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“CULTURAL E-COMPETENCIES IN OPEN AIR”



EUROPEAN REPORT ON KNOW-HOW, NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE “CULTURE BUILDER”

(Italy, Czech Republic and Slovakia)

WP2 Activity2_Results 3



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INTRODUCTION

The 'Cultural E-Competencies in Open Air' project originates from the common desire of the four partners from three European countries to develop competences capable of creating innovation in culture through the use of enabling technologies in a process of digital transformation.

This innovative model intends to have its foundations in culture, heritage enhancement, digitisation and the Green Deal. The purpose is to move in the direction of a new context that could be named the 'open-air museum of culture builders', where the different cultural, artistic, professional, transversal skills are to be promoted, while respecting the environment and the surrounding society, in order to create a virtuous network of relations for a greater sharing of knowledge both in presence and online.

The final objective is to provide all citizens with the skills and the competences on how to valorise cultural heritage in order to increase their chances of becoming the European citizens of the future with a strong social impact on the community.

This report is the result of in-depth studies and the researchers' personal knowledge of the current scenario of the teaching of culture in schools and government support for cultural youth organisations. It will lead to an analysis of new cultural trends in Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia and significant developments compared to the past, including the current topic of digitisation of cultural heritage.

Finally, an important part of the report will be devoted to the most important museums in the three countries with an in-depth focus on those that are already using artificial intelligence. Other important aspects of culture that will be explored include cultural heritage sites, typical local customs and traditions, along with an itinerary on national gastronomic and culinary culture and its important role in the society.

Culture is approached with different meanings and developments from country by country, since culture is the way a nation expresses and identifies itself in language, folklore, territory, art, music, architecture and everyday life. Culture, therefore, is understood in a more or less broad sense, but is always perceived as an important and indispensable part of people's lives; nevertheless, it is still seen only as a leisure activity, when it should contribute to a now necessary development of skills, thus enriching people's social and educational curriculum and contributing to the improvement of their psychophysical state and quality of life.



Culture seen as an optional good consequently puts it on the back burner, which means that in situations of economic instability or any kind of emergency, as was the case for example with the Covid-19 pandemic, culture and related activities are the first things people give up, with the risk that this impoverishment, even more serious than the economic one, will become irremediably a habit.

To fully understand the common points and the criticalities of these countries, a comparison with other European realities seemed almost necessary, so for each topic it was decided to also provide an overview, albeit in broad outline, which also includes other states not part of the project in its experimental phase.

In this transversal journey, some points are common to all the countries; such as, for example, the tendency to concentrate culture in the centres of the largest cities, penalising the suburbs and rural areas, which are generally poorer and more concrete, even though it is precisely in these areas that there is a proliferation of popular traditions and customs linked to the festivities and the territory.

For some, a strong patriotic identity will stand out, while others will be the enriched product of intense interaction with other cultures. Every country has monuments of the past that are part of their history and document, among other things, the craftsmanship and skills of their people; alongside the popular traditions, which include both tangible and intangible elements, are the modern traits of culture and the enriching opportunities for the world of work, economy, inclusion and individual and social enrichment.

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This report is a compendium of knowledge, realities, good practices and resolutions for the future, valuable for the identification of the skills and competences of the figure of the 'culture builder' and central to the definition of the model of 'Cultural E-Competences in the open air', but above all for the responsibility that each individual has to protect, to preserve and to transmit cultural heritage to the next generations.

I. THE STATE OF CULTURE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

The education and the school must and can have a vital role in creating a shared European culture and values of citizenship. The demand for labor flexibility, resulting from the Maastricht principles of free movement of people, money and goods, has also become an element of school flexibility. Before the



Maastricht Treaty, the European Union did not deal with education at all, except for vocational education. Since 1986, however, developments have been rapid and the education systems, which had so far been considered too rigid, are gradually forcing the teaching staff to adapt to the changes required by the rapid development of modern technologies and industrial and tertiary reorganization. Education conceived as a European common good is a form of citizenship that cannot renounce the cultural, social and civic dimensions of education. School is definitely the starting point for shaping the citizens of tomorrow, in terms of education, cultural level and competences.

Are the educational systems of Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia able to achieve these goals and respond to these needs? Is the relationship between culture and education in these countries competitive with their European neighbors? And, broadening the perspective, is the school system capable of stimulating interest in music, visual arts, theatre, and film from the earliest levels of education, in view of a further expansion of demand for cultural products and services in the future? Are we on the right track to raise the cultural level of the tomorrow's citizens? The role of artistic and cultural education in the acquisition by young people of the necessary skills to face the new socio-economic landscape is now widely recognized at European level, although in practice there are still many steps to be taken. In 2007, the European Commission proposed a European Agenda for Culture, later confirmed by the Council of the European Union. This agenda recognizes the value of arts education for the development of creativity, a key competence in the near future. Moreover, the strategic framework of European cooperation in education and training over the last decade has clearly highlighted the importance of transversal key competences, in particular cultural sensitivity and creativity.

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The proclamation of 2009 as the 'European Year of Creativity and Innovation' gave even more weight to the recognition of the links between cultural sensitivity and creativity.

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To come back to the topic of schools, teachers responsible for artistic activities play a key role in developing the creativity of students and young people. The study 'The Impact of Culture on Creativity' conducted by KEA European Affairs in 2009 identified the area of teacher training as one of the main areas for improvement in creating a creative learning environment in schools. Improving teacher



education and training in general was the first objective of the Education and Training work program for 2010. Concerning the content to be taught, the main role of schools is no longer to transmit knowledge, but rather to ensure the access to certain competences; this implies a redefinition of the missions of basic teaching in favor of the acquisition of the new fundamental competences required by a knowledge-based society and continuous learning.

The unpredictability of the industrial and the technological changes precludes any ambition to precisely plan requirements in training. On the contrary, the unbridled rhythm of these changes is related to the precariousness of employment, which forces workers to change jobs or positions frequently and demands great adaptability rather than specific qualifications. Flexibility of workers is reflected in the flexibility of the school, which must be able to quickly adapt to the very rapid evolution of knowledge.

Each European state, and in many cases each of its regions, organizes its educational systems and programs in different ways, and how schools are organized can affect the quality of young people's preparation, their ability to break free from their socioeconomic backgrounds and freely choose a career or a life path. Based on the information gathered by the partners' researchers, an attempt will be made to outline useful characteristics to identify an effective, informed, equitable and inclusive line of enrichment that goes to correct the imbalances currently in place and encourages the work of teachers by providing useful insights for investing in future cycles by raising the cultural level of teaching.

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One of the most interesting aspects of cultural heritage that has been witnessed in recent years is the broadening of the target areas of cultural heritage and the emphasis on its value for the future.

According to the European Union, *“cultural heritage consists of the resources inherited from the past, in all forms and aspects - tangible, intangible and digital (originally produced in digital and digitized form), including monuments, sites, landscapes, skills, practices, knowledge and expressions of human creativity, as well as collections preserved and managed by public and private entities such as museums, libraries and archives. It originates from the interaction over time between people and places and is constantly evolving”* (May 21, 2014 Council Conclusions on Cultural Heritage as a Strategic Resource for a Sustainable Europe).



The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defines the characteristics and domains of intangible cultural heritage as follows: *“the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, know-how-as well as the associated tools, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces-that communities, groups and in some cases individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage”*. The document also emphasizes how intangible heritage is transmitted from generation to generation, constantly recreated by communities and groups.

Many are the areas and assets included, today, in the concept of heritage at the international level, in addition to the traditional cultural, natural and mixed, movable and immovable assets that have always formed its framework; and a lot are the ways in which culture is transmitted to new generations.

The link between culture and education is also grounded in Recommendation CM/Rec (2014) 5 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Promotion of Landscape Knowledge through Education, which provides specific guidance to policymakers but also to educators. Among the purposes of the recommendation, it states, *“Each school subject (history, art education, mathematics, etc., including school language as a subject) has its specific forms of oral and written expression. Students must acquire these types of forms in order to appropriate the content taught and participate successfully in school activities”*.

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In an increasingly multiethnic and culturally multifaceted society, in fact, the quality of the relationship that develops with cultural heritage, a bearer of multiple and complex signs, characterized by processes of contamination and continuous integrations, is a vector of social inclusion through dialogue and constructive confrontation between individuals and communities that interpret multiple instances, representing an excellent device for the recognition and the critical understanding both of identity as well as of cultural diversity, of one's own world and that of others.

How and in what grades is culture taught at school?

Italy

For the purposes of explaining how culture is taught in Italian schools, it may be useful to provide some insight into the notion of heritage “pedagogy”, which:



- It includes active and participatory teaching methods; that is, based on discovery, research, learner involvement; on the use of first-hand sources and on work done directly on the ground, on materials, on heritage crafts. It therefore commits to teaching/learning based on methodological-didactic experimentation; on ongoing training and teacher role change; on an active, motivating approach that facilitates the inclusion of all students; on a processual, systemic methodology; on a research-action relationship.
- It is transversal to school disciplines. Heritage, as it is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, is a hinge between the humanities, technology, science, and the arts, and at the same time transversal to the various disciplines, whose closures and limits it breaks. It may serve the various subjects in the curriculum to develop and explore a multiplicity of topics in innovative ways.
- It implies a “partnership” between those in charge of education and those in charge of cultural heritage, thus opening the school to the local area and cultural workers. It should be kept in mind, however, that partnership is not a simple collaboration between two institutions or two worlds (school and museum, school and superintendence, etc.) but is the integration into a coherent whole of different skills, ways of thinking and acting. It means cooperating from the moment of planning.
- It uses the most varied methods of communication and expression; from the most traditional to the most innovative. Heritage is characterized precisely by the multiplicity of materials, expressive and communicative modes. An incredible plurality of languages, means of discovery and understanding of the world allows research, interaction between classes and international exchanges based not only and not so much on language, but on a wide variety of tools that allows the inclusion and enhancement of each individual pupil in respect of his interests and aptitudes, facilitating the fight against exclusion and dispersion.

“Cultural Heritage Pedagogy” is an extraordinary tool for interweaving knowledge and promoting a sense of belonging to the communities in which schools are embedded. The school's relation with the natural, social and cultural environment *“can represent a resource with strong innovative potential when it links learning to reality by enhancing it while respecting territorial vocations”* (Manifesto of the Small Schools - INDIRE).



In this way, it is intended to show that it is essential to educate and raise awareness of heritage not only to develop in all citizens an assumption of responsibility and a civic commitment to protection and enhancement, but also because the “use” of heritage in education can contribute to an education that is not only global (promoting the development of a critical, creative, active and responsible personality), but also personalized albeit within collaborative paths that include moments of self-assessment and empowerment.

The heritage pedagogy, on the other hand, has proven to be particularly effective both for the achievement of specific educational and cultural goals and for the acquisition of transversal skills and overall personality development.

Heritage pedagogy is a unique tool that enables young people to acquire in a direct and concrete way a knowledge and historical dimension that, in some ways, also fosters the relationship from one generation to the next.

The heritage constitutes a source and a foundation for the development of creative thinking, in which the process of innovation is combined with practice and indispensable skills. Heritage education tends, therefore, to arouse and enhance an operational ability and an original and creative mindset, which is appreciated in every field today, but above all indispensable to prepare young people to also be creators, builders and project managers of heritage for the future.

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Educating people about heritage means more than collecting information about the past and historical sites. The most important goal is to encourage young people to rationally, creatively, and interactively “appropriate” a historical monument, tradition, object on display in a museum, or in another place.

For the situation in Italy, it is worth mentioning Law 107/2015 known as the Good School Reform, enacted with the intention of renewing teaching with a focus on new disciplines born in the present and projected into the future, such as digital skills.

At the participation of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities in the Didacta Italia Fair (March 8-10, 2023), a collector of exchanges and initiatives aimed at schools, Minister of Cultural Heritage and Activities Gennaro Sangiuliano says, *“School education is the first step for students and schoolgirls toward full awareness of the national cultural heritage. Every Italian, from birth, is surrounded by*



beauty. But only through the transmission of knowledge in classrooms do we come to fully understand its intimate constitutive meaning for our identity”.

On May 12, 2021, a decree of the Prime Minister's Office, based on the proposal of the Minister of Education, adopted the Three-Year Arts Plan, whose planned measures include:

- the development of teaching practices that, by valuing the different aptitudes of each individual, aim to foster the learning of all students and guide their future choices;
- the promotion of partnerships with the subjects of the Coordinated System for the promotion, co-design and development of “creativity themes” and for the sharing of workshop, instrumental and professional resources;
- the promotion of knowledge of Italy's cultural and environmental heritage and the high-quality creative works of Made in Italy;
- the enhancement of practical and historical-critical skills related to music, the arts, cultural heritage, film, and the techniques and media of producing and disseminating images and sounds;
- the enhancement of historical, artistic, archaeological, philosophical and linguistic-literary knowledge related to the civilizations and cultures of antiquity;
- the promotion of training and artistic internships abroad and the international promotion of youth talent through projects and exchanges between Italian and foreign artistic educational institutions, with particular reference to music, dance and art high schools.

The urgency to rethink Italian educational systems in the sense of multidisciplinary follows the logic of overcoming the damaging separation between urban and scientific subjects, as well as between the pure and the applied modes of education. In Italy, technical and art-history education has always been an extraordinary strength in creating specialized skills in the field of cultural heritage. The integrated training of transversal skills with hybrid knowledge is, therefore, the bridge between the educational system and the production system.



In Italy, heritage education is considered a resource of great richness. A school which can teach even outside the canonical classrooms and where the museum, and more generally the sites and elements of cultural heritage, can be the privileged place for the school to implement an operational didactics in the teaching of history, to encourage the encounter of pupils with the sources. In this way, it will be possible to foster curiosity and love for museums and culture, in general, in young people.

The activities carried out with and on the heritage (outside, but also inside the classroom) must, therefore, and first of all, be carefully prepared and accompanied by activities and reflections in the classroom, aimed first at making sense of the use of heritage and then at making explicit the contribution of the activities carried out with and on the heritage to the history or art learning path. As with all educational activities, didactic transposition proves essential in the design of those centered on heritage.

Alongside pathways and materials, the quality of collaboration between teachers and heritage operators is also crucial; indeed, the complexity of heritage requires the participation and collaboration of multiple actors, involved in the fields of education and cultural and landscape heritage. As the meaning of cultural heritage has evolved and attention to it has increased, the interest of schools in this regard has also gradually changed.

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The educational system in Italy is organized as follows:

- Integrated zero-to-six-year-old system, non-compulsory, consisting of:
 - children's educational services that accommodate children between three and thirty-six months old;
 - kindergarten, which welcomes children between the ages of three and six;
- first cycle of education, compulsory, with a total duration of 8 years, divided into
 - elementary school, five-year duration, 14 to 19 years, for children aged 6 to 11 years;
 - secondary school, three-year duration, for pupils aged 11 to 14;
- second cycle of education divided into two pathway types:



- secondary school of five-year duration for students who have successfully completed the first cycle of education;
- three-year and four-year professional education and training paths, always aimed at those who have successfully completed the first cycle of education;
- higher education (universities, institutions of higher education in art, music and dance, and higher technical institutes with different types of pathways).

The Italian compulsory schooling lasts 10 years, from the age of 6 to 16, and includes the eight years of the first cycle of education and the first two years of the second cycle (Law 296 of 2006).

The teaching and learning of culture in the Italian school starts from the earliest years of a child's life, “in the non-compulsory school”, and takes into account the child's lived experience, their concrete experience, their way of approaching situations, of attributing meaning to them, but at the same time they have to fight with the rigid guides imposed by the educational guidelines of past years. Surely, play is the first field of experience to be leveraged to stimulate the curiosity of the new generation in the perspective of active and lifelong learning.

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With Ministerial Circular No. 205 of July 26, 1990, the term “intercultural education”, an extended concept of culture to be provided in all disciplines and school activities, also appeared for the first time in Italian schools, with reference to primary schooling. The circular stated that *“intercultural education is based on the awareness that the values that give meaning to life are not all in our own culture, but neither are they all in the cultures of others; not all from the past, but neither are they all in the present and the future. Educating for interculturality means building a readiness to know and be known while respecting each person's identity in a climate of dialogue and solidarity”*.

Enhancing specificities and at the same time highlighting commonalities is the most effective method of educating for interculturality, including in workshop form. Practicing culture in the Italian elementary school is a twofold challenge that involves teaching about one's own cultural heritage understood as material and intangible heritage, but also knowledge of diversity for individual enrichment and in the context of global citizenship.



In the secondary school, education is already projected into the future and the competencies provided for the fulfillment of the requirement are defined at the normative level by the Decree of the Ministry of Public Education No. 139 of 2007 and, articulated in skills/competencies and knowledge, developed in four cultural axes: linguistic, mathematical, scientific-technological and historical-social. The integration, connection and relationship between the knowledge and skills contained in the cultural axes lead to the achievement and development of the so-called “key citizenship competencies”, also defined in the aforementioned decree, which represent the Italian declination of the key competencies for lifelong learning, identified by the European Parliament in 2006. Eight skills that need as much knowledge, experience and curiosity as possible to be cultivated. Only with this interconnection can the different subjects be transformed into a useful support for the individual to support them and allow them to navigate the learning journey at school first and in the professional world later.

The Italian model is therefore, at least theoretically, structurally dynamic and perfectly in focus on the decisions to be made about what to teach in school in order to cope with the strong transformation at the social, cultural and economic levels.

Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, many elementary schools are experimenting with a new way of teaching modern history and culture. In the past, school curricula tended to pay too more attention to teaching prehistory at the expense of modern history (20th century and beyond). The goal of the new program called *Dějepis+* (History+), currently being piloted in schools, is to move away from the old way of teaching and memorizing dates and facts, choosing instead to show students that history is not something finite, but influences both the present and the future. This approach should lead to more critical thinking in students and a better ability to work with primary and secondary sources. There are small groups of teachers sharing their experiences with this new program and exchanging new ideas. If this model is successful, it will also be used for teaching other subjects.

Regarding the teaching of culture and history in Czech secondary schools, new teaching methods have recently been developed. Teachers try to improve students' understanding of the subject of study by using worksheets and not simply by learning from textbooks, as was done in the past. These worksheets contain visual material and learning tasks, help students to orient themselves in the topic



or review it at home, and teachers can use them as a means of assessing students' level of knowledge. The most effective aspect of using worksheets are the learning tasks that prompt students to think about the topic on their own. The topics studied are the same as in elementary school, but they are deepened according to the age of the students.

In the universities, the situation is more complicated. When studying the humanities, cultural education is included in the curriculum (depending on the field of study), but when studying more technical fields, there is no teaching of culture and history and one must rely on self-education.

Slovakia

The teaching and learning of culture in Slovak schools can be compared to those in the neighboring Czech Republic. Students have learned history and culture based on dated books and methods, however, some teaching materials have been produced that suggest new teaching methods. In some gymnasiums there are subjects focusing on culture as such, but mostly it is taught together with history.

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Nowadays, modern teaching approaches are increasingly applied as they are more motivating, close to life and to the students, and at the same time considered more effective especially because the student receives information through his or her own empirical experience. The teacher and students create problem-based questions that encourage students to connect the knowledge and understanding they are learning.

Invece di accettare passivamente i fatti storici, gli alunni assumono il ruolo di agenti attivi e si cimentano nel pensare in contesti storici, creando progetti, provando una scenetta sull'argomento in questione, lavorando in modo indipendente e in gruppo.

I concetti moderni attivano la creatività e l'immaginazione dell'alunno, migliorano il clima scolastico e aiutano nella formazione di buone relazioni tra insegnante e allievo. L'applicazione di concetti didattici moderni è un mezzo eccellente per motivare gli alunni, in quanto suscita interesse per l'apprendimento. Si spera che più scuole e insegnanti inizieranno a implementare questi metodi nei loro curriculum.



European overview

Cultures have always changed and mutated over time in their values, their structures and institutions, and the places where they are learned. Humans tend not to reflect on their own culture because it is so much a part of themselves that they take it for granted. It is only by confronting different sensitivities, beliefs, heritages and customs that we realize that we have more in common than we think with countries near and far.

The term culture, in the Italian language, as well as in the Czech, Slovak and also in many other European languages, is rather ambiguous and lends itself to different and varied interpretations and applications, and perhaps therein lies its greatness and elusiveness. In the field of teaching, the focus should not be on the meanings of the term, neither should always think only of the end result, but of the path that teachers, children and families travel together and the scenarios that open up along the way as a result of the notions introduced into the baggage of life and the experiences that impact in transforming the way they relate to themselves, to others and to the world.

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The teaching of national culture, in particular of language and literature, today appears to be strongly influenced by the historical-political situation in which, ever more fully, individual European realities are immersed. Reference is made to the European, supranational dimension, in which states operate and of which they increasingly recognise and accept constraints and limits, as well as stimuli and directions. In this context, uncertain but also obvious horizons open up: to be all Europeans, must we also be a little less Italian, Czech, Slovakian? This is not exactly true. On closer observation, there is no existing European cultural identity; there is no common language, just as there is no common cuisine and not even a common habit of how to spend leisure time. There are national cultures, of course, but sometimes they are seen as an obstacle to the formation of a supranational identity; on the contrary, sometimes they are regretted, impoverished. In times of globalisation and wide mobility, however, it is reductive to speak of Europe alone when talking about culture. It is not easy to find a satisfactory orientation criterion with regard to the intertwining of all these doubts on the teaching of national culture; however, it is useful to provide young people with the tools to nurture new images, creativity, perception and awareness; to give them both national and EU cultural foundations to draw inspiration from. In order to do this, it is necessary to focus on teaching that is not exclusively technical-formal,



linguistic and rhetorical, as this would risk being an ephemeral solution whose inadequacy the school has long felt. Therefore, without ignoring the national cultural conditioning behind the choice of favouring roots, it cannot be forgotten that with time and the ongoing processes of globalisation and changing labour and economic prospects, it appears much less appropriate than it once was.

On the school and education side, it is necessary to take care to develop and safeguard national culture, without, however, neglecting the objective of finding a transversal and possibly attractive path towards a common European sense in the field of the acquisition of shared transversal key competences.

Education systems are entrusted with the task of forming the future generations, the future European citizens, and it is not easy to address one of the most complex trends in modern society with coherence and competence. The primary task of schools is to play an active role in removing the economic and social obstacles that, by limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, prevent the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all in the political, economic and social organisation of the country.

In an increasingly complex and globalised society, the extraordinary increase in know-how in every field of knowledge, the development of technologies, raise the need for education and training for individuals and the community, and pose the need to strengthen those values on which democratic coexistence is based: freedom, equality, justice, solidarity rights, participation, sharing, responsibility and culture. At the same time, there is a growing need for schooling and the transmission of the tools and awareness necessary for democracy to live and grow.

In this panorama, the culture is increasingly an indispensable resource for the individual and for society, and the school represents the institution that has the greatest responsibility in the task of elevating the cultural level of the country and encouraging dialogue and relations with other histories and other cultures by sharing the various points of view and valuing differences.

The knowledge and the learning become effective and persistent when they are offered in such a way that the learner is involved in them, perceives their relevance in view of subsequent choices, studies and professions, in order to build his or her own existence project, to be able to draw on the consolidated heritage of knowledge by using it and extending it throughout the course of life. The



crucial element for learning and for the motivation to learn is the quality of the experiences that teachers and students realise in relation to the fields of study. Knowledge offers the materials of learning, but acquires meaning and practicability in relation to its place in the fabric of the various linguistic forms and theoretical structures, without losing sight of the goal of promoting the highest level of learning for each student and the full participation of teachers in reform processes.

What skills are the important for the development of culture?

There are many definitions of culture and competence; the concept of culture sometimes coincides with that of education, while that of competence seems to be dispersed in the other two.

Every individual experiences several cultures and is nevertheless a cultural being since he/she lives in a certain context, in a historical time, in which various cultural aspects are reflected on him/her, delimiting and characterising his/her being. Knowledge, moreover, also implies knowing how to do, and this is possible by means of a transversal reading tool of knowledge, which are competences.

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Education must lead to various levels of competence, to the acquisition of critical knowledge, not to schematic acquisitions induced by predominantly formative teaching practices.

The education must be motivating, so that the object of knowledge becomes something to reason about, to seek insights into and connections with other knowledge.

The motivation predisposes to the acceptance of new knowledge, but on its own it is not sufficient; if the content is not adapted to the cognitive age, the predisposition to learn produced by the motivation does not translate into real understanding; the object of study remains something vague, which remains suspended.

The Recommendation of 22 May 2018 of the Council of the European Union, in its incipit, cites the European Pillar of Social Rights, according to which *“Promoting the development of competences is one of the objectives of the perspective of a European educational area capable of “fully exploiting the potential represented by education and culture as driving forces for employment, social justice and active citizenship and as a means of experiencing European identity in all its diversity”.*



Furthermore, point 17 of the considerations states: *“The importance and relevance of non-formal and informal learning is made evident by the experiences gained through culture, youth work, volunteering and grassroots sport. Non-formal and informal learning plays an important role in the development of essential interpersonal, communication and cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, analytical skills, creativity, problem-solving and resilience, which facilitate young people's transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life. Better cooperation between different learning contexts helps to promote multiple learning approaches and contexts”.*

These are skills instrumental to the learning, consolidation and realisation of culture:

- critical thinking
- analytical skills
- creativity
- problem solving
- resilience
- active citizenship
- cooperation

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The Recommendation, in its annex 'Key Competences for Lifelong Learning - European Reference Framework', also states that: 'The key competences are all considered to be of equal importance; each of them contributes to a successful life in society. Competences can be applied in many different contexts and in different combinations. They overlap and are interconnected; essentials for one area support competences in another. Elements such as critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, communication and negotiation skills, analytical skills, creativity and intercultural competences underpin all key competences'.

From this it follows that the corollary of competences suitable for cultural development should be cultivated under the following headings:

- communication
- openness to dialogue
- multilingualism
- digital technological skills



- learning to learn skills
- strategic thinking
- empathy

The curriculum of skills and competences preparatory to and necessary for heritage education cannot and will not be exhaustive, but it does have the interest of providing a way of stimulating active learning which includes heritage as an educational objective and tool

Specifically, the heritage education:

- a) stimulates language acquisition: one's own language and foreign languages are elements of cultural heritage and at the same time means to reflect and communicate about one's own heritage. The opportunities for synergy between heritage education and key competences are numerous and often obvious. Besides being part of the heritage and a means to communicate, languages are the code through which our history has been condensed into books, documents, stories, games, songs, poems, etc..
- b) promotes scientific and technological skills and knowledge: cultural heritage also consists of the technologies developed by mankind throughout its existence. As such, heritage reveals the attempts made to understand nature, to control it and to use knowledge for one's own purposes, to use one's own resources and technologies in domestic or work activities. Science and technology are inherent in the local culture. At the same time, it is difficult to motivate students to apply themselves and work in these areas and, even more so, to develop in areas that the heritage approach can make more personal and therefore more accessible. Heritage turns into an 'applied science', which students have to uncover and discover just like real inventors.
- c) adds value to the development of personal and social competences: interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic competences also have their origins in cultural heritage. Religion, tradition and the daily necessities of life have shaped local opinions and customs. The identification and analysis of training needs, both within and outside European borders, can add value to the mutual understanding of the existence and development of new rituals, norms, customs, traditions, values and fundamental, practical ways of playing the role of citizens within society.



- d) introduce entrepreneurship: some countries have achieved development and prosperity through cultural activities. Entrepreneurship has been the driving force of many nations. Heritage education can show good examples from the past. At the same time, the active learning contained in heritage education and competence-oriented learning also stimulate entrepreneurship. Learning becomes a journey of initiative, discovery and relationship with things and people. As a result, it fosters entrepreneurship much better than traditional education systems that focus exclusively on knowledge transfer and passive learning.
- e) it stimulates cultural expression: culture adds creativity and imagination to learning. It is not a competence in itself, but is undoubtedly related to the others. It requires different educational modes with meaningful and non-assessment objectives. Heritage education offers both examples of good practice and necessary techniques and stimuli. This places heritage education between education for the past and education for the future. As the historians say: "history does not provide lessons for the future nor does it help to predict it. However, it adds value to understanding the mechanisms and ineffable nature of the future. Poetry, sculpture, song-writing, singing, dancing, music, textiles, drawing are all examples of the many areas in which opportunities for the development of these skills can be searched for and found
- f) it is useful for digital and learning skills: heritage education offers the ideal context for learners to create their own learning paths, approaching heritage from their favourite angle and using the modes they choose. These learning paths and the demonstration phases of the process include a reminder of computer-digital competences and learning to learn skills.



II. GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR YOUTH CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

European policies on education, culture, youth and sport are mainly proposed by the Member States. However, the EU supports and complements their actions by facilitating cooperation. This concerns in particular financial support for related activities and the cultural and creative sectors.

The EU preserves and promotes its cultural heritage and cultural and linguistic diversity and supports the cultural and creative sectors, including the audiovisual sector. To offer young people wider opportunities in education and the labour market and to ensure their full participation in all sectors of society, the EU has developed several actions, in dialogue with young Europeans and through the Erasmus+ programme and the European Solidarity Corps.

Some of the issues related to culture and youth that Europe is already addressing or intends to address are:

Culture

- Preservation and promotion of the European cultural heritage;
- Cultural cooperation and linguistic diversity;
- Support for cultural and creative industries;
- Support for the audiovisual and media sector.

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Youth

- Studies, training and development for students;
- Opportunities abroad for young people and youth workers;
- Organisations developing innovation partnerships in the fields of education, training and youth;
- Erasmus+ programme;
- European Solidarity Corps, volunteering.

The cultural and creative sectors represent an immensely rich and diverse heritage of Europe and contribute to the evolution of our societies. They play a huge role in the European economy and help generate growth and jobs. Creative Europe 2021-2027 financially supports creative organisations;



encourages audiovisual professionals and cultural and creative operators to operate across Europe, reach new audiences and develop the skills needed in the digital age.

By helping European cultural and audiovisual works to reach audiences in other countries, the programme contributes to safeguarding cultural and linguistic diversity.

The programme includes two different actions, the sub-programmes “media” and “culture”. The CULTURE strand of Creative Europe helps cultural and creative organisations to operate transnationally and promotes the cross-border circulation of cultural works and the mobility of cultural operators. It provides financial support to activities with a European dimension aimed at improving the transnational creation and circulation of European works, developing transnational mobility, audience development (accessible and inclusive culture), innovation and capacity building (in particular digitalisation, new business models, education and training). The supported activities aim to encourage cultural and creative operators to work internationally.

Funding opportunities under Culture cover a wide range of actions:

- Horizontal actions: cooperation projects, networks, platforms, mobility for artists and cultural professionals and development of cultural policies.
- Sectoral support: support for music, publishing, cultural heritage and architecture, as well as other sectors.
- Special actions: EU cultural awards, European Capitals of Culture, European Heritage Label, support for young artists and services to citizens.

Erasmus+, the European Union programme in the field of education, training, youth and sport for the period 2021-2027 promotes, inter alia, projects aimed at developing skills in various green sectors, including those in the framework of the contribution of education and culture to the Sustainable Development Goals, green sectoral skills methodologies and strategies, future-oriented programmes and initiatives that support the planned approaches to environmental sustainability of the participating organisations.

The programme also supports active citizenship and the ethics behind long-term learning, promotes the development of social and intercultural competences, critical thinking and media literacy.



Erasmus+ supports projects that enable participation in democratic life and social and civil engagement through formal or non-formal learning activities. The focus is on raising awareness and understanding of the European context, in particular with regard to the common values of the Union, the principles of unity and diversity and its social, cultural and historical heritage.

In the field of youth, Erasmus+ has developed a youth participation strategy to provide a common framework and support the use of the programme to promote young people's participation in democratic life. The strategy aims to improve the quality of young people's participation in the programme and complements key EU youth policy documents, such as the EU Youth Strategy and the European Youth Objectives.

In a constantly changing, increasingly mobile and multicultural society, cultural differences are also part of culture for Erasmus+, which can be perceived as obstacles by people from all backgrounds, but can particularly affect people with fewer opportunities. These differences can represent significant barriers to learning in general, all the more so for individuals with a migrant background and for refugees, especially those who have just arrived, for those belonging to national or ethnic minorities, for sign language users, for people with difficulties in language adaptation and cultural inclusion.

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The participation of young people in decisions and activities at local, regional, national, European and global level, as well as youth cultural organisations, is essential if we are to build societies that are to be more democratic, more supportive and more prosperous. For this reason, the State and the bodies closest to young people must contribute, in concert with Europe, in supporting and encouraging their participation in building a better society in line with their aspirations.

As we will see, photographing the realities of Italy, Czech Republic and Slovakia, interest in young people and culture is present and growing in all countries; perhaps, it is also thanks to the direction given by Europe in this sense that there can be an increasing awareness of the combination of youth and culture, with all the positive implications on learning and entrepreneurship, transversal skills and active citizenship.



Does the State provide support? Are there funds invested in the development of culture?

Italy

The rules governing the criteria and functioning of organizations in Italy can be found in the Constitution, in articles 3 and 18, in the Civil Code, as well as in the recent legislation on the Third sector referred to in Legislative Decree no. 117 of 3 July 2017. In a subsidiary way, we can also refer to the criteria present in the regional laws on youth policies and in the national calls issued by the Department for Youth Policies and Universal Civil Service.

On the functioning and development of youth organizations, the State, the Regions and the system of local self-government sign an annual agreement in which the financial resources, objectives and priorities for interventions in support of youth organizations are defined. The ministerial decree of distribution, which is issued annually by the delegated political authority in the field of youth policies, represents a final act of the programming and destination of the Fund for Youth Policies, which has as its premise the Understanding, whose destination mainly affects youth organizations, either directly, or through the interventions of local authorities.

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In Italy, youth policies are developed at various levels. There are many national laws in favour of young people in different areas such as education, employment, health, culture, etc. The organizational system is a multi-level governance, a democratic form of government in which decisions derive from the collaboration of many actors who influence each other.

At central level, the Department for Youth Policy and Universal Civil Service of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers is responsible for promoting and linking government actions aimed at ensuring the implementation of youth policies and manages the Universal Civil Service programme.

Youth policies are based on the principles of shared competence and subsidiarity. Therefore, the Government, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces contribute to the drafting of youth legislation, while local authorities, the Third sector and youth organizations are actively involved in the bottom-up planning and implementation phase.

As mentioned above, every year the Italian Government establishes the priorities of youth policies, after consultation with the Regions and other relevant local authorities. The annual strategy is based



on multiannual lines of action. In the last five years, the strategy has supported actions in favor of young talents and the fight against youth hardship.

