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Final White Paper Sustainable Heritage

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Approval

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Foreword

The Transform4Europe (T4EU) Alliance is a collaboration among leading European universities, established in 2020 under the European Universities Initiative. This initiative aims to foster collaboration and excellence in higher education across the European Union, contributing to the creation of a European Education Area, co-developed by higher education institutions, student organisations and stakeholders.

Ten European universities have come together to create a unique Alliance to take care of the future of the regions, countries and Europe as a whole. Transform4Europe seeks to harness our collective strengths to build a truly European inter-university ecosystem.

Among its many activities, the T4EU Alliance is committed to developing a collaborative, comprehensive and critical approach to sustainable heritage. The diverse actors in the T4EU ecosystem serve as powerful drivers for the joint development of strategies in sustainable heritage through a multi-actor knowledge exchange and research collaboration.

This White Paper is part of an ongoing process designed to provide a current analysis of practices and to put forward guidelines for action in the field of sustainable heritage to enhance university collaboration.

Its primary objective is to explore how the diverse and multifaceted dimensions of heritage — and the issues connected to them — can be effectively integrated into university research, education, and community engagement.

Background and Context

This document draws on the collective work carried out by members of the T4EU Alliance within Work Package 7 (WP7), dedicated to sustainable heritage. Since its launch in November 2023, this work has unfolded over two years of events, conferences, festivals, workshops, joint initiatives among partner universities, stakeholders (GLAM+), and student competitions, all centred on the multiple dimensions of heritage.

While considering existing European initiatives and frameworks — such as *Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe*, *SoPHIA Project*, *CliC Project*, or *Heritage Skills Project* — the T4EU Alliance has chosen to adopt a practical, innovative, concrete, and interdisciplinary approach to sustainable heritage. To operationalise this vision, the concept of heritage has been articulated into six interrelated thematic areas:

- Tangible Heritage
- Intangible Heritage
- Environmental Heritage

- Heritage and Generations
- Labour and Heritage
- Conversion and Heritage

These categories are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, as the issues surrounding heritage are deeply interconnected. However, this thematic structure provides a useful framework to make the field more operable and practice-oriented, enabling interdisciplinary work grounded in the actual practices and experiences of the T4EU partner universities.

Developed collaboratively during the initial phase of the T4EU Alliance, this framework has since inspired and guided events, initiatives, and discussions on heritage across the two years of shared activity. In line with their shared, integrated, long-term joint strategy and in synergy with their educational dimension.

Therefore, the purpose of this White Paper is twofold: to present the analytical insights emerging from this collaborative and long-term joint strategy process, and to highlight the good practices that have informed our understanding of the complex field of heritage, in synergy with its educational dimension.

Core Questions and Shared Commitments

At the core of the Sustainable Heritage Alliance lie key questions, that we, as a collective, are both responsible for asking and committed to addressing:

- How can we engage students meaningfully in activities concerning sustainable heritage?
- How can we involve GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) stakeholders?
- How can we build effective partnerships with public and private institutions?
- How can we strengthen cross-border collaboration among universities?
- How can we recognise and connect with the heritages of new minorities in Europe?
- What roles and forms should public dissemination of scientific debate on sustainable heritage take?

These questions have guided the shared work of the T4EU Alliance over the past two years on how we can achieve our goals and what actions we are committed to. They serve as reference points in our collective efforts to envision and test possible responses to the challenges that define the present and future of heritage in uncertain times.

Objectives and Outlook

We aim is to maintain a practical and participatory focus to, and produce measurable, high-quality research and scientific outcomes related to sustainable heritage. Achieving this requires engaging both students and civil society, in line with the priorities and strategy of the Joint Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Through the cooperative expertise and resources of its university members, the Transform4Europe Alliance seeks not only to foster a critical and innovative approach to sustainable heritage, but also to promote best practices, preservation, and the enrichment of Europe's shared cultural heritage for future generations.

This work reflects a long-term commitment — not only to current challenges, but also to the enduring stewardship of our common European heritage. This White Paper stands as a tangible outcome of the collaborative efforts and shared vision and strategy of the Transform4Europe University Alliance in shaping the European University of tomorrow.

