

Towards a European Heritage Pedagogy

Document developed within the framework of the CIVIS project “*FARO project-Building community through FARO Convention*”

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Introduction

This document aims to contribute to the definition of a *European Heritage Pedagogy* by translating a theoretical-methodological model into operational guidelines developed through the experience of the CIVIS Open Lab – FARO Sapienza. Operating within the framework of the CIVIS European University Alliance, the initiative takes as its primary conceptual reference the *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, also known as the *Faro Convention* (2005), understood as a practical horizon within which pathways towards active citizenship, social cohesion and cultural mediation can be situated.

Through the sharing of authoritative know-how that supports social action, Sapienza University of Rome has for years demonstrated a dedicated commitment to Third Mission activities, of which the CIVIS Open Lab - FARO Sapienza is an international expression. By fostering a dialogue between multidisciplinary knowledge and professional skills in response to primary societal needs¹, the University's SARAS Department has promoted public engagement initiatives with empowering effects on the communities involved. In this process, cultural heritage — in its broadest sense, and thus in its dual tangible and intangible nature — has become the catalyst for the development of important collaborative networks with local entities, representing a fertile and ideal ground for methodological reflections and action-research practices. Indeed, the relational dimension underlying Third Mission projects is fully expressed in a conception of heritage as a space for the “flourishing of pluralities and [...] the elaboration of civic and cultural awareness”².

This approach informed the practice of border pedagogy and cultural mediation applied to contexts of identity and historical complexity during the project ***Paesaggi di confine. Modelli di lavoro per una narrazione partecipata***. Operating within the scientific field of Border Studies, a team of scholars and researchers from Sapienza University of Rome explored between 2022 and 2024 the dichotomous nature of the concept of *limen*. Engaging school teachers, university students, third-sector entities, and museum institutions, the team conducted training pathways, initiatives, and an extensive series of debates and seminars. This work

¹ *Dialoghi sul Confine: patrimonio culturale e costruzione di comunità*, curated by I. BALDRIGA – C. RUSSO, Roma, 2024, p. 81.

² Ivi, p. 80.

generated a profound and structured reflection that extended beyond mere theoretical enquiry; aligned with the scope of the Third Mission, it aimed at valorising research and producing public goods with measurable impacts evaluated against objective parameters established during ex-ante project assessment. Alongside specialised scholarly publications and educational toolkits, the project's outputs include the *Dizionario dei Paesaggi di Confine* and the *Archivio dei Prodotti di valico*, two expressive laboratories that strengthened ties with the territory through the active involvement of PhD candidates and Master's students, starting from the collection of oral testimonies from local citizens.

It is within this framework that the activities of the CIVIS Open Lab – FARO Sapienza are situated. Grounded in the participatory and democratic values of the *Faro Convention*, these activities encourage civic engagement and rest upon a conception of cultural heritage as a realm of plural identities, a vector for disseminating social responsibility, and a tool for fostering awareness around inclusion and sustainability. By promoting dialogue and active citizenship through collaboration between universities and local entities at the European level, the Open Lab oversees four distinct programmes: *FARO project - Building community through FARO Convention*; *EUROTALES – Building a Museum Laboratory of the Voices of Europe*; *STORM – Stories of Migrants. Learning Memories, Building Peace*; and *All Year Long CIVIS Open Lab Music Ensembles*. Oriented towards knowledge sharing, valorisation, and access to cultural heritage, these initiatives deploy four complementary methodologies spanning linguistic research, museum mediation, the collection of migratory memories, and musical practice.

Within this broader landscape, ***FARO project - Building community through FARO Convention*** represents the laboratory in which the principles of a *European Heritage Pedagogy* are tested and developed, building on fruitful collaboration among four institutional partners and their respective urban communities: Sapienza Università di Roma (Rome), Aix-Marseille Université (Marseille), Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Madrid) and University of Bucharest (Bucharest). The reference in the project title to the 2005 Council of Europe Framework Convention also mirrors the choice to adopt the Italian metaphor of the lighthouse (*faro*) in the acronym, designating the sequential phases of the project: **Flow** – Acknowledgment (Bucharest, June 2025); **Aquifer** – Documentation (Madrid, October 2025); **Ripple** – Integration (Rome, February 2026); **Ocean** – Openness (Marseille, March–April 2026).

