

# Youth for the future of cultural heritage in Europe

## Executive Summary

Here we are! This is a matter of cultural heritage and youth, deeply intertwined, as youth is the primary brick in cultural heritage's future; and this is what motivated us to develop the "Youth for the future of cultural heritage in Europe".

***We understand cultural heritage as a collective consciousness encompassing all human experiences from the past into the present. Remembering this is essential in creating a sustainable future. It not only holds the knowledge of our being but plays an essential role in promoting sustainable socio-economic development. Furthermore, in the face of intensifying climate change impacts, we need to do more, we need to do better. We, the youth, take seriously our task of taking cultural heritage further as a constant reference for better societies.***

The European Year of Youth was designed to "shine a light on the importance of European youth to build a better future – greener, more inclusive and digital". Originally conceived as a way to give back to the generation that was particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, the rising challenges of climate change, security, and disasters have added to the urgency of a collective response to these risks. Throughout #EYY2022, hundreds of activities across Europe emphasised the importance of including and involving young people in the challenge to address our societal needs.

Due to the multifaceted and complex challenges faced by cultural heritage in Europe, this inclusive and intergenerational approach is especially needed today. The European heritage landscape is at a crucial crossroads as it evolves to tackle climate change impacts and respond to the current socio-economic needs and priorities; mainly, the post-pandemic period, green and digital transition, and people-centred approaches to governance and planning. For this transformation to be fully effective, it needs the contribution of all generations and sectors of society.

With this paper, we want to bring forward the priorities of youth for cultural heritage, as a contribution to the public discussion on the future of cultural heritage in Europe. Written by a team of volunteers from over 15 countries, this paper attests to the drive, commitment and skills of young people across Europe, acting as a snapshot of the current views. At the same time, it is an invitation for the cultural heritage field to act on youth priorities and fully integrate young people on all levels, from decision-making, to on-the-ground actions.

Moving forward and considering the 2023 European Year of Skills, the words of the youth manifesto provide a clear guide for our involvements and activities: "Sustainability is the goal for the future of cultural heritage. Cultural heritage bridges past and future and helps societies achieve sustainable development."

**The five principles identified** will provide the stepping stones to concretise this response, by identifying strategies and examples of good practices:

1. **Inclusion - Heritage as a confluence;**
2. **Collaboration - Heritage as a collective network;**
3. **Intergenerational exchange and dialogue - Heritage as a bridge;**
4. **Strengthen the sector - Heritage as a future profession;**
5. **New technologies - Heritage as an expanding field;**

To act on these principles and take actions on the priorities of youth, we invite our readers and partners to sign the pledge and commit to working towards these goals, identifying specifically the strategies they will use to implement this. You can read more about how we are planning to take this forward in the conclusion.

This paper, the largest joint undertaking by ESACH, Europa Nostra and The Future is Heritage yet, was made possible through the collaboration between different stakeholders, partners, and volunteers in the European cultural heritage field, with a specific focus on networks and organisations that are actively working to include young people.

#### **Lead partners**

[European Students' Association for Cultural Heritage \(ESACH\)](#)

[Europa Nostra](#)

[The Future is Heritage \(FisH\)](#)

#### **Associated partners**

[Europeana Initiative](#)

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We thank the partners that agreed to take part in "Youth for the future of cultural heritage in Europe" and build a lasting legacy. We are also thankful to all contributors and reviewers that collaborated in the piecing together of this large document and its dissemination.

In these challenging times, we hope this work will contribute to strengthening cross- sectoral collaboration, knowledge-sharing, peer-to-peer learning and advocacy in our field of activity. Cultural heritage is not an auxiliary sector, but rather the heart of our socio- economic fabric. We rely on our entire network to disseminate this work further, and we look forward to receiving guiding feedback.