Methodology

This White Paper is grounded in the experience and activities developed by the universities of the Transform4Europe Alliance between 2023 and 2025. The concept underpinning the document was jointly developed during the early stages of the project through a collaborative process involving heritage experts from the partner institutions.

Building on this shared framework, the dynamic activities of work package 7 (WP7)—including workshops, cultural events, festivals, and conferences — served as catalysts for developing the tools and methods needed to address the significant challenges of building a sustainable European heritage. Through the monitoring of these activities, and in alignment with Milestone 52 (*Roadmap on the GLAM ecosystem across different regions*), WP7 experts identified best practices, critical issues, and opportunities to respond effectively to these challenges and propose solutions. Furthermore, the WP7 leader, in collaboration with the T4EU Joint Communication Office, designed and developed an online platform called *Sustainable Transformative T4EU Heritage & GLAM Portfolio and Toolbox*, which includes a comprehensive collection of culture and heritage-related initiatives implemented by T4EU partner universities during the project's timeline

Drawing from this body of expertise, the T4EU expert partners designed and shared a Heritage Engagement Report Inventory, in which each T4EU university presented its own perspective and ideas on key heritage-related themes.

All member universities contributed to this process, compiling the inventory and providing the qualitative data that form the foundation of the present White Paper.

All the qualitative data collected from the T4EU experts were subsequently analysed, synthesised, and organised into a coherent framework, forming the core content of the document.

The inventory is subdivided into two main sections:

- **Section I** – develop a model of exploring the term heritage: it examines the six thematic approaches through which the T4EU Alliance has explored and conceptualised the concept of heritage, providing definitions and presenting concrete examples of practice-based work.
- **Section II** – Approaches and challenges on heritage: it addresses the key issues associated with heritage within higher education and research, offering conceptual framing and proposing possible courses of action derived from the experiences of the partner universities.

Develop a model for exploring the term heritage

A new framework for research and teaching collaboration is needed to achieve measurable results related to the effective integration of sustainable heritage within the T4EU Alliance.

By combining a rich diversity of expertise and approaches, the collected and presented qualitative data will be used to implement a T4EU heritage approach in all our institutions, based on a new way to explore the term *heritage*, to pursue positive change and transformation comprehensively and innovatively.

Element	Subtopic	Response
Tangible Heritage	Definition and Importance	Tangible heritage, as defined by the European T4EU alliance, encompasses physical assets that embody historical, cultural, scientific, and social significance, including monuments, architectural complexes, industrial sites, landscapes, and collections. Across European institutions, it is recognised not only as material objects but as carriers of collective memory, identity, and cultural meaning. Despite regional and disciplinary differences, common principles emphasise integrity, and contextual value, alongside the understanding that heritage is dynamic, interpreted through social,

		historical, and ideological lenses. Tangible heritage thus functions as both a repository of past knowledge and a framework for ongoing cultural negotiation and community identity.
	Sustainable Practices	<p>Sustainable heritage practices encompass conservation, adaptive reuse, and community-centred management across multiple universities. Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski engages in digitization and 3D scanning and documentation of cultural heritage as well as climate-change-induced changes to the urban and natural environment through its relevant structures. The Heritage BG CoE, part of Sofia University, contributes to implementing cohesion policies at a national and community level, enhancing the impact of investment in science and research, developing integrated research and innovation in various scientific fields with a pronounced focus on tangible and intangible heritage.</p> <p>The University of Trieste focuses on digital heritage practices in history and humanities, as well as on the tangible heritage of contemporary migration patterns across Europe with the “Garden of the (in)visibles” project. Alicante University focuses on preventive conservation, life-cycle assessment, climate-risk audits, and circular procurement. The University of Silesia highlights the critical presentation of post-industrial heritage, linking tangible and intangible dimensions. Vytautas Magnus University focuses on cultural repurposing and artistic responses to dissonant heritage. Jean Monnet University addresses landscape-embedded mining heritage, while EKA, the Estonian Academy of Arts, promotes eco-</p>