On the occasion of each gathering, the participating universities developed activities tailored to the specific context of each city, meeting periodically to exchange updates, best practices, and shared methodologies. To foster civic engagement initiatives, each centre successfully established a local collaborative network, configured in a distinct manner: in Bucharest, emphasis was placed on the historical recognition of the city's ethnic and linguistic minorities through guided tours of Armenian and Jewish heritage sites, alongside strengthened ties with the Museum of the University of Bucharest, the Societatea de Cultură Macedo-Română, Asociația Da'DeCe, the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore “Constantin Brăiloiu”, and the “Mușata armână” Foundation; in Madrid, this cooperative network manifested through the testing — and subsequent sharing — of digital tools, notably *Voces-Territorios*, a mapping application that collects oral testimonies regarding cultural transformations and the contributions of minority communities to the city's urban fabric, thereby encouraging the study of linguistic diversity and social inequalities; in Rome, the involvement of key stakeholders such as the Parco Archeologico del Colosseo, EcoMuseo Casilino, Associazione Tezeta, and Civico Zero Onlus proved essential in fostering shared reflections on *difficult heritage* and its social implications, the role of cultural heritage in shaping identities through an intercultural lens, and the potential to re-signify contested memories and narratives through participatory museology; finally, the Marseille meeting provided a crucial venue for dialogue between academia, citizens, and institutional representatives, highlighting the commitment of the municipality — driven by local associations and museums, particularly the Musée d'Histoire — to join the Faro Convention network, despite France not yet having signed the document.

The insights gained throughout the project have reaffirmed how Third Mission initiatives can generate tangible, measurable impacts on citizenship. Given their capacity for replicability, this publication aims to kickstart transformation processes anchored in heritage pedagogy in the spirit of the *Faro Convention*. By adopting an agile format intended for a diverse readership, this document introduces nine guidelines, preceded by a theoretical framework, to address the core research question:

“How can we promote a European citizenship grounded in culture and the shared values of memory, identity, and heritage?”

1. Regulatory and policy framework

The conceptualisation of cultural heritage as a space for the exercise of citizenship emerged internationally in the first half of the twentieth century, fostering — in a spirit of reconciliation following the First and Second World Wars — the establishment of bodies such as the International Office of Museums (OIM), ICOM, and UNESCO. However, it was towards the end of the last century that a definitive paradigm shift occurred: moving away from a perspective primarily focused on physical conservation, a relational vision of cultural heritage progressively took root, wherein value is conferred by communities that identify with it and regard it as a resource for building social bonds and democratic practices.

The international regulatory framework outlined below succinctly traces the key milestones of this evolution, which are of crucial relevance to the formulation of a *European Heritage Pedagogy*.

The UNESCO *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, adopted in 1972, represents the first major multilateral instrument dedicated to safeguarding heritage of outstanding universal value³. Although formulated from a predominantly conservationist standpoint, it laid the groundwork for subsequent international agreements.

Two years after *Recommendation No. R (98) 5 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States concerning heritage education*⁴, the Council of Europe adopted the *European Landscape Convention*⁵ in Florence in 2000. This instrument extended the notion of heritage to ordinary landscapes, explicitly recognizing the role of local populations in their perception and transformation. Conceptually, this expansion prefigured the central premise later embodied in

³ UNESCO, World Heritage Centre - *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, 1972: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

⁴ COUNCIL OF EUROPE - *Recommendation No. R (98) 5 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States Concerning Heritage Education*, 1998: [https://search.coe.int/cm/#{%22CoEIdentifier%22:\[%2209125948801c72e3%22\],%22sort%22:\[%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22\]}](https://search.coe.int/cm/#{%22CoEIdentifier%22:[%2209125948801c72e3%22],%22sort%22:[%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22]})

⁵ COUNCIL OF EUROPE - *Council of Europe Landscape Convention*, 2000: <https://rm.coe.int/16807b6bc7>

the *Faro Convention*: heritage is not an objective given, but rather the product of a process of value attribution by communities. During the same period, the European Council, meeting at its extraordinary session in Lisbon, addressed “a quantum shift resulting from globalisation and the challenges of a new knowledge-driven economy”⁶: recognising European cultural diversity within the information society became essential to fostering collaborations that drive individual and collective growth.

