresa

Harald Hartung

Zoltán Krasznai

Gábor Sonkoly

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## 1. General context

One year after the launch of the European Year of Cultural Heritage and the high-level conference “Innovation & Cultural Heritage” organized by the European Commission, the REACH Social Platform for participatory approaches and social innovation in culture, with the support of the European Commission Directorate General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), and Coventry University (REACH Coordinator), organized a symposium “Horizons for Heritage Research - Towards a Cluster on Cultural Heritage” in Brussels, 20 March 2019. The symposium brought together a broad range of stakeholders: representatives of Horizon2020 funded research projects and infrastructures, heritage and memory organizations and European institutions, as well as of civil society networks, platforms and organizations. The European Year of Cultural Heritage (EYCH) had a significant impact in engaging Europeans with their heritage. It created a momentum for heritage research that should be carried on with.

The momentum created by the EYCH was taken up by Head of Unit Mr. Harald Hartung (Inclusive Societies unit, DG RTD, European Commission) in his opening speech. In response to the conclusions of the “Innovation & Cultural Heritage” conference (20<sup>th</sup> March 2018), the EU approach to cultural heritage will be holistic and forward-looking, aiming to connect the past, present and future.



Harald Hartung  
Inclusive Societies unit, DG RTD  
European Commission

Cultural heritage research will have a central role and its own dedicated 'intervention area' in the future European research and innovation framework programme for 2021-2027: Horizon Europe. Mr. Hartung saw great opportunities in the cooperation between the cultural heritage sector and cultural and creative industries, as advocated by the European Parliament. He said that the timing could not be better for the stakeholders to voice their views about how to fill the framework programme with concrete action and specific content. Also Policy officer Dr. Zoltán Krasznai (Inclusive Societies unit, DG RTD, European Commission) noted that in relation to the ongoing policy debates this was the right moment for heritage research stakeholders and networks to think about how to bring their voices together and constitute a stable coordination mechanism among them.



Zoltán Krasznai  
Inclusive Societies unit, DG RTD  
European Commission

He also encouraged the symposium participants to reflect on what shall be the European added value in future cultural heritage research.

The scene of the symposium was further framed by three keynote speakers. European Year of Cultural Heritage Team leader Dorothea Nigge (DG EAC, European Commission) presented the rich and continuing legacy of the EYCH. This legacy can be perceived as understanding cultural heritage in an integrated and holistic way, and as cultural heritage having great social and economic value for Europe. Based on the experiences of the EYCH, Ms. Nigge identified five key areas of action for the future: participation and access; sustainability and supporting heritage-led local and regional development; protecting endangered heritage; mobilising knowledge and research as a way to support advanced digitisation and foster social innovation; and reinforcing international co-operation in the field.



Dorothea Nigge  
EYCH 2018, DG EAC  
European Commission

REACH Project Coordinator Prof. Neil Forbes (Coventry University) pointed out the transversal nature of cultural heritage, embedded in its very definition, bringing together, for instance, tangible and intangible, urban and rural, and humanist and post-humanist perspectives.





Neil Forbes  
Coventry University  
REACH Project Coordinator

The transversal nature of cultural heritage also means intersectorality, including memory institutions, academic institutions, as well as increasingly today the cultural and creative industries as its interpreters and producers. Furthermore, the concept refers to interdisciplinarity – cultural heritage research encompasses a wide range of disciplines with their own specialized conceptual and methodological frameworks, but with an obvious need to co-produce knowledge. Finally, there is an important chronological element embedded in cultural heritage in its capability to mediate between the past and the future, and in its capability to show how past societies sought to find solutions to their challenges.

Another key theme raised by Prof. Forbes was cultural heritage as contribution. He raised the question of who is a “stakeholder” taking part in cultural heritage processes, and argued that we often use the term too loosely. Some fundamental questions that researchers need to engage with in this area include how to get involved with / in stakeholder communities, whose voice to give credibility, and how to moderate between different, often conflictual views and voices.

The co-creative intersectorality of cultural heritage was highlighted also by REACH work package leader Prof. Gábor Sonkoly (ELTE University), whose keynote presentation put on the symposium’s agenda the research themes and questions, which could be discussed by roundtable participants in relation to their expectations of Horizon Europe.

While noticing that the themes obviously are manifold and multifaceted, Prof. Sonkoly called for comparative research on the concepts of cultural heritage, and how they have travelled transnationally. As he noted, there are significant regional differences in the perception of cultural heritage in Europe (East-West, North-South), which can be seen for example in the interpretation of intangible heritage.



