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Fourth Regional Seminar

“Faro Convention: from words to action “

14-15 October 2021
Bucharest, Romania

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MINISTERUL CULTURII



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About the Fourth Faro Convention Seminar in Romania



1. Context

The Council of Europe, the National Institute of Heritage of Romania and the Ministry of Culture of Romania jointly organised a high-level meeting Faro Convention: “From words to action”, in Bucharest on 14 and 15 October 2021, in a hybrid format (with national participants partially present on spot and partially online, as well as the online presence of international experts from numerous Council of Europe member States).

Initially scheduled to be held in September 2021, the seminar had to be postponed due to some unforeseen changes in the Romanian government. Though the political situation in Romania was expected to stabilise by October, in fact, by the time the conference took place, the situation had worsened – the government had been dismissed and the Covid-19 case incidence in Romania soared significantly. Even in this suboptimal political situation in Romania, the seminar gathered representatives of ministries in charge of culture and heritage matters from the Council of Europe and the European Union member states, representatives from the Ministry of Culture of Romania and National Institute of Heritage of Romania, various international organisations, heritage communities and other local, regional and national stakeholders in the fields of culture and heritage.

It provided guidance on implementing the Faro Convention principles, showcased examples of best practices from national authorities, heritage communities and civil society, highlighted the added value of signing, ratifying and implementing the Convention and fostered co-operation between the public sector and civil society in cultural heritage governance.

The seminar in Bucharest, Romania was the last of four regional seminars, following on from the previous seminars held in Madrid (December 2018), Maastricht (May 2019) and Tbilisi (June 2021, online), organised in the framework of the Council of Europe-European Union partnership in the field of culture and cultural heritage and, more specifically, their Joint Project “The Faro Way: enhanced participation in cultural heritage”.

About the Faro Convention

The Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention) is a convention about cultural heritage, conceived for the benefit of society and implemented by European citizens. It outlines a framework to define the role of civil society in decision-making and management processes related to the cultural heritage environment in which they operate and evolve.

The Convention emphasises the important aspects of heritage as they relate to human rights and democracy. It further promotes a wider understanding of heritage and its relationship to communities and society and encourages citizens to recognize the importance of cultural heritage objects and sites through the meanings and values they represent to them.

This legal instrument was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 October 2005 and opened for signature to member States in Faro (Portugal) on 27 October of the same year. It entered into force on 1 June 2011 and to date 21 countries have ratified it and 7 others have signed it.

It is important to emphasise that the Faro Convention principles could serve as useful guidance for the member States’ policies in the field of cultural heritage, leaving authorities free however to implement these principles according to their national contexts.

The Faro Convention highlights three main aspects:

- The shared rights and responsibilities towards cultural heritage within an integrated strategy approach;

- The role of cultural heritage as a resource for building more democratic societies and improving the living environment and quality of life;
- The links between heritage rights and human rights: every person has a right to engage with the cultural heritage of their choice, while respecting the rights and freedoms of others.

The Faro Convention has consequently several guiding principles:

- Cultural heritage is a means and not an end;
- Involvement of social groups and organisations while considering different backgrounds, responsibilities, and capacities of each group or organisation;
- Cultural heritage is about the relationship between people, places and stories; the feeling of belonging;
- Social cohesion can be strengthened by creating shared responsibility towards cultural heritage;
- Cultural heritage can contribute to protecting and maintaining cultural diversity and locality (sense of place) in a time of standardisation.

Such concepts may challenge the usual approach to cultural heritage governance, where identification, protection, conservation, and diffusion are mainly developed through public authorities. The decision by States to endorse the Faro Convention and participate in its implementation should ensure a balanced approach between the more traditional role of authorities and civil society's increased involvement today. This will allow the preservation of the existing heritage while promoting its use in addressing societal issues.

2. The aims of the Fourth Faro Convention seminar in Romania



Even if the seminar was taking place in one of the countries that has not yet signed the Faro Convention, the existing good practices on the implementation of the Faro Convention principles by civil society and heritage communities in Romania should be highlighted and should demonstrate the potential of these principles and the pertinence of the adoption of the Convention by member States. It should be noted that despite the delay in the formal signing of the Faro Convention by Romania, there is a general willingness to adhere to Faro Convention principles at government and institutional level. This is at least partly due to the success of the above-mentioned implementation of good practices by civil society and heritage communities in Romania.

