

ICOMOS



EUROPEAN QUALITY PRINCIPLES for EU-funded Interventions with potential impact upon Cultural Heritage

Recommendations & Selection Criteria, November 2020



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

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In the framework of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 and at the request of the European Commission, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) developed “*European Quality Principles for EU-funded interventions with potential impact on cultural heritage*”. Focused mainly on built heritage and cultural landscapes, it was one of the ten Flagship Initiatives launched by the European Commission to ensure that the European Year would have a lasting impact.

Whilst the recognition of cultural heritage as a common good and responsibility is a precondition of quality, quality objectives must be taken into account at every stage of the processes and life-cycle, from the conception of funding programmes to end-of-project evaluation.

The *European Quality Principles* developed by ICOMOS have been published and can be accessed at: <http://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2436/>
The publication proposed 40 *Main Recommendations* as well as a set of *Selection Criteria* to assess the quality of projects with potential impact on cultural heritage: they are reproduced here to make them more accessible and operational. ICOMOS hopes that with this separate publication, EU institutions, Member States and others will have a useful tool to ensure and even improve the quality of interventions on our common heritage.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Principles and standards

- 1 All stakeholders involved in cultural heritage conservation should adhere to international cultural heritage charters and guidelines.
- 2 Standard-setting texts and guidance documents related to cultural heritage, produced by UNESCO, the Council of Europe, ICOMOS, CEN, and other competent organisations, should be made accessible free of charge through the internet and e-publications or digital tools.

Advancing quality principles

- 3 Cultural assets should be used in respectful ways, to safeguard their meanings and values and to become an inspiration for local and heritage communities and future generations.
- 4 Recognition of cultural heritage as a common good and responsibility should be a precondition of quality. Cultural heritage conservation should be understood as a long-term investment for society.
- 5 Cultural values should be safeguarded when assessing the overall costs and benefits of an intervention, and considered at least on an equal footing with financial value.

Programming at eu and national levels

- 6 Cultural heritage preservation should be mainstreamed into programming at EU and national levels on an equal footing with other objectives.
- 7 The EU's programming activity and funding for cultural heritage should be based on sound research and analysis.
- 8 Member States should involve their national cultural heritage institutions/administrations from the outset of the programming/negotiating phase and at all stages thereafter.
- 9 Successful programmes and projects at national and regional levels should be made available so that the EU can encourage the sharing of good practices amongst Member States.

- 10 Priorities for the selection of projects to be funded must be consistent with the *European Quality Principles for EU-funded interventions of projects with potential impact on cultural heritage*, impact on cultural heritage and with strategic cultural heritage protection policies and must have been approved by the national cultural heritage institutions/administrations.
- 11 Consideration should be given to the funding of small-scale projects as well as to a two-stage decision process for larger projects.

Project briefs and tenders

- 12 Briefs and tenders should reinforce a conservation approach in which proposals comply with the *Selection Criteria* of this *Quality Principles* document in order to uphold cultural heritage and its associated values.
- 13 Briefs and tenders should require that proposals respect the authenticity in its tangible and intangible aspects and the preservation of the cultural asset.
- 14 Briefs and tenders should require that proposals set out direct and indirect intervention impacts on cultural heritage as part of a risk analysis with mitigation measures. They should also require that proposals include a conservation-maintenance and long-term monitoring plan, and a business plan especially for large projects, and that they explain the potential benefits for the public.

Design

- 15 Project proposals should set out how the existing cultural heritage status, values and conditions have been integrated into the design, providing the reasons for all proposed interventions. An identification of emerging risks, issues and opportunities concerning the project and its context should be taken into account.
- 16 When additional elements or new uses are necessary, a project should ensure there is balance, harmony and/or controlled dialogue between the cultural heritage and the new elements, respecting the existing values.
- 17 When new functions are considered, these should respect and be compatible with the heritage site, respond to community needs, and be sustainable.
- 18 Projects and planning should acknowledge the need for ongoing maintenance and strengthen the capacity of local communities to care for their heritage.
- 19 EU-funded projects should respect EU values and treaties. Reconstructions might only be funded in exceptional circumstances, insofar as the project complies with the *Selection Criteria* of this *Quality Principles* document.

Procurement

- 20 During the procurement of the work by project beneficiaries, a two-envelope system should be deployed for ranking the technical offer separately from the financial one, giving priority to the former.

