



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The **reSpect** project is about re-thinking the XXI century conservator/restorer's figure and role. It intends to evaluate the possibility of setting the benchmark for an updated and innovative education itinerary for such a figure.

Conservator/restorer (C/R) commonly means a professional that operates within the Cultural Heritage sector. In recent decades the "universe" of Cultural Heritage has widened its limits so much (embracing both the worlds of artistic productions and the natural environment) that trainees of different disciplines dealing with conservation (i.e. Art, Architecture and the Environment) share much fundamental knowledge (i.e. chemistry, physics, materials' behaviours etc.) and much more, particularly, but not only from the scientific/technological area, has been added to such specialist activity in recent years.

Despite this scenario, there are not many contact opportunities between the cited training branches with a consequent dispersion of information. In particular this happens between the more art oriented disciplines (art, architecture and archaeology) and the more nature and environment oriented ones that have recorded consistent improvement in many directions, thanks also to general contemporary concern and focus.

The partnership believes that the time has come for a renovated approach to the (initial) preparation of future C/Rs providing them with a common attitude towards both the arts and the environment so as to embrace the worlds of conservation & restoration into one common vision, one origin and shared approach.

The partnership also envisages the opportunity to start expressing the outcomes of conservative interventions, which are different in scale and specific technologies, with common words. The partnership believes that re-touching lacunas of a worn out painting is comparable to replanting the shores of a damaged estuary; both recover the readability and the authenticity of a phenomenon, whether it is artistic or natural; both are more and more concerned with their short and long term social and economical impacts, with their overall sustainability. This is also the aim expressed by the **reSpect** logo.

## SUMMARY

To tackle the goals of **reSpect** in terms of partnership, a good balance is needed between the world of education/training and the world of work on both sides (i.e. art and environment).

Given that the project idea has been already officially presented and discussed at a round table with several representatives of VET and HE European Institutes at the recent **ELIA** (European League of Institutes of the Arts) biennial meeting (Vienna, 8-10 Nov. 2012) and that within ELIA there is now a growing sub-network of education and training institutes in C/R promoted by the applicant Palazzo Spinelli (<http://www.elia-artschools.org/Members/?discipline=Conservation%20-%20restoration>), the partnership, although starting from an already fertile ground, would benefit from further improvements.

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### **Education and work sector in the Arts:**

in terms of training institutions a particular focus is needed on those representative of the art conservation sector at both VET (vocational education and training) and regional scale and at HE (higher education) and national scale. Also representatives of confederations, such as EnCoRe - European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education, are to be involved.

Dealing with the work sector, the project would greatly benefit from representatives from the production and enterprise sectors (i.e. materials / technologies providers and work activities from art, architecture and archaeological sectors) and from that of professionals, such as ECCO – European Confederation of Conservators-Restorers, as full or silent partners.

### **Education and work sector in the Environment:**

On the side of environmental conservation, mostly HE institutions need to be involved but governmental authorities with or without training practice in the sector could also be of interest. Representatives of confederations, such as FEE - Foundation for Environmental Education, are to be contacted as well.

Dealing with the work sector, the project would greatly benefit from representatives from the production and enterprise sectors (i.e. materials / technologies providers and work activities from the environmental sectors) and from that of professionals such as ENEP – European Network of Environmental Professionals as full or silent partners.

## **RATIONALE**

Despite the fact that the reasons why conservation is needed are self explanatory (i.e. to allow the existence of tokens from the past and consequently the chance to learn from them), sometimes the efforts and resources conservation takes seem to need renewed motivations and explanations.

Conservation is a cultural and intentional process and therefore it shares all the changes in history that similar processes, such as artistic productions, are subject to: namely taste or trend. At the same time, and in particular during the last century, conservation practices and research have been progressively moving towards the scientific side of the question; that is to say reducing the aesthetic and subjective assumptions for interventions or at least giving more objective reasons to them.

Within such evolution the improvements have been and still are many but the narrowing of research fields into strong specializations and the risk of scarce communication between different sectors (if not between different schools of thought) is high. If we then move out of the typical Cultural Heritage sector expanding the view to other C/R professions, such as the ones dealing with the environment, communication is poor or even non-existent.

Environmental sciences and therefore environmental conservation have provided interesting developments and contributions in the last decades. These are not merely technical or scientific or philosophic; they also deal, for instance, with the social and economic impact analysis of conservative interventions which seems to be a good point when we seek for the above cited “renewed motivations” of conservation.

