

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

REPORT OF THE OMC (OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION)
WORKING GROUP OF MEMBER STATES' EXPERTS

What is participatory governance of cultural heritage about?

Participatory governance is about strengthening the relationship between cultural heritage institutions and professionals, and everyone interested or engaged in cultural heritage – civil society, the public, owners, caretakers, businesses, etc. Participatory governance affects the professional role because it demands both knowledge of cultural heritage, and knowledge of the relevance of cultural heritage in society and of the relations between people and cultural heritage.

Governance is a word used to express the movement from *governing* towards *involving stakeholders* in processes commonly reserved for and run by experts, officials and politicians. Its key aspects of participation and access have been popular in cultural policies for a long time. However, this has been the case more in relation to ideas, ambitions and visions; participatory governance of cultural heritage expresses the will to move towards more participation in everyday, common practice.

Participatory governance of tangible, intangible and digital cultural heritage is an innovative approach, introducing a real change in how cultural heritage is managed and valued. It is also more sustainable in the long term than the approach used to date.

It is a creative process that involves experimenting with, exploring and testing old and new ideas and options in different contexts. It is about being open-minded and not focusing on the end result or ways of measuring the outcome. It means being bold and daring, pushing the limits. It means being prepared to go beyond the passive acceptance of 'popular will'.





This handbook

The Council of the European Union in its 'Conclusions on the Participatory Governance of Cultural Heritage' of November 2014 called for the involvement of the public and private sectors at all levels of decision-making, and invited the Commission to promote a participatory approach to the governance of cultural heritage. It also called for increased cooperation among EU Member States in order to identify and disseminate best practices on bottom-up approaches for joint inclusive management of cultural heritage.

Consequently, a working group of national experts from 26 Member States and Norway was set up within the framework of the Work Plan for Culture 2015-2018. Its objective was to identify innovative models of participatory governance of cultural heritage.

This handbook is the result of their work.

Who is this handbook for?

This handbook consists of practical advice primarily for cultural heritage professionals and institutions. However, it has the general aim of moving the participatory governance of cultural heritage from abstract notions to concrete actions and therefore other interested parties, such as politicians and policy-makers, will also find parts of it useful.

How was the content created?

The Council had asked the working group to identify good practices by mapping and comparing public policies at national and regional level.

First, country representatives filled out a questionnaire. The results showed that focusing on legal prerequisites or financial support would not be fruitful. Consultations with civil society are either required by law or are customary in Member States. Generally, there is public trust in decisions concerning cultural heritage, but there is also potential for improvement. The same is true for consistency between different governing levels. The overarching conclusion is that, in most of the countries represented in the working group, there are no formal hindrances to introducing participatory governance of cultural heritage, and, in many or even most, the prerequisites are already in place.

Next, country representatives filled out a template and 47 examples of best practice of participatory governance of cultural heritage were collected. The working group agreed that, despite some similarities between countries, it is impossible to directly transfer individual examples between countries, or even within them.

Finally, the group made an analysis of the examples based on 5 factors: initiator, motivation, obstacles/barriers, consequences and lessons learned. The analysis shows that there is a need for: **boosting public interest and building relationships; flexibility and support for projects; improving staff competences and training.** Other lessons learned include that: **the process is part of the result; bottom-up and top-down approaches are complementary; participation and transparency are vital in all phases; and tangible, intangible and digital heritage should be connected.**

This handbook is based on the conclusions of this analysis.



Recommendations for cultural heritage institutions and professionals

The handbook also includes recommendations for cultural heritage institutions and professionals. This section builds on the analysis and identifies specific areas for action, steps to consider and questions to ask.

The first aspect to address is the **attitude towards and willingness to adopt** participatory governance of cultural heritage. It is recommended that every cultural institution/professional start the process by going through a simple list of six questions. These are on: the institution's/professional's readiness to change; whether civil society/stakeholders have shown an interest; if there is a positive attitude to cooperation, a common initial understanding, a professional openness to knowledge of all types; and if public benefit is the primary aim.

This list of questions is a tool for testing whether the process can run in circumstances where the participatory governance of cultural heritage could be considered an advantage. It is also useful during the next steps, to fine-tune the process.

The next steps fall into three general areas divided into three to five sub-steps each:

Create the pre-conditions by: providing information on legal conditions and opportunities, identifying stakeholders, developing a common vision, allocating resources, and creating an environment or opportunity where knowledge can be shared and participants can learn from each other.

Support the process by: fostering communication and transparency, attracting interest and interaction between the history of cultural heritage and the personal stories of stakeholders, highlighting that common good means common responsibility, affirming the professionals' role in public opinion, and paying attention to agendas and the need for compromise.

Ensure sustainability by: monitoring and evaluating the process, strengthening intrinsic motivation to adopt this approach, promoting the benefits for the community.

Recommendations for politicians and policy-makers

There are some **basic preconditions**, such as fostering the **recognition of cultural heritage as a common good**, a **shared resource and a driver of sustainable** development together with the continuous advancement of **synergies among different stakeholders** and **with other sectors**.

The working group recommended **taking advantage of existing and upcoming cultural heritage-related initiatives and funding programmes at national and EU levels** with a view to further developing their potential for participatory governance.

The group also recommended the development of a clear and comprehensive **policy framework** at national and EU levels to guide strategies and practice.

The full report is available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/index_en.htm

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