		friendly restoration, and sustainable and innovative energy efficiency measures for heritage, and organizes trainings in Heritage Impact Assessment to discuss the values of heritage to the broader environment. The University of Primorska implements interdisciplinary, community-based adaptive reuse projects, while Saarland University enhances accessibility through multilingual and AI-supported interpretation. Collectively, these practices prioritise sustainability, inclusiveness, and cultural continuity.
Intangible Heritage	Definition and Importance	Intangible heritage, as defined by the European T4EU Alliance, encompasses practices, knowledge, languages, rituals, performing arts, traditional crafts, and other cultural expressions that sustain identity and social cohesion. Across T4EU, this is widely acknowledged as essential to community memory, self-identification, and intergenerational continuity and exchange. Despite regional and national differences, common principles highlight its dynamic and evolving nature, linking everyday practices with broader historical, social, and cultural contexts. Intangible heritage fosters creativity, community engagement, and sustainable development, providing continuity across generations. It reinforces collective identity, nurtures cultural resilience, and supports intercultural dialogue.
	Sustainable Practices	Sustainable practices for intangible heritage, as promoted by the European T4EU Alliance, emphasise community engagement, intergenerational transmission, and adaptive interpretation. Sofia University fosters festivals, cultural centres, and digitisation of heritage,

		<p>while Alicante prioritises preventive conservation, digital inventories, and inclusive management. The University of Silesia, together with the University of Primorska and the University of Trieste, highlight participatory, bottom-up approaches, workshops, and memory practices linking tangible and intangible dimensions. Vytautas Magnus University focuses on creative approaches to community engagement and heritage preservation. EKA, the Estonian Academy of Arts, supports digital archiving and promotion of local crafts, while Saarland University emphasizes multilingual and intercultural transmission. Across institutions, sustainable intangible heritage practices maintain cultural identity, enable contemporary relevance, foster creativity, and strengthen community cohesion while ensuring continuity across generations. The Alliance collectively explored these issues in the second T4EU annual Heritage conference “<i>Transborder Heritage: A Multidisciplinary Approach</i>” held in Trieste from 25th to 27th of February 2025.</p>
Environmental Heritage	Definition and Importance	<p>Environmental heritage encompasses landscapes, ecosystems, natural resources, and associated knowledge that societies recognise as valuable for ecological, cultural, historical, or aesthetic reasons. It reflects the intertwined relationship between human activity and nature, linking biodiversity, climate resilience, and sustainable livelihoods with cultural identity and collective memory. Across European institutions, environmental heritage includes both preserved natural areas and post-industrial or modified ecosystems, highlighting the complex entanglements of</p>

		past and present human–nature interactions. It underpins sustainability, informs regional and community identities, and provides a foundation for education, research, and the creation of economic and cultural value.
	Sustainable Practices	Environmental heritage management increasingly relies on sustainable, practice-oriented approaches that integrate nature-based solutions and community participation. Key strategies include habitat restoration, water-wise maintenance, and low-impact tourism guided by carrying-capacity principles. Projects such as peatland management by Jean Monnet University and post-industrial site recultivation demonstrate eco-conservation and renewable resource management. Initiatives like the Archaeological Park Simonov Zaliv and the Mythical Park in Rodik (Slovenia) illustrate collaboration between researchers and local communities, promoting sustainable tourism and cultural inclusion. Educational activities—digitisation, citizen-science monitoring, and awareness campaigns foster policy innovation. The <i>Living Trees as Architecture</i> project by the University of Primorska exemplifies how traditional ecological knowledge can merge with modern research to sustain environmental heritage. Vytautas Magnus University's <i>Archi/Tree/tecture</i> symposium showed how creative and innovative educational practices can reshape our understanding of natural and built heritage. The University of Trieste promoted a student competition on the environmental heritage of the Bora wind, raising awareness of collective responsibility for environmental preservation in different

