
RECOMMENDATION ON FOSTERING PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND SKILLS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SPECIALISTS IN RESPONSE TO CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

INTRODUCTION

Professional training and the skills of specialists are a key factor in ensuring the sustainable development of the cultural heritage conservation and management system. In the context of contemporary challenges, it is an undeniable fact that social dynamics require the improvement of core competences. It is essential *to identify and promote activities related to the use of fostering skills and tools* that strengthen professional expertise in the cultural heritage field.

It is necessary to bear in mind that professional training is a gradual endeavour with a prolonged period before trained specialists can apply their skills in practice, thus requiring strategic planning. At the same time, the proposed strategies for cultural heritage conservation and management must take into account the fact that the advent of new technologies and artificial intelligence requires constant additional training. Mastering modern knowledge and tools is crucial both for career development and for dealing effectively with contemporary challenges.

This Recommendation is the result of the research and findings of the ‘SkillFoster / Heritage Matters: Fostering Cultural Awareness and Professional Development / 2023-1-BG01-KA220-HED-000153432’ project, carried out with the financial support of the European Union. Its aim is to provide guidance to states, cultural institutions, educational structures, and all stakeholders on *the identification, cultivation, and application of fostering skills and tools*. These improve professional training and ensure the career development of cultural heritage specialists, while guaranteeing the sustainable development of the whole system.

I. FINDINGS AND NEED FOR CHANGE

- **Social dynamics:** Social relations are undergoing continuous changes, which require not only adaptation but also *the identification of proactive fostering skills and tools* to improve the professional training and career development of cultural heritage specialists.
- **Insufficient representation in policies:** The topic of fostering the professional training and skills of cultural heritage specialists is relatively underrepresented in policy documents and legislation, both in the European Union and in individual states. The focus is mainly on conservation and use, and to a much lesser extent on *socialisation, management, and education* in the cultural heritage field.
- **Transformation of the education system:** There is a shift in the educational paradigm—from teaching and knowledge reproduction to *the formation of competences* oriented towards practical application. This shift ‘re-establishes’ the research, professional development, and interpretation of cultural heritage in relation to its exhibition, perception, and presentation, placing emphasis on *key competences and professional qualifications* in the development of new competence profiles.

- *Skills deficiencies and challenges:* Despite the high personal motivation and vocation of most cultural heritage specialists, surveys show *deficiencies in practical training, practice exchange, participation in scientific events and research*, as well as a lack of sufficient *specialised training courses*.
- *Advantage of lifelong learning:* In the context of the European Year of Skills and global challenges, *lifelong learning* is crucial for the adaptation of specialists, although national data indicate significant gaps in participation.

II. DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERMS 'FOSTERING SKILLS' AND 'FOSTERING TOOLS'

'*Fostering skills*' are the capabilities of specialists that improve the quality of activities carried out in the cultural heritage conservation and management system through the formation of competences in functional areas and activities that have the potential to stimulate change and development in its internal and external environment. Fostering skills are distinguished from other skills by their potential to overcome various bottlenecks that hinder or slow down ongoing processes in the cultural heritage field. Skills fostering is a long-term process intended to ensure the sustainable development of the cultural heritage conservation and management system and requires *strategic planning at different levels*.

'*Fostering tools*' are instruments designed to support and promote the development of fostering skills within the cultural heritage protection and management system.

III. RECOMMENDED FOSTERING SKILLS

States and relevant institutions are encouraged to support the development of the following fostering skills among cultural heritage specialists:

- Research competence to identify and analyse deficiencies, problems, strengths, and weaknesses of the cultural heritage conservation and management system, enabling the proposal and implementation of effective management solutions.
- Informed management of ongoing processes related to the professional training and career development of cultural heritage specialists.
- Development of skills for managing cultural projects and policies.
- Strengthening transnational and inter-institutional cooperation.
- Digital competence in utilising artificial intelligence and modern technologies within the cultural heritage field, addressing the repeated recommendations in policy documents and legal acts advocating for its integration into the digital age.
- Development of digital registers, including a database of resources on professional training and career development for cultural heritage specialists.
- Identification of cultural values across different types of heritage.
- Conducting cultural heritage impact assessments as a management tool to prevent negative interventions and consequences regarding its conservation.
- Interpreting cultural heritage to reveal its stories, symbols, and meaning for contemporary communities, including dissonant heritage that requires special attention in the modern world.

IV. RECOMMENDED FOSTERING TOOLS

- Legal guarantees to ensure activities related to professional training and development.
- Agreements to promote qualification and retraining in the cultural heritage field.
- System for supplementary remuneration related to acquired qualifications and experience in the cultural heritage field.
- Agreements and international cooperation and capacity-building programmes in the cultural heritage field.

V. CONCLUSION

This Recommendation calls on the states and all stakeholders to adopt an integrated and proactive approach to *skills fostering and the career development* of cultural heritage specialists. Its implementation will contribute to:

- Updating education programmes and curricula to include interdisciplinary modules that bring together cultural heritage, digital technologies, sustainable development, crisis management, and social inclusion.
- Establishing systems for continuous professional development.
- Raising awareness of ethical standards and legislation.
- Increasing *the quality and effectiveness* of cultural heritage activities.
- Ensuring *the sustainable development* of the cultural heritage system in response to both contemporary and future challenges.
- Improving *the professional realisation, career development, and competitiveness* of specialists on the labour market.
- Strengthening *cultural awareness and public engagement, bridging the gap* in the application of modern technologies, and *developing new competence profiles*.

In the spirit of international cooperation and the principles of cultural diversity and sustainability, we call for joint action to implement this Recommendation and to create an environment that encourages continuous learning and innovation in the cultural heritage field.

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