Implementation period
2018-2021

Urban Agenda for the EU

Observatory on culture/cultural heritage and climate change in the urban framework

Action 9

May 2022

09
OBSERVATORY ON
CULTURE/CULTURAL HERITAGE
ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Photo Cover Page: High Water in St Mark Square, 15.11.2019

Comune di Venezia

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This is a **draft** version of the booklet of Action 9 "**Observatory on Culture/Cultural Heritage and climate change in the urban framework"** of the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership "Cultural and Cultural Heritage" Action Plan.

In particular, the final set of Recommendations is still subject to scrutiny. Comments and feedback is welcome.

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09
OBSERVATORY ON
CULTURE/CULTURAL HERITAGE
ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Action 9

Observatory on culture/cultural heritage and climate change in the urban framework

1) Who we Are

Action Leader

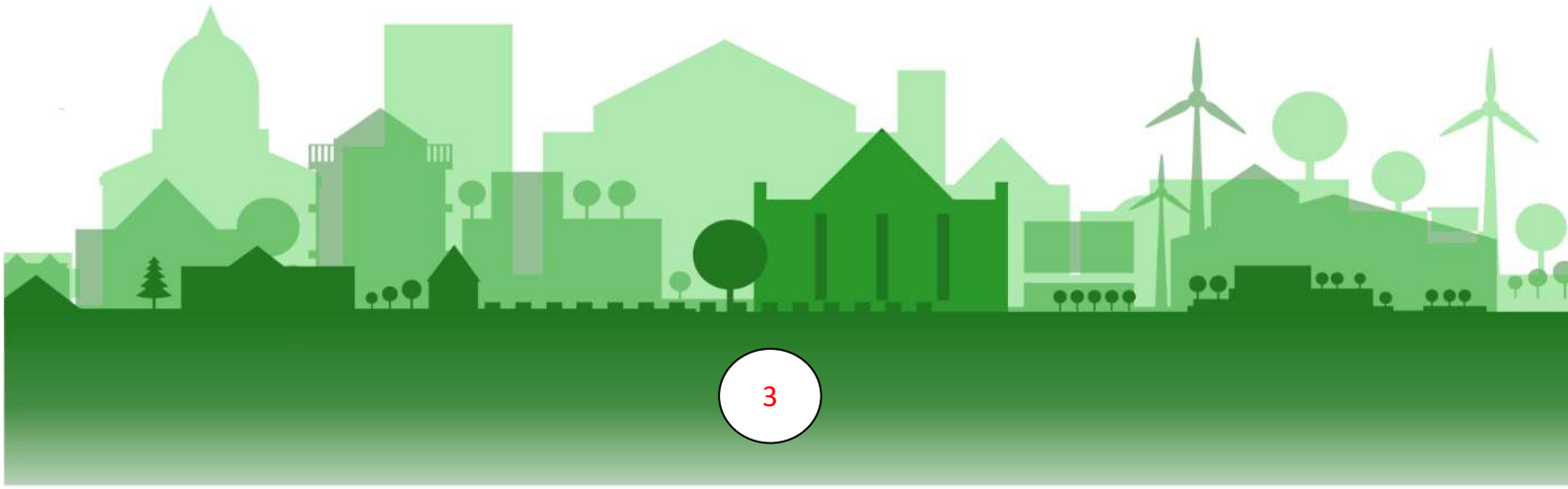
Ministry of Culture (MIC), Italy
In cooperation with: Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali, Italy

Action Group Members

City of Bordeaux
Flanders Heritage
Silesia Region
Cyprus Ministry of Interior
URBACT
ICLEI
JRC
Supported by: Italian Agency for Territorial Cohesion, German Ministry of Interior

International experts involved

Andrew Potts, ICOMOS and Climate Heritage Network
Paolo Vitti, Associate professor of the practice, University of Notre Dame School of Architecture



2) Background context

Climate change is a major global challenge and threat affecting every aspect of our lives on the Planet, including cultural heritage. In urban settings, climate change has an impact on urban landscapes, built heritage and, perhaps less evidently, on all types of tangible and intangible heritage.

While confronted with the urgent need of protecting their cultural heritage, cities could benefit greatly from unleashing the potential that arts, culture and cultural heritage offer for strengthening resilience, driving climate action, supporting transitions to sustainable development, stimulating social awareness and encouraging participation. Nevertheless, concrete common measures have not been conceived yet. Although local climate adaptation plans are increasingly being developed and implemented, they include culture and heritage only sporadically in their scope.

The European Green Deal, the ambitious growth strategy by the European Commission aimed at reducing EU greenhouse gas emissions and at leading the EU to achieve climate neutrality, did not include culture and cultural heritage in its set of transformative policies when it was launched in 2019.