The Department of Youth Policy and Universal Civil Service uses the Annual Youth Policy Fund, which aims to promote youth rights and support the Annual Strategy. The amount of the Fund is fixed annually by the Budget Law. The official act of the Unified Conference establishes the distribution of the Fund between the national government, the regions and local authorities.

Since 2006, the National Youth Fund has been financing measures to promote the following lines of action:

- non-formal and informal education,
- access of young people to the labour market, including the development of start-ups and youth entrepreneurship,
- social inclusion and specific measures to reach marginalised and vulnerable groups of young people,
- participation and rights of young people,
- cultural activities,
- talent development,
- prevention and combating of addictions,
- volunteering and access to international and European programs and projects.

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Since 2019, the Delegated Political Authority has set the following national political priorities:

- social integration
- participation
- support for youth autonomy,
- non-formal education,
- prevention and measures against new addictions.

As required by the Act of address concerning the identification of political priorities to be achieved in the year 2021 and for the three-year period 2021-2023, the Italian Ministry of Culture has subsequently identified five priorities, as follows:



- Protection and security of cultural heritage,
- Promotion of the development of culture,
- Support for entertainment, cinema and audiovisuals,
- Promotion of tourism,
- Improvement of the organization and functioning of the administration.

The priorities set by the Ministry of Culture are aimed, *first of all*, at the implementation of the actions within its competence within the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) that Italy presented to the European Commission as part of *the Next Generation EU*, which is the instrument adopted in July 2021 to respond to the pandemic crisis caused by Covid-19. In this Plan, culture and tourism are associated with the concepts of digitization, innovation and competitiveness, which together constitute the first of the six missions identified by Italy for these loans.

For Tourism and Culture in particular, there is an investment of 6.68 billion euros divided into 4 different sectors of intervention:

- Cultural heritage for the next generation,
- Regeneration of small cultural sites and religious, cultural and rural heritage,
- Cultural and Creative Industry 4.0,
- Tourism 4.0.

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In this scenario, young people are explicitly mentioned as privileged beneficiaries.

It is a well-known fact that the culture and artistic heritage sector has been, more than others, severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has imposed for several periods the closure of places dedicated to culture and the shelving, for reasons of force majeure, of all activities considered ancillary.

To relaunch this sector, specific investments have been included in the National Recovery and Resistance Plan (PNRR); This is a figure equal to 2.44% of total resources, also considering the Complementary Fund and the other European Structural Funds destined for our country.

Among the most significant interventions that have been and will be financed with these resources are the digitization of artistic heritage and the removal of architectural barriers, to allow people with disabilities to access places of art and culture. Solid investments will then be guaranteed to enhance



the beautiful landscapes, the rural heritage and the small villages, gardens and historic villas, as well as for the seismic safety of religious buildings.

The Covid pandemic has also rewritten the way art is enjoyed; The public, in fact, has redirected its choices based on both territorial proximity and the digital offer made available.

To address the critical issues set out above, the PNRR provides for specific interventions whose main lines of action dedicated to culture are contained in the third component of mission I, named “Tourism and Culture 4.0” and are the following:

- increase the level of attractiveness by modernising the tangible and intangible infrastructures of the historical-artistic heritage;
- improve usability and accessibility through investments in digitalization and removal of architectural barriers;
- regenerate small villages through the promotion of cultural activities and the enhancement of parks and historic gardens;
- improve seismic safety and preservation of places of worship and ensure the shelter of works of art involved in adverse weather events;
- supporting the recovery of the cultural and artistic industry.

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All these actions also follow a logic of reducing environmental impact.

Czech Republic

Over the past four years, the Government of the Czech Republic has invested more and more money in supporting non-governmental and non-profit organizations working with children and young people. The 2002 budget of the Ministry of Youth, Education and Sport allocated some CZK 179 million to support these activities. Other ministries, including the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of the Environment also provide funds for activities of non-governmental and non-profit organisations involved in children and youth work.



There are hundreds of non-governmental and non-profit organizations for children and young people and organizations involved in child and youth work in the Czech Republic. Currently, these organizations have approximately 230,000 children and young members.

The major organizations are:

- Junák - (Association of Boy and Girl Scouts in the Czech Republic),
- Pionýr, Association of Youth Tourist Clubs (The Association of Youth Hiking Clubs),
- YMCA of the Czech Republic,
- Asociace pro mládež, vědu a techniku (Association for Youth, Science and Technology),
- Česká tábornická unie (Czech Union of Campsites),
- Folklore associations (associazione folcloristica),
- a youth section of the Bohemian, Moravian and Silesian Fire Brigade Association,
- Český červený kříž (Czech Red Cross)
- and many more.

There are two umbrella organisations operating at national level such as the so-called 'national youth councils'; These realities associate non-profit non-governmental organizations that work with children and young people, and are:

- the Czech Council of Children and Youth,
- the Circle of associations for children and young people.

Specifically

Česká rada dětí a mládeže (ČRD = Czech Council of Children and Youth)

It is an umbrella organization of the main Czech non-governmental and non-profit organizations involved in the education and leisure of children and young people. Its work complies with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Czech Council of Children and Youth is based on respect for the mission of each association and on providing help to children and young people in the Czech Republic. The adopted strategy authorises the Council to deal with other parties in the Czech Republic and abroad on behalf of its associations. The Board provides member associations with



methodological, organizational and legal consultancy services if they are unable to obtain them otherwise.

Kruh sdružení dětí a mládeže (KSDM - The circle of youth and children's associations)

This circle of associations associates youth and children's organizations in the Czech Republic, while maintaining their sovereignty and respecting their rights and interests. The Club defends the interests of all its members vis-à-vis local and foreign bodies, organizations and institutions.

The objectives of the Circle include, in particular:

- enforce the conditions for youth work of civic associations,
- promoting a democratic and equal relationship between children and youth organisations and their mutual cooperation,
- actively participate in the international cooperation of children's and youth associations,
- articulate, defend and enforce the interests of the member organizations of the Circle.

Slovakia

In Slovakia there are various funds dedicated to the development of national art and culture. These funds, allocated by the Ministry of Culture, are as follows:

- Art Support Fund (Fond na podporu umenia)
 - Non-professional art
 - Theatre
 - Cultural and artistic centres
 - Interdisciplinary projects
 - Dance
 - Creative industry
 - Music
 - Literature
 - Visual arts
 - Digital games



- Libraries
 - Traditional culture
 - Museums, galleries
 - Research and education.
-
- National Fund for the Support of Minority Culture (Fond na podporu kultúry národnostných menšín)
 - Research and education
 - Literary and publishing activity
 - Theatre, music, painting and audiovisual arts
 - Intercultural dialogue and understanding
 - Literary Fund (Literárny fond)
 - Music Fund (Hudobný Fund)
 - Fine Arts Fund (Fond výtvarných umení)

III. NEW TRENDS IN CULTURE

In recent years, EU policy action in the field of culture has been guided by the Commission's European Agenda for Culture, the European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage, which followed the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, the Joint Communication “Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations” and the Multiannual Work Plans of the Culture Council.

Since the beginning of 2020, the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic on culture has exacerbated the challenges faced by the cultural and creative sectors, in particular the living and working conditions of artists and cultural professionals and income generation for arts and culture. National and EU authorities have focused mainly on mitigating the impact of the crisis and helping sectors recover. To help exit the crisis, the Recovery and Resilience Facility was set up and entered into force in February 2021. Cultural and creative sectors and industries benefit to a large extent from the support of the Recovery and Resilience Facility through direct measures in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans and indirectly through cross-cutting measures. Several EU programmes and funds



under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 have also been adapted to provide more targeted support to the cultural and creative sectors in a context of recovery, including an increase in the budget for the Creative Europe programme and the 'Culture, creativity and inclusive society' cluster under Horizon Europe. The COVID-19 crisis has reconfirmed the relevance of overarching priorities of the 2019-2024 Strategic Agenda and accelerated trends already underway in culture, such as digital transformation and the focus on climate change and environmental degradation. It highlighted the valuable role played by culture in promoting people's well-being and improving social cohesion and transformation. In this new context, other important EU initiatives have been launched, which draw heavily on culture or shape cultural policy-making, such as the new European Bauhaus¹⁸, the European Year of Youth 2022 or the Skills Agenda for Europe.

The restrictions due to the pandemic have promoted new ways of cultural participation through the web and have given impetus both to existing forms of digital fruition, but not yet widely spread, and to new digital practices, such as online events, interaction on social channels, webinar discussions, virtual exhibitions, free dissemination of e-books and digital teaching.

Some analyses conducted from a generational perspective have highlighted how among the young people of the new generations there has been an increase in disaffection towards some cultural participation activities in recent years and vice versa a hold among adults and late-adults. Should what emerged from these analyses lead to the conclusion that the new generations of young people participate culturally less or that, instead, the reference models for defining cultural participation have simply changed?

Another aspect to consider, in terms of new trends, is the impact that culture and the arts have on people's well-being and mental health; This is why free access to culture and creativity for people with disabilities becomes fundamental. Similarly, promoting inclusion and non-discrimination, combating racism and gender inequality through culture becomes another priority to be further developed.



Italy

In recent years the evolution of cultural participation in Italy, and more generally in modern society, has been remarkable both in terms of consumption and in terms of supply. As announced by the European and global trend, the advent of the Internet and new technologies has led to a change in cultural consumption behaviour and in the means of communication that are adapting their offer in this direction.

Beyond the needs due to the restrictions for the protection of health, the spread of the Internet and new digital equipment has revolutionized cultural fruition, increasingly variegating the panorama of the offer, the places and spaces of culture.

In Italy the interest of the population towards reading books in free time, that is, reading pleasure free from obligations and constraints, has always been very limited. Despite the progressive increase in the level of education of the population, the share of readers in their free time still remains much lower than the share of the population that possesses the skills to read.

In recent years there has been a significant growth in the offer of e-books, so much so that between 2013 and 2019 the number of copies of works in e-book format has almost tripled, going from 14,916 to over 39,200. Despite the trend towards digitization by the publishing industry, the majority of readers continue to choose paper to digital format.

Over the past decade, in parallel with the decline in the share of book readers, we have witnessed a massive diffusion of new technologies and their increasingly intensive use, especially among the younger generations. These technologies offer not only new opportunities to spend time, but also new opportunities to read. In fact, if it is true that the share of book readers has decreased, it is also true that today we read much more than a few years ago because digital has imposed the written word as a communication code.

All this has led to two major changes in the relationship between the population and reading. The first, related to the object of reading, underlines how today, more than yesterday, the population spends its time in reading short texts contained on the net such as e-mails, articles, posts, short messages and tweets.



The second, instead, concerns the spread of new ways of reading through new technologies, which have favored the spread of a shorter, faster and more discontinuous way of reading, in a succession of reading now rapid now slow. The reading understood in the traditional, linear and progressive sense, in fact, was flanked by a zapping model reading with information of any kind on the web.

The pandemic linked to the spread of Covid-19 has heavily affected leisure activities that take place outside the home. The temporary closure of museums, theaters and cinemas, the suspension of concert activities and the limits imposed on travel have led to a sharp decrease in the share of the population that claims to have enjoyed cultural activities.

As for the habit of going to the cinema by the population, it is possible to observe over time, even before the arrival of the pandemic, profound changes in the methods of use. The viewing of films, in fact, in Italy as in the other two partner countries, has partially moved from the cinema to the home.

In the last thirty years, the spread of the internet has made a real revolution in people's lives, involving changes in terms of customs and lifestyles, offering new ways of communication and new possibilities to live leisure and cultural participation. As is usual for Italy, there have been disparities in the spread of digital both at a geographical level with inequalities between North and South, and at a generational level, to the detriment of the older population that in Italy is predominant.

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With the pandemic lockdown, everything has been put to the test: culture, sports, entertainment, political and religious participation, social relations. The home space, immediately elected as a place of work and study, has become, thanks to the internet, a place of fitness, a portal for access to museums, an arena for shows, an agora for public exchange, a temple of religious participation. All the activities that took place outside the home were reconfigured through the web, in one's own home, bridging the physical distance.

Czech Republic

In recent years, culture in the Czech Republic has had to adapt significantly to the new normal. Since, due to Covid-19 restrictions, face-to-face cultural events were banned for a while, people came up with a new way to do them: online, via Zoom, Skype and means of communication that allowed them



to cultivate relationships and interests at a distance. In this way it was possible to participate in online concerts, museum exhibitions, theatrical performances and many other events in virtual mode.

In recent years it seems that culture has lost its position in the scale of values of the Czech people. Many people, as a result of the pandemic crisis, have lost their jobs or have suffered a drastic reduction in wages that has forced them to choose carefully how to spend the little money available; Therefore, the cut to cultural experiences, considered of secondary necessity, was inevitable. Many people, for example, have made it a habit to watch movies at home instead of at the cinema and it will probably take some time for the culture to return to its original state or in a new attractive form.

Public awareness of museums has also been affected by the covid pandemic. The number of visitors to museums in the Czech Republic has increased steadily since 2013 and reached an all-time high of 14.7 million visitors in 2019. In the year of the 2020 pandemic, it plummeted by 54% and the decline did not stop even the following year: a total of 6.6 million people visited museums (almost a quarter of a million fewer than in 2020). Nevertheless, museums have expanded their exhibition spaces and the number of exhibitions; Unfortunately, without registering improvements in the number of visitors. Several museums have made digital exhibitions, virtual tours and educational programs freely available online, however, having absorbed the crisis, this trend has disappeared signaling a relatively large gap in communication between museums and digital audiences.

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Over the past four years, the Czech government has invested more and more money in support of non-governmental and non-profit organizations working with children and young people. According to the 2002 budget of the Ministry of Youth, Education and Sport, the national government has allocated some CZK 179 million to support these activities. Other ministries, including the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of the Environment also provide funds for activities of non-governmental and non-profit organisations involved in children and youth work. There are hundreds of non-governmental and non-profit organizations for children and young people and organizations involved in child and youth work in the Czech Republic. Currently, these organizations manage about 230,000 children and young members. The most important organizations are the following:

- Junák (Association of Boy and Girl Scouts in the Czech Republic),
- Pionýr, Association of Youth Tourist Clubs (L'Associazione dei club escursionistici giovanili),



- YMCA of the Czech Republic,
- *Asociace pro mládež, vědu a techniku* (Association for Youth, Science and Technology),
- *Česká tábornická unie* (The Czech Union of Campsites),
- *Folklore Association* (Associazione folcloristica),
- a youth section of the Bohemian, Moravian and Silesian Fire Brigade Association,
- *Český červený kříž* (Czech Red Cross)

and many more.

There are two umbrella organizations that operate at national level and associate non-profit non-governmental entities that work with children and young people: the Czech Council of Children and Youth and the Circle of Associations for Children and Youth.

Česká rada dětí a mládeže (ČRDM, Czech Council of Children and Youth)

This is an umbrella organization of leading Czech non-governmental and non-profit organizations involved in the education and leisure of children and youth. Its work complies with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Czech Council of Children and Youth is based on respect for the mission of each association and on providing help to children and young people in the Czech Republic. The adopted strategy authorises the Council to deal with other parties in the Czech Republic and abroad on behalf of its associations. The Board provides member associations with methodological, organizational and legal consultancy services if they are unable to obtain them otherwise.

Kruh sdružení dětí a mládeže (KSDM, Circle of youth and children's associations)

This body associates youth and children's organizations in the Czech Republic, while maintaining their sovereignty and respecting their rights and interests. The Club defends the interests of its members vis-à-vis local and foreign bodies, organizations and institutions.

The objectives of the Circle include, in particular:

- enforce the conditions for youth work of civic associations,



- promoting a democratic and equal relationship between children and youth organisations and their mutual cooperation,
- actively participate in the international cooperation of children's and youth associations,
- articulate, defend and enforce the interests of the member organizations of the Circle.

Slovakia

As in many other countries in Europe and the world, but especially as in Italy and the neighboring Czech Republic, the Covid-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on Slovak culture and how it is perceived, as well as used, by citizens. During the pandemic, many events and exhibitions took place in digital format; Despite this, the negative financial repercussions on many national cultural institutions have been huge and have not yet healed. First the pandemic and now the war in Ukraine have brought with them a drastic increase in inflation and the cost of living such as to force people to make forced choices about how to spend their money, to the detriment of participatory culture. Many Slovaks, especially young people, prefer to visit an online tour or watch a movie at home instead of physically going to a museum or cinema.

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Overview

It is clear from this study that the cultural and creative sectors have been hit hard by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout Europe and, specifically, in the three countries considered, shows and exhibitions have been cancelled, while cinemas, theaters and museums have been closed temporarily and sometimes irretrievably. Closures and cancellations have had strong repercussions both on professionals and on the general population who found themselves faced with having to reset their priorities in the face of reduced economic revenues and basic needs to be met. For this reason, the governments of Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, like the rest of Europe and in line with Community measures, have created ad hoc financial instruments and programmes to provide direct support to the cultural sector and its adaptation to the new needs driven by beneficiaries, such as flexibility, digitalisation and greater accessibility. The policies pursued by individual countries in the various sectors of culture converge in wanting to create the necessary conditions to revitalize the



creative economy and safeguard its long-term growth, while maintaining national cultural diversity, however, stemming disconnected traits through greater information and the transition to digital.



