**CULTURAL WELFARE POLICIES IN MARGINAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC DECLINE AREAS**

**Context**

Trends and scenarios based on cultural statistics:

* The gaps in public spending and in citizens' spending on cultural consumption are growing
* Cultural participation collapses after the Covid-19
* The range of cultural non-participation of the population is widening
* The geography of places affected by "cultural drought" extends, excluded from any cultural offer and opportunity
* Museums and libraries are safeguards of cultural welfare that can contribute to the reduction of cultural and social gaps

In Italy, the decrease in household expenditure on recreational and cultural services in the first year of Covid-19 was almost double that for total expenditure (health -6.4%, education -8.5%, restaurants and hotels - 41.1%) and without particular geographical distinctions.

Almost one out of five Italians (19.0%) on average has not used any cultural or recreational good or service.

**The lack of supply and opportunities in the area, or "cultural droughts"**

In 2021, 1,243 Italian municipalities, in which around 1 million and 600 thousand inhabitants live, did not have any cultural offer (Municipalities without "any cultural offer" are those in which, in the reference year, there is no museum or similar institute and any library open to the public, in which there is no library and in which no entertainment event has taken place).

Data analysis confirms that:

1. High cultural offer:

• Municipalities experiencing demographic growth

• Metropolitan cities

2. Low cultural offer:

• Municipalities with a smaller housing size

• Rural areas or sparsely populated areas

• Municipalities in demographic decline

• Municipalities in internal area

**Critical issues to address**

• The trend in household spending on cultural consumption reflects a level of consumption by cultural elites who are increasingly cutting across traditional territorial gaps

• Compared to traditional forms of cultural consumption, we are witnessing the extinction of the "cultural" middle class

• New forms of social and territorial exclusion in cultural fruition are emerging

• The geography of the "cultural drought" reflects the absence of supply and demand for culture, or there are cultural expressions that are not adequately monitored and correspond to the needs of the most affected territories

• The "consumption basket" adequately reflects the "cultural diet"

• The cultural heritage of museums and libraries can represent an opportunity for cultural welfare and contribute to the reduction of territorial gaps and social inequalities

**Objective**

The objective of the project is the sharing, exchange of good practices and the implementation of local policies that support projects for the regeneration, enhancement and management of the great heritage of history, art, culture and traditions present in small towns throughout Europe, integrating objectives protection of cultural heritage with the needs of social and economic revitalization, employment recovery and contrast to depopulation (cultural welfare).