

## D7.5 Policy Brief Interim

**ARGUS**

### **NON-DESTRUCTIVE, SCALABLE, SMART MONITORING OF REMOTE CULTURAL TREASURES**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cultural heritage is a cornerstone of European identity yet built heritage sites are increasingly at risk due to environmental, climatic, and human-induced threats.

The ARGUS project addresses these challenges by harnessing advanced digital technologies, such as AI-powered monitoring, digital twins, and sensor-based data collection, to enable proactive and preventive preservation of remote and vulnerable heritage assets. By integrating artificial intelligence, multimodal data fusion, and citizen engagement, ARGUS enhances real-time monitoring and data-driven decision-making for heritage conservation. By bridging scientific research, digital humanities, and policy imperatives, ARGUS provides a comprehensive framework to support informed decision-making, ensuring the long-term preservation of Europe's built heritage.

This document provides an overview of ARGUS's objectives, innovations, and alignment with EU cultural policies, presenting its five pillars. The report also introduces the concept of "Digital Humanities" and its implications for policy making.

The report also contains a brief overview of EU competencies for cultural heritage and EU bodies that oversee implementing policies for Digital Humanities.

The document concludes with the presentation of how ARGUS can contribute to policies for Digital Humanities and the envisaged timeframe for implementation.

This policy brief will be further completed by the end of the project in November 2026.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in shaping European identity, yet built heritage sites face increasing threats from environmental, climatic, and anthropogenic factors. The ARGUS project responds to these challenges by leveraging cutting-edge digital technologies—AI-powered monitoring, digital twins, and sensor-based data collection—to enable preventive preservation of remote and vulnerable heritage assets. By integrating AI, multimodal data fusion, and citizen engagement, ARGUS enhances real-time monitoring and decision-making for heritage preservation.

By bridging scientific research, digital humanities, and policy needs, ARGUS can support informed decision-making for the future of European built heritage preservation.

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENT AND PURSUE**

This policy brief provides an overview of ARGUS's objectives, innovations, and alignment with EU cultural policies, particularly in the context of digital heritage and digital humanities. The report also examines the European Union's role in supporting digital transformation in cultural heritage. This document also suggests how ARGUS's innovations align with European cultural policies and digital humanities initiatives.

The document aims to:

- Summarize the project's key objectives, technologies, and expected outcomes.
- Analyse the European Union's policy framework on cultural heritage preservation and digital innovation.
- Highlight ARGUS's potential contributions to EU strategies on digital heritage, sustainability, and citizen engagement.
- Provide recommendations for integrating ARGUS's findings into EU policymaking and funding programs.

This document will be updated with policy recommendations at the end of the ARGUS project, in M36.

## **3. WPS AND TASKS RELATED WITH THE DELIVERABLE**

This deliverable refers to Task 7.6. Policy recommendations included in WP7: Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Activities, and builds upon the results obtained in the other technical work packages.

## **4. ARGUS background**

ARGUS aims to revolutionize the monitoring and preservation of remote built heritage assets through a novel digital twin model, advanced digitization strategies, and AI-enabled decision support systems.

ARGUS is structured around five thematic pillars, each addressing key objectives that contribute to the overall mission of developing a multimodal digital twin model for remote built heritage.

- **Pillar 1: Digital infrastructure**

ARGUS aims to develop and validate a cultural digital twin model for built remote heritage assets by means of tested, validated, and evaluated prototypes.

- **Pillar 2: Measurements infrastructure**

ARGUS will collect and assess “historical” multimodal data from multiple sources and published open data available to create new set of open datasets for heritage preservation research. ARGUS will also develop new miniaturized integrated sensor systems and measurements device, as well as the establishment of measurements protocol for preventive preservation of remote built heritage.

- **Pillar 3: Measurements fusion, data analytics and decision support**

New workflows and methods to fuse multimodal sensor data for heritage preservation will be developed, as well as new methods for data-driven preventive preservation strategies available in a Decision Support System (DSS). In addition, ARGUS will build multi-dimensional data visualisations and open data APIs with adaptive data visualisations (public, research community, stakeholders, authorities) for open data access and re-use and for the ARGUS services (multimodal data fusion, decision support).