		<p>contexts. EKA, the Estonian Academy of Arts is researching, and through innovative technologies like videogames, promoting the values and maintenance of wooded meadows, a human-influenced richness in biodiversity.</p>
Heritage and Generations	Intergenerational Transmission	<p>Intergenerational transmission of heritage is advanced through hands-on initiatives that link education, research, and community participation. Co-teaching between elders and students, makerspaces for traditional crafts, and service-learning with local associations ensure active knowledge exchange. At Jean Monnet University, 3D reconstructions of the <i>Gorges de la Loire</i> and wartime Saint-Étienne allow students to engage directly with regional history. Transgenerational memory walks in Koper and Izola use built-environment observation to identify shared values and bridge generational perspectives. In post-industrial regions, workshops reinterpret industrial heritage and its environmental impact. Projects like the <i>How to Reframe Monuments</i> workshop in Narva organized by EKA; the Estonian Academy of Arts, foster creative reuse, dialogue between different generations and communities, and sustainable continuity. Intergenerational heritage was a key element of the Sustainable heritage Student Competition organised by the University of Trieste, focusing on the transmission of climate awareness across generations. Sofia University leads the T4EU Environmental Transformation Lab "Smart Cities and Regions", which engages in studying the natural and social systems forming the space and structure of cities and surrounding regions; in making them more adaptable and transformable to changing</p>

		geography (climate change, global environmental problems, and other transformation processes); in providing ecosystem services and nature-based solutions for the cities and regions; in developing models for sustainable development (such as digital twins, etc.).
	Policy Recommendations	Intergenerational heritage policy should be guided by four coherent lines of action. First, governance must improve through stronger institutional coordination: cross-departmental task forces should connect heritage, climate, education, and planning, while heritage impact assessments should systematically accompany environmental ones. Second, sustainability depends on prioritising the adaptive reuse of existing buildings and investing in skills transmission through master–pupil programmes, incentives for circular materials, and support for traditional crafts. Third, community participation is essential: small, flexible grants can empower young people and local groups to co-manage heritage sites, while partnerships between cultural organisations, universities, NGOs, and schools—such as collaborations with the 66th Secondary School in Sofia—embed heritage in everyday civic life. Finally, education must embrace linguistic and cultural diversity by integrating Critical Heritage Studies and promoting multilingual curricula that recognise regional dialects and older linguistic variants as vital forms of intangible heritage and intergenerational identity.
Labour and Heritage	Economic and Social Benefits	Labour heritage represents a significant driver of economic and social development, linking the memory of work to new forms of

		<p>sustainable production and innovation. At the same time, it is a driver for the critique of inequalities. Beyond its economic potential, labour heritage reinforces social cohesion by valuing the skills, narratives, and solidarities of working communities, often neglected in dominant cultural discourses. It fosters civic pride, strengthens intergenerational ties, and provides a framework for inclusive participation. USIL organised a workshop on post-industrial regeneration, called <i>Heritage at work – Between the Local and the European</i>, held at the Museum of Metallurgy in Chorzów. In post-communist regions, where the legacy of labour is often <i>dissonant</i>, the reactivation of industrial memory through artistic, educational, and participatory initiatives like the T4EU workshop <i>How to Reframe Monuments</i> organized by EKA; the Estonian Academy of Arts or the collaboration between Vytautas Magnus University and the <i>Backup Stories</i> community gallery, transforms contested pasts into platforms for dialogue and resilience. Thus, labour heritage operates not only as an economic asset but also as a social infrastructure for equitable and sustainable regional renewal. The Alliance collectively explored these issues at the first T4EU Annual Heritage Conference, called <i>Common European Heritage – theoretical framework, values, sustainability</i>, held at the University of Silesia on 22nd and 23rd October 2024, and on the occasion of the First Festival of European Culture and Languages, titled <i>Tourism and Heritage from the Border</i>, held at the University of Trieste from 7th to 11th July 2025. Students from alliance universities were involved in labour heritage exploration through a specially</p>
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		designed course, "Critical Heritage," taught during the T4EU Week at Vytautas Magnus University in from 20 th to 24 to October 2025.
	Sustainable Practices	Labour heritage fosters sustainability by linking industrial memory with contemporary social and environmental responsibility. It promotes green skills, fair employment, and circular economies through initiatives such as the University of Alicante's training in materials conservation and paid apprenticeships, and Sofia University's craft and industrial museums preserving local know-how in the towns of Troyan and Pernik. The University of Primorska's participatory management of the Archaeological Park of San Simon mirrors cooperative models like <i>La Paranza</i> in Naples, emphasizing shared governance and community benefit. Vytautas Magnus University integrates creative practitioners to reinterpret labour heritage critically, demonstrating how sustainable practice unites conservation, equity, and innovation across generations. EKA, the Estonian Academy of Arts provides supplementary courses for craftsmen.
Conversion and Heritage	Adaptive Reuse	Adaptive reuse redefines heritage as a dynamic resource that bridges conservation with innovation, sustaining cultural identity while meeting contemporary needs. The University of Alicante prioritizes the conversion of vacant sites into housing, learning hubs, and cultural or circular-economy centres, reducing embodied carbon and advancing 15-minute-city goals. Sofia University promotes the repurposing of industrial buildings into galleries, ensuring continuity between past and present functions. Vytautas Magnus University