IV. THE STATE OF DIGITALIZATION OF CULTURE

For a culturally rich and diverse Europe, it is essential to ensure the preservation of Europe's precious cultural heritage so that future generations can get to know it, appreciate it and dispose of it to the fullest. As is the case with almost all aspects of modern life, digital technologies also offer solutions for the defense of this heritage.

The great advantage of digitization is that it allows you to have information, data, on which you can work with the use of smartphones, tablets, computers and so on. Digital is changing the world, the way we interact in society and also in the school, which can benefit greatly. Libraries, museums, online archives all over the world, with practically infinite resources, are now a heritage of knowledge that fully becomes part of the tools and teaching. The next step concerns, therefore, the teaching methods that move from the historical approach based on traditional programs and methodologies to teaching as “digital teaching”, with content and students at the center.

In the cultural heritage sector, the revolution brought by digital is extraordinary. The enormous potential for sharing and accessing information is a very important source for the dissemination of heritage culture. In addition to this aspect just outlined, the potential that the introduction of digital has for the protection of cultural heritage is also enormous. Whether it is a priceless painting, an archaeological excavation, a landscape, a cinematic masterpiece, cultural heritage can be easily and permanently damaged or, in the worst case, even destroyed. The digitisation of cultural heritage is important for the protection, conservation, restoration, research, dissemination and promotion of tangible and intangible cultural assets from all types of cultural institutions.

The possibilities offered by the increasing advances in digital technologies are impressive and growing. 3D technology, artificial intelligence and virtual reality are all being used not only to ensure preservation, but also to stimulate the imagination of young digitally native Europeans, inspiring admiration and appreciation for Europe's vast cultural treasures.



European Overview

Through extensive policy, coordination and funding actions, the European Commission supports Member States' cultural policy, with a focus on digitisation and online access to cultural material, as well as digital preservation and care activities.

Europeana, the European Digital Cultural Heritage Platform, works with thousands of archives, libraries and museums across Europe to facilitate access, use and re-use of cultural content. It is the only pan-European platform of its kind and plays a central role in strengthening the cultural heritage community. Launched in November 2008, Europeana is the European digital library that brings together digitised contributions from various institutions from 27 EU Member States in 30 languages and includes books, films, paintings, newspapers, sound archives, maps, manuscripts and archives.

In 2014 the European Council described Cultural Heritage as a strategic resource by referring to its tangible and intangible physical and digital manifestations. This direction was then reiterated with the call of the European Union in 2017 in the decision that announced 2018 as the “European Year of Cultural Heritage”. Digital becomes, therefore, a cultural heritage to be preserved.

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In parallel to these efforts, in 2019, 26 European countries signed a Declaration of Cooperation on promoting the digitisation of cultural heritage. The declaration calls on Member States to exploit synergies between digital technologies and Europe's cultural heritage in three main areas:

- 1) a pan-European initiative for the 3D digitisation of artefacts, monuments and cultural heritage sites;
- 2) strengthening cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation and capacity building in the field of digital cultural heritage;
- 3) promoting citizen involvement, innovative use and repercussions in other areas.

In 2020, with the help of experts, the Commission also completed the 10 basic principles for the 3D digitisation of tangible cultural heritage, which represent important guidance for heritage professionals wishing to digitise their content.



There is no doubt that COVID-19 has clearly highlighted the need to expand online access to cultural heritage: in fact, although many European cultural institutions have had to close, many have since recovered by expanding their digital offerings.

Through Horizon 2020, the Commission provides important and ongoing support for research and innovation in the field of cultural heritage, with a focus on the use of cutting-edge technologies. Since 2014-2020, funding through Horizon 2020 for digital cultural heritage has reached around €70 million and funding for these initiatives will continue in a reinforced manner with the launch of Horizon Europe for the period 2021-2027.

To date, in Europe, the rate of digitization of cultural collections is between 30% and 50%. Even lower are the statistics relating to three-dimensional representations of large structures and landscapes of cultural heritage. In addition, most of the standards in use are not uniform, traceable or secure, which is a risk factor for Europe's tangible and intangible cultural treasures. To fill these gaps, the European Commission's infrastructure “Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage” was born: a joint initiative of large-scale interdisciplinary collaboration between specialists in the sector providing cutting-edge technologies for the digitization of artifacts, the search for works of art as well as the documentation of data in the field of cultural heritage. In addition, the initiative offers museums and small cultural institutions new opportunities to collaborate on joint projects, using a safe and highly professional workspace.

Italy

The digitization of cultural heritage in Italy has started systematically since the nineties of the twentieth century, also at regional level, and has been conducted over the years on the basis of a rich system of methodological tools, developed primarily by the central Institutes of the Ministry, which have gradually covered practically every articulation of cultural heritage. Overall, the information systems managed by the central Institutes of the Ministry, which today constitute the main reference point in methodological and technological terms, contain over 37 million cataloguing descriptions to which about 26 million images are associated; This wealth of information has been consulted by over 100 million unique visitors over the past five years. Added to this is what is still managed at territorial



level, by regional information systems or local applications, and not merged into national databases; A heritage certainly considerable but fragmented, of which it is also difficult to give not only an interpretation, but even a reliable quantification. Other weaknesses are the lack of sustainability over time, the limited consultation of data or the scarce possibility for users to use services that precede or follow the visit to the place of culture. Over time it has been seen that digital is not only an alternative to culture, on the contrary, it represents a great opportunity to create an ecosystem of culture capable of increasing potential demand and expanding accessibility to reach generational and geographical targets that are difficult to engage, as well as new relationships between cultural heritage and people. To carry out this process, with a view to harmonizing the cultural and technological dimensions, the Central Institute for the Digitization of Cultural Heritage - Digital Library of the Ministry of Culture started in 2022 the drafting of the National Plan for the Digitization of Cultural Heritage (PND).

The NDP defines the enabling conditions for a digital ecosystem of cultural heritage to be structured and grown, always taking into account the European context. The PND is the strategic vision with which the Ministry of Culture intends to promote and organize the digital transformation process in the five-year period 2022-2026 in the various sectors of the cultural ecosystem, addressing in the first instance museums, archives, libraries, superintendencies, institutes and public places of culture that preserve, protect, manage and / or enhance cultural heritage; for this reason it also constitutes the strategic, intellectual and technical context of reference for the achievement of the objectives of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). The purpose of this first version of the PND 2022-2023 is to promote and orient the process of change of Italian cultural institutes towards a conscious, participatory, shared, sustainable and inclusive digital transformation. A common framework for action is in fact the basis for consolidating the digital ecosystem of cultural heritage.

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By places of culture we also mean schools, where cultural heritage education plays a key role and a democratic and inclusive approach must be promoted, the responsible use of cultural heritage and the involvement of young people towards active citizenship.

Digital and technologies within schools have an impact on learning processes, especially on the development of children's basic skills and on the development of operational skills and in relational aspects, both between student and student, both in the relationship between students and teachers and ultimately in the relationship with society. In this scenario, important for learning and education



is the stimulus that digital and new technologies can give in the impulse to effective interdisciplinary educational paths that can include contributions deriving from cultural heritage.

If it is true that digital teaching begins at school, it should be considered that training also takes place in common environments, predisposed to collaboration, in laboratories, libraries, museums, cultural heritage, on the territory, so that these too return to being places where to develop or continue the design activity and the encounter between knowledge, know-how and collective participation. The digital revolution will lead to a rapid evolution of the professions of cultural heritage, which the world of education must take into account.

Czech Republic

In September 2022, the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic announced a call to support the digitization of culture through the initiative “Digitization of Cultural Heritage and National Cultural Monuments”. The programme awards grants to support the digitisation of cultural content managed by museums and galleries, the National Heritage Institute, the Roman Catholic Church, and the owners and administrators of national cultural monuments. Through this funding policy, the creation of digitized content, its presentation and sharing with other entities focused on the presentation of the cultural heritage of the Czech Republic is supported. Support is directed towards the acquisition of hardware, other digitization equipment, software and delivery services. The objective of the competitive grant procedure is to support the digitization of the Czech Republic's cultural heritage through innovative and environmentally friendly technologies in the following thematic areas:

- digital documentation of cultural goods, documentary collections and archives of authorized applicants in the form of photographic documentation and scanning,
- digitization of two-dimensional cultural heritage through photographic documentation and scanning,
- digitisation of three-dimensional cultural heritage,
- digital documentation of movable and immovable national cultural monuments in the form of photographic documentation and scanning,
- digitization of two-dimensional mobile national cultural monuments,



- digitisation of mobile and immovable three-dimensional national cultural monuments,
- digitization of cinematographic, sound and audiovisual recordings,
- digitisation of analogue collections, documentary collections and archives of eligible candidates, including retroconversion.

Slovakia

Today, the Slovak Ministry of Culture, led by Minister Natalia Milanova, can announce that the results of the digitisation of the collections available on Slovakiana.sk cultural heritage portal will become part of Europe's digital cultural heritage. The Ministry of Culture, together with the National Outreach Centre (NOC) and selected Slovak institutions, has managed to achieve this success. After a long time, they resumed submitting digitised collections, documents and national cultural monuments to the European Cultural Heritage Portal Europeana.

The NOC's initiative to resume uploading data to the Europeana portal was to disseminate knowledge of Slovak cultural heritage at European level, to improve the quality of the data and the way in which they are presented. Thanks to digitization, Slovak museums, galleries, libraries and other cultural institutions can now bring innovative experiences to the public or provide access to exhibitions and documents that are geographically inaccessible or that, for various reasons, cannot be physically accessible.

In the first phase, objects from the collection of the Slovak Technical Museum and audiovisual works of the National Education Center are made available to the public.

However, the ambitions of the Slovak Ministry of Culture and the NOC did not end there; They plan to make available to millions of people around the world other valuable collections of Slovak cultural heritage, which are still waiting to be digitized. Therefore, the ambitious team behind the Slovakiana project is currently working on sending additional collections from other Slovak institutions, as well as improving the quality of the data provided so that they can fully present our country in the 21st century.



In the wake of Europeana, the Slovakiana project brings together Slovakia's cultural heritage in one place that constitutes the most comprehensive database of collection objects and currently contains more than one million digitised objects.

Thanks to the infrastructure built, the portal offers more possibilities for searching, browsing and downloading digital objects in high resolution with the possibility of subsequent non-commercial use if the current state of copyright protection allows it.

With the portal's content customization capabilities, visitors can create their own collections from accessible objects, discuss with the public, share content, make suggestions to update or add descriptive information to cultural objects, track and be informed about topics of interest to them. All objects also carry information about their availability in terms of related legal protection. Thanks to these features, Slovakiana should become a tool used in e-learning over time, but also, for example, in the creative industry.

The selection of objects for digitization and actual scanning of cultural goods is carried out exclusively by the Institutions of Memory and Funds (PFI).



V. OVERVIEW OF MUSEUMS

Europe preserves a priceless artistic and cultural heritage, collected in hundreds of museums and art galleries scattered throughout its territory. Everyone deserves at least one visit, but in practice it would be really difficult, if you were to visit everyone physically, to check all the items on the list.

How many museums are there....

According to the estimates of the UNESCO Report on Museums in the World, Europe has many more museums per capita than any other continent. The current estimate of museums in the world is about 95,000, 77.4% of which are in Europe. The number of European museums, then, differs from state to state.

Also according to UNESCO estimates, 90% of the world's museums, over 85,000 institutions, have closed their doors due to the pandemic crisis, and part of them may not reopen. These temporary closures, however, have had important economic and social consequences that could weigh on museums in the long term. Places of culture face a major challenge in maintaining their role in the fields of education, dissemination of culture, promotion of social cohesion and strengthening the local and regional creative economy of the future; in this scenario, the role of individual States in adopting immediate policies aimed at supporting the sector becomes fundamental.

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Another aspect to consider is the variety of national realities, the different rhythms with which cultural phenomena develop and modify, the different traditions and the different approaches to the cultural field in different countries; So different and peculiar at times that it becomes difficult to imagine a common effort to align towards a European dimension, without a conscious renunciation of one's own specificities and part of one's own cultural traditions.

Italy

In Italy the regulatory reference for museums is constituted by Legislative Decree 42/2004 whose article 101 includes the museum among the places of culture and defines it as a permanent structure



that acquires, catalogs, preserves, orders and exhibits cultural heritage for purposes of education and study. The same article lists among the places of culture, in addition to museums, also archaeological areas and parks and monumental complexes, institutions that can have museum value.

Italian museums can be distinguished by thematic area, by type and according to the type of management. There are museums focused on anthropology, visual arts, entertainment, music, archeology, food and wine, science, sports, applied arts, design, technique, natural history, military, naturalistic and historical. In addition, there are museums of industrial archeology, ecomuseums, places of the Italian Environment Fund, educational farms, company museums, children's museums, multimedia museums, tactile museums, theme parks, geological sites, UNESCO sites, monuments, villas and palaces, fortresses and castles, museum houses, religious monuments, archaeological sites, archives and botanical gardens.

According to Istat data, in 2020 in Italy 4,265 museums and similar institutions, public and private, were open or partially open: 3,337 museums, 295 archaeological areas and 633 monuments or monumental complexes. The offer of museum exhibition facilities has a density on the territory equal to 1.4 museums or similar institutes per 100 square kilometers and about one per 14 thousand inhabitants in demographic terms. More than one in four Italian municipalities (26.7%) hosts at least one museum or similar institution. Almost half of the exhibition facilities are in the Northern regions (46.2%), 28.9% in the Centre and 24.9% in the South and Islands. In the South, more than half of the archaeological areas are concentrated (51.5%). In northern Italy there are 49.4% of museums and 40% of monuments.

Just over a tenth (11.5%) of the Italian historical-cultural, architectural and archaeological wealth surveyed in 2020 is found in 10 municipalities: Rome (112), Florence (68), Milan (48), Genoa and Turin (41), Bologna (40), Naples (37), Trieste (36), Siena and Venice (33). In the cities of Rome and Florence, world capitals of cultural tourism, 42.3% of museums and other museums in Italy are concentrated. A characteristic of the Italian situation is the widespread diffusion of places of cultural interest: 32.2% of museums are located in small municipalities with less than 5 thousand inhabitants and 33% in medium-sized demographic municipalities; Italy is, therefore, characterized by a strongly polycentric museum offer and uniformly distributed throughout the territory, even in marginal areas from a geographical, socio-economic or infrastructural point of view.



Italy is a large open-air museum that every year attracts millions of visitors from all over the world. Among the most beautiful and most visited museum activities in Italy we can list, in random and non-exhaustive order of a potentially infinite list:

- the Uffizi Museum, Florence
- the archaeological museum of the Colosseum, Rome
- the Vatican Museums, Rome
- the Borghese Gallery, Rome
- the archaeological excavations of Pompeii
- the Accademia Gallery (where Michelangelo's David is located), Florence
- the Doge's Palace, Venice
- the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice
- the National Cinema Museum, Turin
- Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome
- Museum of Venaria Reale, Turin
- Egyptian Museum, Turin
- Hadrian's Villa and Villa d'Este, Rome
- The Archaeological Park of Herculaneum
- The Royal Palace of Caserta
- the Last Supper, Milan
- Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan
- the Scaliger castle of Sirmione
- the Royal Palace of Naples
- the Museum of Capodimonte, Naples
- the museum of the Fabbrica de Monastero dei Benedettini, Catania
- the Capuchin Crypt, Palermo

In terms of artistic beauties, Italy is the ideal place to immerse yourself in a world without equal and the incredible museums scattered in Italian cities testify to an endless cultural heritage that tells the culture of the country from its most distant past to the contemporary.



With regard to the permanent repercussions of the pandemic crisis on Italian museum structures, it is recorded, despite the objective difficulties of the sector, that only 8% of museums have not reopened to visitors after the physical closure imposed at the end of February 2020.

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is a country rich in history and natural beauty, home to a multitude of national parks, pretty towns and historic castles. Despite everything, the country is mainly known for the beauty of its capital, Prague, which boasts over a hundred museums and exhibition halls, embracing every kind of art and historical period.

There is no museum registration system in the Czech Republic and it is unclear how many of the registered entities meet the standards met and take care of the museum collections and how many of them only manage exhibition spaces. It can be said that less than 60% of the institutions covered by the statistics operate under the regime of Act No 122/2000 Coll. on the protection of museum collections and have collections registered in the central register. As regards ownership structure, around 80 % of the total number of museums is established by the State (27) and local authorities, i.e. regions (96) or municipalities (255). 51% of museums are so-called local history museums (general, multidisciplinary), about 10% are art museums (galleries).

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Traditional museums in Prague include the following:

- The Jewish Museum, which houses one of the largest collections dedicated to Judaism in the world;
- The National Gallery, the second oldest art gallery in Europe after the Louvre in Paris;
- The Franz Kafka Museum in the Malá Strana district;
- The National Museum, the oldest and largest in the Czech Republic;
- The Museum of Communism on the totalitarian communist regime of old Czechoslovakia from February 1948 to November 1989;
- The Lobkowitz Palace in Prague Castle, with works by painters such as Velázquez, Brueghel and Canaletto and scores by great composers such as Mozart, Beethoven and Haydn.