- **Pillar 4: Sustainability**

As regards this pillar, ARGUS will develop decision support workflows in preventive preservation with improvements in early warning, curations interval prolongation and threat identification and assessment. It will also advance Heritage Asset Management by developing smart and collaborative infrastructure and tools with a new collaborative platform.

- **Pillar 5: Dissemination, exploitation, and communication**

ARGUS will disseminate and communicate project results with a focus on open access, raise the citizen awareness on the remote built heritage protection and study the feasibility of business models of innovative project results.

Through its interdisciplinary approach, ARGUS directly contributes to EU digital humanities strategies by:

- Enhancing digitization and digital access to cultural heritage (Europeana, Digital Decade).
- Improving AI-driven heritage analysis to support EU digital and AI policies.

- Creating open and reusable cultural datasets aligned with EU Open Science initiatives.
- Encouraging public participation and citizen science, supporting EU engagement policies in digital heritage.

By integrating scientific, technological, and humanities-driven research, ARGUS bridges the gap between digital infrastructure, cultural policies, and participatory heritage preservation, reinforcing the EU's leadership in digital humanities research and policy development.

## 5. The “Digital Humanities” concept

According to Drucker (2013), Digital Humanities is work at the intersection of digital technology and humanities disciplines. It focuses on leveraging tools such as data analysis, visualization, and digital archiving to enhance research, while also critically exploring how digital advancements shape culture, knowledge production, and society.

The intersection between humanities and the digital world creates countless links with almost limitless possibilities for connections between digital humanities and policies. Here are just few examples.

- Cultural heritage and preservation – Policies related to preserving cultural artifacts, historical texts, and artistic works using digital tools.
- Media and communication – Addressing the impact of digital transformation on journalism, literature, and creative industries.
- Artificial Intelligence and automation – Policies on AI-driven humanities research, including text mining and computational analysis, and the ethics of AI use.
- Education and digital literacy – Promoting digital skills in humanities disciplines and fostering digital scholarship.
- Intellectual property and copyright – Laws governing digital rights.
- Data protection and privacy – Regulations on handling digital archives, personal data, and ethical considerations.
- Digital infrastructure – Support for digital humanities through data repositories and digital platforms.

Given these wide-ranging policy implications, several EU bodies play a crucial role in shaping the regulatory and funding landscape for digital humanities. Institutions such as the European Commission and the European Parliament develop legislation and funding programs that support digital cultural heritage, research infrastructure, and digital rights.

The ARGUS project's innovations in digital heritage, AI-driven preservation, and citizen engagement align with broader EU competencies in cultural policies. While cultural heritage policy remains primarily a national competence, the European Union plays a key role in supporting and coordinating heritage

preservation efforts through legal frameworks, funding mechanisms, and cross-border initiatives.

To fully integrate ARGUS's contributions into EU cultural policies, it is essential to examine the competencies established by the European Treaties, as well as the role of EU institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, and relevant Directorate-Generals (DGs) in shaping cultural heritage policies.

The next section explores the EU's legal basis, regulatory framework, and institutional role in cultural policy-making, providing the context for how ARGUS's outcomes can support and influence European strategies for cultural heritage and digital transformation.

## **6. EU competencies for cultural policies**

Cultural heritage is one of the foundations of the EU, as expressed in its Treaty: "[The Union] shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced" (Article 3, European Union, 2016). Given its importance, cultural heritage and its protection has gradually gained ground as a subject for research and innovation policy in Europe, being also is a multidisciplinary domain in relation to the ICT sector, digitisation and innovation for economic and social impact. The EU dedicates resources and efforts to cultural heritage via research and innovation framework programmes, policy initiatives, expert groups and tailored events coupled with digitisation (Aydogan et al., 2021).

In the upcoming paragraphs, we will summarise the legal basis of EU competencies in cultural heritage preservation.

### **6.1. Treaties**

The Treaty of Lisbon, signed in 2007, places great importance on culture: the preamble to the Treaty on European Union (TEU) explicitly refers to "drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe". One of the EU's key aims, as specified in the Treaty, is to "respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and [...] ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced" (Article 3 TEU).

Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states that the EU's competences in the field of culture are to "carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States".

[Article 167 TFEU](#) provides further details on EU action in the field of culture: the EU must contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore. The EU's actions should encourage cooperation between the Member States and support and supplement their action in improving the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of European peoples.



