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EUROPE FUNDS GREEN AND OPEN RESEARCH FOR ITS HERITAGE

European funding for research and innovation is going green. A complex architecture involving institutional and private actors, notably for the preservation of cultural heritage.

Horizon Europe 2021-2027 is the European Commission's flagship programme for funding research and innovation, supporting a wide range of projects to accompany the social, economic, technological and cultural transformations of the countries of the Union, for them to become "healthier" democracies where cultural values are protected.

"Culture, creativity and inclusive society"

Within this programme, a cluster called Cluster 2 is dedicated to the theme of "Culture, creativity and inclusive society".
Coordinated by the European Research Executive Agency, a call for projects was launched last June. With an overall budget of €158m, 51 projects were selected from the 378 applications received following the consultation, which ended on 7 October. The project leaders who just signed their grant agreements with the European Commission are divided into four main thematic families: "Feeding democracy in the face of emerging threats"; "Building a concrete trade policy through supply chains"; "Engaging with cultural actors" and "Protecting European cultural heritage for future generations".

Financing culture and heritage projects

While the first strands focus on protecting the values of democracy and securing trade relations in a postpandemic world, with war on Europe's doorstep, the last two focuses on culture and heritage. The projects selected for the call "Engaging with cultural actors" are rather monitoring and support missions, intended to make the European funding schemes known to the actors involved. Thus, the ARCHE project will focus on the development of a panEuropean framework for European cultural heritage research, while the Net4SocietyHE project will establish transnational networks to advise potential beneficiaries of community funding.

The call, on its part, encompassing the protection of European cultural heritage, was extremely diverse. This subject is at the heart of current European political concerns: it constitutes a crucial societal and economic resource, promoting resilience, inclusion, job creation, etc. It is nonetheless also endangered by the environmental, economic and social risks that Europe is experiencing. Aiming for longterm perspectives so that future generations can seize such heritage issues, the criteria of accessibility — both digital and physical — and of openness prevailed in the selection process. Projects such as IN SITU offers to put these guidelines into practice by studying how to encourage cultural and creative industries in non-urban areas, which have long been forgotten in the field of cultural heritage. Others, such as MuseIT,

— Antonio Mirabile and Carine Claude

ECOLOGY

EU GREEN FUNDINGS

PREMIERE and SHIFT focus on the role of technology, virtual reality and artificial intelligence in museums and in the performing arts.

Three innovative projects for green conservation

Heritage implies conservation, preservation and transmission, whether of works, knowledge or sites. Three innovative projects have been selected to support a green transition towards new conservation practices: GoGreen, MOXY and GREENART. Their goal? To develop new materials for the restoration of works of art in an environmentally responsible manner. The three projects aim to test active principles in the development or industrialisation phase, in order to adapt them to more sustainable conservation-restoration goals.

With a budget of €3.272m allocated by Europe, GoGreen is coordinated by the University of Amsterdam and brings together eight participants professionals, research laboratories such as the CNRS and other universities, the University of Bologna for instance. At the heart of this open research, the methods are inspired by nature and bio-based with green solvents, reagents from nature and ecological delivery systems. The entire chain is engaged, from cleaning to stabilising works of art, including transport and an application to help restorers design ecological preventive and corrective conservation treatments.

On its side, the MOXY programme is based on a sophisticated technology, but simple idea: atomic oxygen to clean the delicate surfaces of works of art, without contact, without risk to health or the environment, without residue or waste. Certainly more environmentally friendly than conventional solvents. The €4m project, coordinated by Ghent University, brings together plasma specialists, environmental scientists and curators from the Netherlands, Lithuania, France, Sweden, Denmark and Italy.

Finally, GREENART — which we will be reporting on in future issues [see box] — is an ambitious international programme that brings together 27 partners — and not just European ones — for a period of 36 months and a budget of €3.8m given by Europe. Its goal? To develop innovative solutions for corrective and preventive conservation while meeting the requirements of the Green Deal, i.e. using low-impact, environmentally friendly materials obtained from renewable natural sources or recycled waste.

GREENART, towards Europe and beyond

Coordinated by the Consorzio Interuniversitario per lo Sviluppo dei Sistemi a Grande Interfase (CSGI), an inter-university consortium based in Florence, GREENART brings together an impressive number of leading European research institutes and universities, as well as professionals in the sector and major international museums such as the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation – Peggy Guggenheim Collection, LACMA, the Tate Gallery and the prestigious Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET). Although the American and British partners are not direct beneficiaries of European funds, they are actively involved in the research initiated by GREENART.

The first aspect of their research involves curative conservation. This entails replacing existing polymers, solvents and surfactants with biological, natural or low-impact materials that are fully sustainable. The second part of the research focuses on systems to replace traditional consolidants, coatings and packaging materials with plant proteins and polysaccharides from renewable resources. For example, protective coatings from cellulose waste or even shellfish, or biodegradable packaging foam, all of which are, of course, noninvasive and reversible.

Launched on 5-6 October in Athens at the Egaleo Park Campus Conference Centre Egaleo Park campus, the first meeting of all 27 GREENART partners was hosted by the CSGI, Piero Baglioni, project coordinator, Antonio Mirabile, dissemination manager and Athina Alexopoulou from the University of West Attica (UNIWA). A moment of exchange and sharing, already bearing fruit thanks to the working groups that have been formed. The first meeting of a long series: the partners will have three years to complete their projects.

All about GREENART with AMA

In future issues of AMA, go behind the scenes of the GREENART project and discover how academics, curators, engineers and restorers are combining their knowledge and expertise to move heritage research towards a greener future. Exclusive interviews, surveys and reports will give you an insider's view of the developments of this innovative European project, which combines heritage science, open research and citizen initiatives. AMA will follow GREENART during the three-year programme and will seize the opportunity to go green with subjects devoted to art and ecology, to the green transition of museums, the eco-design of fairs, and other initiatives of curators and restorers, currently reinventing their profession through ongoing ecological innovation.

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