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PROCULTHER

PROTECTING CULTURAL HERITAGE
FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISASTERS

PROCULTHER CONSORTIUM STATEMENT FOR THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AT RISK OF DISASTER

Implemented within the framework of a Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) initiative and co-funded by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO), the PROCULTHER project aims to support and complement the efforts made by the European Union to strengthen cooperation between the EU Member States, Participating States in the field of civil protection. In this sense, the UCPM, by pooling together European civil protection capacities and capabilities and providing for common standards enabling certified and well-equipped teams to work interchangeably when a disaster strikes¹, is an essential and effective system to allow a stronger and more coherent collective response.

As is widely acknowledged, cultural heritage is more than an important economic resource linked to tourism, it is an invaluable source of our identity and evolution, as well as a driver of social development. It contributes to the continuous revaluation of cultures and identities, being a key vehicle for the transmission of experiences, skills and knowledge between generations and an effective catalyst for social cohesion. For all these reasons, it is essential to preserve and protect it from the risk of disaster.

A holistic and interdisciplinary approach is crucial to ensure the safeguard of cultural heritage in emergency, as well as to reinforce the resilience of vulnerable communities facing the impact of natural and anthropic hazards on their social and economic assets. This entails a series of measures to include the protection of cultural heritage in the disaster risk management (DRM) cycle and a multilevel definition of the synergies that need to be strategically built or reinforced.

On the basis of the experience gained by the PROCULTHER partners -namely Italy, France, Spain, Turkey, ICCROM and Fondazione Villa Montesca- a structured collaboration among Cultural heritage (CH) and Civil protection (CP) actors at National and European level lies at the core of the issue. Indeed, to ensure an effective management and protection of the cultural heritage at risk of disaster, stronger synergies among relevant CP and CH stakeholders should be addressed and reinforced at different territorial levels, promoting management models that link short-term relief measures with longer-term development programmes.

Therefore, in order to provide a more sustainable and effective response to crises, the PROCULTHER partners emphasize, among other elements, the importance of the following measures:

¹ For more details see: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/mechanism_en





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At European level:

- a) Compile lessons learned and best practices and hold training programmes to build capacities of CP and CH professionals as well as volunteers to include the safeguard of cultural heritage in the DRM cycle;
- b) Define an interdisciplinary capacity/module within the framework of UCPM able to support affected countries or interested International Organisations during emergencies and in the prevention, preparedness and response phases;
- c) Strengthen inter-institutional coordination and communication among CP and CH authorities by establishing, through UCPM, permanent consultation mechanisms and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for emergency preparedness and response;
- d) Establish training standards dedicated to different actors/roles in particular in terms of coordination, risk assessment, damage assessment, short term countermeasures, first measures, safety and security;

At national, regional and local level:

- e) Elaborate protocols for coordination and response between CP and CH institutions at national and local levels, ensuring the participation of all main actors, and integrate them within the broader CH site management plans;
- f) Improve the awareness of disaster-response bodies, citizens and society as a whole on the importance to preserve CH in emergency, and strengthen their knowledge on how minimize the impact of emergency operations on the cultural assets involved in the crisis;
- g) Develop and regularly test multi-hazard standardised tools, procedures, guidelines and geographic information systems/technologies able to reinforce the protection of cultural heritage in all the phases of the DRM cycle;
- h) Define and train a coordination structure (cell/cluster/function) able to coordinate the operations of CH safeguard at each territorial level and include CH scenarios in local/regional/national exercises.

At the same time, in accordance with the priorities foreseen by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the aforementioned measures should be structurally envisaged taking into greater account the importance of setting up an effective risk governance specifically dedicated to cultural heritage, based on adequate risk-informed processes. This should serve to establish a coordinated approach to reduce the risk of disaster in this field as well as to guarantee appropriate financial and technical resources to protect CH in a sustainable way.

The PROCULTHER CONSORTIUM
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For more information, visit the PROCULTHER website: www.proculther.eu

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