The fourth seminar aimed to achieve the following goals:

- To reflect on the Faro Convention principles and their multiple uses in practice;
- To showcase examples of good practices from the national authorities, heritage communities and civil society on the implementation of the Faro Convention;
- To highlight the added value and benefits of signing, ratifying, and implementing the Faro Convention for all stakeholders;
- To provide guidance for the implementation of the Faro Convention principles;

- To create an engaging space for exchange and dialogue among the participants from different countries;
- To foster co-operation between the public sector and civil society and discuss the role of national authorities and civil society in cultural heritage governance.

The outcomes and results of all four regional seminars provided content for the planned publications of good practices collection and a policy guidance document for member states. They also contributed to the development of the innovative Interactive Toolkit: “Your Faro Way” (a step-by-step guidance in a form of a role-playing game for the practical application of the Faro Convention principles) to be presented at the closing event of the Joint Project: a high-level conference in December 2021 marking the 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the Faro Convention.

3. Outcomes of the Fourth Faro Convention seminar in Romania



In his opening statement, **Mr Demeter András István**, State Secretary at the Ministry of Culture of Romania underlined the importance of hosting the Fourth Regional Seminar by a state in the process of signing the Faro Convention. He deemed that currently is the right time for the Romanian national authorities to reflect on the importance of signing and ratifying the Faro Convention, as this

is playing a crucial role in enhancing the value of our shared heritage, acknowledging our duty to preserve it and supporting our efforts to raise awareness and transfer it to future generations.

The aim of the Romanian Ministry of Culture is to promote increased participation of civil society and the involvement of national authorities, including the development of supporting tools for better management of the existent cultural heritage.

Mr Stefan Bâlici, Manager of the National Institute of Heritage of Romania, as one of the main organisers of the seminar, highlighted that in Romania, historically, cultural heritage was a state matter, managed in a centralised manner. The implementation of the Faro Convention principles is defining a new approach on local heritage values. This already has a positive impact on the practical work of the National Institute of Heritage of Romania in defining the role of civil society in the decision-making and management processes related to the cultural heritage environment.

Ms Kathrin Merkle, Head of Culture and Cultural Heritage Division of the Council of Europe, drew the concern on the importance of reconnecting the European citizens with their cultural heritage and take into consideration their specific needs. The participation of all stakeholders is desired and required, as well as the cooperation between civil society and authorities, which is crucial for the inclusive and sustainable access and use of cultural heritage.

Mr Francisc Pla, Programme Manager at the Council of Europe, has actively participated at several events in Romania during the last years, to promote and highlight the values of the Faro Convention. Mr Pla defines the Faro principles as broad areas for action and innovation in linking the concept of Europe's shared heritage to human rights and fundamental freedoms for which the Council of Europe remains one of the historic guardians.

Signing and ratifying the Faro Convention by the member States does not create specific obligations for action; it suggests rather than it imposes and provides guidance on how to implement the Convention principles.

During his online contribution about the engagement of authorities and civil society initiatives, **Mr Prosper Wanner**, Lead Expert at the Faro Convention Network (FCN), spoke about the Network as a platform comprising heritage communities working together in line with the Faro Convention principles and criteria. One of the aims of the FCN is to identify good practices and practitioners, bringing together academics, public authorities and civil society. Moreover, it aims to conduct workshops and support members' efforts to address cultural heritage challenges and demonstrate the role heritage plays in addressing today's societal challenges.

Ms Simona Pinton, Università Ca'Foscari, Venice, described in her presentation the legal implications of signing and ratifying the Faro Convention. She also pointed out some general benefits of cultural heritage (including tangible, intangible and digital heritage) as an essential human right. Cultural heritage is, according to her, a resource for economic development that supports national economies' prosperity.

In her very interesting intervention about the implementation of the Faro Convention by heritage communities in Poland, **Ms Aleksandra Chabiera**, from the National Institute of Cultural Heritage in Poland, explained how in her country, non-governmental organisations and volunteers are appointed as social guardians by the authorities and how they are taking over tasks related to the valorisation and preservation of monuments' value, as "a kind of watchdog" and disseminating knowledge about the importance of cultural heritage.

Ms Violeta Đerković, from Novi Sad, Serbia representing the Almašani Association and Novi Sad as European Capital of Culture 2022, spoke about her activities related to the protection of cultural heritage during the past 15 years, mainly focused on preserving and interpreting the cultural heritage of the Almaš region – the oldest part of Novi Sad.

She considers that the Faro Convention Network is a very good tool which brings together active local communities dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of their own cultural heritage. According to her, one can learn about the abundance of opportunities that cultural heritage provides for the general development of local communities, especially through the development of cultural tourism based on the authenticity that each community carries.

