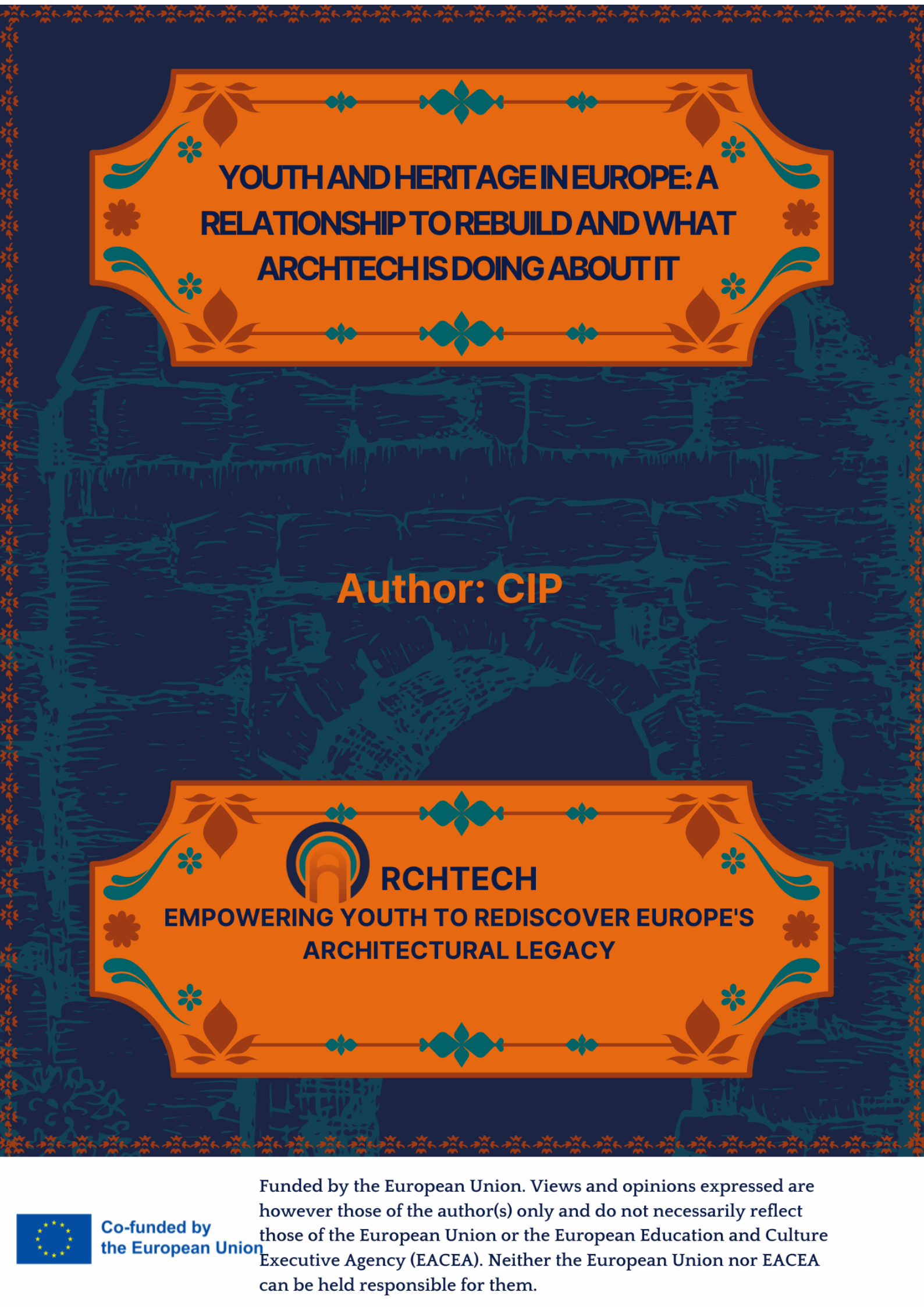




YOUTH AND HERITAGE IN EUROPE: A RELATIONSHIP TO REBUILD AND WHAT ARCHTECH IS DOING ABOUT IT

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ARCHTECH
**EMPOWERING YOUTH TO REDISCOVER EUROPE'S
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Youth and heritage in Europe: a quiet distance

Europe's built heritage is often described as one of the continent's defining assets, a shared resource that anchors identity, sustains tourism, and shapes the everyday experience of cities and towns. The headline data backs this up: an overwhelming 86% of EU citizens consider cultural heritage important for Europe, and 84% say it is important to them personally, with 91% considering it important for their country (Special Eurobarometer 466, *Cultural Heritage*, European Commission, 2017; confirmed in the May 2025 Eurobarometer on *Europeans' Attitudes Towards Culture*). Yet the relationship between young Europeans and this heritage is less settled than these figures suggest, because valuing something is not the same as engaging with it.