Gábor Sonkoly, ELTE  
University, REACH  
Project WP Leader

Other potential research themes that Prof. Sonkoly raised included the role of intangible heritage in relation to cultural rights; Europe's network-based identities, ranging from minorities such as Roma to European professional communities; rural heritage in relation to climate change; co-creative approaches; and digital methodologies. A further area, which should be considered, is the need for a finer terminology for urban heritage (including urban intangible heritage) based on the complex understanding of historic urban landscapes. In an era of mass tourism inside and to Europe, one question is how to channel this growth on a wider basis, also outside the most canonized destinations. Finally, Prof. Sonkoly called for the institutionalization of cultural heritage research at the European level, by recognizing and funding of a network of European Cultural Heritage Chairs.

## **2. Roundtables I: Could a stable coordination structure be beneficial?**

The first set of round tables focused on the question of whether a more stable coordination governance would be needed in the field of cultural heritage research among stakeholders. Each roundtable had its own specific point of view when approaching this overall question. The roundtable on "Structure", chaired by Prof. Arturo Julio Rodriguez Morato (University of Barcelona), addressed the possible forms of coordination. The participants of the roundtable agreed that there is a need for a more coordinated structure communicating selected objectives of the cultural heritage research community around clear and well-defined aims. They considered as self-evident that such a, currently missing, coordination structure would naturally become a major interlocutor of European institutions concerning EU-funded heritage research. The governance should be both cooperative and adaptive, and have rotating coordinators / responsibilities and a steering committee. The new governance structure could form a "network of networks" on heritage research and innovation. It was suggested that part of the initial



funding could come from Horizon Europe, in the same vain as Creative Europe is funding smaller networks.



View of the ‘Round Tables’ discussion

The second roundtable focused on “Liaisons and links with existing groups and networks”, and was chaired by REACH Network Coordinator Dr. Antonella Fresca. It was stated that there exist many networks and projects with specific aims and various needs on different levels (regional, national, European). The challenge is how can these aims and needs be aligned and brought together, towards common goals. Another related challenge is the lack of information and dissemination between existing networks and projects. The roundtable participants came up with possible solutions to these challenges, such as setting up a forum for knowledge sharing among networks and projects; establishing a secretariat to coordinate the new collaboration between projects; and starting again the tradition of an annual conference.

The roundtable on “Who is the audience?”, chaired by Prof. Neil Forbes, had a lively discussion on the forms of interaction there should be between a coordination structure and cultural heritage communities. Issues of sustainability figured centrally in the discussion. The participants of the roundtable highlighted that the points of connection between the needs of communities and the needs of research institutions should be met, not forced. This should always involve a ‘from the bottom up’ approach, and it is important to think about the research as co-creation between the researcher and the community. Some participants also pointed out that sometimes people may be reluctant to share their heritage, whether in overly touristic cities or as part of narrowly-defined identity projects. A recent PHOTOCONSORTIUM project, REviveEU, in the framework of the EYCH 2018 initiative WeAre#EuropeForCulture, was discussed as an example. The project involves the realization of pop-up museums in European cities co-created by joining institutional cultural heritage with crowdsourced stories and personal items from local communities. Overall, the roundtable participants saw photography as one very useful medium to connect to the cultural heritage community.

The roundtable on “Relationship with projects and EU programmes”, chaired by Prof. Gábor Sonkoly addressed the question of how to cooperate to overcome the silos. The roundtable participants agreed that important standard setting took place and models were created during

Horizon 2020, and that now it is important to deepen the level of cooperation. Horizon Europe calls for proposals on heritage research and innovation should be transversal and flexible, since societies change considerably over seven years. Round-table participants voiced the need for funding possibilities so that, based on results, a winning Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe project could be awarded follow-on funding. Finally, it was noted that a shared interdisciplinary network is important also for better knowledge sharing between Commission Directorates General, EU-funded programmes and research projects.

### **3. Towards Horizon Europe - Expectations from the cultural heritage sectors**

This session, chaired by Prof. Luda Klusakova (Charles University Prague), brought together four representatives of prominent European cultural heritage networks and sectors to discuss their expectations of Horizon Europe.



Panel Table

Mr. Pascal Lievaux (Chair of the Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture, France) started by highlighting main conditions for heritage science research, which should be promoted in the framework of Horizon Europe. He noted that the research should involve all knowledge producers in the spirit of the Faro Convention, in addition to academics including heritage professionals and civil societies, who have key roles in the interpretation, identification and use of cultural heritage. Secondly, heritage research needs to be connected to key social, environmental and economic issues, providing new mechanisms for understanding collective identities and for sustainable ways to development. Finally, the dissemination of research results should be done in an open science context, providing equal access to help avoid duplicating efforts, and to help in innovating further.

