Cultural Base

Social Platform
on Cultural Heritage
and European Identities

A proposal for improving the communication and information system in the area of cultural heritage and European identities: CulturalBase European Stakeholders Platform for Arts and Culture (ESPLART)

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1. Background

CulturalBase is a social platform funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 framework Programme 2014-2015 "Europe in a changing world: inclusive, innovative and reflective societies".

As a social platform CulturaBase has undertaken innovative research by experimenting with a participative process. It has encouraged the active participation of a large number of stakeholders, bringing together the relevant research communities with stakeholder representatives.

Through this extensive networking of researchers, practitioners and policy-makers, CulturalBase has sought to advance the knowledge base that underpins the formulation and implementation of cultural and heritage policies and practices in Europe.

One of the main objectives of CulturalBase has been to develop a working network of scholars and stakeholders, and to sow the seeds for a future articulated community that represents the different fields of cultural heritage, cultural identities and cultural expressions and fosters the continuation of researcher-stakeholder collaboration.

2. A new approach to cultural heritage.

The European Commission has proposed 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage.[1] One of the main features of the EYCH is the promotion of a holistic, integrated approach to cultural heritage which is people-centred, inclusive, and forward looking.

Among the objectives set by the above-mentioned proposal for the EYCH are:

1. To promote innovative models of multilevel governance and management of cultural heritage, involving all stakeholders, including public authorities,

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[1] EC Proposal nº 2016/0259 (COD), 30/08/2016.

private individuals, civil society organisations, NGOs and the voluntary sector.

2. To promote research and innovation on cultural heritage, facilitate the uptake and exploitation of research results by all stakeholders, in particular public authorities and the private sector, and facilitate the dissemination of research to a broader audience.

An additional relevant factor to consider is that Horizon 2020 has adopted a new approach to communication, to the use of research results, and to data management as confirmed by the focus of Reflective Societies: cultural heritage and European identities' calls focus on the participation and integration of a great variety of stakeholders.

Due to this new approach taken by Horizon 2020, beneficiaries have the obligation to develop actions that ensure the high visibility of funded actions and to help maximise the impact of results.[2]

The sustainable management of cultural heritage constitutes a strategic choice for Europe. This sustainable management is only possible if it takes into account the transversal, interdisciplinary and trans-sectoral nature of cultural heritage. As set forth by the EC proposal for the EYCH[3], "cultural heritage has a clear European dimension and is addressed in several EU policies beyond the cultural ones", and "in order to fully realize their potential for European economies and societies, the management of heritage resources, which cut across several public policies, need effective multilevel governance and better cross-sectoral cooperation".

In practice, this new approach understands that the management of cultural heritage involves different kinds of stakeholders, "including public authorities, private individuals, civil society organizations, NGOs and the voluntary sector". **The sustainable management of cultural heritage needs a new model of governance that is strongly supported by research and evidence stemming from EU comparative, national and local research**.

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[2] Dr. Gábor Sonkoly, Eötvos Loránd University, Atelier, Faculty Member.
http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/index.cfm?pg=events&eventcode=CAC303F0-96CE-E20A-7906492E83356267
[3] EC Proposal nº 2016/0259 (COD), 30/08/2016.

The following two challenges have been identified for this new approach to cultural heritage:

1. To foster the collaboration and the coordination of all the different actors involved in the sustainable management of cultural heritage.

2. To tackle societal challenges related to cultural heritage through evidence-based decision making. This involves making research accessible to potential users of findings and outputs (policymakers, practitioners, umbrella organizations, etc.).

3. Researcher – stakeholder collaboration.

This deliverable aims to be a reflection of the dynamics of CulturalBase as a social platform and the process all the stakeholders went through. Using the experience of setting up and running the CulturalBase platform provides a good foundation for helping to accomplish the sustainable management of cultural heritage across Europe and to understanding the challenges related to multi-stakeholder processes and evidence-based decision making.