While EU Member States are responsible for their own cultural policies, the EU helps them to address common challenges, ranging from the impact of digital technologies to supporting innovation in the cultural and creative sectors.

The EU also supports actions to preserve cultural heritage and promotes cooperation and transnational exchanges between cultural institutions in the Member States. The cultural sectors can also benefit from specific funding opportunities under Horizon Europe, the Single Market Programme, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the cohesion policy funds.

Article 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union stipulates that ‘the arts and scientific research shall be free of constraint’. Furthermore, according to Article 22 of the Charter, “the EU shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity” (European Parliament, 2024).

## **6.2. EU bodies and digital humanities**

### **6.2.1. European Commission**

The European Commission is the executive body of the EU. It is responsible for proposing legislation, enforcing EU laws, and implementing policies and the EU budget. It also plays a regulatory role in areas where the EU has competence, particularly in enforcing competition law and overseeing compliance with EU regulations (European Union, 2024).

The **Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC)** and **Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT)** and **Directorate General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD)** manage the specific policy areas related to Digital Humanities.

The funding programs established by the European Commission in the field of digital humanities are managed by the European Commission agencies. Horizon Europe funds related with Digital Humanities fields are managed by the **Research Executive Agency (REA)** and the **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)**. **European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** oversees funding for education, culture, audiovisual sectors, sport, citizenship, and volunteering. It manages programs that often encompass digital humanities projects, such as Erasmus+ and Creative Europe. **European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA)** implements parts of EU programs related to health, digital technologies, and the single market. It manages funding under the Digital Europe Programme, which supports projects in areas like supercomputing, artificial intelligence, and advanced digital skills, all relevant to digital humanities initiatives.

### **6.2.2. European Parliament**

The European Parliament is the directly elected legislative body of the European Union. It shares legislative and budgetary powers with the Council of the EU, participating in the adoption of EU laws and overseeing other EU institutions. The

Parliament also plays a crucial role in upholding democratic principles at the European level (European Parliament, 2024). Members of the European Parliament are divided up among 22 specialised standing committees. These committees instruct legislative proposals through the adoption of reports, propose amendments to Plenary and appoint a negotiation team to conduct negotiations with the Council on EU legislation. They also adopt own-initiative reports, organise hearings with experts and scrutinise the other EU bodies and institutions (European Parliament, 2024c).

The committees in charge of revising policies for the Digital Humanities field are the **Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)** and the **Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE)**. **Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI)** which deals with legal matters, including copyright and related rights, which are essential for the protection and promotion of creativity and innovation in the CCS. It is responsible for legal aspects of the digital single market and media convergence; **Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)** is responsible for ensuring that citizens are fully able to exercise their civil rights and liberties within the media space. LIBE therefore also oversees issues of data protection and privacy in the context of digital media, and measures against online disinformation and hate speech (IDEA Consult et al., 2024). When a matter falls within the competence of two or three committees, without the competence of any of them prevailing, the procedure with joint meetings of committees and a joint vote may be applied and each committee shall appoint one rapporteur (Rule 59, European Parliament, 2025).

### 6.2.3. Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers) plays a key role in shaping EU cultural and digital policies, though cultural policy remains primarily a national competence. The Council does not directly regulate culture but influences it through policy coordination, funding approvals, and legislative decision-making.

Under Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Council coordinates Member States' cultural policies and adopts Council Conclusions and Recommendations, which set cultural and digital priorities.

### 6.3. Key contributions from the Commission, Parliament and Council on Digital Humanities

As stated before, cultural policy primarily falls under the competence of EU Member States. However, the EU supports and complements national cultural policies through funding, coordination, and digital transformation initiatives rather than direct regulation. Here we list the main ones in chronological order.

- [European Parliament resolution of 12 May 2011](#) on unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries (2010/2156(INI))

The resolution acknowledges the digital transformation of the cultural and creative sectors. It highlights the role of digital technologies in enhancing access

to and dissemination of cultural content. The Parliament encourages the development of digital platforms and tools that improve the distribution of cultural products and boost the visibility of creative work on a global scale.

- [Commission Recommendation](#) of 27 October 2011 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation(2011/711/EU) as part of the Digital Agenda for Europe

The 2011 Commission Recommendation was a key part of the Digital Agenda for Europe, aiming to digitise Europe's cultural heritage, enhance online accessibility, and ensure digital preservation for future generations. The Recommendation calls for best practices, interoperable standards, and collaboration among Member States, with platforms like Europeana playing a central role in providing public access to Europe's cultural treasures. Additionally, it emphasizes the need for sustainable funding to support these efforts.