Implementation

- 21 The *Quality Principles* should guide the implementation phase.
- 22 The implementation plan and management structure for the project should be clearly defined and agreed, allowing for correction of actions and efficient use of resources. Compatible materials as well as cautious and well-tried techniques, supported by scientific data and proven by experience, should be employed. A contingency provision for any additional needs (e.g. research, testing of materials) should be included.
- 23 Specific communication channels should be established among all parties involved in the project. A dedicated representative of the conservation works could be designated for this purpose.
- 24 The implementation process should be fully documented and archived and made accessible for future reference.

Monitoring and evaluation

- 25 Independent end-of-project evaluation should be undertaken with heritage experts and include examination of cultural, technical, social, economic and environmental outcomes and the impacts on local communities. A less onerous evaluation approach should be considered for small, low-budget projects. Non-compliance with the *Quality Principles* should lead to corrective actions.
- 26 Monitoring should be undertaken at regular intervals. A long-term evaluation with regard to sustainable management and maintenance should be undertaken after a reasonable interval of time, after the completion of the project.
- 27 Adequate resources for independent evaluation by specifically competent heritage experts should be provided at the relevant stages of the process.

Governance

- 28 EU-funded heritage initiatives should facilitate civil society and community participation.
- 29 Fund regulations should encourage the financing of heritage projects, and accept their specificities.

Risk assessment and mitigation

- 30 The European Commission and Member States should investigate and propose a tailored policy on risk management for cultural heritage projects and for projects impacting cultural heritage because comprehensive risk assessments are fundamental for the success of cultural heritage projects.

Research

- 31 Technical, administrative and financial support for an integrated research policy and joint programming on cultural heritage in Europe should be increased as it would help to conceptualise the European dimension of cultural heritage. Research should be conducted on the financing of interventions on cultural heritage and its impact on quality. Building synergies with other EU funding programmes could bring considerable social and economic benefits.
- 32 Funding should be set aside to conduct research at macro level (trends, impacts) and micro level (case-studies and comparison of good practices) to support the programming process at the EU, national and regional levels, and to provide the necessary background information before undertaking any project.
- 33 Transdisciplinary research programmes should be developed and knowledge transfer from the social sciences and humanities field should be improved to include research on participatory planning, integrated management of cultural heritage and the development of smart technology measures. EU research programmes should require that heritage related research results be made accessible to heritage professionals, in particular by the use of Open Access repositories such as the ICOMOS Open Archive.
- 34 European research on cultural heritage protection should provide appropriate funding instruments also for small-scale projects.
- 35 SoPHIA, the Horizon 2020 Social platform on the impact assessment and the quality of interventions in European historical environment and cultural heritage sites should build on the results of this *Quality Principles* document.

Education and training

- 36 Educational and training courses, initiatives and programmes in the cultural heritage sector should conform to the relevant international standard setting texts and guidance in the field, and regularly update their curricula so that they are abreast of technical developments and innovation.
- 37 A provision in EU-funded cultural heritage projects should be established for conservation training or upskilling schemes within the project brief and tendering process, insofar as practicable.
- 38 An information system about the most relevant European education and training institutions and organisations and their courses, initiatives and programmes in the cultural heritage sector would be helpful if regularly updated.
- 39 Institutions and initiatives educating and/or training those who will be involved in conservation issues (such as urban planners, engineers, architects, landscape architects, interior designers, craftspeople) should include conservation in their main curricula. An understanding of cultural heritage should be part of any educational programme at all levels.

Rewarding quality

- 40 The European Commission should evaluate the possibilities of developing a special European Award to reward quality in EU-funded cultural heritage interventions, in synergy with existing schemes and prizes.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR PROJECTS WITH A POTENTIAL IMPACT ON CULTURAL HERITAGE

Our continually evolving environment contains many cultural heritage elements. Because cultural heritage is a common good that is not renewable nor replaceable, these elements should be cherished. To ensure that our generation is able to 'pay back what we borrowed', the following seven quality principles and selection criteria for interventions on cultural heritage have been developed:

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|--------------------------|--|
| 1 KNOWLEDGE-BASED | Conduct research and surveys first of all |
| 2 PUBLIC BENEFIT | Keep in mind your responsibility towards society |
| 3 COMPATIBILITY | Keep the "spirit of the place" |
| 4 PROPORTIONALITY | Do as much as necessary, but as little as possible |
| 5 DISCERNMENT | Call upon skills and experience |
| 6 SUSTAINABILITY | Make it last |
| 7 GOOD GOVERNANCE | The process is part of the success |

This evaluation tool consists of key questions that decision makers should ask themselves to assess the quality of proposed projects with a potential impact on cultural heritage, and to determine whether such projects are worthy of EU or other funding.

