

# The cultural heritage of war in contemporary Europe

Specific challenge: European nations and societies have had ambiguous relation to war since the beginning of the age of modern nation states. Wars were the culmination of patriotic efforts and cemented national identities. The horrors of wars pushed the same societies, nations and their elites to overcome traditional rivalries and to engage in the European construction that finally succeeded after World War II. The Nobel Peace Prize received by the European Union in 2012 and the upcoming Europe-wide memorial events related to the first centenary of the outbreak of World War I and to the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II put in relief in an expressive way the many layers of the cultural heritage of war, whether for local communities, for national or for European identities.

Scope: The multidisciplinary, geographically balanced and comparative research will aim at exploring the complex relationship that contemporary European societies have with the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the major armed conflicts fought on their soil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (*inter alia* World War I and World War II but also Balkan wars, civil wars, revolutions, etc.).

The research will map the use of the cultural heritage of the selected major armed conflicts in memorial practices, media and popular culture, political appropriation, education, heritage preservation and related cultural heritage tourism. It will explore and conceptualise the role that this cultural heritage plays in local and national identities and in the practices and narratives laying the foundation of European identities. It will explore links between national cultural heritage traditions and assess how these can be better articulated, taking the impact of war on cultural memory into account.

Comparison with cases from geographical regions outside of Europe could further deepen the comparative aspects of the research.

The Commission considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU of between EUR 1.5 and 2.5 million would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

Expected impact: Research under this topic will significantly deepen knowledge on the – sometimes contradictory – local, national and European aspects of the cultural heritage of wars and other major armed conflicts. It will provide innovative ways, networks, tools and policy advice on how to maintain and preserve this rich and diverse element of the European cultural heritage and how to promote it further in communication, education and tourism at the level of the whole EU. It is expected that these activities will create a lasting dynamic in this specific field of European cultural heritage by putting into place new networks of researchers, local communities, education providers and specialists of heritage preservation and tourism. They will also contribute to a better understanding of memorialization practices, cultures of commemoration and the politics of memory across Europe.

The research will also provide genuine and innovative policy recommendations concerning the valorisation, in an inclusive European perspective, of this difficult but fundamental cultural heritage of contemporary Europe. Strong emphasis will be put on the development of new inter-institutional initiatives and high quality new education tools and material for multiple platforms that reinterpret cultural heritage and allow the development of new shared cultural perspectives in Europe going beyond the individual nationally-focused memory cultures.

Type of action: Research and innovation actions

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