It has already been highlighted that the cultural heritage field is in need of evidence-based policy developments. This requires improvements in, and better articulation of, the whole knowledge ecosystem in the area of cultural heritage and cultural identities. This ecosystem has different dimensions. On the one hand, it comprises knowledge infrastructures like statistics institutes, databases, surveys, observatories, plus academics and think-tanks producing theory-driven and applied research, as well as consultants predominantly involved in advocacy research. On the other hand, there is also an interdisciplinary dimension to this ecosystem because knowledge about Cultural Heritage (CH) concerns a large variety of disciplines across the Social Sciences and the Humanities (SSH), but its management also involves natural scientists and technologists of different kinds working in problem-oriented research. Finally, there is a third dimension connecting researchers to stakeholders. This is a crucial dimension not only in relation to the use of knowledge, but also for the generation and general orientation of the knowledge itself.

Many improvements can be made at different points in this knowledge ecosystem. Some of them have been identified through the work carried out by CulturalBase. For example, databases are very poor and inadequate. And the contribution of SSH to the

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knowledge of some issues of particular public importance in relation to CH, such as the promotion of creativity or the management of cultural tourism, has hitherto been very unbalanced in favor of a purely economic perspective. But what CulturalBase's experience highlights above all is the weak and imperfect articulation of the system itself, and in particular the insufficient collaboration and knowledge transer between researchers and stakeholders. In this respect, even if the development of generic new tools and new models aiming to foster communication between these two poles can be useful,[4] the creation of an umbrella organization that represents the different fields and actors of cultural heritage, and enables cross-sectoral and cross-project collaboration, could be a crucial factor for improvement in this specific area.

Evidence-based policy developments could very much benefit from such a structure allowing fluent communication, systematic dialogue and knowledge co-creation between researchers, practitioners and policy makers. Nevertheless, in order to make possible these multi-stakeholder processes it will be necessary to overcome some challenges and provide answers to some questions. The relevant challenges, needs and queries identified by CulturalBase throughout its implementation are:

1. How to tackle societal challenges related to cultural heritage through evidence-based decision making?

2. How to foster the collaboration and the coordination of all the different actors involved in cultural heritage sustainable management?

3. How to make research findings and outputs accesible to potential users in this field?

4. Researchers and academics need to reflect on how to take part in evidence-based decision making processes. What kinds of expertise do they need to incorporate in order to be part of multi-stakeholder research processes and projects? How to promote real exchange and knowledge transfer with stakeholders and large communities of interest?

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[4] Currently, two H2020 projects are working in this direction: DANDELION (http://www.dandelion-europe.eu/en/) and ACCOMPLISSH (http://www.accomplissh.eu).

5. How can stakeholders understand the importance of including evidence from research in policymaking and programming? How can practical issues and problem solving be supported by evidence?

"There is a real need to encourage collaboration between research and stakeholders, to pool expertise and resources to provide evidence, complementarities and to widen audiences in order to facilitate the uptake and exploitation of results by all stakeholders" (Susannah Eckersley, Newcastle University, Deputy Project Coordinator of *Critical Heritages: performing and representing identities in Europe*).[5]

In general, policymakers and advocates agree that the use of evidence to inform decisions is necessary for good policymaking and programme design. Nevertheless, many researchers still encounter difficulties in sharing their research findings with policymakers.[6]

The chart below describes the main challenges researchers and stakeholders tackle when they try to collaborate.

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[5] Statements made at the CulturalBase Policy Seminar (Brussels 31/01/2017).
[6] Marlene Lee and Kate Belohlav (2014) *Communicating research to policymakers: Researchers' experiences*. Research Brief, page 1. http://www.prb.org/Publications/Reports/2014/poppov-communicating-research.aspx

> **Translating research to policy**
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> Researchers and stakeholders encounter many challenges in identifying policy issues and implementing evidence-based interventions:
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> - Lack of communication between researchers and policymakers.
> - Lack of timeliness or relevance of research, in which the research process is often characterized as being out of step with the decision-making process.
> - Mutual mistrust.
> - Poor quality of research.
> - Inconclusive or conflicting findings.
> - Political instability and/or high turnover rates at the policymaking levels.
>
> These challenges make it increasingly difficult for both parties to:
>
> - Facilitate productive exchange of ideas and information.
> - Identify, frame, and relay actionable messages that are appropiate for the intended audience(s).
> - Measure and evaluate the impact of research evidence on decision-making.
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> **Source**: Craig Mitton et al., "Knowledge Transfer and Exchange: Review and Synthesis of the Literature", *Milbank Quarterly* 85, nº 4 (2007): 729-68.

