



Improving **RE**search capacities of **Al**banian higher education institutions in conservation and restoration of **C**ultural **H**eritage

Country perspective report on Cultural Heritage conservation in Albania

[project outcome 1.2]



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The report provides an analysis over cultural heritage legislation and management in Albania and its evolution through the years. Information have been collected based on literature review, with special emphasis on country policies, their implementation and the positioning in relation to the international frameworks defined by UNESCO.

The document also includes an overview of the present state-of-the-art on the adopted criteria for restoration work assignment, as well as examples of strategic projects conducted in the field.

1. An assessment of the Ministerial framework¹

In 1991 the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports (MCYS) was established, with the goal of bringing Albanian cultural and sporting organisations in line with European standards and regulatory frameworks. In 2000 the Ministry published a Guide to the Albanian State's Cultural Policy to establish new goals for the country: a national cultural policy based on European models focusing on the promotion of identity and diversity, the support for creativity and participation in cultural life. From now on, culture and the arts are considered as tools that will promote Albania's democratic evolution and re-establish its cultural identity.

Following the 2005 political government election, the title and functions of the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sport were changed, resulting in the formation of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth, and Sports (MTCYS). Tourism was prioritised to showcase Albania, its culture and legacy, boost visitors, and develop infrastructure. Following the 2002-2012 Tourism Development Strategy and the 2006 Strategy and Action Plan for Natural and Environmental Tourism Development, the Tourism Sectoral Strategy 2007-2013 was developed and approved.

In 2009, UNESCO and UNDP launched the Culture and Heritage for Social and Economic Development (CHSED) Programme in Albania, in collaboration with the Ministries of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The programme also collaborated with the Ministry of Education, the Institute of Cultural Monuments, the National Tourism Agency, local and regional governments, universities, and civil society organisations to assist the Albanian government in maximising the potential of Albania's cultural heritage.

¹ Information provided in this paragraph are a summary from: The Association of the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends, "Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends," 20th edition 2020. Available under:<<https://www.culturalpolicies.net>>. ISSN: 2222-7334

Tourism, Youth, and Sports were absorbed into other ministries in 2013, and the institution was renamed the Ministry of Culture, which launched the programmes "Heritage - Development Engine," "Routes of Faith," and "Routes of Memory" under the development of cultural tourism from 2014 to 2018.

The Albanian Ministry of Culture committed to developing a strategic document for a National Culture Policy in 2016, with the assistance of UNESCO and experts, and a guiding document titled "A culture strategy for Albania: Implementing the Cultural Bug" (<https://rm.coe.int/a-cultural-strategy-for-albania-implanting-the-cultural-bug/1680794665>) was prepared in March 2018 by KEA European Affairs after extensive consultations with various stakeholders.

The National Strategy on Culture (NSC) 2019-2025, established by the Ministry of Culture, is the most recent move made to structure objectives for the sector's development (<https://kultura.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/finale-Strategjia-Kombe%CC%88tare-pe%CC%88r-Kulture%CC%88n-2019-2025-ne-Anglisht.pdf>). The NSC 2019-2025 strategic document is in line with the "Government's major programme implementation for urban regeneration and rural development, as well as the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals," and is addressed to central and local public institutions, independent cultural operators, NGOs, the private sector, and other cultural and cultural heritage actors. One of the goals of the midterm and long-term governance plans 2017-2021 is to strengthen the cultural sector.

2. Overview on cultural heritage legislation in Albania

Albania has a long history of cultural heritage protection, with a well-structured legislative system. In 1964, the country participated in the II International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historical Monuments, which inspired the Venice Charter².