In 2003, UNESCO adopted the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*⁷, further shifting attention towards the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills transmitted from generation to generation that communities recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This instrument prefigured by two years the Council of Europe *Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*⁸, which serves as the primary conceptual foundation of this document. The *Faro Convention* formally introduced in 2005 the concept of the “heritage community” (Art. 2), defined as consists of “people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations”. It asserted that “everyone, alone or collectively, has the right to benefit from the cultural heritage and to contribute towards its enrichment” (Art. 4); underscored the need to reflect on the ethics and methods of heritage presentation, encouraging respect for diverse interpretations (Art. 7); and highlighted the contribution of cultural heritage to building a peaceful and democratic society, advancing sustainable development processes, and promoting cultural diversity (Art. 8).

In 2008, the Council of Europe adopted the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue “Living Together As Equals in Dignity”*⁹, advancing an approach to cultural diversity rooted in intercultural dialogue as an alternative to both multiculturalism and assimilation; with the

⁶ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, *Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 march 2000 - Presidency Conclusions* https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_it.htm

⁷ UNESCO, *Intangible Cultural Heritage - Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 2003: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>

⁸ COUNCIL OF EUROPE - *Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, 2005: <https://rm.coe.int/1680083746> ; <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention>

⁹ COUNCIL OF EUROPE – *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue - “Living Together As Equals in Dignity”*, 2008: [https://search.coe.int/cm/#{%22CoEIdentifier%22:%2209000016805d37c2%22},%22sort%22:\[%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22\]}](https://search.coe.int/cm/#{%22CoEIdentifier%22:%2209000016805d37c2%22},%22sort%22:[%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22]})

signing of the *Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education*¹⁰ in 2010, it provided, instead, the pedagogical framework within which to situate educational initiatives aimed at students, outlining active citizenship competences also applicable to heritage education.

The year 2015 marked the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly resolution *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*¹¹. Although not a text exclusively devoted to cultural heritage, it constitutes an indispensable benchmark for the framework delineated here. Specifically, Goal 11 — aimed at making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable — and Target 11.4 — which calls for strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage — explicitly recognise the protection and enhancement of urban quality of life as catalysts for sustainable development processes.

At the conclusion of the *European Year of Cultural Heritage* in December 2018, the European Commission published the *European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage*¹². Structuring European commitment around five pillars, it translated the principles established by the *Faro Convention* into operational lines of action, particularly regarding citizen participation and democratic access to heritage. In the same year, *A New European Agenda for Culture*¹³, adopted by the European Commission, recognized cultural heritage as a lever for social cohesion and innovation, calling for the creation of transnational cooperation networks between cultural and educational institutions — a framework of which the CIVIS alliance is a concrete manifestation.

This trajectory culminated in the two editions of the UNESCO *World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT* (Mexico City¹⁴, 2022; Barcelona, 2025¹⁵), held in significant conjunction with the respective ICOM General Conferences of

¹⁰ COUNCIL OF EUROPE – *Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education*, 2010: <https://rm.coe.int/16803034e5>

¹¹ UNITED NATIONS Department of Economic and Social Affairs - *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2015: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

¹² EUROPEAN COMMISSION - *European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage*, 2018: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/document/european-framework-for-action-on-cultural-heritage>

¹³ EUROPEAN COMMISSION - *A New European Agenda for Culture*, 2018: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0267>

¹⁴ UNESCO *World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT*, 2022: <https://www.unesco.org/en/mondiacult2022>

¹⁵ UNESCO *World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT*, 2025: <https://www.unesco.org/en/mondiacult>

Prague (2022) and Dubai (2025). These convenings reaffirmed the commitment to safeguarding and promoting cultural diversity while advocating for the systemic anchoring of culture within public policies at all levels. In particular, the 2022 declaration explicitly highlighted the role of communities in defining and transmitting heritage, reaffirming on a global scale one of the core principles of the *Faro Convention*.

Alongside the instruments of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, European Union law contributes to delineating the international regulatory context of reference for the guidelines presented here, notably through the *Treaty on European Union* (TEU), the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (TFEU), and the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*.

