



**HISTORIC GARDENS IN PORTUGAL  
AND THE BERLIN CALL TO ACTION**  
Cultural Heritage for the Future of Europe (2018)

European Year of Cultural Heritage  
2018

## HISTORIC GARDENS IN PORTUGAL AND THE BERLIN CALL TO ACTION Cultural Heritage for the Future of Europe (2018)

**This year, on the 30th anniversary of the first Programme for the Conservation of Historic Gardens in Portugal** - a joint initiative of the former Portuguese Institute of Cultural Heritage and the Portuguese Association of Landscape Architects - and the 25th anniversary of the Pilot Project for the Conservation of European Architectural Heritage which has chosen gardens of historical value as a priority at European level;

**In the spirit of the Florence Charter** on the preservation of historic gardens (ICOMOS-IFLA International Committee on Historic Gardens and Sites, 1981) an addendum to the Venice Charter, a normative text on intervention in the physical fabric of gardens of historic value as well as the intangible measures necessary for their protection, conservation and enhancement; **and in the spirit of the observations made by the World Heritage Committee (UNESCO) in the 1992 review of the “Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention” by integrating the concept of Cultural Landscapes** which includes the category of gardens as ‘clearly defined landscapes designed and created intentionally by man’;

**In response to the European Commission's initiative to declare 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage and the Berlin Call to Action** on Cultural Heritage for the Future of Europe, presented at the first European Cultural Heritage Summit, in June 2018, that brought together citizens and organisations from all over Europe, recalling that for all citizens, ‘have a unique opportunity to influence the debate on the Future of Europe’ and ‘confronted with so many challenges, and even threats, to core European values, (...) we must put our shared cultural heritage where it belongs: at the very centre of Europe’s policies and priorities’ via a specific set of actions: (1) Develop the European action plan for cultural heritage; (2) Recognise heritage as a priority for European policies and funding; (3) Create local, national and European bridges; (4) Preserve and transmit the irreplaceable; (5) Invest in quality heritage-led regeneration; (6) Promote better knowledge and deeper understanding; (7) Build on the momentum;

**A meeting was held in Porto - 30 YEARS OF HISTORIC GARDENS IN PORTUGAL - organised by the Landscape Observatory of the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Porto, in collaboration with the Portuguese Association of Historic Gardens and with support from the Directorate General of Cultural Heritage (DGPC) and the Portuguese Association of Landscape Architects (APAP).** The meeting brought together the Programme’s promoters and protagonists, heritage and conservation specialists in the field of historic gardens in Portugal, and representatives of the DGPC and APAP, who analysed the initiatives implemented since the Programme’s launch in 1988.

**The following conclusions were drawn:**

1. There has been a significant development of the principles of action advocated in the Florence Charter, in particular:

- in terms of conservation practice, through the production of methodologies for restoration work; development of the practice of historical research; execution and implementation of restoration projects; exchange of experiences and learning between different areas of restoration - integrated conservation; coordination and execution of garden management and maintenance initiatives;

- an increase in technical and scientific knowledge, that had repercussions on the inclusion of disciplines associated to the restoration of historic gardens and landscapes in academic curricula; production of master's and PhD theses; organisation of scientific meetings and seminars; implementation of surveys and studies of gardens for inclusion in inventory lists for possible listing as heritage sites; production of monographs, scientific articles, exhibitions and catalogues; constitution of document collections; set up of charities involved in the preservation of landscape heritage, in the implementation of programmes for visits to gardens; organisation of courses addressed to a wide range of audiences; opening gardens to the public and organisation of education and entertainment programmes;

- internationalisation, sharing and circulation of information through post-graduate training in foreign universities, organisation and participation in international conferences, publication in international journals, participation in international organisations; recognition through international awards;

- institutionalisation of conservation practice through the activity of landscape architecture technical experts from the Directorate-General for Cultural Heritage and Regional Directorates of Culture, and gardens / properties that fall under their aegis, with implications in terms of inventorying, listing, management, conservation and restoration of the properties safeguarded by them, and production of assessment reports on interventions in listed heritage sites, despite the fact that the number of technical experts is manifestly insufficient to respond to the protection and conservation needs of the gardens.

