

High-level Innovation and Cultural Heritage Conference

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20 March 2018

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Brussels

This event, organised in Brussels on 20 March 2018 in the framework of the European Year of Cultural Heritage, showcased the dialogue between contemporary European society and the most promising innovations in the field of cultural heritage that European policies and funds have supported. The conference was organised by the European Commission Directorate General for Research and Innovation, in close cooperation with Directorates General for Education and Culture and for Communications Networks, Content and Technology.



European Commission

Children using apps in a museum

The event's sessions highlighted policy, social, technological, methodological innovations and new, promising partnerships for cultural heritage. The speakers – leading European politicians, artists and scientists – discussed policy developments, success stories and future challenges.

Mariya Gabriel, EU Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, said: 'Europe is blessed with an immense cultural heritage which can provide us with a sense of a shared identity and inspire us,' adding that, 'digital transformation may play an essential role in protecting this heritage'.

Carlos Moedas, EU Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, spoke about the importance of cultural heritage for urban regeneration and the need to innovate for the future by learning from the past.

Professor Sofia Pescarin, a researcher at the Italian National Council of Researches (CNR), in the Institute of Technologies Applied to Cultural Heritage in Rome, pointed to the EU-funded GIFT project, which is developing digital experiences where people engage physically with each other to share playlists of their favourite museum exhibits. GIFT is also enabling visitors to enjoy technologies that measure emotional responses to artwork, and share their experiences with other users. She spoke about how virtual reality can be developed to enhance museum exhibitions and add a more interactive storytelling element. 'There is a need for digital curators within our museums,' she said.

Professor Pier Luigi Sacco of the International University of Languages and Media in Milan, Italy, and special advisor to the European Commission, gave a second example, the 'Father and Son' game developed by the National Archaeological Museum in Naples. Highly rated, this popular game is available as an app for Android and iPhone devices, and tells the story of a son who follows in the footsteps of his archaeologist father, whom he has never met. Going through several stages, to unlock the final level of the game, you must visit the museum.

Digital technology is not just a new tool to visualise, explore or consume cultural heritage – it can also assist with conservation efforts.

Professor Antonia Moropoulou of the National Technical University of Athens, Greece, spoke in detail about the restoration of the Holy Aedicule in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, Israel. She worked with digital specialists to develop a high-resolution 3D model of the Holy Aedicule, which allowed her team to devise the optimal way to restore it. The model allowed them to identify damage that had been done by previous conservation efforts, and to assess how the monument might react to seismic activity in the area, and plan its rehabilitation accordingly.

The EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor Navracsis, said that Europe needs to actively innovate with cultural heritage to engage communities. 'We have to use cultural heritage as a source of energy for future projects, for innovation. These times, when the very future of the community at European level has been put into question, and there are diverging views about the future prospects of the EU, we have to take cultural heritage out of the museums, put them back into everyday life and investigate how we can use the experiences and achievements of past generations.'

The conference was part of the programme of the European Year of Cultural Heritage and will contribute to its legacy by launching the public discussion about the objectives of European research and innovation policy for cultural heritage beyond 2020.

- Watch the Event video
- Read the Commission Press Release on the conference
- Watch the video clip on Our European Heritage

European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018

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