Yet, cultural heritage, culture and the arts are able to support the just transition and climate resilience goals pursued by the EU, as the European Cultural Heritage Green Paper by Europa Nostra clearly demonstrated. At the highest political level it becomes acknowledged that culture and cultural heritage "*offer great potential to drive climate action and sustainable development and contribute meaningfully to climate solutions*"(Rome Declaration of the G20 Ministers of Culture). Besides, there is an urgent need to speed up mitigation of and adaptation to climate change in order to increase the resilience of cultural heritage and reduce disaster risk.

3) Objectives

The Action aims at addressing the need of bringing together national, regional and local authorities, together with the research sector, stakeholders, professional and civil society organisations, in order to analyse needs, risks and opportunities for culture and cultural heritage in the framework of climate change. It makes reference to the European green deal and other main political and strategic frameworks, on the one hand, and the role of urban authorities, with specific reference to local climate adaptation plans, on the other.

This pilot action acts at the intersection of three elements, rarely found together in policies and programmes, cultural heritage/culture, climate change and the urban context.

The goal of the Action is preparing the background for a problem-solving-oriented European multi-level, multi-stakeholder Observatory on culture/cultural heritage and climate change in the urban framework.

The main aims are helping to prevent risks of loss of cultural heritage values in the framework of the renovation wave and the "green" reconversion of urban areas and fostering the contribution of the cultural sector to climate action. The approach adopted is multidisciplinary, and the principles that oriented the work were creating synergies, avoiding duplication of efforts, capitalizing on lessons learnt, on experiences on the ground and on work already done.

The Action plan included four groups of activities:

1. **Mapping policies** and **collecting knowledge**.
   Getting a picture of the policy framework at the international, European and national level and of the regulatory and scientific context, understanding interconnections and main issues at stake.
2. **Mapping actors** and **building the network**.
3. Defining the **scope, main purposes and functions** of a European Observatory on culture and cultural heritage in relation to climate change and the range of its activities.
4. Investigating **structure and legal body**.

4) Results and main outcomes

1. Mapping policies and actors, collecting knowledge

In order to collect, describe and share policies, programmes, projects and actors in the area of culture and cultural heritage in relation to climate change in the urban context, a **database** was designed, developed and published online. It gives access to the description of **140 policies, 40 programmes, 180 projects and 250 actors** and their mutual relations. Items were classified according to the four categories adopted by ICOMOS report "The Future of Our Past" (ICOMOS 2019): **High Ambition, Mitigation, Adaptation, and Loss & Damage**, a framework derived from climate policy and the Paris Agreement. This framework is useful both in order to emphasize how culture and cultural heritage fit into climate policy frameworks, and to make information more accessible to operators from climate, land use and related sectors.
https://www.fondazionescuolapatrimonio.it/innovazione-e-sperimentazione/the-culture-cultural-heritage-and-climate-change-knowledge-base/

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A description of the methodology adopted for the research, mapping and description, alongside with an analysis of the information collected, are available as a separate report. A **bibliography** covering the last two decades (2001 – 2021) and including papers, books, reports, conference papers, magazine articles, radio and video interviews, web pages, completes the overview.
https://www.fondazionescuolapatrimonio.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Bibliography_CultureCulturalHeritage-and-ClimateChange-Knowledge-Base.pdf

2. Building the network - Outlining the Observatory scope and functions

Alongside with action members, around 40 experts and main actors in the area of culture, cultural heritage and climate change in the urban framework were actively involved in the discussion via individual interviews based on an on-purpose developed questionnaire. Valuable and complementary expert points of view were thus gathered from representatives of local governments, research organisations, European projects and initiatives, professionals, civil society organisations.

Among the interviewees were representatives of the following organisations:

- Climate Adaptation Partnership of the Urban Agenda for the EU / City of Genova
- New European Bauhaus Unit of the European Commission JRC
- DG Environment of the European Commission
- Chair of the OMC Group Strengthening Cultural Heritage Resilience for Climate Change / Fraunhofer Gesellschaft / Climate for culture
- UNESCO Urban Heritage Climate Observatory / GEO
- World Heritage Office in Bamberg and Urban Gardening project
- ProteCHT2save and STRENCH projects / ISAC of the Italian National Research Centre (CNR)
- ROCK – Cultural heritage leading urban futures project / City of Bologna / University of Bologna
- HUB-IN. Hubs of Innovation and Entrepreneurship for the Transformation of Historic Urban Areas /Energy cities
- HYPERION project – National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) Institute of Communication and Computer Systems
- Sustainable historic environments holistic reconstruction through technological enhancement and community-based resilience – SHELTER project / Tecnalia
- PROTection of European Cultural HEritage from GeO-hazards – PROTHEGO project / ISPRA
- Changes in Cultural Heritage Activities: New Goals and Benefits for Economy and Society – CHANGES project / University Politecnico of Milan