The notion of a shared heritage articulated in EU primary law is conceptually aligned with that delineated in the *Faro Convention*. Article 3, paragraph 3, of the *Treaty on European Union* (TEU)¹⁶ commits the Union to respect “its rich cultural and linguistic diversity” and ensure “that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced”. Operating in a complementary manner, Article 167 of the TFEU confers supporting competence in the field of culture upon the Union, establishing that it shall contribute “to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore”¹⁷. Although Member States retain primary competence over cultural policy, this provision provides the legal foundation for the Union's programmes and initiatives supporting heritage.

Article 13 of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* stipulates that “the arts and scientific research shall be free of constraint. Academic freedom shall be respected”¹⁸. While lacking an explicit reference to cultural heritage, this mandate effectively supports the participatory and creative approaches to heritage mediation utilized in Third Mission activities, where artistic expression and scholarly research serve as key instruments for empowering heritage communities.

¹⁶ EUROPEAN UNION – *Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union*, art. 3, par. 3, GUUE C 202, 7.6.2016: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12016M003>

¹⁷ EUROPEAN UNION – *Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*, art. 167, GUUE C 202, 7.6.2016: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12016E167>

¹⁸ EUROPEAN UNION - *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, art. 13, GUUE C 326, 26.10.2012: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=celex:12012P/TXT>

According to current interpretations, European Union citizenship, established by Article 9 TEU and Article 20 TFEU¹⁹, consists not only of political and civil rights, but also of shared belonging to a community of values and history. In the process of constructing an active and informed European citizenship — the overarching goal of *European Heritage Pedagogy* — knowledge of and participation in cultural heritage thus becomes essential.

Finally, the European Union has created specific instruments to translate these principles into operational practice. Among the most recent, the *Creative Europe* programme (2021–2027)²⁰ provides financial support for transnational cultural cooperation and the safeguarding of European cultural and linguistic heritage, while the *New European Bauhaus*²¹ initiative fosters the convergence of sustainability, aesthetics, and social inclusion within shared living spaces.

¹⁹ EUROPEAN UNION – *Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union*, art. 9: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12016M009>

Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, art. 20: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12016E020>

²⁰ EUROPEAN COMMISSION - *Creative Europe programme 2021-2027*: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe>

²¹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION - *New European Bauhaus*: https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en

2. From Principles to Practice

The extensive experience gained over the years through European Third Mission programmes clearly illustrates why the *Faro Convention* serves as an ideal “reference framework”²² for universities seeking to initiate and execute collaborative projects with local communities that yield tangible impacts. Although measuring changes in civic sentiment remains complex, these initiatives offer a unique opportunity to foster behavioral transformation and to “experiment with unexplored dimensions of heritage [...] that acquire identity profiles through processes of self-narration and shared memories”²³. Scientific literature has long examined — and continues to investigate — the innovative scope of this Council of Europe framework convention which, while committing signatory States at the international level, requires domestic implementing legislation as it lacks direct effect within national legal orders.

In order to contribute to the development of a *European Heritage Pedagogy* and thereby foster a citizenship rooted in shared cultural and identity values, it is essential to emphasise that the operational concreteness of the *Faro Convention* derives primarily from its very structural arrangement (I – Aims, definitions and principles; II – Contribution of cultural heritage to society and human development; III – Shared responsibility for cultural heritage and public participation; IV – Monitoring and co-operation; V – Final clauses) and its accessible lexical register, tailored to its ultimate beneficiaries. Addressing the societal challenges of the early 2000s — which remain acutely relevant today — the Council of Europe did not merely advocate for civic engagement rhetorically; rather, it established the structural conditions for its exercise, initiating an empowerment process for heritage communities. By assigning them a defined role, it simultaneously tasked the Parties with developing “legal, financial, and professional framework”²⁴ to enable their action. Inevitably, this sparked a complementary process of civic responsibility, as the *Faro Convention* recognised that heritage communities “value specific

²² *Dialoghi sul Confine: patrimonio culturale e costruzione di comunità*, curated by I. BALDRIGA – C. RUSSO, Roma, 2024, p. 77.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ COUNCIL OF EUROPE – *Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, 2005: <https://rm.coe.int/1680083746> ; <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention>

aspects of cultural heritage”²⁵, and thus decide how to transform cultural heritage into a driver of sustainable local development²⁶.