Central Bohemia, on the outskirts of Prague, is a region full of beautiful castles and palaces, enchanting river valleys, silver mines and unexpected landscapes. Among the many museums you can visit, we mention some of them:

- The village of Botanical handicrafts, Ostrá
- the ossuary of Sedlec, Kutná Hora
- the Monument to King George and the Polaba Museum, Poděbrady
- Nativity Museum, Karlštejn
- Museo della Ceramica, Kostelec nad Černými lesy

South Bohemia, i.e. the whole area south of Prague up to the border with Austria and Germany, is an extremely diverse region with fabulous cities such as Český Krumlov and České Budějovice, beautiful castles, large rivers, mountains, lakes and nature trails. Among the museums not to be missed there are:

- The Discalced Augustinian Monastery, Tábor
- Museum of South Bohemia, České Budějovice
- The Regional Museum, Český Krumlov
- The castle, Hluboká nad Vltavou
- The Monastery Museum, Borovany

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The Plzeň region in West Bohemia is home to centuries-old forests and crystal clear bodies of water. The eponymous capital, famous worldwide for its beer, is the fourth largest city in the Czech Republic after Prague, Brno and Ostrava. Among the museums that can be visited, we mention:

- Il museo della Selva Boema, Sušice
- Il Museo della Boemia occidentale, Pilsen
- Il Museo minerario Planá - Tunnel Ondřej Šlik, Plana
- Il Museo delle marionette, Plzeň
- Il Museo della Škoda, Plzeň

The Karlovy Vary region in the northwestern part of the historical region of Bohemia is known for its thermal baths. Among the museums:



- The Brick Museum, Kyselka
- Cheb Museum and Castle
- Krásno Mining Museum
- The Doubrava Open-Air Museum in Lipová
- The Museum of Musical Instruments, Luby

The region of Ústí nad Labem, located in the northwestern part of the historical region of Bohemia, owes its significant development to its location between Prague and Germany. To visit:

- The Terezín Memorial
- The Magdeburská barracks and the small fortress, Terezín
- The regional museum, Chomutov
- Zubrnice Railway Museum
- L'Acquedotto and vapore Střekov and Ústí nad Labem

La regione di Liberec, nella parte nord della regione storica della Bohemia, al confine con Germania e Polonia, è una zona con infinite possibilità attrattive per movimento e cultura, ai piedi del monte Ještěd. Fra le offerte museali, si ricordano:

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- Šindelka Forest and Hunting Exhibition, Harrachov
- Popular buildings, Pertoltice
- Forest and hunting exhibition Šindelka, Harrachov
- The Museum of the Giants, Vrchlabí
- The Jizera Mountains Museum, Korenov

The region of Hradec Králové, northeast of the historical region of Bohemia, is characterized by enchanting nature and the very elegant union of Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and modern architecture. Some of the museums in the region are:

- The Franciscan Monastery, Hostinné
- The Castle of Staré Hrady
- Places of the Czech Crown, Náchod
- Hanička Fortress near Rokytnice, in the Orlické Mountains



- Třebechovice Nativity Museum, Třebechovice pod Orebem

The Pardubice region, located in East Bohemia with a small part in northwestern Moravia, offers an abundance of natural beauty. From the top of the observation towers you can enjoy some beautiful views of the beautiful and rugged landscape, from the plains to the hills to the Králický Sněžník massif, or the historic towns. The museums are many; Some of them are mentioned:

- The Hippological Museum, Slatiňany
- The Mining Museum, Jevíčko
- Košumberk Castle
- The Industrial Museum of Mladějov
- The East Bohemian Museum in Pardubice

The Vysočina region, also known as the Jihlava region, is located in the southeastern part of Bohemia, and partly in the southwestern territory of Moravia. The landscape is characterized by hills, lakes, high cliffs, dense forests, flowering meadows and three UNESCO heritage sites. Among the museums of this area:

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- The Gate of the Mother of God, Jihlava
- Gustav Mahler's House in Jihlava
- Kámen Castle
- The Synagogue, Třešť
- The Underground Exhibition and Exhibition of the History of Rail Transport, Telč

South Moravia, in addition to being the warmest and most fertile region of the Czech Republic, is also the place that has the oldest traces of settlements on Czech territory. This area is ideal for lovers of nature and cultural monuments. Speaking of museums, some of the many present, are:

- The Czechoslovak Šatov Fortification Area
- Dietrichstein Palace and Brno underground
- DinoPark, Vyškov
- The South Moravian Museum in Znojmo
- Budišov Castle



The Olomouc region, located in the northwestern and central part of Moravia and to a small extent in the Silesian region, about 250km from Prague, is rich in history and traditions, cultural monuments and beautiful landscapes. Some of the museums are listed below:

- The Archbishop's Palace and Archdiocesan Museum in Olomouc
- Zlaté Hory Mining Museum
- Museo del cinema di Zdeněk e Jan Svěrák
- Hanušovice Brewery Museum
- The first and only private accordion museum, Litovel

The Zlín region, located in the southeastern part of Moravia, boasts a number of natural, cultural and historical landmarks such as mountains, garden architecture, spas, wine valleys, remains of the Great Moravian Empire, religious monuments, historic buildings and museums; Among all:

Wallachian Open-Air Museum, Rožnov pod Radhoštěm

- The Museum of South-East Moravia, Zlín
- The Podhradí Museum, Buchlovice
- The Ceramics Museum of Tupy, Tupy
- The Museum of Forestry and Hunting, Chřibů

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The region of Moravian-Silesia, in the north-eastern part of Moravia and in Silesia on the border between Poland and Slovakia, is a region with several mountainous areas as well as highly industrialized; its capital Ostrava was in fact called the “steel heart of the Republic”. Museums include:

- The Open-Air Museum of Folk Traditions and Handicrafts in Bolatický
- The Mining Museum Park Lanek, Ostrav
- Jiří Třanovský Museum and Memorial, Třanovice
- Kravaře Castle Museum in Silesia
- The Ostrava Industrial Museum

Like Italy, the Czech Republic is characterized by a regional division that marks heterogeneous landscapes and traditions. Moving within the country you will encounter cultural realities that greatly



influence the tourist and cultural economy. The places of culture, therefore, reflect these realities and, although scattered throughout the territory, are concentrated in the most populated and best accessible centers.

Slovakia

Despite being a small country, Slovakia has a great heritage of regional diversity, both cultural and geographical. In Slovakia there are almost 100 museums and 26 galleries of different kinds, for example: national or natural history, balneological, mining, agricultural or archaeological, National Museum of Music, mint, clock, furniture, folk costumes and military museums, or museums with historical exhibitions, and many others. Region by region, as was done for the Czech Republic, we will list some names.

The largest of Slovakia's eight regions is Banská Bystrica, which is crossed by the Slovak Ore Mountains and rich in ancient mining centres. Some of the museums in the area are listed below:

- Museo minerario Andrej adit, Kremnica
- Fiľakovo Castle Museum
- Podbrezová Ironworks Metallurgical Museum
- Forests of the Slovak Republic - Open-Air Forest Museum, Čierny Balog - Vydrovská dolina
- Modrý Kameň Castle, National Museum of Slovak Culture
- Museum of Slovak National Uprising, Banská Bystrica
- Permanent exhibition on the history of skiing in Slovakia, Kremnica

The smallest of the regions, as well as the richest and most urbanized is Bratislava; Here is a short list with some museums in the region, many of them in the city of Bratislava, capital of Slovakia:

- Archaeological Museum of the Slovak National Museum, Bratislava
- Little Carpathian Museum in Pezinok
- Museum of Folk Art Production ÚĽUV, Stupava
- SNM Natural History Museum, Bratislava
- Slovak National Museum, Bratislava (SNM)



- Slovak Olympic and Sports Museum, Bratislava
- Railway Museum of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava
- Jewish Community Museum, Bratislava

The Košice region in southeastern Slovakia borders Hungary, the Banská Bystrica region and the Prešov region. On the territory there are part of the Slovenský raj National Park and the protected area of the Slovak Karst. Some of the region's museums, many of which reflect the agricultural and mining economy, are listed below:

- Mining Museum of Gelnica
- Museum and Cultural Center of Southern Zemplin in Trebišov
- Museo Pavel Horo, Bánovce nad Ondavou
- Museum of Eastern Slovakia, Košice
- Zemplín Museum in Michalovce

The region of Nitra, bordered to the south by Hungary, is the region of Slavic Christianity and knowledge. In addition to the historical and cultural monuments of the city of Nitra, the thermal pools in Sturovo, Komarno, the bison reserve in Topolčianky; the Courtyard of Europe in Komarno; The houses in the rock in Brhlovce, you will find several museums, some of which are mentioned below:

- Diocesan Museum and Pontifical Museum, Nitra
- Hippological Museum, Topolčianky
- Danube Museum in Komárno
- Slovak Agricultural Museum in Nitra
- Šurany City Museum

The Prešov region is the region of the High Tatras, well-preserved folk architecture and Spis Gothic. The area is located in the northeastern part of Slovakia and is bordered to the north by Poland and to the east by Ukraine. The region is rich in flora and fauna, extraordinary natural beauty and historical monuments; Among the museums:

- Manor house and archaeological park Hanušovce nad Topľou /Tripolitana/
- Prešov Regional Museum /Tripolitana/



- Wine Museum, Prešov
- Spiš Museum of the Slovak National Museum, Levoča
- Veľký Šariš City Gallery and Museum

The Trenčín region, bordering the neighboring Czech Republic, is the region of Slovakia's defensive castles and important figures, such as Ludovit Stur, Alexander Dubcek and M. R. Stefanik. Among the museums to visit:

- Museum of Slovak National Councils SNM, Myjava
- Trenčín Museum, Trenčín
- Bojnice Museum /Bojnice Castle/, SNM
- Čachtice Museum - Draškovič Manor House
- Curia of Ambrovec, Beckov

The Trnava region in western Slovakia is famous for its wine and thermal springs. Some of the museums, among the many present:

- Museo Balneologico Imrich Winter, Piešťany
- Sereď Holocaust Museum, SNM
- House of the homeland history of Šamorín
- Museum of Western Slovakia in Trnava
- Zittau Island Museum in Dunajská Streda

The region of Žilina, bordering the Czech Republic and Poland, is a mountainous region rich in natural beauty, folklore and castles. Some museums in the region are as follows:

- Archaeological Museum in Nature, Liptovská Mara – Havránok
- Sklabiňa Castle Museum
- SNM Slovak Village Museum, Martin
- Museum of Mines and Metallurgy, Maša - Liptovský Hrádok
- Kysuce Village Museum, Historical Forest Railway, Vychylovka



What can be seen from this overview is that there are far fewer museums in Slovakia than in Italy and the Czech Republic and that most of them reflect the economy of the places. Monuments and nature in Slovakia, more than museums, are incentives for tourism.

Are there interactive museums that use artificial intelligence or holograms?

Museums and cultural organisations have been hit hard by the Covid-19 crisis in terms of lost revenue. At the same time, the crisis has accelerated the search for alternatives to the “traditional” use of culture through the digital transformation of the sector. Europe's action is projected to provide museums with the opportunity to cooperate with each other and with creative and technological partners through experimental projects, to apply digital technologies to culture in an innovative way. The technology applied to museums allows them to develop solutions that improve their digital presence, or innovate their daily functions and processes, experiment with 3D digitization and AR/VR applications for visitors, exploit the creative potential of technology to offer transformative experiences for the public and test new business models for the post-crisis recovery phase.

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Initially, the purpose of digitizing culture was quite simple: to try to increase the amount of extra content, usable through the use of tools, such as QR codes or replacing classic audio guides with apps to download on your smartphone. Then interactive exhibitions were born to offer experiences in direct contact with the work and teaching began to make use of tech tools by creating interactive museums.

Italy

In Italy the experimentation between art and technology seemed to proceed very slowly until the beginning of 2020 when museums, no longer able to offer the possibility of visiting exhibitions physically, began to develop alternatives, thus moving towards a digitization of cultural heritage. The immediate response of places of culture was an increase in content on social media and the opening of other channels (the most striking example was the arrival of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence on Tik Tok, a social network used mainly by teenagers), but soon even these digital gimmicks were insufficient. Increasing the need for increasingly tech and cutting-edge solutions, artificial intelligence



has also begun to be used within digital museums, with multiple purposes, such as: speeding up the work of employees, enriching the visitor experience, providing more information to scholars.

According to data from ICOM Italia (*International Council of Museums – Italy*) during the pandemic of March 2020, following the closures, about 90% of Italian museums started creating ad hoc digital content to reach the public at home. When it was understood that the immobility of the period would be prolonged, the technicalization processes had to be accelerated to find an alternative in a short time to physically going to the exhibitions. The so-called “digital tourism” has had a significant boost thanks to the proliferation of virtual museums and digital cultural platforms that have allowed access to museum content via smartphone, PC, tablet or TV. Surely, the implication of the medal is that in the online museum, compared to the traditional one, it is not possible to admire the original of the work, having to “settle” for a reproduction.

With the use of virtual reality, or the realistic simulation of a reality that does not exist, it is possible to create 360-degree virtual tours; The virtual tour allows you to move between the works as it would happen in reality and listen to the explanation of the audio guide. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism has created the Grand Virtual Tour, a virtual tour that takes the viewer on a journey through the main theaters, palaces, monuments and museums in Italy such as the Colosseum in Rome, the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, the Venaria Reale or the Egyptian Museum in Turin and many others. The physical guide, inside the museum, is responsible for exhibiting the works to visitors, intriguing them and answering questions. For example, in the Circuit of the Museum Houses of Milan the innovative technology of “chatbots” has been adopted, that is, automatic systems that allow you to chat with virtual characters as if they were real people, with the aim of discovering new and fascinating details of the Milanese house-museums and the neighborhood that surrounds them.

In Bologna's museums, from June 2021, an Artificial Intelligence system has been inserted that allows to measure the satisfaction of a work of art by the public; this system, called ShareArt and was developed by the National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Economic Development (ENEA) is able to detect, through a camera, the images of visitors looking towards the works on which it is installed. In this way, by collecting and storing data on any expressions, behaviors and the surrounding environment, the system is able to process information such as, for example, the path taken to approach the work, the number of people who have observed it, the time and distance of observation,



gender, age class and mood of the visitors who observe. All in compliance with privacy and GDPR since the data are not associated with any natural person or geographical location.

Another good example of technology applied to museums is provided by the National Museum of Science and Technology “Leonardo da Vinci” in Milan, which with the “You & Ai” Project aims to bring citizens closer to Artificial Intelligence through different techniques: wearing augmented reality viewers you can get a taste of life in 2030 or be accompanied by a driverless car in a virtual metropolis; You can interact with 28 hologram actors on topical issues and be able to choose which algorithms to use for a given purpose. The topics covered are all themes that want to reflect on how much man is willing to grant, in terms of autonomy, to Artificial Intelligence in the coming decades.

Czech Republic

Even the Czech Republic, especially following the Covid-19 pandemic, has shown that it wants to catch up with technological advancement in support of culture. For culture lovers, there is no shortage of opportunities to deepen their knowledge of art, literature, music and science through interactive experiences and new technologies at the service of spaces and visitors.

An example of an interactive museum is the Film Legends Museum in Prague, a museum specialized in the detailed elaboration of figurines, statues, busts, replicas of different sizes from the scale of 1:6 to the real size or even larger.

Also in Prague, I AM Prague's exhibitions at the Museum of Illusion Art bring historical illusion-creating techniques to life in art in the selfie and social media era of the 21st century, with a touch of local style, and encourage guests to touch and interact with the exhibition.

At the Model World in Brno you can admire a gigantic railway track with 40 trains, as well as other small-scale attractions. You can see a model railway with about half a kilometer of tracks, 140 switches and 1500 figures. With its surface area of 60m², it is the largest permanently exposed slope in Moravia.



Anthropos Brno, always with interactive approach is a unique museum that documents the oldest history of the settlement of Moravia and the entire European continent. The 3.5 m tall life-size model of a mammoth accompanied by a cub attracts the attention of children and adults. The extensive museum exhibition is one of the largest and most modern of its kind in Europe.

In the town of Mladá Boleslav, the Metoděj Vlach Interactive Aviation Museum offers a journey through the history of aviation from the dawn to the Second World War. You'll see original aircraft, such as the famous Caudron G.3, as well as blockbuster replicas. In addition to the tour between original planes and replicas, the voucher also includes a simulation of your choice: an interesting novelty is, for example, the parachute jump simulator.

Less widespread in the Czech Republic is, however, the use of Virtual Reality at the service of museums and cultural institutions. However, there are some realities that make admirable use of it.

Vasulka Kitchen Brno at the Brno House of Arts, for example, is a cutting-edge space for research, experimentation and informal education of new media. At the heart of their interdisciplinary project “Vasulka Media Art Live Archive” is the experimentation of artificial intelligence for the interactive mediation of cultural heritage; focuses not only on the use of intelligent software functions (image recognition technologies) for searching for Vasulka's work, but also explores different ways of visualizing the results of AI work. This use of technology fully responds to dynamic changes in archival and museum practice as a result of the ongoing digitisation of art archives and their online accessibility. The project involves the use of artificial intelligence in the form of artificial neural networks of machine or deep learning in the analysis of the audiovisual works of Steina and Woody Valsuka and the development of interfaces for interactive mediation of the archival content of their works in online and offline environments. The main results of the project, in terms of technological innovation, are three pieces of software: two software tools specially developed for the automatic recognition of visual and sound objects in Vasulka's work and a specially equipped interactive web interface. Other results of the project concern the experimentation of the possibilities of making the contents of the Vasulka archive accessible through different interfaces that reflect the performative and immersive results obtained from the use of intelligent tools.

