

## **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

### **✓ The Noah's Ark of Cultural Heritage**

Scientists and decision makers are engaged in the task of forecasting the effects of global change over the next 100 years not only on humans, but on historic structures and monuments. Will the temples of Agrigento withstand the effects of sandstorms? Will Prague's Charles Bridge or central London survive the scourge of increasingly frequent flooding? These are not scenes from an apocalyptic science fiction film, but some of the problems to be addressed by the European project Noah's Ark, coordinated by the Institute of Atmospheric Sciences and Climate (ISAC) of the Italian National Council for Research (CNR), Bologna (Italy). The project, launched on 24 June, will benefit from the participation of prestigious European institutions and enterprises. Like the Biblical ark, it will collect the mass of environmental data and parameters currently available, to map future scenarios for Europe's monumental heritage. According to the experts, climate change will bring irreparable damage in its wake, especially to archaeological and historical works exposed to the open air.

The project is the first in Europe to deal with the effects of global change on the Cultural Heritage. While today's experts are concentrating on the effects of air pollution on monuments over the next decade, Noah's Ark goes beyond this, and not only in time. Its partners will evaluate numerous factors causing the deterioration of artefacts, including future temperature, relative humidity, freeze-thaw cycles, solar radiation, wind speeds associated with rain, concentrations of gases, atmospheric particles, marine salt, pH of rain and biological agents. "By the end of the project, which has a three-year duration and is supported by 1,200,000 Euros of funding from the European Commission, we'll have at our disposal a Vulnerability Atlas – says Sabbioni – which will indicate the areas at greatest risk". Finally, guidelines will be published, addressed to all those involved in Cultural Heritage management, providing strategies for adapting to global change over the coming years".

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