		<p>contributes to the heritagization of Ignalina nuclear power plant while Jean Monnet University explores the reversibility of heritage sites through digital 3D modelling and the ecological rehabilitation of the Châteauneuf slag heap. Similarly, the University of Primorska's restoration of the Servite Monastery to create a public space with active involvement of the local community highlights creative reuse as both conservation and innovation. EKA, the Estonian Academy of Arts annual course "Abandoned landscapes" focuses on repurposing and reuse of unused heritage sites</p>
	Sustainable Practices	<p>Sustainable conversion integrates environmental responsibility with heritage preservation through reversible design, low-impact materials, and community participation. The University of Alicante's "repair first" ethos, materials passports, and post-occupancy evaluation exemplify circular and adaptive approaches. Sofia's Central Mineral Bath, converted into the Sofia City Museum, embodies balanced reuse that respects architectural authenticity while enriching cultural life. The Estonian Academy of Arts promotes eco-friendly retrofitting, energy efficiency and participatory governance to ensure long-term resilience. Through the HEI-Transform project, the University of Primorska advances inclusive, sustainable reuse across diverse sites, demonstrating how responsible design can unite ecological performance with cultural continuity. Vytautas Magnus University through research into nuclear cultural heritage advocates for a sustainable, community-</p>

		engaged and low-impact practice that enhances cohesion and resilience.
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Approaches and Challenges to Heritage

The challenges involved in constructing and defining a common idea of sustainable heritage within the T4EU Alliance can be grouped into the following engagement categories. The data collected and analysed for this purpose form the basis of a clear strategic document to develop and implement the framework for establishing a common European sustainable heritage.

By adopting this approach, the T4EU Alliance has been able to identify common challenges of all partner institutions and to design mechanisms and tools to address them. This process fosters common approaches and shared understandings of heritage among researchers, students, teachers, and GLAM+ partners, thereby strengthening inter-university collaboration within our academic communities.

Engagement Area	Subtopic	Response
How do we engage students?	Main issues	Student engagement in heritage studies is challenged by fragmented information, financial and scheduling constraints, and the perception of heritage as either outdated or overly specialised. Many students lack access to hands-on learning, multilingual tools, and clear career pathways, which reduces motivation and retention. Limited institutional connections to heritage organisations and the overuse of English as the sole working language further restrict inclusion. Across universities there is also a struggle to demonstrate the social and professional relevance of heritage fields, often perceived as less practical than STEM disciplines, highlighting the need for renewed visibility and institutional support.
	Forms of participation	Engagement flourishes when students are invited into authentic, practice-based environments that combine learning with contribution. Forms of participation include service-learning studios, living

		<p>labs, citizen-science surveys, and internships with GLAM institutions. Universities like Sofia and Primorska, and EKA integrate workshops, field practice and summer schools that link theory to real-world heritage management. International events blended intensive programs (BIP), and competitions foster transnational collaboration and creativity. It enables students to co-create knowledge and connect with diverse communities across linguistic and cultural boundaries.</p>
	The role students can play	<p>Students act as co-researchers, designers, and mediators who bridge academia, practice, and community. Their participation extends beyond learning to leadership: developing projects, conducting citizen-science surveys, and presenting research at conferences. They can also serve as guides, interpreters, and ambassadors for sustainable and inclusive heritage, aligning cultural preservation with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the European Green Deal. By proposing solutions, prototyping heritage-tech and participating in decision-making bodies, students bring creativity, empathy, and technological fluency. Their critical engagement transforms them into active contributors rather than passive recipients, shaping the future direction of heritage policy and practice.</p>
	The contribution students brought to the white paper	<p>Students provided essential, user-centred insights that ensured that the White Paper real needs and emerging priorities. Their participation in pilot and case studies offered evidence for testing policy options, visualising trade-offs, and identifying gaps in accessibility, training, and skills recognition. Their contributions highlighted generational diversity, digital innovation and inclusivity, ensuring that policy frameworks remained adaptive and future-oriented. Ultimately, their voices reaffirmed the purpose of</p>