Member of the Faro Convention Network of the Council of Europe and representing the Jaume I University, **Mr Ángel Portolés Górriz**, during his presentation, highlighted the participatory processes based on knowledge and socialisation of cultural heritage, creation, development, and interactions between heritage communities. Additionally, he raised this very important question: **Where is the role of institutions in the relation between heritage and people?**

According to **Mr Levan Kharatishvili**, Creative Strategies Lab (CSL) Tbilissi, Georgia, a key indicator of democracy is the population's involvement in decision-making processes through grassroots activities.

In Georgia, non-governmental and voluntary activities related to cultural heritage are supported to some extent by central and local government through cultural institutions, open grant competitions and tenders. Civil society initiatives are receiving international support through the following institutions: the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation Grant (AFCP), EU4Culture

project, the USAID Zrda Project and World Bank Regional Development Project for Georgia aiming to improve infrastructure services and institutional capacity to support the development of sustainable tourism-based economy.

The Community-led Urban Development Strategies in Historic Towns (COMUS), a joint project of the Georgian Ministry of Culture and the Council of Europe launched as part of the implementation of the Faro Convention in Georgia, has been the result of decades-long co-operation in the field of heritage-led development, involving local, national and international partners that aimed at fostering urban (social and economic) development using cultural heritage as a driver in two historic pilot towns: Chiatura and Dusheti.

One significant achievement of the fourth Faro Regional Seminar is that representatives from Romanian local and national authorities, national funding bodies, as well as very active stakeholders from the civil society had the opportunity to showcase the various fields of implementation of the Faro Convention principles through different successful projects in cultural heritage valorisation.

Ms Simona Fiț, personal advisor to the mayor of Timișoara (European Capital of Culture 2023) in the fields of culture and education showcased in her presentation, with the title “Local heritage - purpose, means and context”, various experiences and projects implemented during the past 20 years in the non-governmental sector, in the areas of culture, education, civic and community engagement that are very much in line with the Faro Convention principles.

In her intervention “When priorities meet the offer - about funding cultural projects”, **Ms Irina Cios**, Director of National Cultural Fund Administration (AFCN), pointed out that this body of the Romanian Ministry of Culture is the main public funder of cultural projects in Romania. On an annual basis many projects in the field of cultural heritage are getting funding through transparent selection process. The main working principles implemented by the AFCN are very much aligned with the Faro Convention principles:

- The principle of respect of cultural rights: protecting and promoting the respect of the intellectual property rights of creators, supporting the widest possible access to culture for all audiences, as well as the identification and activation of new audiences.
- The principle of dialogue and civic participation: relying on ongoing dialogue with beneficiaries through regular consultations.

- The principle of performance: promoting the adoption of performance standards in the development and implementation of cultural projects.
- The principle of publicity and transparency: proposing an affordable financing system based on transparent criteria and open competition.
- The principle of diversity: respecting ethnic, cultural, religious and gender diversity.
- The principle of sustainable development through culture: understanding culture as a factor of sustainable development and social cohesion.

Mr Lucian Alexandru Găvozdea, President of Romanian Order of Architects spoke about organising sessions to finance projects in the field of architecture through the: “The Architectural Stamp Duty - Reflecting Baukultur Back to Communities” that supports initiatives, projects, programmes, publications and events that promote contemporary architecture, cultural heritage, sustainable development, the role of the architects in society, history, and theory and architecture as an added value for society.

Mr Găvozdea, concluded: "The deep meaning of the architectural stamp is to support the development of new ways of engaging all stakeholders, users and decision-makers in order to achieve an architecture and a built environment of very good quality for all. “

Mr Furu Arpad, project director at Transylvania Trust Foundation, presented the approach and outcomes of the Rimetea Heritage Conservation Project that has encouraged pro-active conservation and stopped the unsympathetic adaptation of Rimetea’s most valuable but greatly threatened historic buildings. Since 1996, a conservation grant has been annually offered to 130-140 of Rimetea’s historic building owners by the City Council of Budapest. This recurrence of funding has given the project a continuity, which is highly important for a constant community development.

All parties involved in the conservation agreement are signing the three conditions attached to the grant:

- 1) the historic building owners ensure that good conservation practices will be carried out on the property;
- 2) the owners agree not to change any of the valuable architectural features on the plot;
- 3) in cases where changes and/or new measures are proposed, the owner will take the professional advice of the Transylvania Trust and a restoration grant for larger works can be obtained through an application.

In his intervention, **Mr Bogdan Ilieș**, from the association “Ambulanta pentru monumente”, talked about the process of securing the wooden churches and their role in the old villages.