Europa Nostra Secretary General Ms. Snenska Quaedevlieg Mihailovic welcomed the policy momentum that was created by the EYCH. She pointed out a shift within the last five years in the relationship between cultural heritage research and civil society, and saw that this cooperation should continue even in a more systematic way. People-centred approaches and identities are important to Europe and to Horizon Europe. Ms. Quaedevlieg Mihailovic also welcomed a holistic approach to cultural heritage, which aims to avoid thematic and stakeholder

fragmentation, as well as creating a permanent platform for enhanced co-operation in heritage research. Also Prof. Monika Hagedorn-Saupe, who spoke on behalf of the museum sector, highlighted the importance of a collaborative platform, and multiperspective approaches to cultural heritage. The development of suitable infrastructures and tools, from the point of view of the museum sector, shall also include the adaptation of the legal framework, the development of appropriate technical equipment, special training for staff, easy to find and to use tools for teaching and edutainment, and tools to involve the public / citizens.

Dr. Johan Oomen (Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, Europeana Board Member) spoke on behalf of the digital cultural heritage sector. Europeana published an Innovation agenda earlier in 2019, based on an in-depth consultation with the 2.200+ professionals working with Europeana

([https://pro.europeana.eu/files/Europeana\\_Professional/Innovation\\_Agenda/Europeana%20Innovation%20Agenda.pdf](https://pro.europeana.eu/files/Europeana_Professional/Innovation_Agenda/Europeana%20Innovation%20Agenda.pdf)). In the agenda, the transformational research and innovation potential and challenges of the cultural heritage sector are identified in four overarching areas: strategy and impacts (strengthening the network of cultural heritage institutions); technological innovation (the development of digital content, tools and services); social change (increasing the social impact of cultural heritage sector); and economic innovation (enabling cultural heritage institutions to become more responsive to financial challenges by introducing innovative business models).

## 4. Roundtables II: Cultural heritage themes

The second set of roundtables was designed to discuss prominent cultural heritage themes based on loosely defined common questions: why do we need this line of cultural heritage research; what are the emerging research topics for the next framework programme; and how to bridge between different disciplines, levels and stakeholders?



Brochures of the participating projects



The roundtable “Conservation”, chaired by Prof. Piero Baglioni (University of Florence, ECHOES Cluster), focused on strategies, which are needed to ensure the long-term conservation of irreplaceable cultural heritage resources. The roundtable participants saw that it is fundamental to develop materials and methodologies, based on soft matter and colloidal science, which are feasible, not time-consuming, affordable to end-users, and safe to the operators and the works of art for the remedial conservation of artifacts. These new methodologies should be also transferred to other fields, such as food industry, paint industry, medicine and pharmaceuticals (drug delivery), detergency, etc. Also, it is important to produce conservation protocols, risk maps and databases of degradation mechanisms and for classifying materials and methodologies used in remedial conservation. It was further pointed out that the European Commission should promote the use of standards and best practices that include quality controls (e.g. ISO standards).



Piero Baglioni  
University of Florence  
ECHOES Cluster

The roundtable “Cultural landscapes”, chaired by REACH work package leader Prof. Jose Maria Civantos (University of Granada), began its work by discussing the concept of cultural landscape, which breaks the dualisms of tangible-intangible, rural-urban, culture-nature. It also allows a more dynamic approach to preservation. The conservation of a landscape is no longer seen from the point of view of the sole natural ecosystem but from the point of view of a landscape already changed by people, and continually used. For example, agrarian policies and the negotiation of conflicts of interests need also to be taken into account in a cultural landscape research perspective. Innovative research topics identified by the roundtable included developing novel and engaging participatory approaches within local communities, and sustainability, i.e. how a cultural landscape point of view can contribute to sustainable heritage.

The roundtable “Intangible cultural heritage”, chaired by Prof. Sandra Bitusikova (Matej Bell University) started from the premise that cultural heritage should be understood in its complexity (tangible-intangible), and that all heritage has an intangible dimension. Intangible cultural heritage means living heritage, connected to communities. Languages and multilingualism are eloquent examples of this living heritage and would require further comparative research. The roundtable participants pointed out that the fact that culture is always adapting to change does not mean lack of authenticity. They also noted that historical research should be more present in Horizon Europe, e.g. understanding how populist and extremist

groups claim heritage for their own legacy is not possible without historical analysis. Cultural heritage has positive and negative connotations, they both should be examined. Finally the roundtable participants highlighted that trans-local perspectives are significant – research should not be restricted to ~~certain~~ predetermined levels of heritage process. Similarly, extra-European perspectives should be examined – European heritage is not only the heritage located in Europe and European cultural institutions have rich collections of extra-European heritage.