The participation gap becomes visible as soon as one looks past attitudes. According to recent Eurostat and Eurobarometer figures, 51% of Europeans did not take part in any artistic or cultural activity, either individually or as part of a group, in the previous twelve months (Eurobarometer, *Europeans' Attitudes Towards Culture*, May 2025; Eurostat, *Culture Statistics, Cultural Participation*), and the European Parliament has pointed out that lack of interest is one of the most frequently mentioned barriers to cultural participation in EU surveys, which means that building interest and understanding through formal, non-formal and informal education should be a priority for widening access to culture (European Parliament, *Report on Structural and Financial Barriers in the Access to Culture*, A8-0169/2018). For young people, this barrier is compounded by a structural one: heritage education is uneven across national curricula, civic engagement opportunities in the heritage sector are limited compared to environmental or social fields, and the digital tools that young people use every day are rarely connected to local heritage in any meaningful way.

The result is a generation that is digitally fluent and civically aware, but largely disconnected from the material fabric of its own urban environment. Heritage tends to be perceived as the concern of public authorities, academic specialists, or older generations, something to be visited rather than co-shaped, and this disconnect weighs particularly on the large stock of minor, unlisted, vernacular buildings that hold the everyday memory of European cities but fall outside formal protection regimes.

A Cyprus snapshot: what the co-creation roundtable showed

The Cyprus co-creation activity carried out by C.I.P. Citizens in Power within the ArchTech project, a roundtable combined with field testing of the *Buildings Alert!* application in the

Chrysopolitissa neighbourhood of Larnaka on 28 May 2026 offers a concrete illustration of this wider European pattern. The participants, a group bringing together archaeology students from the University of Cyprus, youth workers from local organisations, and a heritage expert, were neither disengaged nor uninformed. Yet the discussion surfaced the same recurring issues observed across the consortium: a perceived gap between formally protected monuments and the much larger stock of everyday heritage buildings; a lack of accessible channels through which young people can report deterioration or contribute observations; and an appetite for digital tools that translate civic interest into structured, usable data. Cyprus, in other words, is not an outlier; it is a useful close-up of the European situation.

From exchange to adoption: what the project offers going forward

As ArchTech approaches its closing months, it is worth stepping back from the individual outputs and reflecting on what the project has actually been: a sustained, two-year exchange between five organisations working in very different national contexts but facing strikingly similar questions about how to bring young people closer to heritage. The Cyprus roundtable was one moment in a much longer conversation that has run across France, Spain, Greece, Malta and Cyprus, and that conversation is what has shaped the project's outputs into something more useful than any single partner could have produced alone.

That exchange has had a concrete effect on the way the project's tools and methodologies are designed. Rather than fixing a single model and asking partners to apply it locally, ArchTech has worked the other way around, building flexibility into the methodology so that the same training framework, the same data-recording logic, and the same digital infrastructure can be adapted to very different urban realities, regulatory contexts, and youth audiences. What works in a Mediterranean port city with a layered colonial and post-war fabric is not what works in a French regional centre or a Maltese historic core, and the project's outputs have been refined precisely to absorb that variation rather than flatten it.

This is what makes the project's legacy a matter of exploitation rather than dissemination alone. The methodologies, the training framework, and the digital infrastructure developed within ArchTech are not closed deliverables tied to the project's lifespan; they are designed to be picked up, adapted, and embedded in the activities of youth organisations, municipalities, cultural institutions, and educational bodies long after the funding period ends. The exchange between partners has, in this sense, produced something more durable than a set of files, a shared way of working that other actors across Europe can adopt, modify, and carry forward in their own contexts.