Essential to the execution of these participatory dynamics is “the dissemination of knowledge that acts as a prerequisite to awareness, or rather gives it substance”²⁷, in harmony with an emotional and ideal drive that must be respected and strategically channelled. Within this framework of applicability, the flexibility of the concept of cultural heritage emerges as a vital asset, allowing it to be continuously assessed against the specific heritage definitions codified in the domestic legislation of the States Parties; at the same time, its broad scope generated significant interest within current scholarly debates surrounding *Inclusive Heritage Education* across Europe²⁸.

Although the *Preamble*²⁹ demonstrates that the *Faro Convention* was conceived “for the purpose of safeguarding and fostering the ideals and principles, founded upon respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, which are their common heritage”, “emphasising the value and potential of a cultural heritage wisely used as a resource for sustainable development and quality of life in a constantly evolving society”, and “recognising that every person has a right to engage with the cultural heritage of their choice [...]”, one cannot ignore that it has been ratified by only 26 States³⁰.

The reasons for this delayed ratification, or even the outright absence of signature, are diverse. Consider, for instance, nations such as France, Germany, Denmark, Greece, or Lithuania. In the French context, a 2013 advisory opinion by the Conseil d'État highlighted potential constitutional incompatibilities preventing formal ratification, despite the French State having actively participated in drafting the text. However, the Marseille experience demonstrated —

²⁵ COUNCIL OF EUROPE - *Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, art.2, lett. B, 2005: <https://rm.coe.int/1680083746>

²⁶ L. COLOMER, *Exploring participatory heritage governance after the EU Faro Convention*, in “Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development”, (2023), 13 (4), pp. 856–871.

²⁷ I. BALDRIGA, *Estetica della cittadinanza*, Florence, 2020, p. 27.

²⁸ *Creative and Inclusive Heritage Education: Handbook for Teachers and Trainers*, curated by A. FERNÁNDEZ-ABALLÍ - T. H. WEIR – A. J.M. IRVING – M. VAN DIJK, Groningen, 2026.

²⁹ COUNCIL OF EUROPE - *Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, 2005: <https://rm.coe.int/1680083746> ; <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention>

³⁰ COUNCIL OF EUROPE - *Chart of signatures and ratifications of Treaty 199*: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=signatures-by-treaty&treaty=199>

as evidenced by both Laia Colomer's research³¹ and the outcomes of the Ocean phase of the CIVIS Faro Project — that the 2005 Convention can serve as “an umbrella to develop bottom-up cultural community projects”³². By interpreting its content as a cultural horizon for action, cultural heritage becomes a mediator of intersubjective relationships³³ capable of triggering positive civic engagement initiatives. Conversely, in the German context, as explained by Francesca Berti and Klaus-Christian Zehbe, Germany's federal structure accords the *Länder* exclusive competence in cultural matters relative to the federal government, with prerogatives spanning “policies in the arts, culture and education to teacher training and school curricula”³⁴. An international convention binding the State in cultural matters would consequently require complex coordination among the *Länder* before it could be ratified at federal level.

In light of the elements and considerations presented thus far, and trusting in the replicability of the *FARO project - Building community through FARO Convention* model, this publication hopes to encourage experimentation with the *Faro Convention* even in countries where the text has not yet been signed, while simultaneously stimulating the development of global citizenship competences as outlined by UNESCO³⁵. In its 2015 publication *Global Citizenship Education: Topics and Learning Objectives*, the organization identified three core conceptual dimensions of global citizenship education, corresponding to the cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural domains of learning³⁶. These axes have equally informed the formulation of the guidelines presented in this document, which aim at promoting a *European Heritage Pedagogy*.

If, as Ban Ki-moon observed, global citizenship education allows us to understand in depth that what unites us is being citizens of the global community and that our challenges are interconnected³⁷, cultural heritage and heritage communities can play a decisive role in fostering this realisation. This operates as a virtuous circle: the maturation of a sense of belonging and identification with the surrounding world inspires, in turn, “attention, interest,

³¹ L. COLOMER, *Exploring participatory heritage governance after the EU Faro Convention*, in “Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development”, (2023), 13 (4), pp. 856–871.