There are different types of projects: small and large, public and private, expensive and low-cost, with direct and indirect impact on cultural heritage. The quality principles of the evaluation tool are both heritage based and process-related, and they should be assessed by decision makers responsible for cultural heritage and those responsible for the overall process and the finances. The tool may also be useful for civil society, and local and heritage communities.

1 KNOWLEDGE-BASED

Conduct research and surveys first

- Is the heritage in danger or in need of urgent conservation work?
- Have the heritage element and its setting been researched and surveyed prior to the formulation of a project brief and prior to the design of the project?
- Have all relevant elements and features of the cultural heritage been identified? Is their history, current physical condition and values known and understood? If not, are there actions planned to identify these further?
- Has a cultural Heritage Impact Assessment been carried out? If so, was this undertaken by independent experts with heritage skills? In cases where there are several intervention options, have they all been considered in the cultural Heritage Impact Assessment?

2 PUBLIC BENEFIT

Keep in mind your responsibility toward future generations

- Does the project explicitly recognise cultural heritage as a common good and responsibility?
- Is the project in full conformity with the relevant heritage legislation and regulations? Or does its approval require exemptions?
- Is the project necessary to preserve the historic environment and its cultural heritage for future generations? In cases where projects mainly respond to needs as currently perceived, which may then evolve over time and thus make the interventions redundant, are these interventions potentially reversible?
- Are all motivations and specific interests for the project clearly acknowledged?
- Will future generations continue to have access to the full richness of the historic environment and its cultural heritage after the proposed intervention, or will some features be lost? If so, is this loss justified by public benefit and how will it be perceived/judged by future generations?

3 COMPATIBILITY

Keep the spirit of the place

- Will the intended use respect the characteristics, architectural composition and relevant elements of the cultural heritage?
- Is the project respectful of the historic environment and its cultural heritage, in its setting sizes, proportions, spaces, features and materials, as well as (former) use?
- Does the project respond to people's need in terms of cognitive and physical accessibility?
- Does the project uphold national and international cultural heritage standards and principles?
- Will the authenticity of the cultural heritage/landscape be maintained?

4 PROPORTIONALITY

Do as much as necessary but as little as possible

- Is the proposed project cautious in its approach, in particular in cases where works are irreversible or knowledge is insufficient or currently unaffordable?
- Is the project focused on repair and conservation rather than heavy transformation (i.e. involving replacement of authentic material)? Is the project 'overdoing' it and 'overspending'?
- Is the authenticity being preserved, in particular when the project includes contemporary new design to accommodate (new) uses?
- Is there balance, harmony and/or controlled dialogue between the cultural heritage and the new elements?

5 DISCERNMENT

Call upon skills and experience

- Is the project calling upon knowledge from all relevant disciplines? Is it the result of a collective and transdisciplinary reflection?
- Does the project demonstrate the designer's understanding of the cultural heritage, their creativity to find balanced solutions, their knowledge of materials and attention to detail in their design?
- Are the proposed technical interventions well-tested? Can the technical interventions be described as state of the art? Are technical approaches with high risks/uncertainties avoided?

- Is the project fit for purpose and tailor-made for this particular cultural heritage?
- Does the project reflect national, regional and local traditions, standards and specificities?
- Are small- and medium-size conservation and building enterprises eligible to carry out the project?

6 SUSTAINABILITY

Make it last

- How will the project impact on the environment?
- Has an independent Environmental Impact Assessment been carried out? Were the conclusions taken into account into the project?
- Have the local inhabitants and heritage communities been consulted and involved in the project and its development? Were their considerations taken into account?
- Does the project take future maintenance into account? Is there a strategy for maintenance (post-project)?
- Is there a long-term strategy for the post-project management of the cultural heritage, in particular when new use is proposed?

7 GOOD GOVERNANCE

The process is part of the success

- Is there a clear understanding of which experts and local and national authorities have to be included at each step of the process?
- Is risk assessment and mitigation, with the implication of heritage professionals, an integral part of the project?
- Will a monitoring system be in place during and after the project implementation?
- Does the project include adequate provisions for contingency and flexibility in case of unexpected events or discoveries?
- Does the project include heritage conservation and management training and promotion (dissemination/sharing) of knowledge?
- Is the project part of an integrated sustainable development strategy?

**European Quality Principles for EU-funded Interventions
with potential impact on Cultural Heritage**

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With support for the first edition from:
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Dominique Schneider and Florence Babics (ICOMOS France) for the french version, and
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The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Publishing: ICOMOS International Secretariat

Design & lay-out: Vanessa Paris

Photograph, Cover photograph: Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral, April 2019

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ISBN 978-2-918086-40-6

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