		heritage education itself to create equitable, sustainable, and creative heritage pathways for Europe's next generations.
How do we engage GLAM stakeholders?	Main issues	Engaging GLAM stakeholders reveals several systemic barriers: financial and resource constraints, digitisation gaps, intellectual property (IP) and licensing complexities, and fragmented standards that limit open data and co-creation. Institutions often lack long-term collaboration frameworks, with engagement linked to isolated events rather than ongoing partnerships. Balancing conservation with accessibility, adapting to evolving visitor expectations, and aligning sustainability goals (such as energy efficiency and climate resilience) remain persistent challenges. Furthermore, ideological and cultural diversity within international programmes introduces debates over heritage definitions and representation, underscoring the need for inclusive, pluralistic approaches to cultural value and shared stewardship across European and global contexts.
	Forms of participation	Effective engagement requires multidimensional collaboration between universities and GLAM institutions. Activities include co-curated exhibitions, residencies, and citizen-archive drives, as well as workshops, round tables, and joint research initiatives. Participatory methodologies such as living labs, urban cafés, and co-design workshops or Student Competitions facilitate collective problem-solving. Many universities in the alliance link students to museums, archives, and libraries through internships and summer schools. Events like guided tours, visiting lectures, and mobility schemes foster dialogue and visibility. These diverse platforms strengthen institutional networks and cultivate long-term collaboration grounded in trust and mutual benefit.

	The role GLAM stakeholders can play	GLAM stakeholders act as mentors, and catalysts within heritage ecosystems. They safeguard collections, validate data, and ensure professional standards, while co-producing knowledge with academic and community partners. Their involvement in teaching and co-training programmes bridges research and practice, providing real-world contexts for student learning. As conveners of public dialogue and disseminators of cultural narratives, they promote inclusive participation and broaden audience reach. Importantly, stakeholders can also take initiative proposing projects, co-designing competitions, and advancing sustainability pilots thus transforming from passive collaborators into co-leaders of innovation and policy development within a European framework of shared cultural responsibility.
	What contribution did GLAM stakeholders bring to the white paper	GLAM stakeholders contributed essential expertise, empirical data, and case-based insights that grounded the White Paper in operational reality. Their input informed policy recommendations on digitisation standards, intellectual property management, and climate-risk adaptation, while providing measurable indicators of impact and inclusion. Through peer review and co-authored guidance, they helped ensure that proposed frameworks were feasible, scalable, and sensitive to institutional diversity. Their cross-sectoral experience—spanning museums, archives, and libraries—enriched the document with evidence-based strategies and lessons learned. Ultimately, their engagement ensured that the White Paper articulated a coherent, community-rooted vision for sustainable, accessible, and collaborative European heritage governance.
How do we build a	Main issues	Building partnerships with institutions requires overcoming fragmented governance, rigid

partnership with institutions?		administrative frameworks, and short-term collaborations. Many institutions operate in silos, with limited mechanisms for sustained cooperation or shared objectives. Regulatory barriers, procurement rigidity, and volatile funding often slow down collaboration. At the same time there is a challenge of short-lived participation, where institutions join projects without long-term engagement. It is necessary to connect institutional agendas to environmental and digital transformation, ensuring that partnerships evolve beyond formality into lasting ecosystems of shared learning and innovation.
	Forms of participation	Partnerships thrive through a diversity of formats that balance formal agreements and experimental collaboration. Memorandums of Understanding (MOA), co-funded living labs, and shared research roadmaps help align missions while maintaining flexibility. Alicante's use of joint dashboards and steering committees enables transparent governance, while Sofia University's stakeholder challenges and interdisciplinary bootcamps demonstrate how institutions can co-create solutions to real cases. At Primorska, and UNITS, participatory exhibitions foster dialogue across municipal and cultural actors. Jean Monnet's collaborations with the Institut ARTS show how shared infrastructures—like digitisation projects or cross-institutional internships—can translate cooperation into tangible outcomes.
	The role they can play	Institutions act as key enablers and mediators between research, governance, and society. They bring legitimacy, resources, and access to real contexts, allowing academic innovation to meet public needs. Certain institutions focus on the institutionalisation of good practices and the shaping of legislation, whereas others place greater emphasis on mentoring and co-design as key elements in