Tackling socio-economic challenges is a cooperative undertaking, but cooperation between policymakers and researchers does not happen spontaneously. Researchers and stakeholders work in different habitats and a series of obstacles make their interaction difficult. They have developed different modes of discourse and they approach the same issues from different perspectives and with different sets of priorities.[7]

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[7] European Commission, *Communicating research for evidence-based policymaking. A practical guide for researchers in socio-economic sciences and humanities,* DG for Research and Innovation Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities, 2010, http://www.spia-europa.de/pdf/guide-communicating-research.pdf

As described in the chart above, there are two main barriers that make interaction difficult between researchers and stakeholders: timing and language.

Regarding the timing, policymakers and practitioners are usually interested in problem-solving while researchers are not always used to working by following a decision-making process. There is a need to move beyond the traditional one-way model of dissemination, and the development of a two-way dialogue can help researchers to understand these problems and co-develop strategies with stakeholders, acting in the medium and short term.

In the second place, there is a need to find a common language to increase linkages between researchers and stakeholders. As previously mentioned researchers and stakeholders have cultivated divergent modes of professional discourse. Bridging this linguistic gap demands conscious effort.

The creation of a common space that enables a two way dialogue would greatly facilitate the productive exchange of ideas and information and consequently stimulate the cooperation between researchers and stakeholders. Such a common space would help bridge the linguistic gap and foster the cooperation that focuses on connecting, interacting and sharing knowledge, skills and experiences.

4. What does CulturalBase propose?

The sustainable management of cultural heritage needs a new model of governance, and one that is supported by research and evidence stemming from EU comparative, national and local research.

In order to achieve this model of governance CulturalBase proposes, as a follow-up activity, the creation of a multi-stakeholder platform in the cultural heritage field. This Platform will promote collaboration and real exchange between researchers, stakeholders and the larger community of interest.

This platform named "CulturalBase European Stakeholders Platform for Arts and Culture" (ESPLART) will at first be built on the existing collaboration structure established by CulturalBase.

Conceived as a space for dialogue between representatives from the various target audience groups that have too often been artificially separated, the platform aims to:

- Reduce the gap between academics and non-academic stakeholders, particularly practitioners and policy-makers.

- Promote the creation of a common ground for exchange between these audience groups so as to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges, leading to co-creation of proposed solutions to those challenges.

5. **How is ESPLART going to foster and improve the collaboration between research, policy and practice?**

Knowledge management or knowledge brokering has already been used in the fields of public health and social sciences. It has been defined as a range of activities, and there is no "one size fits all" approach to knowledge management.[8] Therefore, ESPLART will take stock of the lessons learnt from past experiences in order to design and to implement a knowledge management system that is tailored to the needs of the cultural heritage field.

Take as an example the United Nations System Organizations that have implemented a knowledge management system, where knowledge brokering remains a challenge in their attempt to develop, organize, share and integrate knowledge to achieve their cross-cutting goals.[9]

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[8] Franken, Braganza (2006): "Organisational forms and knowledge management: one size fits all?"; International Journal of Knowledge Management Studies 2006-Vol.1, Nº ½ PP.18-37
[9] Petru Dumitriu (2016). *Knowledge Management in the United Nations System.* Executive Summary, page iii. https://www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2016_10_English.pdf

Knowledge brokering is about bringing people together. It is the human force that makes knowledge transfer more effective. Knowledge management needs facilitators, who are brokers, not producers. As facilitator the tasks of a broker include bringing people together and facilitating communication, access to information, understanding each other's needs and abilities, exchanging know-how and generating synergies among network members in order to build knowledge.[10]

ESPLART will be the space to explore the needs, and support the emergence of, the broker, a new category of actor fully engaged in a "translating function" among the different players involved in the field of sustainable cultural heritage management.

This includes "translating" not only languages but also adapting and making different priorities, processes, results, and problems understandable across different practices. Ultimately, ESPLART aims to empower communities of practice that traditionally work separately to enrich each other.

The platform will implement its actions through focused and targeted communication, co-organized workshops, training courses, publications and toolkits, seminars and conferences, as well as awareness-raising activities and campaigns in collaboration with the different actors participating in the platform.

ESPLART will provide a solution to the need for an umbrella organization that represents the different fields of cultural heritage, and will enable collaboration. It will give practitioners the opportunity to think about the whole range of policy actors beyond the European level.