The Institute of Cultural Monuments (IMK) was founded in 1965, tasked with inventorying, protecting, and safeguarding the Albanian historical assets. In 1971, the Act Nr. 4874 *On the protection of historical-cultural and natural treasures* was issued; the text relates to objects of historical and cultural assets worth to the Albanian people, the export and restoration of which is

² ICOMOS (Ed.), 1964. The Venice Charter. International Charter for the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites, in: II International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments. Venice.

prohibited without the authorization of the designated entities³. A few months later, in December 1971, a new document was drawn up which outlined further measures for the protection and management of cultural heritage; the document provides information on the state of Albanian heritage, which, despite being protected, is still vulnerable to direct meddling with the surrounding environment through improper use by the population as well as the armed forces. Therefore, the 1971 circular urges for increased public awareness of the issue, greater attention to legacy as a manifestation of people's material culture, and improved local government oversight. Concerning the conservation-restoration of protected assets, the document states that the interventions must be carried out under the control of the bodies in charge and according to scientific rigour criteria, emphasising the need for an adequate documentation of the activities.

In 2003, the 1971 Act Nr. 4874 was replaced by the Law n. 9048⁴. Law nr. 9048, date 7.4.2003, "For Culture Heritage" confirmed the role of the IMK as an institution tasked with managing and protecting cultural assets. In line with the 1971 decree, the Law defines different levels of protection, dividing heritage into "category I cultural monument" and "category II cultural monument": the former is protected in terms of both the architectural system and the building techniques used; the latter is safeguarded with regard to the volumes and the appearance of the outside. Restoration interventions, defined as "an operation aimed at preserving the features of the objects through interventions that slow down their degradation and highlight their 'value,'" can only be carried out by expert personnel whose skills must be certified by the National Restoration Council, which also approves the projects. The Cultural Heritage Act Nr. 9048 approved on 7 April 2003 was the legal framework covering all activities in relation to preserving, promoting and managing the Albanian national heritage until 2005, when it was replaced by Law nr. 9386, date 4.5.2005, "For Museums". On 27 July 2006, further amendments were made by Act Nr. 9592, which introduced the National Committee of National Heritage as an advisory body. The Committee consisted of senior officials directly responsible for the promotion of cultural heritage in Albania.

³ Giusti, M.A., 2005. *La cura del tempo: Restauro e tutela del patrimonio culturale albanese*. La Biblioteca, Firenze.

⁴ Giusti, M.A., 2005. *La cura del tempo: Restauro e tutela del patrimonio culturale albanese*. La Biblioteca, Firenze; Giamb Bruno, M., Pistidda, S., 2015. *Alcune riflessioni sul restauro in Albania attraverso il caso studio dell'hāmām di Delvina*, in: Bellingeri, G., Turano, G. (Eds.), *Ca' Foscari, Venezia e i Balcani. Atti Del Convegno Di Studi Balcanici Ca' Foscari, Venezia e i Balcani* (Venezia, 2013). Venezia, pp. 61–75.

Article 17 provides for the establishment of a National Council for Restorations to grant permission for restoration of cultural heritage buildings and monuments.

The government approved the Strategy and Action Plan for Tourism Development Based on Cultural and Environmental Tourism in 2005, with the goal of rediscovering Albania's cultural and historical identity and acting to better safeguard, administer, and promote its national patrimony. The plan was based on the UNESCO report "Cultural Heritage in South-East Europe: Albania"; the strategy was supported by the UNDP's Support to Eco and Cultural Tourism Development Programme (2006-2009), the UNESCO Centre for Monument Restoration in Tirana (June 2005-November 2009), and other initiatives aimed at further safeguarding and promoting Albania's tangible and intangible cultural heritage (<https://www.culturalpolicies.net/>). With an agreement signed in June 2005 between the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport of the Republic of Albania and UNESCO Director of Division of Cooperation, the project "Organization of the Centre for restoration and conservation of the monuments in the framework of capacity building in the field of preservation and restoration of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Albania" was undertaken. The initiative was funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to UNESCO, and the investment resulted in the establishment of the Centre for Restoration, which includes a technical laboratory for the restoration of movable artefacts, a workshop for the planning of restoration on ancient architectures, administrative facilities, and services that are fully equipped and operational. The Centre is currently one of the Departments in the Institute of Cultural Monuments, which is the main national institute for the protection of tangible cultural heritage in Albania (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/-/regional-centre-for-conservation-and-restoration-for-south-east-europe>). The main activity of the Centre, in accordance with the strategy of the Ministry of Culture, is raising professional capacities in the field of cultural heritage through Training. A three semesters training course addressed to both architects and artifacts restorers was then planned and implemented between January 2007 and October 2009. The training course was attended by 20 members from the Institute of Cultural Monuments, Regional Directorates for the Monuments in various cities of Albania, members from archaeological parks and the National Gallery of Arts.