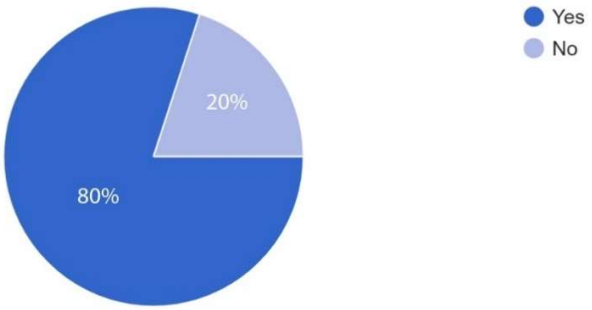
- Water-linked heritage valorisation by developing and ecosystemic approach - WAVE project / City of Breda / City of Ravenna
- POCITYF project – Leading the smart evolution of historical cities
- HEritage Resilience Against CLimate EventS – HERACLES /ISMN of the Italian National Research Council (CNR)
- KAIROS project / URBACT
- Swedish national programme on energy efficiency in historic buildings
- Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU), Head of Building Department
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Ministry of Culture of Italy (MiC) – Director-General for cultural heritage security
- Ministry of Culture of Italy (MiC) - Ministerial Cabinet
- Museums for climate action / Curating tomorrow
- European Association of Archaeologists - Climate Change and Heritage (EAA)
- Municipality of Edinburgh
- Morus Londinium - University of London - Urban Tree Festival
- Julie's Bycicle
- Café De Ceuvel Project
- Gare Maritime Project / Extensa Group
- Foundation "Polo del '900"
- Institute of Atmospheric Sciences and Climate of the Italian National Research Council (CNR)
- Master of Science Protection of Cultural Heritage and Monuments of Nature from the Effects of Climate Change of the Hellenic Open University
- University of Turin – Climate change anthropology
- Uppsala University – Department of art history

Seagulls in the historic centre of Rome – courtesy of a private owner

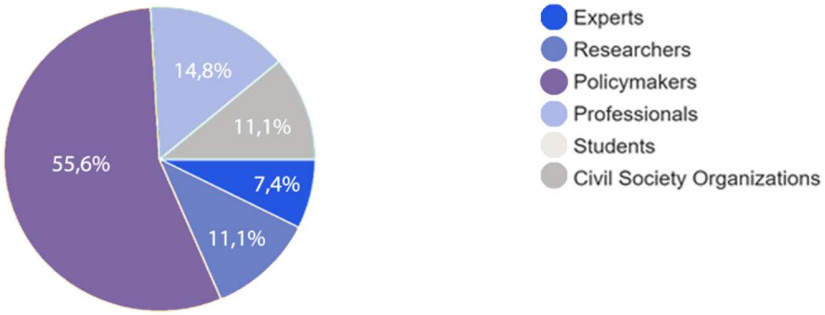
The exercise also helped to investigate the interest and feasibility of setting up a European observatory on climate change, culture and cultural heritage in the urban context, its possible functions and target public. Most of the respondents expressed their interest in participating in the initiative and outlined their potential contribution.

Some outcomes:

1. **Relevance of the Observatory at the EU level**



2. **Target users**



3. **Functions**

4. **Activities**

A survey of **existing platforms dealing with culture and cultural heritage in relation to climate change** was also performed, resulting in at least 4 organisations bearing a comparable scope, however adopting different approaches, perspectives and specific focus.
Scope for **networking, collaboration and integration** clearly emerges.

❖ "Three Key Questions"

Food for thought emerged through the interview exercise fuelled **an online workshop offering the opportunity to compare and open to public debate various experiences and perspectives** on a topic perceived as sensitive and vital for society.

Artist: Naziha Mestaoui

Six international experts were invited to bring their point of view on possible strategies to unleash the potential of culture and cultural heritage for addressing climate change, along three key questions:

- **Individual or collective responsibility**? Which focus enables a most effective communication?
- **Data or scenarios**? Can awareness-raising and behavioural change be improved through adding to statistical data, received by the human cognitive sphere, the imaginary of future scenarios, reaching out to the emotional sphere? Can culture play a role there?
- "Loss and damage" is one of four categories of climate action, when adaptation to climate change is no longer possible. Is the perspective of not being able to preserve the whole cultural heritage acceptable? Are there any **good alternatives to loss and damage**?

More than 300 people registered to the workshop, from all over Europe and other world areas (in particular, Latin America); the video recording is available online (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wi95BJogRO4&t=3969s); so far, it was viewed by over 200 people.

3. Possible structure and legal body

Observatory as well as *forum*, *think tank* and other similar expressions are generally used to define aggregations aimed at pursuing common goals and where all subjects participate at the same level. Such aggregations do not correspond to specific organisational or legal forms.