		fostering sustainable partnerships. Institutions can also serve as conveners, connecting sectors and disciplines, and as integrators embedding heritage into spatial, cultural, and climate policies. By engaging in continuous dialogue with universities, they turn research outputs into policy instruments and models for regional development.
	What contribution did they bring to the white paper	Institutional partnerships strengthened the White Paper process by grounding it in practical experience. They contributed governance models, cost–benefit analyses, and regulatory feedback that ensured the proposals were actionable and evidence-based. Their collaborative work provided examples of open-data frameworks, interdisciplinary approaches, participatory heritage governance, and digital transformation, demonstrating how research insights could effectively inform policy recommendations. Through these contributions, institutional partners helped translate academic reflection into policy pathways, supporting replication, accountability, and measurable standards for sustainable heritage cooperation across Europe.
How do we strengthen collaboration across border areas between universities?	Main issues	Strengthening cross-border collaboration between universities faces persistent structural and logistical barriers. Differences in legal frameworks, funding cycles, and recognition systems complicate joint initiatives, while mobility costs and visa restrictions limit participation. Challenges also arise from issues of interoperability and intellectual property, as well as from cultural and linguistic differences that hinder a shared understanding of heritage. Moreover, reconciling distinct disciplinary traditions and methodologies remains difficult, and cross-border work often relies on individual commitment rather than institutional support—making continuity and

		long-term impact harder to sustain across time and borders.
	Forms of participation	Cross-border collaboration thrives through flexible, inclusive, and multi-level formats. Alicante's model of twinned campuses, shared repositories, and co-supervised theses demonstrates how interoperability can enhance continuity. Sofia University and Jean Monnet promote matchmaking events, joint seminars, and stakeholder challenges as effective ways to foster interdisciplinary exchange. Primorska and EKA strengthen engagement through joint summer schools, blended intensive programmes, and technology-enabled classrooms that connect staff and students in real time. Common cultural activities among the Alliance universities (such as <i>The Garden of the (In)visibles</i> which will connect seven universities of the T4EU alliance) are powerful tools to strengthen partnerships. Online events and short-term mobility complement in-person fieldwork, ensuring participation remains accessible even where resources or administrative constraints would otherwise limit cooperation.
	The role they can play	Universities act as bridge-builders between academic, cultural, and civic communities across borders. They broker knowledge, host shared infrastructures, and serve as neutral conveners for multi-country research and policy pilots. As capacity builders and advocates for harmonised standards, they contribute to defining common methodologies and comparative frameworks. Through academic networks that integrate new partners and non-academic actors, universities help create cross-border ecosystems that advance both research and regional cohesion. In doing so, they reinforce Europe's cultural and territorial continuity through shared learning and innovation.

	What contribution did they bring to the white paper	Cross-border collaborations enriched the White Paper process by providing comparative insights and practical templates for transnational governance. Joint work on harmonised indicators and data portability supported policy alignment, while evidence-based models of intercultural dialogue and heritage-driven innovation offered concrete methodological guidance. Collaborative experiences also generated lessons from cross-regional cooperation, including ways to integrate local authorities and GLAM partners into academic and institutional frameworks. Through these contributions, partners not only identified legislative and logistical barriers but also co-developed solutions, transforming isolated initiatives into a coherent vision for transnational heritage collaboration and for advancing sustainable European integration.
What is the role and forms of public dissemination of the scientific debate on sustainable heritage?	Main issues	Public dissemination of scientific debate on sustainable heritage remains constrained by barriers of language, access, and engagement. Jargon, paywalls, and uneven visibility continue to limit the reach of research, while challenges of inclusivity and the integration of non-academic voices persist. Awareness—particularly less “canonical” forms of heritage—also remains low, underscoring that sustainability in heritage cannot be achieved without active public participation. Fragmentation between researchers and GLAM institutions further hinders dialogue with society. To address these issues, dissemination efforts must move beyond traditional academic channels, fostering trust, shared understanding, and cultural literacy among broader publics.
	Forms of participation	Effective dissemination requires combining academic rigour with accessible and creative forms of communication. Multilingual explainers, open-