Back to the legal framework, in 2008 the Act n. 9882 of 28 February revised some of the provisions of law n. 90484 of 2003. The most significant changes concerned the repeal of some paragraphs relating to the objects subject to protection and a different definition of the same, such as in the case of museum areas; the redefinition, even if nominal, of the bodies responsible for protection;

and greater freedom of action in the areas of respect to the bound objects and potential new destinations of use of the same (Giambruno and Pistidda, 2015).

The Albanian Ministry of Culture declared the need for a long-term vision for cultural heritage in the Cultural Heritage Programme 2013-2017. Furthermore, according to the UNESCO national programming document for Albania 2014-2017 (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233036>), Albania's cultural legacy plays an essential role in the country's social and economic development. Museums, archaeological parks, historical cities, and other cultural sites are well-positioned to be leveraged for sustainable cultural tourism development, which will help catapult the country's progress toward EU accession; however, in order to fully realise their potential, these resources must be improved and conserved. The Law on Cultural Heritage and Museums Nr. 27/2018 is the most recent legal provision that addresses the subject of cultural heritage in terms of management, protection, conservation, and enhancement, also defining the professional figures qualified to intervene on cultural heritage. It sets changes in the management of cultural heritage and museums, decentralization of administration and financing in order to protect and preserve the national cultural heritage, as well as a substantial change in society's approach to cultural assets. According to Law Nr. 27/2018 PËR TRASHËGIMINË KULTURORE DHE MUZETË (FOR THE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE MUSEUMS)⁵, the restorer does not have a clearly defined profile jet as a professional figure in Albania. The training is provided by the Regional Centre for Conservation and Restoration established in 2005, which also works with licensed individuals. Centers for the restoration of cultural heritages are established within institutions dealing with cultural heritage, such as the National Film Archive, National Library, Medieval Art National Museum, National Museum of Fine Arts, and National Museum of Photography "Marubi," where future restorers are trained. In compliance with Albanian law, the National Committee for Material Cultural Heritage is the national authority in charge of establishing the requirements that restorers must meet and issuing licenses to Restorers based on their specific criteria. The decision of the Council of Ministers no. 792, of 07.10.2020 "*On the determination of special conditions and criteria licensing, accompanying documents, subcategories of licenses, procedures for granting, suspension or revocation, as well as annual license quotation for interventions in cultural materials*" establishes the categories and subcategories of licenses, as

⁵ Full text:

<http://planifikimi.gov.al/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=4013&token=226df4ac6d637e59f1afbfd0d458ee99ea3d5c3c>

well as who can apply for such licenses and the criteria for obtaining them. Under current legislation, the professional skills and/or qualifications required of conservators-restorers vary depending on the category for which the applicant is submitting his/her request (i.e., restorers of architectural pieces, or restorers of art works etc.). Regardless of the category, the four main requirements are as follows:

- a) A certain number of years of work experience in the profession cited in the diploma;
- b) Work experience in specialised institutions working on cultural heritage;
- c) Professional specialisations regarding the subcategory (held, certified or recognised by the Ministry of Culture);
- d) Authorship or co-authority in conservation project design - restoration according to the subcategory of approved according to the legislation on cultural heritage.

The Ministry of Culture, through the institutions under its authority, is the certification body for Albanian restorers operating in the field of cultural heritage. Because the conservator-restorer profession is not yet regulated, there is no state exam required. For restoration work, however, graduated students must have a license issued by the National Committee of Material Cultural Heritage. The criteria have not yet been published.