³² Ivi, p. 856.

³³ Ivi, p. 861.

³⁴ F. BERTI – K-C ZEHBE, *Heritage education. The impact of European cultural policies on educational theory and on primary school curricula in Italy and Germany*, in “Pedagogia oggi”, XXII (2024), 2, p. 148.

³⁵ UNESCO, *Global Citizenship Education. Preparing Learners for the Challenges of the 21st Century*, Paris, 2014.

³⁶ UNESCO, *Educazione alla Cittadinanza Globale: Temi e obiettivi di apprendimento*, Trent, 2018, p. 15

³⁷ Ivi, p. 14.

and consequently caring behaviours towards heritage”³⁸. It is observation that triggers this system of value transformation, which is substantiated by individual experience and ultimately by the practice of storytelling — in its dual dimensions of listening and constructing stories — in a constant exercise of understanding and meaning attribution³⁹.

2.1 The guidelines

The following guidelines seek to provide a practical translation of the theoretical and regulatory framework discussed in the preceding sections of this document. Having first reconstructed the legal trajectory that led to the recognition of cultural heritage as a space for active citizenship, and then emphasised the essentially practical nature of the *Faro Convention*, the document now presents nine possible answers to the initial research question:

“How can we promote a European citizenship grounded in culture and the shared values of memory, identity, and heritage?”

These proposals are not top-down directives, but operational suggestions arising from field experience and structured participatory reflections. They are organised around three interconnected spheres of intervention, representing the core dimensions of the Convention — **cultural heritage, communities, and resources** —, yielding nine corresponding action proposals designed to advance a *European Heritage Pedagogy*.

³⁸ I. BALDRIGA, *Estetica della cittadinanza*, Florence, 2020, p. 111.

³⁹ Ivi, p. 110.

CULTURAL HERITAGE	I. Cultural heritage: seizing the opportunities of a flexible definition II. Cultural heritage as a seed for the future: from memory to sustainable development III. A heritage economy for human development
COMMUNITIES	IV. Co-authors of memories: shared narrative as an identity foundation V. Accessibility as a design paradigm VI. From the language of rights to the practice of shared power
RESOURCES	VII. The time for trust and authentic participation VIII. Shared digital tools for participatory documentation and dissemination IX. Training to recognise and valorise

I. Cultural heritage: seizing the opportunities of a flexible definition

The inclusive nature of the definition of cultural heritage is evident in Article 2 of the *Faro Convention*, which explicitly recognises its evolving character. This aspect represents a valuable asset to be emphasised: codifying a rigidly demarcated concept would have confined — and thus potentially constrained — cultural heritage valorisation processes within national contexts possessing differing legal traditions and cultural sensitivities. Conversely, a dynamic and elastic notion facilitates its application to categories that might previously have been excluded for various reasons, such as digital practices, migratory memories, or testimonies from historically invisible communities. A *European Heritage Pedagogy* should therefore assist professionals and citizen communities in navigating this flexible space with growing awareness, questioning which definition of cultural heritage is activated in any given social and regulatory context.

II. Cultural heritage as a seed for the future: from memory to sustainable development

Cultural heritage ought to be understood both as an inherited legacy to be safeguarded and as a catalyst for future initiatives. The *Faro Convention* establishes this programmatic direction from Article 1, identifying human development and quality of life as the primary goals of conservation and sustainable use of cultural heritage. Concurrently, it calls for decisions regarding heritage transformations to be grounded in an understanding of the associated cultural values (Art. 9) and recognises heritage communities as the actors empowered to attribute value and guide these projects (Art. 2). An implicit link is thus established between conservation and development. To foster an informed European citizenship built on shared values of memory, identity, and heritage, this empowerment process must manifest through the recognition of the role played by individuals and communities in generating knowledge and critical awareness within a framework of socio-economic and cultural sustainability.