UGO! Media in Prague is, finally, a cutting-edge showroom dedicated to visual technologies, i.e. the production of showcases for the projection of holograms, transparent displays and projection films.



The company, which specialises in quality visual system integrators, had a successful year, with a turnover of CZK 15 million and boasting in its client portfolio the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, the Czech pavilion at the Dubai Expo and world-renowned fashion brands.

Slovakia

Digital interactive museums where art and technology collaborate to put the public at the center of the work between virtual and multimedia installations, are also taking hold in Slovakia where the passive idea of “old-fashioned” museums is gradually giving way to a new concept of cultural fruition, more participatory and experiential.

The Tatry vnútri Museum, inside the Tatry vnútri gallery in Starý Smokovec, for example, offers the most modern experiential tour of the unique Tatra Mountains. Thanks to the large interactive projections it is possible to visit places that would not otherwise be possible to reach in person due to critical terrain or bad weather. The proposed experience allows you to immerse yourself in the wild nature and natural beauty of the Tatras in an original way through photos, videos and information controlled by timers, touch screens and the movement of people in space.

The Museum of the Slovak National Uprising in Banská Bystrica ranks among the most modern exhibitions in Europe. In addition to historical and period exhibitions, it also uses an interactive presentation to present Slovak history between 1938 and 1945, with a focus on documenting the anti-fascist national liberation struggle and the Slovak national uprising.

Digital technologies are not absent in M. R. Štefánik's hometown, Košariská, where his political, military and diplomatic activities, as well as his private life and hobbies are documented thanks to touch screens and displays, where the Avemeo system is used to control the exposure of historical content and commercials interpreted by actors.

Modern technology is also used by the Zemplín Museum in Michalovce, which documents the living and non-living nature, cultural, historical and economic development of the Zemplín region. The exhibition also offers visitors a digital information system with touch control and a table with a touch screen on top, compatible with historical equipment. Among the technologies available to the visitor,



the virtual mirror allows you to take a picture of your body and to select the virtual 3D model of the popular costume, which adapts and “dresses” the visitor in real time.

Among the most comprehensive regional museums in the region of eastern Slovakia is the Spiš Museum in Spišská Nová Ves. Its vast collection contains 150 thousand artifacts from a wide range of historical, artistic, technical and natural sciences disciplines. The Spiš Museum has made the exhibition accessible to visitors with hearing and visual impairments thanks to a specially designed tablet application.

Finally, the Slovak National Museum “SNM Children's Museum” in Bratislava has set up a unique museum for younger explorers. Instead of having to read captions and legends, children can touch the exhibits and play to learn about everything on display in the museum. In addition to interactive exhibitions, there are also various playgrounds and creative workshops. The intention of the museum is to encourage children to learn and to show them that learning can also be fun.

The relationship between art and technology has radically changed the way the museum is experienced. The challenge of the museums of the future is to combine emotions and technique using new communication technologies, multimedia installations, videos that enrich and transform a simple visit of discovery or cultural deepening into a 360 ° experience that involves on an emotional and physical level. Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, driven by the need for renewal and the European strategy, are implementing concrete initiatives to offer visitors innovative cultural experiences, even at a distance.



VI. IMPORTANT AREAS WITH CULTURAL HERITAGE

In all regions and cities of the European Union, cultural heritage is the key element of the image and identity of cities and is appreciated by both residents and tourists. These are different places that illustrate the memory, history, art, traditions, landscapes and cultures of European heritage, helping to give voice to Europe's diversity.

Italy

Italy is the custodian of a very important cultural and environmental capital as well as being the nation with the largest number of sites inscribed on the UNESCO list of Humanity. To date, in fact, UNESCO has recognized 1157 sites in 167 countries around the world, of which 900 are cultural, 218 natural and 39 mixed (58 in Italy).

The natural, cultural and landscape richness of Italy is priceless: a heritage made up of immense natural areas, exclusive archaeological sites, unique monuments and endless artistic masterpieces, all to be discovered or visited.

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The first Italian sites to be included in the UNESCO cultural heritage were the rock art of Valcamonica in 1979 and, in 1980, the historic center of Rome together with the Church and the Dominican convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie and the 'Last Supper' by Leonardo da Vinci in Milan; the latest, included in 2021, were the following: Montecatini Terme, among the Great Thermal Cities of Europe; the frescoed cycles of the fourteenth century of Padua; and the Portici of Bologna.

In the list of natural heritage we find non-artificial monuments, geological formations or natural areas of high universal aesthetic, conservative or scientific value.

In Italy there are 5 recognized natural sites: the Aeolian Islands, Monte San Giorgio, the Dolomites, Mount Etna and the ancient primordial beech forests of the Carpathians.

Since 1992, UNESCO has also considered landscapes that represent “joint creations of man and nature”. These works must demonstrate the evolution of a society and its settlement over time, under



the influence of constraints and/or opportunities presented by the natural environment and cultural, economic and social pressures.

In Italy there are 8 cultural landscapes recognized as UNESCO heritage: the Amalfi Coast, Portovenere, the Cinque Terre and the islands of Palmaria Tino and Tinetto, the Cilento National Park and the Vallo di Diano (with the archaeological sites of Paestum, Velia and the Certosa di Padula), the Sacred Mounts of Piedmont and Lombardy, the Val d'Orcia, the 12 Villas and 2 Medici Gardens of Tuscany, the Wine Landscapes of Piedmont: Langhe-Roero and Monferrato, and The Prosecco Hills of Conegliano and Valdobbiadene.

Since 2003, UNESCO has also approved the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, to protect traditional culture and folklore around the world. To date, there are 15 traditions to be safeguarded in Italy, from the compelling Opera dei Pupi siciliani, passing through the expressive Canto a Tenore sardo or the heartfelt processions with Macchine dei Santi, up to the varied Mediterranean Diet or the exceptional Art of Neapolitan Pizza Makers.

Below is the complete list of Italian World Heritage sites:

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- 1979 Rock Art of Valcamonica
- 1980 (and 1990) Historic center of Rome, the extraterritorial properties of the Holy See in the city and St. Paul Outside the Walls
- 1980 The Dominican Church and Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie and Leonardo da Vinci's 'Last Supper'
- 1982 Historic center of Florence
- 1987 Venice and its Lagoon
- 1987 Piazza del Duomo in Pisa
- 1990 Historic Centre of San Gimignano
- 1993 The Sassi and the Park of the Rock Churches of Matera
- 1994 The city of Vicenza and Palladio's villas in Veneto
- 1995 Historic center of Siena
- 1995 Historic center of Naples
- Crespi d'Adda (1995)



- 1995 Ferrara, city of the Renaissance, and the Po Delta
- 1996 Castel del Monte
- 1996 Trulli of Alberobello
- 1996 Early Christian monuments of Ravenna
- 1996 Historic center of Pienza
- 1997 Archaeological areas of Pompeii, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata
- 1997 The Royal Palace of the eighteenth century of Caserta with the Park, the Vanvitellian Aqueduct and the Complex of San Leucio
- 1997 Amalfi Coast
- 1997 Modena: Cathedral, Civic Tower and Piazza Grande
- 1997 Portovenere, Cinque Terre and Islands (Palmaria, Tino and Tinetto)
- 1997 Savoy Residences
- 1997 Su Nuraxi di Barumini
- 1997 Archaeological Area of Agrigento
- 1997 Piazza Armerina, Roman villa of Casale
- 1997 The Botanical Garden of Padua
- 1998 Archaeological Area and Patriarchal Basilica of Aquileia
- 1998 Historic Centre of Urbino
- 1998 National Park of Cilento and Vallo di Diano, with the archaeological sites of Paestum, Velia and the Certosa di Padula
- 1999 Villa Adriana (Tivoli)
- 2000 Aeolian Islands
- 2000 Assisi, The Basilica of St. Francis and other Franciscan sites
- 2000 City of Verona
- 2001 Villa d'Este (Tivoli)
- 2002 The late Baroque cities of Val di Noto (south-eastern Sicily)
- 2003 Sacri Monti del Piemonte e della Lombardia
- 2004 Etruscan Necropolis of Cerveteri and Tarquinia
- 2004 Val d'Orcia
- 2005 Syracuse and the rocky necropolis of Pantalica



- 2006 Genoa, the Strade Nuove and the System of the Palazzi dei Rolli
- 2008 Mantua and Sabbioneta
- 2008 The Rhaetian Railway in the Albula and Bernina landscape
- 2009 Dolomites
- 2010 Monte San Giorgio
- 2011 The Lombards in Italy. Places of power
- 2011 Prehistoric pile-dwelling sites of the Alps
- 2013 Medici villas and gardens in Tuscany
- 2013 Mount Etna
- 2014 Wine landscapes of Piedmont: Langhe-Roero and Monferrato
- 2015 Arab-Norman Palermo and the cathedrals of Cefalù and Monreale
- 2017 Venetian defense works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. State of Land-State of Western Sea (transnational asset, for Italy Peschiera, Bergamo, Palmanova)
- 2017 Ancient primordial beech forests of the Carpathians and other regions of Europe, transnational site. In Italy 13 beech forests
- 2018 Ivrea, industrial city of the twentieth century
- 2019 Prosecco Hills of Conegliano and Valdobbiadene
- 2021 Padua Urbs Picta - Giotto, the Scrovegni Chapel and the pictorial cycles of the fourteenth century
- 2021 The Great Spa Towns of Europe
- 2021 The Portici of Bologna

The set of UNESCO sites represents a wide and significant repertoire of the many Italian excellences in the fields of architecture, painting, urban planning and landscape of the Belpaese. The truth is that they are only a small part of the immense cultural heritage possessed by Italy, which boasts over 4,000 museums, 6,000 archaeological areas, 85,000 churches subject to protection and 40,000 historic houses surveyed. Italy is also “open-air art” with its coasts, reserves and natural landscapes. Not to mention movable property such as art objects.

Every Italian city contains hidden pearls that are worth discovering with the sight and with the mind, getting excited on the journey. In first place among the cities with more culture in Italy there is certainly



Rome, the capital with its millenary history, followed by Milan, “capital of fashion” capable of perfectly combining history and innovation. Another beauty of Italy is Turin, with a total of 337 cultural sites including architectural wonders, famous museums and majestic theaters. Following Florence, Naples, Venice, Bologna, Palermo, Genoa and Cagliari as the tail end of a list that could be much longer.

Such a great heritage, it goes without saying, also needs great care and awareness so that it is safeguarded, transmitted and appreciated by future generations.

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic, as well as Italy, is a jewel rich in history and natural beauty that is home to a multitude of national parks, pretty towns and historic medieval castles. Not only Prague, therefore, fascinates visitors from all over the world. The Czech government, in line with the project partner states and with the indications of the European Union is moving to enhance and support the promotion and protection of its heritage.

Each region in the Czech Republic is peculiar and has unique and varied cultural heritage characteristics; Therefore, to have a quodro of Czech beauty, a fragmented overview of the territory is necessary.

The Prague region, crossed by the Vltava River, offers romantic, vibrant and evocative landscapes and deep-rooted traditions. You can take pleasant walks through the vineyards and the legendary Podskalí area, visit the unique ethnographic museums or admire the jewels of cubist and art nouveau architecture. Big Czech names such as Franz Kafka, Albert Einstein or Václav Havel have found inspiration in these places.

Central Bohemia is an alternation of castles, small villages, medieval towns, vineyards, old silver mines, enchanting river valleys surrounded by dense forests, such as the dense forests of Křivoklát and the areas around the rivers Berounka, Elbe, Sázava and Vltava. This area has given rise to strong traditions such as pottery, mining and vine cultivation.



The landscape of South Bohemia offers, instead, harmonious views, green hills, beautiful countryside, silver ponds, glittering fish ponds, castle towers, Renaissance palaces and white farmhouses in rustic Baroque style with such unique architectural and urban value that it deserves, as is the case of the village of Holašovice, the inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Traditions, dialects, festivals, crafts and customs, in this area, preserve an authentic and well-preserved flavor. The bobbin lace making of the Prácheňsko region, wood-based crafts in the predominantly mountainous region of Šumava and Pošumaví, the making of musical instruments such as bagpipes and accordions in the Blata region or the traditional tulip-patterned furniture from the Doudlebsko region remain unique and well-maintained traditions.

West Bohemia is famous for its spas, beer production, Karlovy Vary porcelain and cut glass. The local phenomenon is also the centuries-old tradition of making musical instruments, which originally began as a form of local income and gradually developed to a large-scale production level employing several thousand people. Due to its border location, German and Czech culture have been united and intertwined for centuries, leaving memory of it in the local architecture of half-timbered houses.

North Bohemia is divided into many landscape areas including the Ore Mountains, the Bohemian Switzerland National Park, the country of Mácha, the Lusatian Mountains and Ještěd Ridge, Frýdlantsko and the Jizera Mountains. It is a popular tourist destination, much of which had been inaccessible until recently. Traditions such as the processing of crystal glass and jewelry stones have been kept alive in the regions of the Jizera and Podještědí Mountains, Českolipsko, the Bohemian Paradise and Pojizeří.

East Bohemia means rocky towns, old stables and the tradition of horse racing, gingerbread and nativity scenes. It is a region rich in traditions, crafts, typical half-timbered architecture and magical nature. Noteworthy is the East Bohemian Carnival with its captivating atmosphere and rightly inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In this area, centuries-old traditions survive such as puppets, opera music, the production of nativity scenes in the Hradec Králové region, the draperies of Broumov, Vamberk lace in the heart of the Orlické mountains.

Sunny South Moravia is known for several world traditions that originated in the four traditional regions, such as Podhorácko asparagus, Znojmo pickles from Podyjí, Mikulov wine tradition and Znojmo Brno cabbage and mills from the Drahansko and Svitavy regions. It is also the ideal place for



lovers of natural beauty and cultural monuments such as the functionalist villa Tugendhat in Brno, dating from the years 1929-1930 and listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Another monument recognized by UNESCO is the Cultural Landscape of Lednice-Valtice, the largest park in Europe.

La Moravia-Slesia è la regione più orientale della Repubblica Ceca ed è una regione particolare per via delle sue tradizioni ancora vive, i costumi, l'architettura pittoresca e anche il paesaggio specifico segnato dall'allevamento pastorale e dall'industria mineraria e pesante. Industria, natura e cultura convivono armonicamente in questo territorio.

La Moravia centrale e i monti Jeseníky sono un'area indissolubilmente legata a tre regioni tradizionali: Haná e la sua ricchezza, il folklore, l'ospitalità locale e il dialetto haná sono splendidamente completati da prelibatezze tradizionali come olomoucké syrečky (formaggio a pasta molle stagionato); i monti Jeseníky sono una delle destinazioni termali più conosciute, il cui clima unico con effetti curativi è tra i migliori al mondo; e a Záhřeb, vive tutt'oggi la tradizione dei fabbri artistici Hefaiston, il cui raduno internazionale si tiene al castello di Helfštýn.

East Moravia is an area famous for its still felt traditions such as, for example, the Slovácko verbunk (a folk dance) and the Ride of the Kings, two phenomenal traditions inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Its varied offer of traditions includes original gastronomy, the art of majolica, the production of folk costumes, costumed dolls and Easter eggs. It is also a territory strongly characterized by the millennial Christian tradition that has influenced architecture, cuisine and local folklore.

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Finally, Vysočina offers a gentle undulating landscape on the border between Bohemia and Moravia. The two traditional regions of Horácko and Podhorácko keep alive their traditions of unique dances, songs, folk architecture and crafts. History has left Vysočina with a large number of monuments, so much so that three places in the area are inscribed on the UNESCO Prestigious List: the historic center of Telč, with one of the most beautiful Czech squares; the Church of St. John of Nepomuk in Zelená hora and the town of Třebíč, with its intact Jewish quarter and the Basilica of St. Procopius.

Each cultural area, in the Czech Republic, but we have also seen in Italy, is an expression of the aspects and characteristics of the geographical area and of the peoples in which every single element contributes to a specific social and cultural profile with similar elements and others specific.



Slovakia

Despite being a small country, Slovakia has a great heritage of regional diversity, both cultural and geographical, and seven sites included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The Košice region in eastern Slovakia is among the richest in the country. Its core is the Košická kotlina basin, a fertile and densely populated valley, it is surrounded by mountain ranges, which offer excellent skiing and hiking possibilities. The city of Košice, a metropolis located on the Hornád River, has a long and rich history that is reflected in its monuments and centers of culture.

Bratislava, in the homonymous region in southwestern Slovakia, stretches along the Danube, nestled between the vineyards and mountains of the Little Carpathians. The capital of Slovakia is a perfect fusion of modernity and traditions, nature and urban spaces. The historic center of Bratislava preserves an artistic heritage of extraordinary richness and elegance, first of all the Castle, a symbol of the city.

The Horehronie region is characterized by a beautiful landscape with typical villages around the upper reaches of the Hron River which lies almost in the heart of Slovakia. It is one of the most scenic areas of Slovakia due to the diversity of the natural environment, rich in culture and traditions.

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Tatranský, located in northern Slovakia, is Slovakia's most attractive tourist area. It consists of two sub-regions: Tatra and Northern Spiš. The Tatras offer a landscape similar to that of the Alps, while Northern Spiš is rich in architectural monuments from different historical periods, especially manor houses (Strážky), monasteries (Červený kláštor), castles (Kežmarok, Ľubovniansky) and towns protected as national monuments (Spišská Sobota, Kežmarok, Podolíne). The most interesting places from a historical-monumental point of view are Kežmarok and Spišská Sobota (the latter declared a protected urban area).

