

# Cultural Heritage as a Source of Societal Well-being in European Regions – ESPON HERIWELL

**Theme:** Cultural heritage, territorial impact, well-being, indicators

### Scope

During the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, over 23 000 events were organised, reaching more than 12.8 million participants. This clearly shows the potential impact that cultural heritage can have on economic development and people's quality of life.

During the last decade, policymakers have increasingly acknowledged the role of cultural heritage as a strategic resource for economic growth, employment and territorial cohesion. This is reflected in several European policy documents, more recently the "New European Agenda for Culture", adopted by the European Commission in May 2018, and the "European Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century", adopted by the Council of Europe in April 2017.

Cultural heritage has been gradually streamlined in different policy areas, such as the EU Cohesion policy, thus showing the growing strategic importance that the topic has gained on the European agenda. Several initiatives at the European level contribute to the general appraisal of cultural heritage, such as the European Heritage Days, the European Heritage Label, the European Heritage Awards and the European Capitals of Culture. Despite recent efforts to improve cultural heritage statistics by the European Commission, it is still a challenge to fully capture the significance of its impact on the economy and society.

On 7 December 2018, the European Commission presented the European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage which among other things calls for evidence-based decision-making in the cultural heritage field and enumerates a number of projects that are going to be carried out in order to address the issue of measuring the impact of culture and cultural heritage on economy, society and local development. The Framework mentions that ESPON's study "Cultural Heritage as a Source of Societal Well-being in European Regions" (2020–2022) will play an important role in providing evidence and data on the impact of cultural heritage on societal well-being.

The objective of this research is to develop a pan-European methodology and territorial analysis on the impacts of cultural heritage on society, considering well-being, social inclusion and other aspects. The research shall cover both material and intangible cultural heritage and the impact should be associated with:

- Presence of material cultural heritage (stock of buildings and other objects)
- Consumption and use of cultural heritage
- Digitalization of cultural heritage
- EU funded investments in cultural heritage
- Activities (policies) aimed at increasing the positive impact of cultural heritage and diminishing the negative impact.

The main outcome will be a methodological framework defining the most important societal domains in which the impact of cultural heritage can be observed and evidence of such impact. In principle it would mean a profound focus on societal benefits of cultural heritage in terms of quality of life in European regions, by looking at material well-being, education, health, social inclusion and equality, life satisfaction and happiness, etc.

The study will quantify the impact over the past 10 years by establishing comparable socio-economic indicators and engaging in data collection from national statistical institutes, registers. Big data where applicable. The research will aim for an overall illustration of the extent to which cultural heritage has an impact on societal well-being in Europe and provide comparative analysis of different European regions where appropriate.

The impact of European, national, regional and local policies, strategies, legal mechanisms and regulatory frameworks aimed at preserving and maintaining cultural heritage or increasing its use will be addressed to support research process and findings. Over 40 thematic or country experts and other specialists from across Europe will be involved.

### **Policy questions**

- How can the societal impact of cultural heritage be defined? In which societal domains does cultural heritage contribute? How significant is this contribution?
- How to measure the societal impact of cultural heritage? How to express it in quantitative terms, considering reliability and validity, at the territorial level?
- What are the differences between the societal impact of cultural heritage in different types of territories?
- How to compare the results on impact of cultural heritage across different European regions?
- How can digitalization of cultural heritage have an impact on well-being in terms of education, knowledge, etc.?
- What are the impacts of EU funded investments in cultural heritage on societal well-being in cities and regions?

### **Contractors**

- Istituto per la ricerca sociale (IRS): IT, (lead contractor)
- European Association of Cultural Researchers (ERICarts Network and Institute), DE
- Associazione Economia della Cultura (AEC), IT

### **Project Support Team**

- Christin W. Krohn - Institute of Transport Economics, NO
- Irene Hadjisavva-Adam - Ministry of Interior, CY
- Paul Mahringer - Federal Monuments Authority of Austria, AT
- Maciej Hofman - DG CULTURE, European Commission
- Laura Hagemann-Arellano - DG REGIO, European Commission
- Christine Vanhoutte - Flanders Heritage Agency, BE, external observer

**Budget:** € 739 275

**Lifetime:** April 2020 – March 2022

### **Deliveries**

- Inception delivery, 29 September 2020
- Interim delivery, 29 January 2021
- Second Interim delivery, 31 May 2021
- Draft Final delivery, 30 August 2021
- Final Delivery, 28 February 2022

**Contact:** Zintis Hermansons (Project Expert), [zintis.hermansons@espon.eu](mailto:zintis.hermansons@espon.eu)  
(<mailto:zintis.hermansons@espon.eu>) ; György Alföldy (Financial Expert) [gyorgy.alfoldy@espon.eu](mailto:gyorgy.alfoldy@espon.eu)  
(<mailto:gyorgy.alfoldy@espon.eu>)