



DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO INDIA

EU-India to strengthen collaboration on cultural heritage conservation

New Delhi, 4 December 2018: A two-day conference on "**EU–India Partnership for Cultural Heritage Conservation**" was inaugurated today by H.E. Tomasz Kozlowski, Ambassador of the European Union to India and Dr. BR Mani, Director General, National Museum. Ms Nirupama Kotru, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India gave a special address. **32 leading experts from the European Union and India** deliberated on the most pressing issues being faced in cultural heritage conservation and discussed innovative solutions to tackle challenges such as climate change and urbanization to our shared heritage.

Organized by the **Delegation of the European Union to India** and **Embassies of EU Member States** in collaboration with the National Museum Institute of Art, Conservation and Museology, Government of India, the conference was hosted at the **National Museum** on **4-5 December 2018** in New Delhi.

European experts from ***Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Spain*** representing a cross-section of fields relevant to cultural heritage conservation shared their experiences and expertise in this area. The main themes included: urban planning and the conservation of monuments; the use of non-invasive technologies for archaeological conservation; application of earth observation sciences and geospatial data; risk estimation for sites of high cultural value; and digitalization of items of cultural significance to make them accessible to a broader audience. Cutting-edge technological developments that offer opportunities for preserving our heritage and advancing socio-economic development were also discussed.

EU Ambassador Tomasz Kozlowski said, "Cultural heritage is a collective as well as individual responsibility; it deserves to be recognized and preserved for future generations. The EU along with its Member States has been collaborating with India on cultural preservation through various projects. We hope this conference will further put a spotlight on this very important issue and strengthen our partnership further."

The conference marks in India the conclusion of the celebrations of 2018 as the *European Year of Cultural Heritage*, the objective of which has been to further cultural heritage as a bridge builder between the EU and its key partner countries. The EU has been celebrating this year with a number of high-profile events, among them its role as Guest of Honour at the New Delhi World Book Fair; the organization of the flagship-EU Film Festival in 11 cities across India; and the celebration of European literature and linguistic diversity at the "Long Night of Literatures" in Delhi.

Attracted by India's rich cultural heritage, the number of European visitors to India has increased exponentially over the last few years. In 2017 alone, over 2 million Europeans visited India, accounting for roughly a quarter of all tourist arrivals in the country.

The promotion of our common cultural heritage is part of the broader vision of the EU and India to further deepen their partnership through strengthened people-to-people and cultural exchanges, as expressed by political leaders at the last EU-India Summit in 2017, and as enshrined in the *EU Strategy for India*, recently adopted by the European Commission on 20 November 2018.

The full conference agenda can be downloaded [HERE](#).

EU and India

In India, the EU has supported a number of heritage projects, including the “**Cultural Heritage and Management Venture Lab**” in Ahmedabad. Ahmedabad was the first Indian city to be nominated for the list of UNESCO World Heritage, boasting enormous heritage resources: 57 protected monuments, and a large number of traditional wooden pol houses, of which about 10,000 survive now.

The neighbourhoods (called pols) give the urban fabric a distinct character which not only enforces social unity but also allows for architectural quality and structural stability. But these historic urban settlements in the state of Gujarat have been undergoing rapid change and decline due to the pressures of urbanization.

The EU project aimed to strengthen the capacities of people working in the cultural heritage field, and facilitate an environment for creativity, innovation, professionalization and entrepreneurship in cultural heritage and management in order to allow the people of the state of Gujarat to fully benefit from the potential of cultural heritage as an economic value.

It did that by bringing key stakeholders together, including decision making bodies and policy makers, with a focused set of cluster development actions, aiming at awareness, training, benchmarking, and international network development.

This included:

- 1) Around 50 leaders from regional and local public administrations (related to cultural management, heritage, urbanism, architecture, tourism and environmental departments) as well as private enterprises (constructions, craftsmen, tour-operators, heritage and cultural managers and cultural producers); NGOs involved in employment and entrepreneurial programs and related foundations connected to heritage and sustainable livelihood projects.
- 2) Around 150 young people and professionals, artisans and skilled workers (crafts people, architects, designers, city planners, cultural managers and related professionals) from Gujarat participated in seminars and workshops related to cultural management and heritage.
- 3) Mentoring and technical and management support to 10 new cultural and heritage management companies in Gujarat.
- 4) Organizing a set of public-private entities from Gujarat (India) & Valladolid (Spain) to be part of an international network promoting the economic value of cultural heritage management.

Another EU project focused on development of a unique folk art and culture based creative industry benefiting folk artists poor and marginalised rural and tribal communities living in six districts in West Bengal namely Malda, Purulia, Bankura, Paschim (West) Medinipur, Purba (East) Medinipur and Nadia.

The project benefited folk artists living in the six districts and practising a variety of folk dance, song, drama and painting. The idea was for the folk artists to own and manage rural micro enterprises and resource centres offering cultural products and services including heritage tourism services. The direct beneficiaries of the action were 3200 folk artists including 1837 Chhau dancers, 468 Jhumur dancers and Jhumuriyas or Jhumur singers, 310 Patuas, 270 Bauls and Fakirs, 181 Gambhira and 134 Domni performers living in one hundred and fifty villages across six districts. These folk artists formed 233 self-help groups (SHG) as part of ongoing interventions to revive art forms as a means of livelihood.