III. A heritage economy for human development

Cultural heritage generates economic value, ideally aimed at enhancing the well-being of individuals and communities. Where this does not occur, the *Faro Convention* acknowledges an inherent tension: while Article 9 commits Parties to promoting respect for the integrity of cultural heritage, Article 10 openly recognises heritage's potential as a factor in sustainable economic development, provided that policy respects "the integrity of the cultural heritage without compromising its inherent values". Economic development and cultural integrity thus become elements to be balanced on a case-by-case basis. A *European Heritage Pedagogy* consistent with this search for equilibrium translates, in project practice, into an explicit requirement of alignment: every economic sustainability objective must be evaluated against the cultural values recognised by the reference community, rather than treated as an autonomous goal to be pursued. This implies that the financial sustainability of a project can never be assumed as a standalone indicator of success, but must be measured alongside its capacity to preserve the cultural meanings the initiative sought to valorise.

IV. Co-authors of memories: shared narrative as an identity foundation

European citizenship is not constructed upon a monolithic memory, but is rooted in a repository of narratives representing the negotiated result of a constant attribution of meaning to the past. For this reason, Article 3 of the *Faro Convention* defines the common heritage of Europe as "a shared source of remembrance, understanding, identity, cohesion and creativity": memory and identity assume collective dimensions, constructed through a community narrative process. In projects guided by *European Heritage Pedagogy* principles, implementing a genuinely participatory model introduces methodological and conceptual challenges, as all stakeholders involved are required to reach a shared understanding of the terms of the process itself, starting from the definition of cultural heritage. It is necessary to guarantee every person's right to benefit from and contribute to cultural heritage (Art. 4), while developing an ethical reflection on its methods of presentation that respects the plurality of interpretations involved (Art. 7) — a need that becomes especially pressing in the case of *difficult heritage*. Making these premises

explicit, rather than confining them to the initial project design phase, is essential; hence the value of incorporating moments of active narrative restitution into educational pathways, instead of mere passive consumption.

V. Accessibility as a design paradigm

In educational projects aiming to foster active European citizenship through cultural heritage, accessibility must be guaranteed and identified as a structural precondition from the earliest design phases. The *Faro Convention* explicitly highlights this in Article 12, which calls on Parties to encourage everyone to participate in “the process of identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural heritage” and to enhanced access in particular for “young people and the disadvantaged”. The removal of physical, sensory, cognitive, cultural, social, and economic barriers must be approached systemically. Translating this principle into practice requires shifting the design sequence itself: for example, involving “radical allies”⁴⁰ — persons with disabilities — during the ideation phase to co-identify obstacles that might otherwise go unnoticed. A *European Heritage Pedagogy* cannot treat accessibility as an afterthought or a episodic consequence of public engagement initiatives; it must ensure that accessibility forms a constitutive prerequisite for the entire process of engaging with and valorising cultural heritage.

VI. From the language of rights to the practice of shared power

In an empowerment process catalysed by cultural heritage, individuals and collectives are recognised under Article 4 of the *Faro Convention* as having the right to benefit from cultural heritage and contribute to its enrichment. This entails a corresponding phase of community responsibility that translates in practice into effective shared decision-making mechanisms. Working alongside this, Article 11 lays the structural groundwork for shared power to be

⁴⁰ *Il museo accessibile. Pratiche partecipative e impatto sociale in un'organizzazione culturale*, curated by M. E. BRUNI e S. BILOTTA, Milan, 2025, p. 29.

exercised, committing the Parties to develop “legal, financial, and professional frameworks” that encourage joint action by public authorities, experts, and civil society. Initiatives promoted within heritage pedagogy cannot limit themselves to verifying this legal implementation; while contributing to its monitoring (Art. 15) and encouraging international cooperation (Art. 17), they must primarily trigger virtuous circles of active participation. The most meaningful outcomes of these processes are measured in shifting self-perceptions and an enhanced sense of belonging to a community. These are not secondary byproducts, but results as vital as academic publications, requiring proper documentation and evaluation in final project reporting.

VII. The time for trust and authentic participation

Genuine engagement with heritage communities requires extended timelines and the patient building of trust, which can be difficult to reconcile with rigid project timelines. While administrative constraints must be respected, it is essential to recognise that the need for a broader timeframe is rooted in Article 5 of the *Faro Convention*, which commits Parties to valorise heritage through a continuous process of “identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation”. This sequence demonstrates that these are not isolated actions, but ongoing prerogatives exercised by communities over the long term — a temporal dimension that also underpins the monitoring of laws, policies, and practices related to cultural heritage under Article 15. Active citizenship initiatives promoted within *European Heritage Pedagogy* must align with these principles, calibrating activities to the rhythms of diverse social contexts, respecting religious calendars, and honouring pre-existing relational networks. Operationally, this means incorporating preliminary listening phases with communities and defining impact indicators evaluated not only at project close, but weeks, months, or years later, when the effects of an authentic participatory process have materialized and consolidated beyond the lifecycle of initial funding.

