

Fourth European Conference of Ministers responsible for the Cultural Heritage

(Helsinki, 30-31 May 1996)

Final Declaration and resolutions

Meeting in Helsinki on 30-31 May 1996 for their 4th European conference, the Ministers responsible for the cultural heritage of the States Party to the European Cultural Convention, supported by their colleagues from guest countries,

- referring to the declaration adopted by the heads of state and government at their meeting in Vienna in October 1993 concerning the establishment in Europe of a vast area of democratic security, based on peace and stability;
- recognising that commitment to a shared cultural heritage and to the benefits conferred by its diversity is one of the prime factors in building and consolidating the new Europe, alongside commitment to pluralist and parliamentary democracy, the indivisibility and universality of human rights and the rule of law;
- taking as their starting point the co-operation defined in the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada, 1985) and the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta, 1992);
- taking account of the results obtained at the previous European Conferences of Ministers responsible for the Cultural Heritage, held in Brussels (1969), Granada (1985) and Valletta (1992), the work of the Council of Europe and developments in international thinking on the aims of conservation;
- aware of the need to expand and up-date the concept of integrated conservation of the heritage, which the Council of Europe has been promoting since 1975, for the purpose of responding better to the economic and social challenges facing Europe today;
- considering that, with countries from the whole of Europe now embarking on intergovernmental co-operation, the time is ripe to consider the place of the cultural heritage in the process of development;

Adopt the following declaration and resolutions:

Helsinki Declaration on the political dimension of cultural heritage conservation in Europe

The European ministers responsible for the cultural heritage:

- I. Solemnly express their commitment to the political aims of the Council of Europe as redefined by the Vienna Declaration;

A. affirm their support for the action taken by the Organisation to protect human and minority rights, combat xenophobia and intolerance, and promote European partnership in the cultural co-operation field;

B. welcome the accession to the European Cultural Convention and the Council of Europe of a series of new States, a move which gives intergovernmental co-operation a fully pan-European dimension;

C. consider that the values inherent in cultural heritage and the policies needed to conserve it can make an important contribution to the aims of democracy and balanced development pursued by the Council of Europe;

II. Agree on a series of principles which they recognise as common reference points for heritage policies throughout Europe;

A. Access to the cultural heritage

Access to knowledge and enjoyment of the cultural heritage must be promoted as a factor vital to personal and collective fulfilment. Contact with the cultural heritage allows individuals to locate themselves in their own historical, social and cultural environment. This applies to the cultural heritage in its widest sense, including the cultural landscape, the movable heritage and the intangible heritage, as well as the architectural and archaeological heritage.

B. Unity and diversity of the cultural heritage

Knowledge of the cultural heritage should be propagated at local, regional, national and international level, and must emphasise both the elements which reflect Europe's unity and the diversity of its cultural identities. A thorough understanding of the values inherent in heritage is conducive to appreciation of diversity, tolerance and ability to surpass mere differences. The now established concept of a common cultural heritage should lead individuals and communities to acknowledge shared responsibility for protecting it, regardless of its physical location or current political context.

C. The cultural heritage as an economic asset

The relevant state authorities have a duty to implement the measures for scientific identification and legal protection of the heritage specified in the Granada and Valletta Conventions. They should also devise dynamic conservation strategies which mobilise its economic potential for urban regeneration and rural development. Its contribution to local development will be registered not only in its immediate effects on the economy and on employment in many branches of activity, but in a wide range of indirect benefits accruing to the entire community.

D. The cultural heritage in the process of sustainable development

The cultural and natural heritages make up mankind's environment; combined action must be carried out for their joint protection in the context of an international ecological approach to spatial management. It is essential to co-ordinate policies for heritage conservation and spatial planning.

Use of the cultural heritage as a resource must be made part of the planning process of sustainable development determining the constraints which apply to the use of non-renewable assets. To ensure that this resource is transmitted to future generations in a manner that preserves the authenticity of the heritage without precluding change, all public and private sector operators involved have a responsibility to adopt practices which are compatible with the environment. Conservation of the cultural heritage assists in more accurately defining sustainable patterns of production and consumption relying on judicious management of space and resources, economy of energy, and recycling of materials and waste.

E. Sustainable strategies for cultural tourism

The growth of cultural tourism can help develop and revitalise regions, but has the potential to exert pressure on the cultural heritage and to affect the quality of life in host communities. Cultural tourism policies and strategies must be carried further, seeking a balanced and sustainable use of the heritage which preserves its useful potential for future generations. It is important to work out specific models for the development of cultural tourism which do not duplicate the usual patterns of mass tourism.

F. The need for cross-sectoral conservation strategies

The protection and use of the cultural heritage are a matter for the whole community, whose commitment through public and private sectors is essential to its future. The responsible authorities must develop cross-sectoral strategies which combine various types of action and ensure co-ordination of public and private initiative in support of the private owners to whom much of the cultural heritage is entrusted. Legal, fiscal and administrative incentives can encourage the implementation of such strategies. Public sector resources are always insufficient to provide protection of the cultural heritage and must be supplemented by every available source of funding.

G. The role of the state and of public authorities

The cross-sectoral approach to conservation and reliance on partnership make it necessary to define clearly the role of the state and the various public authorities. The respective responsibilities of the various territorial communities and the state's supervisory, incentive or co-ordinating function must be spelled out in the processes of administrative decentralisation or reorganisation which are under way in a good many European countries. Reliance on partnership and private

initiative must not mean abdication by the public authorities of their responsibility for protection of the cultural heritage.

H. The role of voluntary organisations

Without challenging the specific responsibilities vested in the state and the regional and local authorities, the role of voluntary organisations should be more effectively promoted, used and encouraged by turning to account the major contribution made by voluntary initiatives in building a democratic society.