The roundtable “Digital cultural heritage”, chaired by Policy Officer Albert Gauthier (DG CNECT, European Commission), discussed widely the issues related to digitization and accessibility. Some things are born digital – one key question is how to preserve this digital cultural heritage. The roundtable participants noted that quality instead of quantity of data is a central concern in digitization, so the work should focus on creating quality standards. Also issues of copyright, automatic annotation of objects and the need for a European storage capacity were pointed out as an absolute necessity, as well as curation, which is of key importance for accessibility, interaction, participation and re-use of objects. The roundtable concluded that digital cultural heritage should be seen as part of cultural heritage, not as a separate realm.

## **5. The Manifesto / Position paper**

In this session, chaired by Prof. Neil Forbes, a Manifesto, proposing a new coordination structure for cultural heritage research stakeholders, was presented, and an agreement of delegates was sought on formalizing the proposed coordination structure. The need for such a structure was indicated by the former Horizon 2020 funded CulturalBase social platform, and the same has become apparent in the REACH coordination and support project as well.

In summary, the Manifesto called for a permanent and sustainable governance structure for cultural heritage research, which would facilitate dialogue, discourse, and co-creation, and which would have the capacity to endure beyond the lifetime of any individual, funded project. The new coordination structure could act as the professional stakeholder partner of EU institutions in the co-creation process of an ambitious cultural heritage research and innovation agenda. Furthermore, it should be open to all stakeholders – broadly defined as actors in any sector or discipline with an interest in cultural heritage research. Finally, the new coordination structure was envisioned as a directory of what resources can be offered on a basis of mutual trust such as, acting as a knowledge-exchange broker, providing online services, and the dissemination of toolkits, publications and other communications.

In the discussion that followed, the manifesto was both endorsed and critically elaborated. Questions, such as what exactly is intended with the permanent structure, what is the relationship of the new initiative to the already existing ones, and what is the added value of a European coordination mechanism in comparison to a wider international focus, were raised by the discussion participants. Some commentators considered “Manifesto” as a too strong and binding term, and many favored to look for a better definition. It was proposed that the existing initiatives should be mentioned more directly in the Manifesto, i.e. that it should take advantage of the existing positive experiences of coordination, and give them new intensity in the

European Research Area. One discussion participant noted that the Manifesto should not tie cultural heritage research too much on benefits of cultural heritage, but should retain a critical, broader research perspective. It was also proposed that a clear roadmap and business plan should be created for building a new coordination structure. The REACH social platform will implement a second round of consultation and distribute a new paper concerning future research agendas and collaborative frameworks.

## 6. Conclusions

The symposium was concluded by Mr Hartung who began his speech by announcing on a very positive note that an important step in negotiations between European Institutions and Member States on Horizon Europe – the so-called Council of Ministers’ General Partial Agreement on the Horizon Europe Specific Programme – had been successfully completed. Once finally approved, this will be the legal frame for European funding for research and innovation for the period 2021–2027. Mr Hartung also mentioned that the Symposium is integral to a series of public and stakeholder consultations towards writing the first strategic work programme of Horizon Europe.

Building on the conclusions of the Innovation & Cultural Heritage conference organized by the European Commission in March 2018, the notion of the holistic approach to heritage and heritage research was mentioned on several occasions during the symposium. Holistic approach refers to both a need for an integrative approach in the heritage-related EU-funding, and in that framework covering a wide range of forms and uses of heritage, and activities related to heritage, ranging from monuments to practices, and from conservation techniques to cultural and creative industries. Holistic approach can also mean questioning of the many dualisms traditionally related to heritage, between culture and nature, tangible or intangible, institutional and non-institutional, rural and urban, digital and other cultural heritage. All these aspects are part of the same holistic phenomenon and process that we call heritage. However, this kind of holistic approach does not mean that the research should be about everything in a certain moment. Heritage research can and should participate in and have impact on major societal issues, such as sustainability, urbanization, resilience, climate change, democratization, digitalization, and so on.



Listening to the conclusions



The intersectional and interdisciplinary nature of cultural heritage research that was pointed out by many speakers during the symposium, while sometimes potentially problematic, was seen as a positive challenge and a great added value. As a research field, cultural heritage has the relatively rare capacity to bring together and to combine the approaches and methodologies of humanities/social sciences and natural sciences, as well as the digital sphere and cultural and creative industries. In different projects these elements combine in different ways. In addition, it was widely acknowledged by the symposium participants that there are many equal knowledge producers in cultural heritage research: academic researchers, professional organizations, civil society organizations and citizens. This transversal nature, and the collaborative and co-creative approach it entails, is part of the model role that cultural heritage research can play in the wider research field.

The discussions and ideas of the symposium participants, summarized in this report, were shared with EU policy makers in a high-level policy debate on cultural heritage and the cultural and creative industries in Horizon Europe



MEP Christian Ehler

The policy debate, which took place in the House of European History on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2019, was hosted by MEP Christian Ehler, EP rapporteur of the Horizon Europe programme.