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[10] Canadian Health Services Research Foundation. The theory and practice of knowledge brokering in Canada's health System. 2003. http://www.cfhi-fcass.ca/migrated/pdf/theory_and_practice_e.pdf

6. Challenges to face and objectives to accomplish.

In order to increase the social relevance of cultural heritage, the challenges are:

CHALLENGE 1: To foster the collaboration and the coordination of all the different actors involved in the sustainable management of cultural heritage.

General objective 1: To build knowledge alliances between transnational, structured and result-driven projects, stakeholders and policy-makers from different territorial levels.	**Specific objective 1**: To create a transnational peer network in order to foster partnership, synergies, collaboration and exchange of information between EC funded research projects on cultural heritage.
	Specific objective 2: To give to the members of the platform training to acquire the expertise and the skills on knowledge management, communication, dissemination, exploitation of results and co-creation, required by the new approach to cultural heritage adopted by the EC.
	Specific objective 3: To support a networked approach to national, regional and local levels across national boundaries and national contact points, in order to make the biggest impact on policy and for people.

General objective 2: To enable knowledge transfer, as a multi-way dialogue between the various actors involved, to facilitate the uptake and exploitation of research results by all stakeholders, in particular public authorities and the private sector.	**Specific objective 4**: To improve the communication interface between academics, policy-makers, and practitioners, ensuring that research undertaken within the EU framework contributes to decision-making and policy development at European, national and regional levels.
	Specific objective 5: To highlight the need and explore the opportunity for the emergence of a new category of actor engaged in a "translating function" among different sectors, acts as intermediary and facilitator of the relationship between researchers and stakeholders, triggering the potential benefits this interaction can bring.

CHALLENGE 2: To tackle societal challenges related to cultural heritage through evidence-based decision making by making research accessible to potential research users (policymakers, practitioners, umbrella organizations, etc.)

General objective 3: To optimize the impact and sustainability of EC funded projects by facilitating the reutilization of research findings in subsequent projects.	**Specific objective 6**: To co-produce with stakeholders mechanisms to increase visibility of the projects, and their initiatives.
	Specific objective 7: To stock/database/archive information and data produced by research projects involving all relevant stakeholders.

General objective 4: To evaluate the way in which knowledge and skills of researchers can have impact on policy-making, professional practitioners and other actors outside academia through evidence-based management.

7. <u>How are we going to do this</u>?

1. By creating a community of knowledge on cultural heritage that includes different categories of stakeholders.

2. By designing and implementing a knowledge management system that creates synergies and generates interaction between researchers and stakeholders to create a context which leads to a coproduction of knowledge.

3. By supporting the emergence and exploring the role of the broker of knowledge.

4. By using four distinct methodologies to stimulate reflection and problem solving, namely: action learning, action research, design thinking, and peer learning.

5. By setting in motion an array of network and dissemination events that combine two levels of communication. On the one hand, communication and interaction between EU funded projects and, on the other hand, dissemination events that target national, regional and local policy makers and practitioners.

8.   Potential members of the platform.

The platform will bring together a broad range of actors like researchers, public policy makers, international organizations, NGOs, umbrella organizations, as well as public and private foundations.

The European Commission is identified as an important target group, which could provide and communicate guidelines for efficient collaboration and troubleshooting as well as additional funding for collaborative events and meetings. Nevertheless, ESPLART would act as facilitator of the dialogue with different types of stakeholders at European, national, regional, and local levels.

9.   How can the platform be financed and organized?

The ESPLART project requires sustainable long-term funding which can be ensured by seeking a mixture of public and private funds. For example, funding from COST Action can be complemented by regular contributions from major participating institutions and other projects; this will ensure the active participation of smaller stakeholders through cross-subsidising. Private foundations with direct interests in the work of ESPLART will also be solicited for occasional contributions.

The management structure of ESPLART will deliberately mirror the different stakeholders the project involves. A steering group of representatives from the different categories of participants will help a fulltime Project Manager and the coordinator of the steering group to manage the process. The role of coordinator will be held for two years, and rotate through the different members of the steering group, who will be engaged for four years in the first instance. A regular monitoring and

reporting schedule will help prioritise broad engagement and effective dissemination of findings from the ongoing work of the ESPLART 'translators'. Engagement will be encouraged by using funding to train some practitioner members of the platform as knowledge management facilitator-translators, forming a direct link between the aims of the platform and its end-users.