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Policy Seminar "New Horizons for Cultural Heritage" (RICHERS project)

"Is there a future for heritage in the European Union?"

Speech by Jens Nyman Christensen, Deputy Director-General

Millennia of human creativity and exchanges among civilisations, but also wars and tragedies, have made Europe what it is today: a continent of culture and creativity, a continent of cultural heritage. There is no doubt that cultural heritage is a trait in defining Europe: its attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit; a valuable resource for economic growth, employment and social cohesion.

Why do we need to take action? Why do we need to constantly renew this rich asset? Cultural heritage is not a passive inheritance. Its survival depends on the efforts made by every generation to re-discover and re-interpret it, as well as on our capacity to face the global challenges of today like urbanisation, environmental sustainability and digitisation which shake up traditional models of access to culture and participation.

But we are facing more challenges and risks. When public budgets for heritage are being slashed, the transmission of heritage skills and knowledge among generations is interrupted. This chain of shared knowledge and experience is highly valuable for local economies. Simultaneously, the attacks on cultural heritage in Iraq and Syria are attacks on our common values as human beings. The European Union has repeatedly condemned these acts as war crimes and will continue to do so.

Although heritage protection is a national, regional and local responsibility, the European Union can and must ensure the safeguarding of Europe's cultural heritage. There is no contradiction between national responsibilities and EU intervention. The European treaties require us to respect cultural diversity while bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore. The strategy "Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe"¹ presented by the European Commission in 2014, is our roadmap for the next five years.

Under the Creative Europe and Erasmus+ programmes new funding opportunities became available in which heritage is one of the most represented sectors. Moreover, through the Horizon 2020 programme even more funding is dedicated for research and innovation. On the other side, direct support has been channelled to cultural heritage through the Structural Funds. In the previous period 2007-2013, 6 billion euros were earmarked for culture-led investments of which 3.2 billion euros was devoted to cultural heritage. The current programming period 2014-2020 European support will be even stronger with around 4.770 billion euros.

¹ European Commission, *Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe*, 22.7.2014, Brussels. http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/publications/2014-heritage-communication_en.pdf

Through supplementary actions like the European Capitals of Culture, the European Heritage Label, the European Heritage Days and the European Heritage Awards, the European Commission is stimulating the whole cycle of cultural production and preservation.

The digital shift presents exciting and still untapped opportunities to increase and diversify audiences, by reaching out to young people. One of our priorities is how to achieve a more accessible and inclusive culture, taking into account how digital technologies have changed the way people access, produce and use cultural content. In March, the European Commission launched a group of national experts from across the EU to discuss the impact of the digital shift on audience development and on the practices of cultural institutions. The experts will map policies and strategies for audience development via digital means and present a manual of good practice for cultural institutions and professionals by the end of 2016.

The opportunities that the internet brings are crucial for the cultural and creative industries and new and innovative business models are rapidly evolving. The preservation of our cultural resources and their wider accessibility must be balanced with incentives for preservation, investment and innovation. This balance underlies the approach taken by the Digital Single Market Strategy that the Commission announced in May 2015 and Commissioner Navracsics is firmly committed to this objective. Thus, the European Commission cooperates closely within relevant steering groups and teams overseeing the Strategy's implementation.

The copyright reform is particularly relevant to the challenges of cultural heritage in the digital age. The European Commission has identified a number of key priorities for a targeted reform. These notably include "fit-for-purpose" copyright exceptions, in particular in areas where important societal benefits can be untapped or unlocked. Preservation and access to cultural heritage are one of these areas and an impact analysis is currently under way. In this context, the principle of cultural diversity is duly considered.

We need to help communities to take ownership of heritage management by making it part of their daily life. How can we do that? Innovative forms of community-oriented management can greatly improve the economic and social potential of heritage policies and contribute to the well-being of citizens. Participatory governance is one of them. Public and private actors, local communities and stakeholders must all be active in managing and maintaining heritage.

We need our policies to be more effective and sustainable. Therefore the promoting of evidence-based policy-making and strengthening the links between culture, research and innovation are of the utmost importance for the future. For example, EU-wide comparable data on the social and economic impact of heritage policies are still lacking. This is detrimental for policy making and for convincing decision makers to invest in culture. This is why we recently supported the project "Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe"², which has produced an interesting mapping of the research available on this subject.

In conclusion, we need to refine our policies, adapt them rapidly to the shifting reality, and respond to emerging needs. We need to better equip the heritage sector to face the

² <http://www.encatc.org/culturalheritagecountsforeurope/>

challenges posed by globalisation and digitisation. We need to raise awareness among the general public, and especially among the young people, about the value of heritage and its connection to our daily lives. We need to turn heritage into a driver of economic activity, a centre of knowledge, a focal point of creativity and culture.

This is why I would like to thank the RICHES consortium for contributing to fill this policy gap. Your project provides a much-awaited insight that will feed our reflections towards a new vision, where heritage is a resource for the future.