The Danube region with its landscape of land and water, is located in southern Slovakia. It is a very fertile area characterized by a profitable agricultural activity and the presence of outdoor pools of hot springs.

In the central Považie region there are beautiful landscapes, cultural monuments, scattered villages with their folklore and their typical traditions; The many cultural events organized throughout the year attract all tourists to visit this picturesque part of Slovakia.



The Dolné Považie region (lower part of the Váh basin) was among the first inhabited territories of Slovakia. The continuous historical settlement of the territory is testified by numerous archaeological finds. Trnava, with its numerous sacred monuments (called “Slovak Rome”) and Piešťany, with its famous thermal baths, are accompanied by the enchanting forests of the Little Carpathians (Malé Karpaty), the various natural and monumental attractions and the many castles built during the thirteenth century.

The territory of Gemer, to which the Malohont region was annexed in the 19th century, is located in the south of central Slovakia. Gemer, along with Orava and Liptov, is among the most beautiful tourist regions in Slovakia. The Slovenský kras National Park with its numerous caves and chasms has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Among the monuments of historical interest are the castles (Krásna Hôrka) or their ruins (Muráň), the numerous manor houses (that of Betliar is, without a doubt, the most noteworthy) and many churches scattered along the Gothic Way.

The Liptov region, thanks to its unique natural resources and its cultural monuments, offers one of the most beautiful natural scenery in Slovakia. Most of its territory is mountainous, rich in forests, mineral and thermal springs, underground resources and a splendid protected natural landscape. In several villages in the Liptov region, you can also find examples of folk architecture such as, in particular, in the village of Vlkolínec, inscribed on the list of UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and in the open-air museum of the villages of Liptov in Pribylina.

The Dolný Zemplín region is characterized by wide plains with many wetlands, looping rivers, excellent Tokai wine and specialties of the easternmost Slovak cuisine. Most of the territory is a flat land with a predominantly deforested landscape in the eastern Slovak plain. The most visited places in the Lower Zemplín region are the Zemplínska šírava reservoir and the Vihorlat protected nature area. Among other things to see are religious buildings such as the Brehovský monastery (Brehovskom kláštore), several old wooden churches and the old towns of Michalovce and Trebišov.

Dolná Nitra, which together with Horná Nitra (North Nitra) makes up the historical region Ponitrie, is one of those areas in Slovakia that are of interest not only for natural beauty, but above all for cultural and historical heritage. This region has always been inhabited by populations whose traces can be found in many places. The city of Nitra, the oldest in Slovakia, concentrates several cultural, religious



and historical monuments, while in Topoľčianky there is the Slovak National Stables, among the largest in Europe and the Bison Park, unique in Slovakia.

In the Orava region, on the border with Poland, located on a rocky hill above the Orava River in northern Slovakia, Orava Castle is considered one of the most beautiful castles in the country. Built in 1241 where wooden fortifications once stood, over the centuries it has been characterized first by the Romanesque style, then the Gothic one up to its current architecture in Renaissance and neo-Gothic style dating back to 1611.

The Pohronie region owes its rich heritage to the volcanic heritage and its mountains custodians of important mineral riches in deposits of iron, gold, silver and copper. One of the most important mining regions in Europe, developed here in the Middle Ages, had its capital in the famous city of Banská Štiavnica, today inscribed on the UNESCO list of natural and cultural world heritage, flanked by the nearby Kremnica, built on a deposit of pure gold, where a mint was created that has been working continuously for almost 680 years, earning the title of the oldest mint in the world still in operation. The area also boasts ruins of romantic castles such as Revište, Šášov and Dobrá Niva, the Hronský Beňadik monastery and a large amount of unique technical structures and monuments.

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The Poiplie region bears the name of the Ipel' River, much of which flows along the border between Slovakia and Hungary. In addition to once-famous mining towns such as Krupina or Pukanec, the region also boasts many castle ruins (Fiľakovo, Divín, Modrý Kamen and Čabrad') and forts of the anti-Turkish defense line (Bzovík). The long period of the Turkish threat has left many traces in the territory. This southern corner of Slovakia has many ancient monasteries, manor houses and technical monuments in a wonderful landscape covered with vineyards.

The Šariš region in northern eastern Slovakia is moderately mountainous and valleys alternate cyclically with mountain ranges. The historic centres of Prešov, Bardejov (Unesco World Heritage) and Sabinov, and rare technical monuments, such as the salt mines in Solivar or the mines in Dubník, are his pride. Šariš is also the area in Slovakia where most of the old wooden churches are concentrated; it also boasts the world-famous spa of Bardejov, where among the several prominent guests also Empress Sissi experienced the excellent service and hospitality of the locals. The typical local dialect, spoken like the national language, also contributes to the characterization of this area.



The Southern Spiš region is the historical territory in northern Slovakia, with all the basic natural attributes of the typical Carpathian landscape. Spiš is a region that abounds in all kinds of riches: from the Slovenský raj National Park to the Spišský hrad Castle, inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage, Cultural and Nature. The charming town of Levoča is also the gem of the major centres in the Spiš region, with numerous architectural monuments and the largest wooden altar in the world.

The Turiec region extends in the northwestern part of Slovakia in the Turčianska kotlina basin surrounded by the mountain ranges of Malá and Veľká Fatra, Kremnické vrchy and Žiar. Due to its beauty and rich natural heritage, this region is one of the most evocative in the territory of Slovakia and is sometimes referred to as the “garden of Turiec”. The landscape and cultural heritage of this region includes two national parks (Malá Fatra and Veľká Fatra), typical villages displaying ancient examples of folk architecture and majestic rural manors from different historical periods.

The region of Horná Nitra, next to the upper basin of the Nitra River, is known above all for its natural wealth and its historical and cultural heritage. The pearl of the region is the fairytale Bojnice Castle; it is the busiest castle in Slovakia, and one of the most beautiful historical monuments in the country.

Upper Zemplín is the easternmost region of Slovakia and presents the typical Carpathian landscape with the original virgin forest with intact nature, vast oases of silence with sweeping views and picturesque villages in the area of the Východné Karpaty mountains. The region is also characterized by numerous ancient Orthodox and Greek-Catholic wooden churches of high cultural and historical value.

The Záhorie Region thanks to its privileged geographical position and not extreme climatic conditions, is one of the first territories settled in Slovakia. The Smrdáky Baths, the Lesser Basilica of Šaštín and the cultural monuments of the former royal city of Skalica are its major attractions.

The Žilina region is particularly affected by the unique natural environment and the abundance of historical and cultural monuments. Forested mountains cover most of its surface, and the most valuable capital of regional nature is represented by the Malá Fatra National Park and the Protected Landscape Areas of Kysuce and the Strážov vrchy mountains. Not to forget also the creations of man in the region, which boasts an unusual number of castles and historic palaces such as manor houses



and courts from different eras, which are found in almost every village. The entire region is also famous for its artisans who were mostly active in the past as boilermakers and street vendors.

History, culture and traditions in Slovakia represent a spectacular heritage to be consolidated and instilled from a participatory point of view. There is certainly no shortage of attractions for lovers of history, nature, folklore and culture, but an incentive to improve your spendability could come from the nearby Czech Republic and Italy.

Overview

Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, although identified in two distinct tourist areas, such as Mediterranean Europe and Central-Eastern Europe, with different tourist vocations, all present numerous testimonies in the cultural heritage that tell the beauty. With a view to allowing its knowledge and enjoyment by an ever wider public, the effort of these States must turn to the enhancement and protection of their treasures. Tangible cultural heritage, in general and in the three countries in question, enriches the individual and social lives of citizens and is a driving force for the cultural and creative sectors. Nevertheless, these natural sites, buildings, archaeological zones, museums, monuments, works of art, historic cities and landscapes also represent a very important resource for economic growth, employment and social cohesion, offering the possibility of promoting the expansion of culture, tourism and, even before that, the identity of a territory. As the partnership of the Cultural E-Competencies In Open Air project wants to demonstrate, the three countries are already actively working to safeguard and promote heritage in a cohesive, sustainable, inclusive and cooperative way, trying to improve each other where there are shortcomings. The sense of belonging and pride in national cultural riches are the means, in this case, to encourage conduct aimed at the realization of common improvement initiatives.



VII. THE REGIONAL CUSTOMS, THE FOOD CULTURE AND THE ROLE THEY PLAY IN SOCIETY

Regional customs and traditions are the testimony of peoples. The rediscovery of folklore, dialects and the popular soul that are the essential components of every culture focuses on the recovery of local peculiarities and the transmission of ancient popular traditions. The European Union is today a large community comprising 27 member states, each with its own history, roots, cultures, traditions and diversity to be preserved and brought together in a common culture. Having a common culture also means being fully aware of the heritage of customs and values of one's own people, of one's own land, even before being able to develop a broader, European sense of common belonging. Europe is a continent where, although the States, being part of a single community, sharing a single market without frontiers and being guided by a single Constitution, have maintained their characteristics in all their aspects: from cultural, artistic and culinary traditions to customs and traditions. It is thanks to this mosaic of realities that Europe preserves a unique identity in its versatility. Europe is a collection of stories and legends, traditions and diversity to be preserved and transmitted to future generations so that they are never forgotten.

The diversity continues even within the national territories where from region to region you can observe customs and traditions that often still live in popular festivals that are bearers of knowledge as precious as it is not widespread.

Not only crafts, customs, dialects and customs, but also local and regional gastronomic traditions that recall the eating habits of a community

The performances, expressions, gastronomy, festivals and rituals that local communities and groups recognize as part of their cultural heritage are all intangible assets of popular culture to be known, preserved and transmitted.

Italy

There are many local traditions that Italy boasts and that are much more than simple customs and traditions of a given population, but flames that keep alive the very essence of belonging to a place and that are reflected in what we are today.



Many of the Italian traditions are religious customs, involving faith, devotion and sometimes even theater and performances. Among the most immersive experiences for the faithful and tourists to remember there are certainly the feast of Sant'Agata in Catania or the Festa dei Gigli in Nola, near Naples. The celebration of Santa Rosalia, "*U fistinu*", is instead one of the Italian traditions most dear to the Palermitans for the role that the saint played in the fight against the plague in 1624. We also remember *the Focara* in Novoli in the province of Lecce, the largest bonfire in Italy in honor of Sant'Antonio Abate, the Madonna delle Galline in Pagani in the province of Salerno that recalls the free-range hens that brought to light a wooden table with the face of the Virgin Mary, dating back to the eighth or ninth century, and the traditional Strazzo di Matera, on July 2, to celebrate the Brown Madonna.

Also on July 2nd, in honor of the feast of the Visitation, and on August 16th, in honor of the Madonna Assunta, the two "*careers*" of the famous Palio di Siena deserve to be mentioned, among the most famous Italian traditions, a competition between the seventeen Sienese districts on the model of an equestrian joust of medieval origin, during which jockeys travel the ring of Piazza del Campo three times on horseback.

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The second macro-area of Italian traditions concerns pagan festivals and, among these, the most famous is the Venice Carnival, one of the most heartfelt and participated celebrations in Italy, as well as the most famous and oldest carnival in Europe.

In Puglia, more precisely in Salento, the Notte della Taranta is celebrated, the largest Italian music festival dedicated to traditional culture and, in particular, to popular music of Salento. The most eventful, perhaps, among the Italian traditions that crosses various cities of the region to end in August in Melpignano, in the heart of the so-called "Salento Greece".

Spring with blooms characterizes many events, including the Almond Blossom Festival in Agrigento; the Tulip Festival in Castiglione del Lago; and the celebrations of Calendimaggio which, together with medieval re-enactments, are repeated in many areas of Italy.

Finally, on the second Sunday of October, a historic international sailing regatta is held in the Gulf of Trieste, the *Barcolada*, famous for the large number of boats participating in the race.



A riot of traditions, therefore, from north to south as evidence of a heritage accumulated over millions of years by a people to be preserved, valued and handed down in turn for posterity, as has been happening for centuries.

Traditional events are also opportunities to relive the typical gastronomic experiences; In fact, Italy and food have always been an indissoluble combination, both in the eyes of tourists and for Italians themselves. Food is a fundamental part of the culture of the whole country and each Region has its own recipes, almost always derived from a centuries-old tradition, declined in a myriad of variations and jealously handed down within the family.

Italian gastronomy can be defined in all respects as the art of good eating, so famous is it all over the world. It is a cuisine that in centuries of history has transformed the diversity of a territory, originally poor but with a thousand peculiarities, into the flavors of a people. These are ingredients, recipes and dishes that today feed a food and wine tourism capable of attracting millions of visitors every year.

The thousand culinary traditions of Italian gastronomy are the mirror of a united country but always divided on a cultural, social and economic level. Starting from a common base of Mediterranean cuisine made of oil, pasta, rice and vegetables, in typical Italian dishes are added meat, cold cuts and cheeses that differ in each region for shapes, condiments and cooking methods, giving rise to a unique panorama in the world of aromas and flavors.

Each Region has a thousand specialties declined in different ways that are part of a cultural heritage and traditions of inestimable value that go far beyond the inventions of the media. The most famous foods and dishes common to all regions include: cheeses and cold cuts, pasta and risotto, soups and soups and meat and fish dishes, pizza and ingredients such as extra virgin olive oil.

Italian gastronomy enjoys an endless list of ingredients that each region, city or even single locality has the opportunity to breed, cultivate and prepare. The climate and the land favor meat breeding in Tuscany, cheeses and mozzarella in the south, citrus fruits in Sicily. In Italy from north to south there are dozens of types of bread each with specific characteristics. Pasta, risotto and pizza are great boasts exported abroad.



The typical products of the Italian tradition reflect culture in the broad sense of the term, such as the history of each region or city.

The typical traditional dishes of poor and peasant Italian cuisine are a cultural heritage of inestimable value that changes even within a few tens of kilometers. Pizza, for example, is different from Rome to Naples: the first thin and crunchy, the second pleasantly chewy with a high and honeycomb cornice.

Since Italy is a peninsula with about 7500 km of coastline, fish naturally has a place of honor. Also in this case, from one Region to another, recipes and traditions change drastically. The Tuscan coast is famous for caciucco, an excellent fish and shellfish soup, in Naples fried squid and shrimp is a must. Bluefin tuna, with its fine, firm and compact meat, is instead one of the highest points of the rich Sicilian tradition.

As for desserts, ice cream rules everywhere, but in Sicily it contends the primacy with granita. The northwest has a rich production of hazelnuts with which exquisite chocolates are prepared. In the east, Austrian pastry and Italian tradition have created an interesting and original mix, while in Tuscany there is panforte, a dessert whose recipe is almost a thousand years old. In Naples babà, pastiera and sfogliatelle all deserve at least a taste, while along the sunny coasts of Calabria the favorite ingredients of pastry chefs are dried figs, walnuts, cinnamon, oranges and almonds.

Italian cuisine is an extraordinary laboratory of cultural biodiversity, influenced by social, religious and historical-graphic factors expertly elaborated over time and handed down until today. Knowing the history of traditional Italian cuisine, its changes, its roots is a fundamental step to have a complete picture of Italy and its customs.

Czech Republic

The varied and colorful folklore of the Czech people, always ready to party and claim their strong cultural identity is a festival of colors of beautiful costumes, sewn and embroidered by hand; the taste of the dishes of the past re-proposed with undiminished passion; the rhythms of ancient songs and dances still very much felt. From religious processions to historical re-enactments, from agricultural



festivals to folk celebrations, the Czech calendar is full of unique opportunities to get in touch with the essence of its intangible cultural heritage.

Among the most heartfelt festivities and celebrations *Masopust*, also known as the Bohemian Carnival, takes place throughout Prague and gives life to parades with folk costumes, parades of colorful floats, fireworks and dances. In traditional culture, it was a time of weddings, pig slaughter, dance parties, door-to-door processions with people wearing masks. *Masopust* is a great opportunity to eat and drink traditional foods such as donuts and fried pork.

The Czech Republic has its cultural roots in the Christian world. And for Christians, Easter is the greatest feast of the year, because it commemorates the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Easter Monday is linked to folk customs that differ in different parts of the Czech Republic. However, these celebrations of the arrival of spring have a common trait: the girls color the eggs and give them to the boys who, during Easter Monday, go from house to house singing folk songs and bringing with them the “pomlázka”, that is a whip made by weaving fresh willow twigs with which they goliardically whip the girls' butts. This custom has its origins in pagan rituals and is intended to wish health and fertility to women. During Easter, Easter markets are also held in urban centers or in open-air folklore museums, for example in Moravia, in Rožnov pod Radhoštěm.

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In the Czech Republic, the last night of April, also called Walpurgis Night, is traditionally associated with the so-called witches' bonfire. This interesting custom dates back to pre-Christian times, when it was believed that, on the night between April 30 and May 1, the forces of evil had the greatest power and that people should protect themselves, their families and their livestock from all this. The bonfire of the witches has been preserved until today more as a moment of popular entertainment and joy. In the villages, but also in cities such as Prague and Brno, good music is played and a children's accompaniment program and barbecues are prepared.

The preparation of the May tree is another spring festival that coincides with the period of the celebration of Walpurgis Night. The May tree is a decorated tree trunk that forms the central element of this spring festival. The May Stake is a center for entertainment and dance. Tradition says to guard the May stake as the fallen May stake means a destroyed prestige of local young men. The erection of the May stake is a vivid custom in many localities and in most regions, especially in Moravia.