2. The existence of significant problems in terms of personnel specialised in the conservation of gardens – in particular gardeners and other craftsmen – and the fact that initial efforts to train workers have not had continuity, and there has even been a loss of expertise in this field over the past 30 years. Similarly, the general recommendation on the propagation of plant material, and the specific recommendation on species, varieties and cultivars necessary to ensure the authenticity of restoration initiatives, has not achieved sufficient results.

3. The absence of structured funding for restoration and maintenance initiatives of historic gardens.
4. The scarcity of gardens included in Portugal's national cultural heritage list (with greater representation of gardens through their inclusion in municipal plans), resulting in greater vulnerability of this heritage and insufficient valorisation by local organisations and communities.
5. A significant number of gardens of historic value are at risk and, as a consequence, a unique and unrepeatable part of Portuguese cultural heritage faces threats that may call into question not only its authenticity but its continued existence.

**The participants therefore subscribe to the “Berlin Call to Action” and, in this spirit, appeal to the competent organisations and all citizens, to:**

1. **Consider historic gardens as a central element of Portuguese and European cultural heritage**, wherein their protection and appreciation, should involve society as a whole, and local communities in particular;
2. **Consider including the UNESCO category of 'cultural landscapes' in Portuguese legislation** in order to respond to the debate generated by the World Heritage Committee, and recognise the value of heritage landscapes and their vulnerability and fragility as living heritage;
3. **Adopt greater and more effective funding to safeguard, restore and promote Portuguese historic gardens** that fall within the public and private domain, so that they can be preserved and appreciated by present and future generations and strengthen collective memory **in its Portuguese and European dimension, through initiatives based on the World Heritage Convention and the Florence Charter, and also inspired by principles of high-quality *Baukultur*, as formulated in the Davos Declaration**, adopted at the beginning of 2018, the European Year of Cultural Heritage. Due to the living nature of gardens, the production of management and maintenance plans associated with such funding should serve as a guarantee for the authenticity of the interventions and for the perpetuation of this evolving heritage, thereby reducing vulnerability to threats that may affect its integrity and existence;
4. **Consider historic gardens as a strategic resource for society, economy, culture and the environment**, taking advantage of the dynamics that currently exist in the field of tourism and the environmental and preservation concerns of the natural and cultural values of the landscape, establishing priorities and dialogue between national and local policies;

**5. Observe, as a collective task, the need to preserve historic gardens in order to transmit them for the enjoyment of future generations,** boosting the human and financial resources necessary for education and training, involving academics, managers, organizations, professionals and citizens. The measures to be promoted include appraisal and monitoring of the work carried out, in particular over the past 30 years, evaluation and analysis of the grounds for eventual successes and failures, creation of a database of works and sources of information that have already been produced, education and professionalization in terms of higher education and mid-tier education, in particular by preparing craftsmen in the various arts of construction, especially gardeners, reinforcement of the value placed on botanical knowledge and production;

**6. Pay heed to the importance of stimulating stronger public involvement in safeguarding and transmission of Portuguese cultural heritage, manifested through gardens,** with particular attention to education and interpretation of landscapes with cultural value for all age groups and the involvement of the media in dissemination and public awareness of the value of this heritage;

**7. Encourage and support initiatives to facilitate the continuity of scientific research and the sharing and circulation of information,** production of publications, in particular, those aimed at the general public, inventorying and listing, promotion of public access to gardens, organisation of conferences, courses, meetings, support for organizations involved in the conservation and enhancement of cultural landscapes and initiatives that reward restoration projects, in accordance with the best practices of interventions in heritage sites .

**In response to this Call and inspired by the dynamism generated by the European Year of Cultural Heritage to consolidate and improve synergies, the Landscape Observatory of the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Porto, in collaboration with the Portuguese Association of Historic Gardens and the Portuguese Association of Landscape Architects, intends to establish itself as a permanent platform for the collection of knowledge, training and coordination of 'Cultural Landscapes' which include the category of 'Gardens' as 'Landscapes - clearly defined, intentionally conceived and created by man'.**

Porto, 23 November, 2018

The document 'Historic Gardens in Portugal and the Berlin Call to Action' can be signed online at:  
<https://www.observatoriodepaisagemfcup.com/>