

CULTURAL HERITAGE

A TOWN – A REGION – A COUNTRY – EUROPE

Europe's cultural heritage is our common wealth – our inheritance from previous generations of Europeans and our legacy for those to come. It is an irreplaceable repository of knowledge and a valuable resource for economic growth, employment and social cohesion. It enriches the individual lives of hundreds of millions of people, is a source of inspiration for thinkers and artists, and a driver for our cultural and creative industries. Our cultural heritage and the way we preserve and valorise it is a major factor in defining Europe's place in the world and its attractiveness as a place to live, work, and visit.

Cultural heritage is a shared resource, and a common good. Like other such goods it can be vulnerable to over-exploitation and under-funding, which can result in neglect, decay and, in some cases, oblivion. Looking after our heritage is, therefore, our common responsibility. While heritage protection is primarily a matter for national, regional and local authorities, the European Union has a role to play in line with the EU Treaties and in respect of the principle of subsidiarity.

The image of the European culture is given by the association of the concepts *people – culture – history – territory*, which provides certain local features. From this relation, a cultural area can be identified with local, regional and national features beyond a certain European culture. The specific of the European culture is provided by diversity and multiculturalism as means of expression on local, regional, or national levels.

Specificity and diversity are the means of intercultural dialogue between European peoples. Heritage is related to issues of identity and diversity, which are of increasing relevance in Europe. Heritage is always both local and European. It has been forged over time, but also across borders and communities. Heritage is made up of local stories that together make the history of Europe.