I. The scientific and educational message of the cultural heritage and training

Cultural assets are authentic evidence of the history of culture and human civilisation. It is an essential duty of present and future researchers to ensure that they are studied, documented and preserved.

Heritage education should underline the historical, artistic and ethical values that the cultural heritage embodies for the community, teaching respect for multiple identities, development of tolerance, and opposition to inequality and exclusion. The quality and objectivity of the educational message depend on the values of those who are interpreting the cultural heritage. Equally important is the transmission of the skills necessary to maintain the cultural heritage. This can be assisted by the dissemination and exchange of information and expertise within and between member states.

III. Recommend that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopt the declaration and resolutions of the present Conference as a basis for the inter-governmental work programme implemented by the Cultural Heritage Committee;

IV. Stress the absolute need to combine the efforts of the various international governmental and non-governmental organisations, and to establish close partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Resolution No. 1 on the cultural heritage as a factor in building Europe

The European ministers responsible for the cultural heritage ask the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to invite the CDCC and its Cultural Heritage Committee to develop a medium-term work programme centred on the following objectives:

I. Heritage and identity

It would be expedient:

A. to acknowledge the part played by each culture in the creation of heritage and to recognise the common traditions that have contributed to this development of modern Europe;

B. to analyse the ways in which the cultural heritage contributes to greater cultural cohesion within Europe while respecting cultural diversity and promoting social integration;

C. to assert the shared attachment of Europe's citizens to their common cultural heritage by establishing, as part of intergovernmental co-operation at the Council of Europe, a procedure for preserving and upgrading built heritage assets and archaeological sites that reflects the cultural diversity which has emerged over history within a given territory, irrespective of the present-day political context of that territory.

II. Heritage in society

The following should be examined:

A. means of securing more active involvement of the local community and voluntary bodies in the planning and management of collaborative projects;

B. means of encouraging enhanced co-operation between the public and private sectors;

C. means of encouraging the private sector in the preservation of the cultural heritage.

III. Heritage, information and training

Transmission of the heritage depends on the systematic redistribution of information and the advancement of skills. It is therefore up to national, regional and local authorities to circulate information and provide basic and further training for their professionals, thus ensuring that human resources are used to better effect. At European level, however:

A. The Council of Europe should:

- consider setting up a permanent information system (European Heritage Watch Network) to keep authorities, professionals, researchers and training specialists in touch with heritage developments in other countries, drawing upon the Council of Europe's earlier report on architectural heritage policies in Europe;
- promote, on the basis of well-tried existing schemes such as the European Heritage Days, the European Cultural Routes and the European Heritage Classes, European educational initiatives aimed at encouraging citizens to respect the environment and tourists to respect local cultures and at bringing home to young people the values of Europe's cultural heritage.

B. The new European Foundation for Heritage Skills set up with the support of the Council of Europe's Cultural Heritage Committee and acting in partnership with other national and international organisations should provide further opportunities for pan-European programmes for the advanced and continuing training of professionals.

***Resolution No. 2
on the cultural heritage as a factor of sustainable development***

The European ministers responsible for the cultural heritage ask the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to invite the CDCC and its Cultural Heritage Committee:

I. To establish a European methodology for heritage management in a framework of sustainable development.

This will involve:

A. devising an instrument for evaluation, over a period of time, of the quantitative and qualitative impact of public and private cultural heritage investment;

B. identifying the part played by heritage in creating new employment opportunities, taking due account of alternative local development and urban regeneration schemes;

C. tackling, with reference to the cultural heritage, the specific problems of investment structures in a number of countries undergoing transition to a market economy. They should be included in the Specific Action Plans and Technical and Professional Co-operation Programmes launched by the Council of Europe;

D. formulating for public authorities and market partners decision-making criteria which highlight the long-term investment value of heritage programmes and the fact that profitability in this area cannot be evaluated solely in economic terms but as a gain for society as a whole;

E. developing methods based on building stock life cycles to assess the environmental impact of rehabilitation of old buildings compared to buildings constructed according to modern production methods;

F. promoting co-operation between the authorities, voluntary organisations, private firms and local communities to provide a sound basis for sustainable development.

II. To prepare, on the basis of work completed by international or national agencies, a recommendation to member states on sustainable strategies for cultural tourism devoted to enhancement of the heritage.

The Cultural Heritage Committee should be guided by the following principles:

A. tourism makes a significant positive contribution to wider public access to the cultural heritage, and the revenue derived from tourism can provide substantial resources for the upkeep and preservation of the cultural heritage;

B. strategies for cultural tourism can help to upgrade various categories of cultural property such as the industrial heritage and buildings designed for tourist purposes, drawing for example on the Cultural Routes experiment launched by the Council of Europe. Alternative tourist routes may be launched, for instance, on the occasion of European Heritage Days;

C. the policies to be promoted must stipulate that use of the heritage and visiting of certain cultural sites cannot exceed sustainable levels which are set by the heritage vulnerability;

D. any sustainable policy for cultural tourism should avoid overexploitation of the cultural and natural heritage, a rare and non-renewable resource whose deterioration (or indeed loss) would destroy the very basis of its tourist value;

E. efforts should be made to encourage the allocation under flexible arrangements of part of the financial proceeds of tourism to the preservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage;

F. strategies for developing tourism should take appropriate account of policies to improve residents' quality of life.

III. Convening for the first time, under Council of Europe auspices, an interministerial working party bringing together representatives from departments responsible for heritage, finance, employment and the environment, for the purpose of suggesting fiscal and legal options to encourage job creation in connection with the use, upkeep and restoration of the built heritage.