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The partnership believes that, starting from the positive potential represented by the mixed artist/scientist education of a typical Conservator / Restorer in the Cultural Heritage sector, there is more than good motivation for bridging the worlds of the arts and the environment so as to share the approaches and the understanding of their specific phenomena and mutually improving such understanding highlighting the common ground and giving rise to a renewed education path able to tackle some of the pressing changes in the sector such as:

- **Changing world:** “glocalisation” processes (i.e. local answers to global pressures) that require a more localized understanding of natural and cultural phenomena;
- **Changing legislation** (more and more sensitive to lifecycle and imprint questions at all level of activity);
- **Changing professional requirements** (growing needs of continuous updating and certification);

So.....changing the approach through the expansion of perspectives, the contamination of points of view, the better understanding of changing needs.....in other words with a project such as **reSpect**.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

The partnership of **reSpect** not only believes that conservation is important but understands the need of setting the foundations for a renewed vision and approach to C/Rs education and training.

Therefore the **main objectives** of the project are:

- To provide the future C/Rs in both Cultural Heritage and in Environmental sectors with a **common vision of conservative questions** and better understanding of correlated issues;
- To steer **information sharing** between the conservation areas of art and the environment;
- To evaluate and **delineate possible improvements in C/R initial and further education**;

European Conservation and Restoration, in particular in the Cultural Heritage sector, is experiencing a key moment in its evolution, marked by the decline of the “post 1966 Florence flood” generation that so much has contributed to the development and professionalization of the sector.

The momentum comes in a period of generalized crisis (although mostly financial) that threatens the resources (intellectual, motivational and economical) needed to keep C/R as the fundamental sector for Europe’s rich Cultural Heritage and the European conservation training and practices as a contribution of excellence on an international scale. Despite the generalized concern and focus, a similar fate seems to hit the environment and its conservation. The fact that the majority of the European environment has been shaped by humans makes it a cultural phenomenon and its conservation a delicate question.



Such problems have common grounds and common solutions therefore need to share their approaches and insights.

To turn **reSpec** into not only a vision or a proposition, the approach will be that of G.L.O. (Generic Learning Outcomes) as far as it will be fundamental, at this first and interlocutory stage, to collect information, points of view and feelings from the many subjects involved so that setting the discussion, defining the needs, envisaging the solution will lead to a sustainable answer.

## RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

| n. | Approx. date                          | description   |
|----|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1  | month <b>3</b> (out of 24)            | How much of the <b>reSpec</b> approach is already in partners' education practices (starting <b>Questionnaire</b> )       |
| 2  | Month <b>8</b> (out of 24)            | Conservation education: <b>synthetic report</b> on national realities on both sides (Heritage and Environment)            |
| 3  | Month <b>10</b> (out of 24)           | <b>reSpec website</b> and project forum   |
| 4  | Month <b>16</b> (out of 24)           | <b>ELIA</b> art-conservation <b>subnetwork</b> based steering committee (action proposals)                                |
| 5  | After each of the 10 planned meetings | <b>reSpec Meeting activities reports</b> (written and video-photo)  |
| 6  | Month <b>24</b> (out of 24)           | Final <b>Conference</b> (within the "Salone dell'Arte e del Restauro" [Art and Restoration Fair] Firenze – November 2014) |

## EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE

Given that **reSpec** is seeking the opening of new and not explored ways of comparison between the **cultural heritage** and the **environment sectors** dealing with conservation and that the planned extended partnership is covering various areas of interest from different points of view (education, work and institutional bodies) and many countries are represented, it seems feasible that more intensive cooperation will originate from it, also considering the planned activities and their outcomes.

It must be highlighted that the **reSpec** idea was recently conceived and nurtured within the ELIA conservation and restoration disciplines' sub-network. ELIA, with more than 300 EU and international members, already represents an effective "sounding board" for a transversal and interdisciplinary project such as **reSpec**.

Furthermore the project involves VET and HE institutions that in many cases already have, or are strongly connected to, environmental education departments / bodies / professionals / researchers so that it seems feasible that the activation of a finalized link between the cited



disciplines would provide an added value as much as that same link will be easily implemented.

## **IMPACT**

Based on the already set involvement and goal sharing of much of the partnership, the qualities of **reSpect**, as much as its explorative nature, will strongly contribute to place the participating subjects on new ground, possibly “unsafe” but definitely challenging and exciting; just what the proponent thinks is now needed in the Cultural Heritage sector. On the other side, the subjects dealing with environmental conservation will have the opportunity to compare their own activities with the cultural heritage approach to the environment (i.e. cultural landscapes) and the specific perception of its qualities.

This opportunity to share information and approaches will also involve common technical and scientific aspects that despite the different scale of conservative interventions are homologous. And the scale question is probably the more pertinent when we talk about expected impact. The two areas of research are in fact mostly differentiated because of dealing with problems on different scales: objects (whether movable or immovable on the cultural heritage side) and territories on the environmental one. The proponent, together with the partnership, believes that sharing of information based on such different “scale” questions will provide a positive mutual transferral of approaches as well as tools, practices and methods enriching the disciplines with a wider understanding of relative phenomena.