		<p>access briefs, podcasts, and public debates help make knowledge more widely available, while open events, community collaborations, and educational partnerships strengthen local engagement. Artistic media—such as art, literature, and film—can render heritage debates emotionally and culturally resonant, and media campaigns, exhibitions, and collaborations with NGOs and schools further broaden their reach. Digital tools and visual reconstructions make research more tangible to citizens. Collectively, these formats expand participation, fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility in the conversation on heritage and sustainability.</p>
	The role it can play	<p>Universities act as mediators between science, policy, and the public, ensuring that evidence-based knowledge becomes a shared social resource. They translate complex information into accessible formats and initiate dialogues that bridge communities, experts, and institutions. Co-creation processes position the public not as passive recipients but as active agents in shaping heritage values. By fostering transparent and inclusive debates, universities strengthen democratic engagement with cultural and environmental heritage.</p>
	What contribution did it bring to the white paper	<p>Public dissemination enriched the White Paper process by grounding policy design in social understanding and public trust. Collaborative efforts produced accessible syntheses and engagement metrics, alongside tested models of inclusive communication and tools for cross-sector cooperation and public consultation. An emphasis on cultural participation ensured that heritage was not merely preserved but continually redefined through community dialogue. Together, these contributions connected academic knowledge with civic realities,</p>

		transforming research into actionable, publicly owned insights for sustainable heritage.
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Conclusion and directions for the future

This White Paper brings together the collective work and experience of the Transform4Europe Universities Alliance within Work Package 7 (WP7), conducted between November 2023 and 2025. It represents the culmination of a two-year collaborative effort aimed at developing a comprehensive and critical approach to sustainable heritage across research, education, and community engagement. Through workshops, conferences, cultural events, and shared initiatives, the Alliance tested models of cooperation and developed tools to address the challenges of building a sustainable European heritage ecosystem.

Throughout the project, the monitoring of WP7 activities, together with the MS52 Roadmap on the GLAM ecosystem, enabled the Alliance to identify best practices, critical issues, and opportunities for further action. These efforts demonstrated that heritage must be approached not as a fixed legacy but as a dynamic, inclusive, and participatory field that unites tangible, intangible, and environmental dimensions.

The White Paper also consolidates practices and reflections emerging from the six thematic areas explored: tangible heritage, intangible heritage, environmental heritage, heritage and generations, labour and heritage, and conversion and heritage. Each of these perspectives contributed to a better understanding of how universities can act as catalysts for sustainable transformation, connecting academic research with societal needs.

Based on this shared work, the White Paper collected insights and recommendations concerning:

- the development of regional culture and heritage policy strategies that promote and discuss European values;
- the enhancement of multilingualism through a Multilingual Campus Strategy to foster cooperation in language teaching and learning developed in Task 7.4;
- the creation of tools to integrate digital recreation and practice-based artistic research methodologies into university programmes and research frameworks developed within Task 7.5.

By synthesising these experiences, this document aims not only to benefit the Transform4Europe Alliance, but also to serve as a reference model for future initiatives to other universities and regions. Given the potential of our collective approach, the T4EU Alliance aims to become a leading actor and a role model within the European Education and Research Area.

More broadly, the White Paper seeks to strengthen the role of universities as mediators between science, policy, and society, and as active agents in the sustainable preservation and renewal of Europe's cultural and territorial continuity.

The T4EU Alliance's mission is to stimulate and invite a mutual development for further research, experimentation, and dialogue among academic, civic, and institutional partners, ensuring that sustainable heritage remains at the heart of Europe's shared learning, innovation, and identity. By consolidating and optimising the results presented in this White Paper, the outcomes of WP7 provide a strong foundation and new strategies for continued collaboration in the T4EU ecosystem.