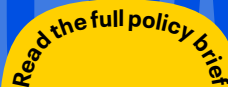


The logo for RECHARGE, featuring the word in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

RECHARGE

Resilient European Cultural Heritage
As Resource for Growth & Engagement

A yellow circular button with the text "Read the full policy brief" curved along its top edge.

Read the full policy brief

A yellow circular button with the text "Read the full policy brief" curved along its bottom edge.

Read the full policy brief

Policy Recommendations

Enhancing participatory approaches in Cultural Heritage Organisations

The RECHARGE policy recommendations offer a clear framework to strengthen cultural heritage organisations across Europe. Heritage organisations must shift from gatekeepers of cultural heritage to active facilitators of participation. Grounded in nine living labs and collaborative research, the recommendations promote trust-building, inclusion, and long-term partnership. Aligned with the Faro Convention and ICOM's new museum definition, they urge structural support for participatory practices. By embedding participation into policy and daily activities, heritage organisations can become more resilient and relevant. In the cultural heritage sector, participation is not optional, it is a driver of innovation, sustainability, and public value.

KEY INSIGHTS

Based on research and real-life experiments, the RECHARGE project generated insights on participatory practices that directly support policymaking in the cultural heritage sector. Four key insights are the following:

1

Misalignment regarding participation

- Cultural heritage organisations often prioritise organisational activities
- Most external stakeholders value flexible, socially and technologically driven initiatives
- There's a need for investment in participatory and multi-level co-governance

2

Living labs align organisational and stakeholders needs

- Living labs offer space for co-creation and collaborative work
- They allow experimentation and iteration of participatory business models
- They also open space for stakeholders' needs

3

Participatory models drive heritage sustainability and relevance

- Participatory Business Models helps diversifying funding and revenue streams
- They also create social, environmental and financial value for heritage organisations
- Participatory models can range from a more restricted form of participation to a more advanced one

4

Barriers to implement participatory models

- Institutional culture can offer resistance to decentralising authority
- Sharing heritage assets and decision-making can be challenging for heritage organisations
- Organisations also struggle to dedicate resources to trust-building activities

TARGET AUDIENCE

RECHARGE policy recommendations are directed at key stakeholders, who can address the recommendations and help shape the future of the sector. In particular:

→ **Policy- and decision-makers at the European and national levels**

→ **Cultural heritage networks**

→ **Cultural heritage organisations and the cultural and creative sector**

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1



Recognise relationship-building and community participation as core to heritage work, and support them accordingly.

We recommend the European Commission to recognise relationship-building as a core heritage function, supporting trust-based engagement, flexible funding schemes, and valuing qualitative alongside quantitative impact in participatory activities.

2



Enhance the capacity and sustainability of volunteer infrastructure through targeted policy support as a key complement to participatory cultural heritage initiatives, serving the public good, and deserving skills investment.

We call for cultural policies fostering multi-level ecosystems that support volunteers' skills, inclusive organisational practices, and recognising volunteer work as a vital contributor to public value, social cohesion, and democratic life.

3



Provide robust support for capacity-building programmes that equip cultural heritage organisations to effectively implement participatory approaches.

We recommend EU and national networks to embed participatory principles in heritage training, creating tools and supporting co-creation, stakeholder engagement, and tailored models for diverse user groups.



Enable institutional change by establishing sustainable funding streams dedicated to participatory cultural heritage initiatives.

We call for dedicated funding for heritage organisations to adopt participatory models and living labs methodology. We also recommend policymakers and cultural networks to encourage cross-sector collaborations between heritage organisations and civil society, education, health, and innovation.



Promote innovative and participatory financing and legal models for cultural heritage through research and training.

We recommend that innovation centers and policymakers support research and adoption of participatory financing models, promoting and incentivising the use of tools to help heritage organisations achieve sustainable funding and navigate legal frameworks.



Establish an EU-wide Cultural living labs recognition scheme to boost the visibility of participatory co-creation practices and encourage their uptake across the cultural heritage sector.

We embolden heritage organisations to adopt living labs methodology and other participatory practices, and call on the EC to support networks, training, and an EU label recognising participatory innovation, ensuring visibility and sector-wide impact.



Develop an EU evaluation framework for participatory heritage, enabling research on effectiveness and efficiency.

We recommend policymakers and cultural networks to support research on participatory strategies and co-develop an EU-wide evaluation framework measuring cultural impact, inclusion, resilience, and sustainability through qualitative and quantitative indicators.



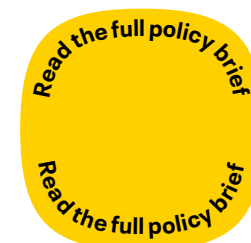
Include participant motivation as a key metric in assessing cultural heritage participation.

We recommend policymakers and heritage networks expand impact assessment frameworks to include motivation indicators, measuring satisfaction and long-term engagement through diverse engagement tools.



Support the establishment of a data collection framework or resource on Cultural Participation to systematically monitor engagement in cultural heritage, inform policymaking, and foster knowledge exchange and capacity-building across the sector.

We recommend policymakers and cultural networks to establish a central knowledge hub on participatory heritage, commissioning updated studies to guide policy, strengthen practices, and extend the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 legacy.





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The RECHARGE project is funded by the European Union's HORIZON Europe programme. It brings together existing and new communities, networks, and partnerships within the cultural heritage sector to promote participatory management through cultural heritage living labs. These living labs, developed collaboratively and open to both professionals and the public, serve as experimental spaces to test and create innovative ways to harness resources. The goal is to develop sustainable future business models that create and integrate value both within individual organisations and across the cultural heritage sector as a whole.

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