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**STEERING COMMITTEE
FOR CULTURE, HERITAGE AND LANDSCAPE
(CDCPP)**

**Thematic session on climate change and sustainable development as related
to human rights and democracy, and specifically, culture, heritage and
landscape resources**

Background Note

For information and action

Secretariat Memorandum
prepared by the
Directorate of Democratic Participation
Culture, Nature and Heritage Department

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Thematic session on climate change and sustainable development as related to human rights and democracy, and specifically, culture, heritage and landscape resources

Background Note

Reflection on working methods and the purpose of the thematic session

At its meeting in April, the Bureau of the CDCPP discussed ideas for reviewing working methods to further enhance the CDCPP's work, in view of its role as a pan-European intergovernmental structure with responsibility for unique culture/heritage/landscape Conventions. In addition to discussing progress reports on ongoing activities, Bureau members were interested in holding thematic sessions on topical societal issues during the annual plenary Committee meetings and agreed to participate actively in the preparation and running of such events.ⁱ

In line with this debate on working methods, the Bureau examined an initial list of possible topics and agreed to organise a thematic session at the 2019 plenary meeting on the vital issue of climate change and sustainable development as related to human rights and democracy, and specifically, culture, heritage and landscape resources in this context.

It is the Committees strength to bring together work strands on Culture, Heritage, Landscape which are in many ways linked to climate change and sustainable development issues. Interesting work has already been carried out in the past in this direction.ⁱⁱ The 2019 thematic session would raise awareness of the fact that activities overseen by the CDCPP contribute or can contribute to addressing main societal challenges and are relevant for the Organisation. It may develop or inspire further planning around this fact.

Outline of the thematic session

The session would thus outline the societal challenges and link culture, heritage and landscape activities to it, with special highlights (eg Strategy 21, landscape, culture). It would also stimulate member States to present their own experiences on how they are addressing the climate change challenges and/or contributing to sustainable development in relation to human rights and democracy, and further on highlight how CoE standards, soft standards, tools could be of help. Lastly, the session may identify a possible new transversal focus for CDCPP activities, with potential links to other relevant activities inside or outside the Council of Europe.ⁱⁱⁱ

The session will be opened by two keynote speakers, Mr Andrew Potts and Mr Freddy Paul Grunert, followed by interventions from the different sectors represented within the CDCPP and possibly also from the Department of Culture, Nature and Heritage, from representatives of invited international organisations, such as ICCROM, UNESCO and the European Union, as well as from observers to the CDCPP from the civil society, professional and academic communities. It is expected that CDCPP delegates will involve themselves in the ensuing debates and contribute to reflections on possible innovative and up-front work by the Committee on the challenge of climate change and sustainable development. The unique role and composition of the CDCPP may thus come to full fruition, in line with its integrated and progressive vision and the standards of the Council of Europe.

Action required

The Committee is invited to:

- Welcome the organisation of the thematic session on climate change and sustainable development as related to human rights and democracy, and specifically, culture, heritage and landscape resources;
- candidate to present a three-minutes contribution presenting an example of how the above-mentioned challenges are addressed at national level and how CoE activities and products are/ can be of help;
- suggest possible follow-up activities of transversal interest to the Committee and directly useful for policy-makers, thus adding value to the CDCPP's work.

ⁱ A thematic session was already organised in 2018 on the topic of Artificial Intelligence in preparation of the Rijeka expert seminar in October 2018 and an intervention made by Gerfried Stocker, Director of Ars Electronica.

ⁱⁱ Back in 2011, the Council of Europe's CultureWatchEurope initiative issued a think Piece on Culture and Climate Change (<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806a34c9>). The paper analyses the cultural disconnect between humans and nature and their possible reconnection, reflects upon human rights perspectives and cultural perspectives on ecology from other parts of the world and finally, analyses the role of culture, education and media to promote sustainability and creative solutions, also in partnership with local and regional authorities.

More recent work of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) includes the preparation of [a Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Cultural Heritage facing Climate Change: increasing resilience and promoting adaptation and the launch of a publication on the same topic in 2018](#). It sets out selected national experiences, strategies and action plans as well as cases from cities, institutions and dedicated research initiatives. A number of conferences and workshops were held: the most recent one supported by the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement on "[Culture against disasters: protecting cultural landscape as prevention of natural disasters](#)" held in Ravello/Italy in September 2018. Work on the Faro Convention as well as Strategy 21 deal also with sustainable development issues and are relevant when charting ongoing Council of Europe activities.

ⁱⁱⁱ - To promote risk culture among population, synergies between the [EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement](#) and the Education sector have been created in the framework of the "[BeSafeNet](#)" Olympiad: Better knowledge against disasters", whose winners will be awarded with a prize at the Plenary Meeting of the CDCPP on 12 June in Strasbourg.

- A study was produced on "Potential synergies concerning climate change between the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement".

- The Bern Convention is organising a Ministerial Conference on "The right to a healthy environment for human well-being" in cooperation with the Directorate General of Human Rights, the Registry of the Court and the Commissioner for human rights.