

EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

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Development of the European Students' Association for Cultural Heritage: the First ESACH Meeting Girona, 7-9 June 2018

Inspired by the announcement of plans for the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 (EYCH), the European Students' Association for Cultural Heritage (ESACH) was founded in 2017 with the intention of contributing to the EYCH's objectives by providing a youth perspective within the cultural heritage debate, attained through a network established between students and young researchers at European University. Today the network has widened to include fifteen universities in eight European countries.

ESACH's first meeting was held at the University of Girona (UdG) on 7-9 June 2018. This provided the occasion to convert its networking activity, which up to that moment had been only virtual, into something concrete. We all met at the University Campus located in the Old Town, where we were welcomed by UdG Vice-Rector, Dr. Josep Calbó, who also presented us with an academic offer for a new Master in Cultural and Natural Heritage.

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At the Girona Meeting seven ESACH universities were present. Consequently, the European, as well as the interdisciplinary dimension, came to the fore immediately. The interdisciplinary goal was almost naturally fulfilled, thanks to the various knowledge profiles that each member shared with the others, contributing to widen the perspectives of each discipline in a field of action that perhaps had never been considered.

Elena Fînariu (M.A. in Cultural Anthropology, Bucharest) opened the presentation session with a contribution about what she considers to be one of the best practices on the conservation of intangible heritage, based on a case study of the *pizzica pizzica*, the traditional music and dance from the south of Italy in Apulia.

Next Ana Tomala and Daryna Kuprianova (Law students, Opole) introduced us to the goals of UNESCO Recommendations and Conventions, and the policies of the European Union concerning the protection and enhancement of European cultural diversity.

We were treated to further contributions concerning new technologies involved in the humanity fields: Larissa Borck and Ragna Quellmann (M.A. in Cultural Anthropology, Hamburg) presented the “Young Heritage Studio”, a project created by students and professors focusing on how digital devices within cultural sites could provide easier access and better comprehension for youngsters.

Next Nicole Gieser and Jana Tempelmeier (M.A. in Art History, Münster) presented a blog they created in which they collected less known monuments of Münster, i.e. ones which people passed every day without being aware of the European history behind them. Their project resulted in an exhibition held last July in Münster.

Carlos G. Bayonas Abelleira (M.A. in Cultural Heritage Management, Madrid) discussed the statement that public participation is the most important *raison d'être* of heritage – which in some cases leads us to become tourists in our own city – while at the same time he also discussed the problems that uncontrolled tourism could provoke with respect to the management of sites and monuments.

Next Patricia Dos Santos Ferraris (M.A. in Art Markets, Lisbon) presented her research into the Art Nouveau movement, focused in particular on the work of René Lalique. In conclusion Marius Müller (ESACH Founding President) argued for the necessity of legal reform in German heritage law, which is mainly focused on conservation matters. He pointed out the urgency of recognition of the communicative-creative potentials intrinsic to heritage.

All the different contributions revealed the common idea that the most important reason for heritage's preservation is to raise communities' awareness about what heritage means for the development of cultural identities. This was the starting point for our aim to make our common vision official. According to the idea that culture exists because it evolves with the people who share it, we believe that heritage's value cannot be enhanced only through protection and conservation policies, but its intrinsic value is about promoting it as a resource for connections across nations and generations.

These considerations led us to better understand one of the main features of ESACH: that interdisciplinarity has to do with the belief that a discipline does not have a straight and closed path, but there must be a connection between specializations. The network is moreover cross-generational, and a real youth perspective could come about only thanks to a constant interaction between Bachelor, Masters, and Ph.D. students. The European dimension is the supporting feature of the project (since we are aware that heritage is a common European point of reference) as well as a responsibility.

Having discussed and defined these points, we gave shape to a definite vision of ESACH, as follows:

ESACH is a Students' Association whose aim is to contribute to the reconnection of the concepts of culture and heritage as a stimulus for contemporary cultural developments.

ESACH's future objectives include strengthening the international dimension of the academic network by including more universities and facilitating collaboration between faculties and departments to intensify the interdisciplinary approach. Even though ESACH was born one year prior to the EYCH 2018, its aim is to extend the project beyond 2018 and organize a meeting at a European university at least once a year. ESACH is currently in the process of organizing the second meeting at the University of Genoa (Italy), to be held most likely in spring 2019.

During the first ESACH Meeting the participants had the unique opportunity to visit the ancient Greco-Roman city of Empúries, with an archeological tour organized by members of ESACH Girona. On the first day, after having been welcomed by the museum's curator, Elisa Hernández Pastor, we visited the archeological site of Empúries. Its origins date back to 550 BC, but its remains were forgotten until the 20th century, when archeologists discovered the site. Currently, thanks to audiovisual didactic support, visitors can see a reconstruction of its original appearance. Consequently, we had the chance to experience what we were discussing during the previous days and enhance awareness of our responsibility towards heritage by recognizing the value it has for a community's memory and identity.

**If you wish to become part of the ESACH network
or find out more about us, see:**

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