



CDCPP THEMATIC SESSION

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT AS RELATED
TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY,
and specifically, culture, heritage and landscape
resources**

Austrian contribution

Cultural Heritage: Climate
Change and Sustainable
Development goals
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Cultural heritage: Climate Change and Sustainable development goals

- Natural and man-made disasters pose a huge threat to our common natural and cultural heritage. Climate change is among these disasters and severely threatens the future wellbeing of our heritage assets. With each incident their cultural significance, historic, physical and artistic value is diminished to some degree or other.
- Threats and destruction of heritage – be they natural or man-made – rightly give us reason for great concern. The recent fire of Notre Dame has shown us clearly the fragility and importance of the topic. In line with the Council of Europe's and UNESCO's approach I think it is necessary to take preventive measures timely, including international and national awareness-raising efforts, enhanced technical assistance and capacity-building. We also welcome the suggestions by the Ministers of Culture of the EU to create a European mechanism for the conservation of endangered heritage in order to do all we can to prevent another disaster of that kind.
- We have to strengthen our cooperation and share our knowledge in safeguarding and reconstructing our heritage. We may draw on the rich experience of efforts and initiatives already undertaken by the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the European Union.
- For example, I would like to mention the joint Summer University in Krems, Austria, in July, an EU funded project, "*Climate Change and Cultural Landscapes. Preventive conservation of natural and cultural resources along the river Danube*". The participants will discuss the challenges posed by climate change and develop mitigation strategies and plans for the protection of our heritage assets. Topics to be covered include climate change, UNESCO World Heritage matters, terrace landscapes, flood modelling, and emergency planning for cultural heritage.
- In this context, please let me also highlight the importance of intangible heritage that equally deserves safeguarding and protection. The heritage-related skills and crafts necessary for complex interventions on cultural heritage require an in-depth knowledge about traditional craftsmanship. This is crucial to carry out safeguarding measures in a technically correct and sustainable manner. Internationally certified initiatives like the „Heritage Academy“ in Vienna offer comprehensive training for all groups of people involved in the conservation of built cultural heritage.
- Another example: In 2017 Austria published a study on traditional craftsmanship as intangible cultural heritage and an economic factor. It surveys the state of traditional craftsmanship in Austria and analyses the parameters of their endangerment and safeguarding. The study has recently been translated into English and is now being distributed.

- To counteract the dangers to our heritage, we also have to make the most of digital technologies. Emerging technologies – including 3D technologies, artificial intelligence and augmented reality – allow us to record, document and preserve cultural heritage and promote their accessibility. One very promising network is the EU-project „Time Machine“, financed under the Horizon programme. It will help us to use historical data to face the challenges of the present. I think it is essential that we have data in a comprehensive, cheap and quick way.
- An important aspect of all these efforts is to also involve society and particularly young people in the protection of our common heritage. Our common Heritage Strategy 21 as well as the Faro Convention are excellent and comprehensive tools to facilitate our national policy making in this field. Further examples are the European Solidarity Corps - aiming to foster solidarity in the European society, engaging young people and organisations in various activities, including cultural heritage – and an Austrian programme in school education, where the Technical College for Wood Technology in Hallstatt provides a wide range of classes from traditional to high tech skills. The objective is to intrigue and prepare young people for specialised professions in the field of heritage protection.
- The SDGs and their implementation give us another incentive to improve the promotion of heritage. Austria considers culture as a transversal topic in the SDGs affecting a number of goals (4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16 and 17).