VIII. Shared digital tools for participatory documentation and dissemination

The development and sharing of digital tools represent a valuable asset for documenting cultural heritage and gathering identity testimonies. Within a *European Heritage Pedagogy* project, these instruments must be consolidated and made interoperable across participating national contexts, in accordance with Article 14 of the *Faro Convention*. These resources also prove useful conceptually, as they help problematise the notion of heritage in a democratic manner, restoring an active role to communities in its recognition and definition (Art. 12). In practice, this entails allocating adequate time for identifying, testing, and enhancing digital applications, alongside offering short training modules for non-specialist participants. Furthermore, communicating results requires a deliberate distinction between academic and public registers, consistent with the nature of project outputs and target audiences.

IX. Training to recognise and valorise

Authentic participation in identifying, interpreting, and transmitting cultural heritage requires mediators and communities to possess specific competencies developed over time. As suggested by Article 13 of the *Faro Convention*, cultural heritage must be embedded as a cross-cutting resource across all educational levels, encouraging interdisciplinary research and links to ongoing professional training. In developing a *European Heritage Pedagogy*, ad hoc training pathways must be designed for project participants based on their respective roles, particularly when dealing with the re-signification of *difficult heritage*. Participatory museology serves as a key resource here, fostering critical reflection on contested memories and potential interpretative conflicts, thereby operationalizing the principles of Article 7 of the Convention.

Glossary

Accessibility

A cross-cutting, multidisciplinary approach aimed at the systemic removal of physical, sensory, cognitive, cultural, social, and economic barriers that impede the protection, enjoyment, and valorisation of cultural heritage.

Civic engagement

The active and conscious participation of individuals and groups in community life, which also manifests in bottom-up initiatives through the shared valorisation of cultural heritage.

Common heritage of Europe

As defined in Article 3 of the *Faro Convention*, it encompasses all forms of cultural heritage in Europe that constitute “a shared source of remembrance, understanding, identity, cohesion and creativity”, together with the ideals and values that, in the aftermath of past conflicts, foster “a peaceful and stable society, founded on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law”.

Cultural heritage

According to Article 2 of the *Faro Convention*, it is defined as “a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions”: it includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction over time between people and places.

Cultural landscape

The joint work of humankind and nature illustrating the evolution of human society and settlements over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces (*UNESCO World Heritage Committee*, 1992).

Cultural sustainability

The capacity of a cultural system to renew its tangible and intangible resources over time without compromising their future enjoyment (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015; MONDIACULT).

Empowerment

A process through which individuals gain greater awareness and control over decision-making processes and resources, alongside an increase in their responsibilities, as illustrated in Art. 4 of the *Faro Convention* in relation to cultural heritage.

European citizenship

A legal status established by Art. 9 TEU and Art. 20 TFEU which, according to current interpretations, consists not only of political and civil rights but also of shared belonging to a community of values and history.

Heritage community

A group of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations, according to Art. 2 of the *Faro Convention*.

Intangible cultural heritage

The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities recognise as part of their cultural heritage, according to the 2003 UNESCO Convention.

Intercultural dialogue

According to the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue “Living Together as Equals in Dignity”*, an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds and heritage.

Participatory museology

A theoretical and practical approach that actively integrates the perspectives and contributions of represented communities into the selection, interpretation, and display of content, moving beyond the model of the museum as the sole authority over exhibition narratives.

Third Mission

The set of activities through which universities, beyond the traditional institutional missions of teaching and research, promote knowledge outreach in relation to the surrounding social, cultural, and economic context. The Third Mission encompasses two complementary domains, related to the valorisation of research and the production of public goods, within which public and civic engagement activities hold particular significance, understood as forms of openness, dialogue, participation, and co-design between universities and the various components of society and local communities.

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