- [Council conclusions](#) of 10 May 2012 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation

The Council Conclusions of 10 May 2012 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation (2012/C 169/02) build upon the European Commission's 2011 Recommendation. These Conclusions provide strategic guidance for EU Member States to improve the digitisation, preservation, and online access to cultural heritage. This recommendation provides guidance for EU Member States to enhance the digitisation, preservation, and online accessibility of cultural heritage. It emphasizes the importance of digitising cultural material.

- [A New European Agenda for Culture / SWD\(2018\) 167 final](#)

On 22 May 2018, the Commission adopted a New European Agenda for Culture, continuing the provision of the strategic framework for EU action in the cultural sector. The new agenda proposes three strategic objectives, with social, economic and external dimensions: (1) harnessing the power of culture for social cohesion and well-being; (2) supporting culture-based creativity in education and innovation, and for jobs and growth; and (3) strengthening international cultural relations.

- [European framework for action on cultural heritage](#) (2019)

The European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage responds to the invitation of European Leaders and cultural stakeholders. It builds on the results of the European Year of Cultural Heritage and ensures its legacy by developing further concrete actions. The Framework for Action promotes and puts into practice an integrated and participatory approach to cultural heritage, and contributes to the mainstreaming of cultural heritage across EU policies. It builds on 5 pillars:

1. Cultural heritage for an inclusive Europe: participation and access for all;
2. Cultural heritage for a sustainable Europe: smart solutions for a cohesive and sustainable future;
3. Cultural heritage for a resilient Europe: safeguarding endangered heritage;
4. Cultural heritage for an innovative Europe: mobilising knowledge and research;
5. Cultural heritage for stronger global partnerships: reinforcing international cooperation.

- [Resolution on the EU Work Plan for Culture \(2023-2026\)](#) adopted by the Council on 29 November 2022.

The resolution focuses on four different but complementary priorities:

- Artists and cultural professionals: empowering the cultural and creative sectors;
- Culture for the people: enhancing cultural participation and the role of culture in society;
- Culture for the planet: unleashing the power of culture;
- Culture for co-creative partnerships: strengthening the cultural dimension of the EU's external relations.

## **7. ARGUS and policies for Digital Humanities**

The ARGUS project is designed to address several crucial policy elements focused on the preservation of cultural heritage in the face of environmental challenges. These elements include heritage preservation and sustainability, with a particular emphasis on the impact of climate change, pollution, and natural disasters on heritage sites. The project is aligned with several key initiatives of the European Commission (EC) and can provide valuable contributions across various domains. Below are the topics and inputs where the European Commission can expect support from the project:

- Support for advancing heritage preservation policies

The project will contribute to the ongoing efforts of the EC to develop and advance heritage preservation policies. By providing evidence-based recommendations, best practices, and innovative solutions for the sustainable management of cultural heritage, the project will play a role in shaping policies that support long-term conservation. This will align with the EC's goals of protecting Europe's cultural assets and ensuring their accessibility for future generations.

- Support for Climate Adaptation and Heritage Management

The project seeks to address the need for climate change adaptation in the preservation of cultural heritage and can thus contribute to give science-based policy recommendations in the field. As climate change increasingly affects weather patterns and environmental conditions, it is essential to develop adaptive strategies for protecting heritage assets. This component of the project focuses on identifying specific threats posed by climate change, such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and temperature shifts, and implementing measures to minimize their impact on cultural heritage sites.

As part of the broader climate action agenda, the project provides support for climate adaptation in cultural heritage management. By integrating environmental data, climate impact assessments, and adaptive strategies, the project will help the EC strengthen its efforts to protect heritage sites from the effects of climate change. This will be crucial in developing effective policies that address climate risks and help heritage sites adapt to evolving environmental conditions.

The project will contribute to the EC's efforts to integrate cultural heritage into environmental policies. This integration will support a holistic approach to environmental management that considers the value and resilience of Europe's cultural heritage alongside broader environmental goals.