According to a new popular custom, the evening of May Day is also the feast of love in the Czech Republic and lovers gather in Petřín Park in Prague, at the statue of Karel Hynek Mácha, the romantic Czech “poet of love” where they bring flowers, spend a few moments in silence and then kiss under the cherry blossoms of the park.

During the period of Pentecost, when Christians celebrate the sending of the Holy Spirit on earth, the ancient folk festival called the Ride of the Kings is held, that of Vlčnov is a unique event that is part of the list of intangible heritage of UNESCO. It is a ceremonial ride that passes around a village with the character of the so-called king dressed in a female ceremonial costume; the latter accompanied by a group of boys on decorated horses and two pages, helpers with unsheathed sabers. Generally the Cavalcade of the Kings is combined with performances by folk groups, wind instrument concerts, wine tastings and fairs.

Every traditional festival related to the patron saint of a village, at the end of a good harvest or the consecration of the local church, in the Czech Republic is associated with the banquet plays a role of social integration. During the festivities, a series of costumes, entertainment and games are shown off to which special songs, dances and dance games refer, as well as sweets and ceremonial objects.

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Finally, a deeply felt feast, not only by believers but also by lay people, is Christmas which in the Czech Republic begins about a month earlier, that is, when Advent begins, a period of four weeks of waiting and preparations for Christmas. Traditional culture involves door-to-door processions with masks, magical acts to protect oneself from the forces of evil, and parades with masked people disguised as fantastic creatures, saints or animals. These parades contain cultural layers of different origins and character. The most “visible” custom of Advent is the Advent wreath at home, which originated in the German tradition.

The Czech name of December 24 literally means “Generous Day”, probably because of the abundance of food that is traditionally served during Christmas dinner. Even the poorest families make sure that their plates are full on this day of the year. Christmas Eve is associated with many superstitions that usually have to do with life, love and the destiny that the new year holds. According to a Czech Christmas custom, you have to fast for the whole day to see the “golden piglet” (*zlaté prasátko*) in the evening. Dinner is usually served after sunset (traditionally it should not be served until after the first



star has appeared) and consists of carp and potato salad, sometimes preceded by mushrooms, sauerkraut or fish soup. After dinner, Christmas carols are sung around the table and the family moves near the beautifully lit Christmas tree to unwrap the gifts that Czech children believe are brought by the Infant Jesus.

Christmas in the Czech Republic is something so heartfelt that it is also reflected in the craftsmanship, in fact, the unchanged mastery of the production of Ponikla glass beads, Bohemian artistic Christmas decorations, has been officially recognized as an intangible asset of UNESCO.

The roundup of events and traditions highlights that Czechs like to socialize, especially at a young age, and culture has a huge impact on this; It is not only about culture in the strict sense, but also about gastronomy. The most important part of Czech gastronomy concerns the production and consumption of beer. The Czech Republic is the country with the highest consumption of beer per capita in the world and is famous for its quality beers. This is reflected in the social life of its citizens: the thing that usually brings friends together is a pint of beer in a pub. However, the social life of Czechs does not consist only in this. Young Czechs love to attend festivals, cinema, theatre and concerts, while as people get older the interest changes to a preference for outings related to quality food.

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Even comparing the social life of people living in larger cities and people living in small towns or villages shows differences, because in large cities there are more opportunities for culture and social events; for example, in the city of Brno, the theatrical tradition is very much felt. On the other hand, social life in smaller villages is based more on human contact, popular celebrations and city festivals that make the community very united.

Culture, then, also passes from the table with dishes that reflect tradition, craftsmanship and culinary innovation. Czech cuisine is strongly influenced by the contamination with the cuisine of southern Germany and Austria, but also, as is the case for almost all countries, by the microclimates of the regions that determine the production of raw materials and that are reflected, inevitably, in the great culinary richness.

In contemporary Czech cuisine, meat is the protagonist along with an abundance of spices and aromas that are used as ingredients in the numerous regional variations of soups, stewed meats and sauces.



The body of Czech meals typically consists of two or more courses; The first course is traditionally soup, the second course is the main course.

Czech cuisine has been influenced by the cuisines of surrounding countries and nations. Many of the cakes and pastries that are popular in Central Europe originated in the Czech lands. Contemporary Czech cuisine is more meat-based than in previous periods, as the current abundance of farmed meat has enriched its presence in regional cuisine. Traditional soups include *zelňačka* (cabbage soup), pea soups, beans and lentils. Very popular are also meat dishes such as *svíčková na smetaně* (marinated sirloin) served with bread dumplings, *schnitzel* (řízek), beef goulash and *vepřo-knedlo-zelo* (roast pork with dumplings and *sauerkraut*).

Czech cuisine is also very popular for desserts, which are influenced by Central European cuisine. Among the sweet delicacies of which the Czech Republic has reason to be proud are the *palacinky*, or delicious sweet crepes stuffed with jam or chocolate; the *perník* (a kind of gingerbread); the Sacher and the Habsburg Strudel. The most widespread of all the “street food” desserts is certainly the *trdlo*, a spiral of sweet dough, crunchy on the outside and soft on the inside, stuffed and flavored with sugar, cinnamon and other spices of Central European taste.

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In conclusion, the culture of food in the Czech Republic, as for Italy, plays a very important role in the lives of its inhabitants, since like cultural events, sharing food and a good beer is among the most common reasons to gather with family or friends.

Slovakia

The Slovak Republic is one of the youngest nations of old Europe, having been born in 1993 from the separation from the neighboring Czech Republic but, despite this, it presents a strong national identity that is reflected in many unique traditional customs that are well preserved in folk architecture, language, songs, dances, customs and traditional crafts. Examples of the skills and artistic atmosphere of the Slovak nation can best be experienced in folk architecture conservation reserves, outdoor exhibitions, folklore and other festivals, and in smaller villages in regions such as Kysuce, Orava, Liptov, Horehronie, Spiš and Šariš.



In Slovakia almost every valley and region is represented with something specific and often pagan and Christian customs are mixed in celebratory customs.

One of the oldest customs preserved to this day is the Burning of Morena, which takes place two weeks before Easter, and expresses the desire of people to abandon winter to welcome the first warm. Morena symbolized winter and so when people wanted spring to come, they had to kill her, drown her in a stream or burn her. Her effigy made of straw and dressed in women's clothes was accompanied by the girls to the stream and then stripped naked, burned and thrown into the waters of the stream.

As in Italy and the Czech Republic, also in Slovakia the period between Christmas and New Year is one of the richest and most interesting as far as customs are concerned. The tradition of Christmas is breathed in the many Christmas markets or in popular Christmas re-enactments in open-air museums, such as representations of the nativity.

The tradition of the light of peace in Bethlehem, spread by Slovak scouts since 1990, is a great event and a part of Christmas for many people. Through this mission, they bring to families a bit of Bethlehem, human unity and friendship.

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Not unlike in the other two countries, Slovak families usually get together at Christmas bringing special dishes, customs and superstitions to the table. On the evening of Christmas Eve it is common to start the banquet with hosts and honey or small sandwiches called *opekance*, and then move on to fish and legumes, dried fruit, a sauerkraut soup called *kapustnica* and a parade of desserts, among which, the most typical are *kračun* and *štedrák*, while the oldest remains the delicious pancake made from yeast-free dough from which Christmas wafers developed.

The March of the Magi, on the day of the Epiphany and at the end of the Christmas period, takes place in many regions of Slovakia and can therefore be found in various variations and modifications. The customs related to this day show how the ancient Slavic customs, enriched by the elements of Roman culture, overlap with Christian rites. Among the best known customs is the common tradition among boys, dressed in long white shirts and with crowns on their heads, to go around the houses in a sort of paraphrase of the story of the New Testament that tells how the Magi went to visit the child Jesus Christ.



Before Christmas, on December 6, St. Nicholas' Day, it is especially popular among Slovak children to receive sweets and small toys as gifts. According to this tradition, children must clean their shoes and put them on the windowsill in the evening to find a nice surprise inside the next morning.

It is a traditional custom widespread throughout the territory of Slovakia also to bathe as a purification ritual and to whip the girls goliardically on Easter Monday. The traditional reward for sprinkling is, generally, a decorated egg called *kraslica* and symbol of new life.

In some regions of Slovakia the Tuesday after Easter Monday was the day when girls could redeem themselves from bathing and whipping.

Continuing with Slovak customs, the month of May, in general, is considered the time of love and new life. The vegetation of May was the symbol of energy and good growth. The most important place among the plants belonged to the tree that under these circumstances was called the May stake. The May stake was usually placed by a young man to pay homage to the girl he loved. The custom is widespread throughout Slovakia. Mostly tall straight trees served as May poles, especially fir and pine trees with detached bark. Their tops were decorated with colored ribbons. May poles were mounted at night and the following Sunday, young people went around the houses with May poles in front of them and collected financial contributions for the next party, the May dance. The custom has been preserved to the present day, although it has been slightly modified. Usually only a decorated tree is placed in the center of the village or in the main square. Once installed, the May pole remains in place throughout the month and torn down during special celebrations.

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As for Italy and the Czech Republic, of which he has been widely exposed, also for the Czech Republic gastronomy is an element closely connected to culture and traditions. Slovak cuisine, which varies from region to region, is basically Central European and has Hungarian, Czech and Austrian influences. Most Slovak dishes feature ingredients such as potatoes, pork, flour, *bryndza* cheese and cabbage. The traditional national dish is *Bryndzové halušky*, small potato dumplings with *bryndza* sheep's cheese, toasted lardini and sheep's milk whey. Ubiquitous at the table are the soups that, in the past, replaced the second course; the most characteristic is *Kapustnica*, a soup made from sauerkraut, often also mushrooms, meat and sausage, and sometimes served in a bowl of bread. Cumin seeds, smoked bacon and lots of salt are the most common condiments.



Desserts include *Parené buchty*, steamed dumplings with various fillings, such as jam, plum, curd, poppy, seasoned with poppy seeds, sugar, butter, sour cream, breadcrumbs or nuts; *Laskonky*, coconut meringue biscuits with nuts and creamy filling and *Medovníky*, honey-based biscuits, similar to gingerbread.

The Slovaks, more like the Italians and unlike the Czech “cousins”, prefer wine to beer: the Tokaj region along the Hungarian border is an excellent wine production area as well as the Bratislava area; from here, come the wines Rheinriesling, Welschriesling, Gruner Veltliner, Traminer, Silvaner and Muller-Thurgau.

Overview

Traditions, customs and gastronomy are elements closely linked to the culture of a country. Dialects, folklore and dishes tell the story and culture of the inhabitants of a place, the resources available, the territory and also the personality of a people. It is not something trivial at all, but a fundamental element of the character of a society. Traditional festivals are intended to remind people of the traditions, important goals and historical moments that have made a territory what it is today. From region to region, from state to state, the reminiscent representations change, the dishes and ingredients change, but what does not change is the fundamental role that these aspects have in creating the identity culture of a country and uniting its inhabitants in a magical interweaving between past and future.

The Italian, Czech and Slovak folk and gastronomic traditions have as distinctive and common elements the plurality of regional experiences and historical legacies of contaminations of neighboring cultures, experiences and flavors. Thanks to the characteristics that emerged for each country, it is observed that it is common to vary customs, products, knowledge and recipes as soon as you move within the territory; On the one hand the landscape and the climate influence the crops, on the other the historical events and the intersection with different cultures, have greatly influenced attitudes and habits in crafts, folklore and at the table. All three have strongly impressed the Catholic tradition of Christmas celebrations, while with Easter, the Czech Republic and Slovakia abandon themselves more



to the carefree celebrations of pagan approach, giving ample space to young people with their own entertaining representations with an ancient flavor. Finally, all three countries find their most authentic sense of sharing and rapprochement in the banqueting experiences that restore, in serving dishes, all the beauty of peoples.



CONCLUSIONS

In this paper the knowledge of the state of the art in Italy, Czech Republic and Slovakia was deepened for aspects related to culture, education, science, innovation and methods of learning and improvement in the cultural field. This brief survey made it possible to compare three different European realities, highlighting similar characteristics and socio-structural differences in relation to the internal dynamics of the States as well as related to the broader European context.

Proceeding in order of exposure, it first emerges how education and school play a fundamental and primary role in the creation of a shared culture. As the concept of cultural heritage and its role for the future has expanded in recent years, its preservation and transmission to new generations must also adapt in this direction. The link between culture and the world of education is still a purely state prerogative; therefore, the implementation dissymmetry between the situation in Italy and that observed in the other two countries of Central and Eastern Europe is evident, although everyone agrees in preferring a motivating teaching, close to the life and attitudes of the students in order to encourage knowledge and understanding of the topics. In general, it has emerged that the school has a tendency to incorporate culture into other humanistic teachings rather than considering it as a discipline in its own right. From the Italian context it also emerged how necessary collaboration between teachers and cultural heritage operators is to make heritage education a distinct, interconnected and highly rich resource. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the teaching of history and culture is still anchored in outdated teaching methods; However, the first steps are beginning to move towards new, more motivating and effective modern approaches to teaching. The need to rethink the educational systems of Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia in the sense of multidisciplinary follows the logic of integrating “classical” subjects with transversal skills deriving from hybrid knowledge, functional to their usability even outside the educational environments.

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Heritage education plays a key role thanks to its democratic and inclusive approach, the responsible use of cultural heritage and the civil involvement of young people towards aspects of active citizenship, as well as the protection and enhancement of the territory, in relation to the identities of places and landscapes.

Today, the themes of cultural participation, social well-being, accessibility project, in particular, heritage education towards forms of circular forms of education related to digital innovation,



sustainable development and networks of communities and territories, to the different spaces of knowledge, to the multidimensionality of the offer, useful to achieve a principle of substantial equality for the dissemination of knowledge and for lifelong learning.

The European objective is to hinder exclusion and educational poverty by promoting dialogue and social cohesion through access and sharing in the fields of culture, creativity and education. To achieve this goal, it is crucial that cultural institutions and places offer contexts with expanded accessibility in the forms of communication and mediation, aimed at eliminating physical, sensory, cultural, cognitive or digital barriers.

Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, in line with the European Union, show great interest in the combination of youth and culture, with all the positive implications on learning and entrepreneurship, transversal skills and active citizenship.

In this sense, and especially following the harsh repercussions on the cultural sector due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the promotion of cultural and digital youth organizations certainly represent a potential channel of innovation and enrichment of the methods of mediation, education and training of culture.

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The work carried out by the researchers of the project, however, has understood the urgency of providing concreteness to the process of digitization of cultural heritage which, although it is a reality established for some time, has not yet produced the cultural leap that would be possible thanks to the immense heritage possessed by the three countries analyzed.

In the museum sector, the new challenge is to reinterpret culture by exploiting the benefits of artificial intelligence, augmented reality and high technology to involve the public, personalize visits and make the use of art more accessible. The phenomenon of cultural digitization sees museums and archives as protagonists and pushes them towards an improvement in the digital performance of spaces, through a strong involvement of the territory and the public. Participation, sharing, total accessibility and fun are the guidelines of a new museum reality, capable of generating new forms of technological innovation, economic growth of the territory and change in lifestyles and quality of life. The efforts of Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia move towards cultural accessibility using the tools offered by



the European Union for the realization of digital. A growing trend is, certainly, that of the greater and more conscious use of Social Networks by museums to increase external communication. Another new concept of museum is based on the ability of the works to tell their stories through technologies capable of establishing a connection with the visitor to involve him in a cultural, intellectual and emotional experience, capable of satisfying different tastes and needs. The transformation of traditional museums in the direction of the museums of the future aims to design a new model of intelligent, interactive, multidisciplinary and interconnected museum space, able to significantly increase visitor interest and involvement. Returning to the initial question, the presence in the three countries of an innovative museum current has the further objective of bringing the new generations closer starting from an involvement in the world of school through the development and promotion of educational activities aimed at spreading knowledge of cultural heritage. The new approach to teaching tends to extend the training environments also to common extra-curricular spaces prepared for collaboration and comparison in laboratories, libraries, museums, cultural heritage and on the territory. The governments, institutions and organizations of Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia promote the adoption of immediate policies aimed at supporting the sector, although there is still much work to be done; In this sense, the project supported by the present research aims to sow its contribution to bringing the new generations closer to culture through innovative growth tools.

The study is completed with a review of the cultural heritage areas of Italy, Czech Republic and Slovakia respectively, followed by an in-depth analysis of regional customs and gastronomy understood as cultural specificities of strong social impact and identity. The exhibition focuses on material and intangible assets considered of primary importance in the process of transformation of everyday life and traditions from purely territorial and popular events to values to be increased, known, respected, cultivated, supported and handed down.

This study complements the existing literature on the state of cultural education, technologies applied to cultural heritage and initiatives aimed at its valorisation, dissemination and development. However, it is important to keep in mind that this research focused mainly on the behaviors already in place in the three reference countries and in the European context. Once all the factors considered have been focused, the project partners will use the results obtained to get in touch with the target groups in order to identify a realistic and coherent overview with their profiles based on their initial skills, actual



habits, personal aspirations and future expectations. The cognitive process of the general and specific context by the researchers and technicians of the partners of “Cultural E-competencies in open-air” will allow to shape an innovative training path based on the creation of effective tools that bring the user closer to the new concept of culture.



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