In 2019, the Institute of Monuments “Gani Strazimiri” and the Agency of Archaeological Services merged to form the National Institute of Cultural Heritage based on the Decision by Council of Ministers Nr. 364, date 29.05.2019 “For the Functioning and the Activities of the National Institute of Cultural Heritage. Based on its status, the Institute’s main focus is tangible heritage research, preservation, promotion and also rescue and prevention activities for cultural heritage. The Institute also sets the criteria for archaeological research, reviews the technical documents in relation to the process and supervises and monitors the development of projects, depending also on the decisions of the decision-making bodies. The National Institute of Cultural Heritage also maps, updates and publishes the Digital Platform for Archaeological Activities in the Republic of Albania.

Cultural Heritage is part of the National Strategy for Culture 2019- 2025¹⁵³ Project on Council of Ministers Decision for “Licensing of Archaeological Activities”.

The depicted scenario emphasised how, even though the Albanian legislative apparatus on cultural heritage has a long tradition, intervention continues to face a variety of issues that affect work and outcomes related to the application of the law, the training of technicians and specialized companies, and the lack of best practices and shared protocols in project definition. In this regard,

various crucial challenges involving cultural heritage protection have been identified on the Albanian side⁶. Among the key issues to be faced, the training of technicians and specialised companies, the lack of 'protocols' for the drafting of conservation projects, the need for continuous technical updating, as well as the lack of an updated digital inventory of the conservative state of cultural heritage, stand as priorities.

3. Strategic projects and plans for Cultural Heritage: the current scenario

The close relationship between preservation of Cultural Heritage and economic growth of the is clearly emphasised in IPA II, the document stating the Pre-accession Instance of Albania to EU (<https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180817-revised-indicative-strategy-paper-2014-2020-for-albania.pdf>). Albanian Cultural Heritage had already been identified as a key issue in the previous IPA I 2009-2014, that undertook the funding of a project (CRIS N. 2009/021-642) conducted between 2011 and 2014 and focused on the areas of Berat, Korça, Elbasan and Shkodra. The project has risen awareness of the difficulties linked to the accessibility of historical heritage sites in Albania, often located in inhabited areas with poor infrastructure facilities. The restoration of the infrastructure in and around these sites can lead to a revitalization of social and economic life in the areas concerned, promote the economic growth and increase the attractiveness of the sites to tourists. Moreover, it has emerged how the value of historical heritage represents a “powerful instrument to increase the awareness and involvement of local community in the decision making and economic development process” (https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/albania/ipa/2009/pf_10_cultural_and_historical_heritage_-_phase_ii_en.pdf). The relevance of historical heritage is, therefore, also strictly connected to its potentiality in terms of enhancing public engagement and promoting national cultural identity, allowing citizens to play a more active role in the society through a sense of belonging to the community and intercultural understanding. According to the NSDI of Albania 2014-2020 (https://shtetiweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/NSDI_2014-2020_version_JUne-2013.pdf), sustainable tourism is, for the above mentioned reasons, considered as a strategic priority for the economic growth of the Country, though the certification system and the adopted standards need to be revised and updated.

⁶ Riza, E., 2012. Mbrojtja e monumenteve bëhet vetëm përmes ligjit; Riza, E., 2007. Culture Monuments and Their Evaluation Problems. Monumentet 34–47.

In 2016, Cultural Heritage Without Borders launched the "Skills for Employment" programme, which was supported by the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Swedish Government (<http://chwb.org/albania/>). The programme consisted of five training modules held in Albania's major historical cities (Durrës, Gjirokastra, Berat, and Korça) and had certified 230 persons (18 master artisans and 212 apprentices) by 2020. Cultural Heritage Without Borders Albania – a regional Office of Cultural Heritage Without Borders – is an independent non-governmental organization dedicated to preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The 2020-2024 Strategic Plan (<http://chwb.org/albania/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/02/Strategic-Plan-2020-2024.pdf>) endorses an approach which is looking into processes of protection and management as a mean towards dialogue, inclusion and empowerment of all people for better social, cultural and economic individual and collective conditions.

A 213.260 Euro project supported by UNESCO was approved in 2019 to be implemented by the Ministry of Culture over 26 months by conducting a community-based inventory of intangible cultural heritage in Albania. The National project has since formally recognized traditional dances, livestock migrations and craftwork in the national inventory. The Albanian Ministry of Culture prepared the National Park of Butrint-Integrated Management Plan in 2019 with the assistance of the Albanian American Development Fund (2020-2030).

