



GREEN CLUSTER
FOR SCIENCE AND
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The Horizon Europe Green Cluster for Science and Conservation Research

White Paper adopted at the Strategic Policy Meeting on Advancing Sustainability in Cultural Heritage Conservation, Brussels, Feb. 2026 Ten Recommendations

The Green Cluster for Science and Conservation Research is a pan-European alliance uniting the European Union-funded Horizon Europe projects MOXY, GoGreen, and GREENArt, together mobilising and representing 48 European organisations active in heritage science and conservation. The three projects were selected under HORIZON-CL2-2021-HERITAGE-01-01 “*Green technologies and materials for cultural heritage.*” Within this framework, the Green Cluster acts as a coordinated platform linking policy, research, professional practice, and innovation, bringing together EU and Member State policymakers, heritage institutions, research organisations, scientists, conservators, industry partners – including the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSIs) and industries in different sectors – professional bodies, and civil society stakeholders.

At its core lie shared principles: cultural heritage is the cultural dimension of our environment; the preservation of its materiality is vital for maintaining our heritage connections, and is inherently a green action; conservation must be regarded as a scientific domain supported by materials science, interdisciplinary research, and professional expertise. Greener conservation is not just about reducing environmental impact; it must also ensure interventions are effective, validated, compatible with heritage materials, safe for operators, and sustainable over time. Conservation is therefore also about safeguarding cultural heritage as a critical infrastructure of memory, identity, and civilisational resilience—the material anchors of meaning through which societies maintain continuity, cohesion, and orientation in times of disruption and crisis. The Green Cluster advances this agenda by translating fundamental and applied research outputs into implementable guidance, standards, validation approaches, innovation pathways, and long-term support mechanisms that can be adopted across Europe.

On February 26, 2026, the Green Cluster convened its Strategic Policy Round Table hosted by the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) in Brussels—following earlier Round Tables in Amsterdam (2023) and Vilnius (2024). The meeting drew 376 experts and stakeholders, participating both in Brussels and online, and gathered representatives from the European Commission, Member States, and regional policymakers, heritage institutions, scientists, conservation professionals, and industry innovators. Discussions centered on how sustainability and resilience in cultural heritage conservation can be strengthened through European policy instruments, funding mechanisms, education and training systems, innovation ecosystems, and by reinforcing the links between research, professionals, and industrial partners, making heritage conservation a key driver for socioeconomic growth, with particular focus on integration, implementation, scalability, and long-term support.

The policy message was clear: the future of heritage and conservation is green, but if Europe is serious about sustainability and resilience, it must protect what sustains civilisational life. Cultural heritage is the memory of human culture and identity—the identity that holds Europe together—and safeguarding it must now shift from mere recognition to active integration, starting with concrete policy instruments and coordinated efforts.



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As a key outcome, the meeting adopted ten policy recommendations aimed at strengthening European heritage policy instruments:

1. **Amend the Safe and Sustainable by Design framework for Chemicals and Materials to include a sector-specific adaptation related to heritage conservation, and adopt an operational definition of green conservation practice** as a reference across relevant EU programmes.
2. **Formally acknowledge cultural heritage as a critical sector** for its societal, economic, and strategic importance. Designate cultural heritage as the 12th sector under the CER Directive (2022/2557) to ensure appropriate resilience and protection measures.
3. **Support long-term projects “until the last mile”** (minimum seven years), structured in two phases: development up to TRL 4-5, and follow-up to TRL 9 with subsequent market uptake (KER).
4. **Recognize cultural heritage as the cultural dimension of the environment** and integrate it fully into sustainability and environmental policy frameworks.
5. **Include transparent sustainability evaluation** for newly developed materials and methods in cultural heritage.
6. **Support the development and implementation of training and knowledge transfer mechanisms** for all stakeholders within EU-funded research and innovation programmes.
7. **Require balanced partnerships** in future EU calls to ensure equal participation among conservation professionals, industry, and research institutions.
8. **Launch dedicated calls for high-risk or unexplored areas**, with typical funding durations of five years.
9. **Prioritize cooperation with heritage institutions, professionals, and Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSIs) as living labs** in future EU projects.
10. **Mobilise EU instruments to establish long-term heritage science and operational capacity**, at a level comparable to environmental protection, civil protection, and defence.



www.gogreenconservation.eu



www.moxyproject.eu



www.greenart-project.eu

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