- Fusion of climate, weather, pollution, and natural disaster data

The project aims to integrate a wide array of environmental data, including climate, weather, pollution, and natural disaster data, to assess potential threats to heritage sites. By combining these data sets, the project will be able to develop more accurate models and predictive tools that identify areas at high risk of environmental damage. This fusion of data will also allow for more targeted and informed decision-making when it comes to the protection and management of heritage sites, enabling timely interventions to mitigate environmental threats and helping policy makers in assessing the real-world impact of policies.

- Integration of AI and data science into policy making

The project also addresses the integration of AI and data science into cultural heritage policy-making. By employing AI algorithms and advanced data analytics, the project will offer solutions that can significantly enhance decision-making in heritage preservation, climate adaptation, and risk management. These tools will enable policymakers to make data-driven, evidence-based decisions and facilitate more effective policy development. AI and data science integration will enable real-time risk assessments, predictive models, and smarter resource allocation in the field of cultural heritage management.

- Support for adaptation policies to mitigate environmental degradation

A key element of the project is its focus on supporting the development and implementation of adaptation policies aimed at mitigating the effects of environmental degradation on cultural heritage. By collaborating with policymakers, heritage professionals, and environmental experts, the project will

contribute to the creation of policies that guide the protection and resilience of heritage sites. These policies will be based on evidence-driven strategies and ensure that heritage preservation remains a priority in the context of broader climate change and environmental management frameworks.

- Enhancing public awareness and contributing to heritage preservation efforts

Finally, the project recognizes the importance of public awareness in the success of heritage preservation efforts. By engaging local communities, visitors, and stakeholders, the project will promote greater understanding of the environmental challenges faced by cultural heritage and the need for collective action. Public outreach campaigns and educational initiatives will encourage individuals to contribute to the preservation of heritage, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and strengthening public support for policies and measures designed to protect cultural assets. This input will support the EC's initiatives to involve the public in environmental and cultural policymaking, helping to cultivate a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility towards heritage preservation.

Together, these policy elements form the foundation of the project's objectives, which aim to safeguard cultural heritage in the face of climate change and other environmental threats while promoting sustainable and resilient preservation practices.

By addressing these key areas, the project will not only provide valuable support to the EC's ongoing efforts but also contribute to shaping the future of heritage preservation, climate adaptation, and public engagement in the European context.

## **8. Envisaged timeframe for implementation**

In the short term (2-3 years), the project will focus on developing and demonstrating AI-driven models for risk assessment. This will involve the integration of AI and data science into the heritage preservation decision-making process. These models will be validated through pilot projects, helping to assess their potential for addressing environmental and climate-related risks. Additionally, the project will work on testing and validating digital tools, such as virtual platforms and predictive models, in the context of heritage preservation, ensuring their efficacy and reliability for practical applications.

In the long term (5+ years), the project envisions the full integration of its AI and digital tools into broader policy frameworks related to heritage preservation and climate adaptation. These tools will become a permanent part of the policy-making process and will be embedded into real-time monitoring systems for heritage sites. This will allow for continuous risk assessment, adaptive management, and timely interventions to preserve cultural assets. The integration will ensure that digital tools, AI models, and data science approaches are a central part of EU policies on climate adaptation, heritage management, and environmental protection.



By addressing policy needs such as climate adaptation, digital transformation, and the integration of AI into heritage preservation, the project offers targeted solutions that will enhance the resilience of cultural heritage sites. Through the development of advanced risk assessment tools and the integration of digital technologies, the project aims to make a lasting impact on how heritage preservation is approached and how policies are developed to safeguard Europe's cultural assets in a rapidly changing world.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

The ARGUS project represents a forward-thinking approach to safeguarding Europe's built heritage through the integration of advanced digital technologies, scientific research, and policy considerations.

By leveraging AI-driven monitoring, digital twins, and citizen engagement, ARGUS enhances real-time data collection and informed decision-making for heritage preservation.

This report has outlined the project's objectives, key innovations, and alignment with EU cultural policies, while also examining the role of Digital Humanities in policy development. Additionally, it has provided an overview of EU competencies and governing bodies responsible for cultural heritage and digital policy implementation.

As the project progresses, ARGUS will continue to refine its methodologies and contribute to the evolving policy landscape for Digital Humanities, also in collaboration with sister projects NERITES, iPhotoCult and ChemiNova. The final policy brief, to be completed by November 2026, will provide further insights into the project's outcomes and its impact on European heritage preservation.

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