The Annual Report 2020 from the National Institute of Cultural Heritage outlines the developments for legal acts, approved and in process, European and National projects for cultural heritage, such as: EU4Culture, Interreg IPA CBC Italy- Albania- Montenegro 2014-2020, Programme of 100 Villages, Balkan Mediterranean 2014-2020, IPA 2017 Action Programme for Albania, Integrated Urban and Tourism Development Programme, Educational Programmes (https://www.culturalpolicies.net/country_profile/albania-3-1/). Collaborators and supporters for 2020 include the European Union – Office of European Delegation in Albania, UNOPS- The United Nations Office for Project Services, UNESCO- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, AADF- Albanian American Development Fund, CHWB- Cultural Heritage without Borders, TIKA- Turkish Agency for Collaboration and Coordination, KOASH- Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania, TAP- Trans Adriatic Pipeline AG, FSHZH- Albanian Fund for Development, AKPT- National Agency for Territorial Planning, and FAU- Faculty of Architecture and Urban Development. According to the Annual Report 2020, the key issues for the National Institute of Culture Heritage in 2021 are the lack of legislative acts in compliance with the Law nr. 27/2018 "For Culture Heritage and Museums." This has affected the institution's operations, resulting, for instance, in the lack of

Council of Ministers Decisions for the procedure of declaration of cultural interest and public competition. Furthermore, there is no legal basis for the applicable fees for project applications, licencing, archaeological monitoring, project drafting, observation, and so on.

The National Strategy for Culture 2019-2025 (<https://kultura.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/finale-Strategjia-Kombe%CC%88tare-pe%CC%88r-Kulture%CC%88n-2019-2025-ne-Anglisht.pdf>) is a strategic document aiming at the continuation of investments in the development, protection and promotion of art and cultural heritage. The document, drafted by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania, provides an overview of cultural policies in the Country and presents the action plan towards the creation of a favourable environment for increasing the role of culture in the sustainable development of Albania. Strengthening the cultural sector continues to be one of objectives of the midterm and long-term governance plans 2017 - 2021, as the only path towards the development of the cultural sector, in relation to economic and social aspects.

The document reports that over 68 million ALL was invested between 2014 and 2018 in the preservation and restoration of 689 monuments, as well as the redevelopment of historic centres. Historic centres and urban ensembles in Korça, Tirana, and Gjirokastra are being restored and renovated through the "Heritage - Development Engine" programme, while work on historic centres and urban ensembles in Vlora, Voskopoja, Vuno, and Dhërmi continues. A major portion of the cult objects and cultural monuments have been repaired as part of the initiative "Roadways of Faith," which focuses on historical and commercial roads mixed with cultural heritage, food, and handicrafts. For the programme "Routes of Remembrance," the Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with partners, has undertaken several initiatives that aim to highlight the historical and educational aspects of former dictatorship sites through rehabilitation, transformation, and museumization, in order to preserve national memory and promote values to future generations. In five years, three new museums were established: the National Museum of Photography "MARUBI" in Shkodra, the National Museum "GJETHI" in Tirana, and the Museum "Gjon Mili" in Korça; and work was done to musealize and renovate existing museums: the Archaeological Museum in Durrës and the National Museum of Medieval Art in Korça, all to European standards. In the framework of the Integrated Rural Development Program "100 Villages", the Ministry of Culture through the work of dependent institutions and financial support of its partners has provided and continues to contribute by investing in the preservation and conservation of cultural monuments and the promotion of cultural heritage and traditions through fairs, local festivals, etc.

The NSC 2019-2025 and its Action Plan aim to build a roadmap for the development of the culture, cultural heritage, and creative industry sectors in order to foster individual, societal, and state growth. The document provides a comprehensive methodology based on the evaluation of stakeholders from the public and private sectors, representatives of civil society organisations, the support of international organisations operating in the field of culture, art, and cultural heritage in Albania, and the assistance of local and foreign experts in the field, with the goal of setting up sustainable solutions to sectoral challenges toward the mission.

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