Keeping the Observatory **informal**, as a forum or a network, or embedding it within one or more existing organisations, would reduce the administrative, organisational and managerial burden to a minimum. However, this would greatly limit the agency of the Observatory and prevent it from having a full legal capacity. Entering into agreements, receiving funding for developing and providing services would only be possible if an autonomous **legal body** was established.

A preliminary survey of the options for a legal form of the Observatory was consisted in a review and comparative analysis of the legal regime and governance structure of three types of legal bodies in five EU legal systems. Summarising the outcome, the following resulted the most suitable options:

- **Voluntary Association (limited legal capacity)**
- **Voluntary Registered Association**
- **Foundation**

The choice would depend on the purpose of the organisation (profit or not-for-profit), the activities and funding mechanisms envisaged, etc.

5) Observations/Remarks/Recommendations

From the overall implementation of the Action, the following recommendations and lessons learnt emerged:

General remarks

- **Cities are main drivers of climate change**. At the same time, **cities is where most of the cultural heritage is located**. – Cities should be main actors in implementing solutions.
- In order to achieve results in addressing climate change, **dialogue across countries, government levels, disciplinary fields, sectorial policies** should be enhanced; solutions should be based on shared data and build on all perspectives and expertise. **Multi-disciplinary, multi-level approach is key.**
- There can be **tensions** between **climate action and heritage preservation.** Often, however, there are **synergies**. Climate action contributes to cultural heritage conservation - Culture and cultural heritage can contribute to climate action, provide solutions and build community resilience.
- The **role of the arts and the artists** for communicating to and **inspiring communities about climate change, the green deal, climate justice is usually underestimated**. Authorities should work with artists and build upon their creative energy, critical approach and sensitivity to societal challenges in order to find answers for the future of society.

Better regulation

- **Policies and regulations for climate adaptation in the urban context should consider cultural heritage**. Not only such policies and strategy might otherwise have a negative impact on cultural heritage, implying risks of loss, but cultural heritage can contribute to finding and implementing solutions.

- **Policies and regulations aimed at urban resilience to climate change should involve culture.** Culture and the arts, in fact, can mobilise people and promote change in lifestyle and behaviours, thus being a key factor for the success of policies for urban resilience to climate change.

Better funding

- **Synergies across the various initiatives aimed at addressing climate change and between those and the culture and cultural heritage sector increases the potential for their success**. Initiatives such as the *EU mission for climate-neutral and smart cities* that aims at mobilising citizens, for example, would benefit from the involvement of cultural and artistic organisations, who have a specific ability in engaging citizens and communicating with them both on the cognitive and emotional level.

- The provision of an easy and **ready access for urban authorities to the wealth of expertise, knowledge and data on climate change and culture/cultural heritage** is missing and should be supported.

- Funding should be devoted to **training culture professionals on climate issues and vice versa.**

Better knowledge

- **Multidisciplinary approaches** are crucial. Although several interdisciplinary initiatives are on the ground, communication across professional communities is still the exception. **Dialogue across professional communities** would allow to break silos and increase shared understanding of issues, possible approaches and solutions.

- **Joining forces and establishing collaboration across networks and platforms** would enable achieving critical masses of data and information, limiting duplication of efforts and loss of time, developing insights into the future, better communicating with citizens.

- Constant **monitoring of meaningful developments in climate action in relation to culture/cultural heritage and the urban context is necessary**: good decision-making can only rely on up-to-date knowledge and scenarios.

- **Context and connections are key for better action**: understanding specific contexts, connecting them to abstract levels, sharing lessons learnt and mapping experiences with a view to make connections to frameworks and actors. **A swift connection between the "thinking" and the "doing" should be stimulated**.

Co-ordination

Germany - Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community
Italy - National Governmental Agency for the Territorial Cohesion; Ministry for Culture (MIC)

09
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Official members

- Cyprus - Ministry of Interior
- France - Ministry of Culture
- Spain - Ministry of Development and Public Works
- Greece – Ministry of Culture & Sports
- Regional Development Agency of the Ljubljana Urban Region (SI)
- Intermunicipal Community of the Coimbra Region (PT)
- Kazanlak Municipality (BG)
- Flanders Heritage, Flemish Region (BE)
- Dutch Federation of Cultural Heritage Cities (NL)
- Katowice City Hall (PL)
- Alba Iulia Municipality (RO)
- Municipality of Nagykanizsa (HU)
- Marshal's Office of the Silesian Voivodeship (PL)
- City of Berlin (DE)
- Canary Island, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (ES)
- Bordeaux Metropole (FR)
- City of Espoo (FI)
- Jurmala City Council (LV)
- Úbeda City Council (ES)
- City of Florence (IT)
- European Commission (DGs REGIO, EAC, RTD, DEVCO, AGRI, CLIMA, JRC, SG, EASME)
- European Committee of the Regions
- European Investment Bank
- ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability
- Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage
- Eurocities
- URBACT