However, the Ambulance for monuments is not limited to churches. Over the years, water mills, fortress walls, fortified churches, etc. have been secured by the organisation. Communities are asked to provide the necessary materials, provide accommodation and meals for craftsmen and volunteers. Furthermore, the Ambulance for monuments comes with specialists and volunteers who provide the work and documentation. The programme works with the support of The Prince’s Foundation of HRH The Prince of Wales.

StudioBASAR is a Bucharest based architectural studio and a public space practice founded in 2006 by **Mr Alex Axinte** and **Mr Cristi Borcan**. It initiates and develops actions and projects within public space. Ranging from temporary to permanent, these processes include practice-based research, participatory action research, community activation, co-production and co-design, urban design, live education and civic pedagogy. All these actions highlight the practical application of the Faro Convention principles in the capital of Romania, Bucharest.

Ms Raluca Trifa, assistant professor at the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, highlighted in her presentation that the “Catalogue Bucharest inventory” appeared because of the lack of initiative of state institutions regarding the heritage of Bucharest, but also the fast pace in which the cultural landscape of protected areas is mutilated. Catalogue Bucharest is the first complete inventory of all buildings (old, new, on site and vacant land) on all streets in the 98 protected built areas of the capital, which included in 2021 over 18,500 inventory sheets with between 3-5 photos for each property.

The data collected will be used to support the identification of the city's problems and vulnerabilities and to propose real solutions for the future of Bucharest, as well as the basis for new legislation for the benefit of citizens and authorities.

Asociatia Prin Banat, represented by **Mr Mihai Moldovan**, is aimed at documenting and promoting local values, and encouraging cultural tourism and sustainable development. Mr Moldovan showcased through many examples how he and his colleagues have been walking around all corners of the historic region of Banat, looking for stories that are worth telling, no matter whether they are good or bad, beautiful, full of nostalgia or immersed in mystery.

Three main projects are highlighted in his presentation that are implementing the Faro Convention principles:

- **Heritage of Timișoara** is a cultural programme dedicated to the capital of Banat, Romania, which aims to promote the material cultural heritage of the city of Timișoara, raise awareness of the importance of protecting and conserving it among the general public and encourage cultural tourism.

- **Moving Fireplaces** is a project to recognise the phenomenon of migration as a reality in the past and present of Banat and Europe.

- **Centriphery** is a cultural-artistic project with international, intergenerational, and interdisciplinary participation, which aims to significantly improve the necessary exchange between European regions, their cities and peripheries or rural areas. This project is co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme.

4. Faro Convention in action- two study cases in Romania

The seminar participants (present and online) had the unique opportunity to visit the **Museum-Workshop “The school from Piscu “**, a project developed in Romania, that has generated a community of lovers of cultural heritage. It is a cultural space initiated by heritage professionals from outside the village, starting from a collection of local artifacts and, especially, from the anthropological research of the community. The building became a "school" even before it was born. It is an architectural project started by students, raised through volunteer campaigns, where a lot has been learned and a place meant to be open for education.

A concept as simple as it is put into practice, the Museum School is the result of many years of work with the resources of cultural and natural heritage, highlighted by ad-hoc action groups organised in several areas of the country, which advocates the valorisation of these local artifacts in the service of education and the well-being of communities. At the level of national strategy, the reconnection of museum institutions with the school is a stake for which museum education teams work enthusiastically in some places in the country, making great progress in recent decades that bring more students to museums, in a more attractive and more fruitful way. However, the Museum School is a different way of understanding both the museum and the school; it is a way of interacting with the cultural and natural heritage; an approach of self-integration, experimentation, and the action of capturing the complex energy that heritage emanates. The visitors can learn and understand by doing, looking and designing, modelling, building, setting in motion the primordial connection between thinking and craftsmanship. It is a participatory way of relating to heritage.

Each community has a dowry that can be brought together and can become a source of experience, knowledge, and connection with generations of ancestors. The school in the Museum, in the Piscu

version, is a pilot project through which the above is tested, in a former community of potters that today exposes, even involuntarily, its heritage resources to the public.

The Museum School is a good concept to work on in any community. It brings the consolidation of identity through learning experiences.

Ms Adriana Scripcariu, the host and special guide, stated at the end of the visit: “The Museum School - Piscu remains a project in which we have all been disciples of heritage, generating - in addition to quantifiable results - an extremely necessary state of mind, which we hope will bear fruit in future generations.”



<http://muzeu.piscu.ro/piscu-pottery-museum/>

Ms Caroline Fernolend, President and Managing Director of the Mihai Eminescu Trust, highlighted during the seminar the tangible impact and benefits on the community well-being in Viscri/Romania, after the practical implementation of the Faro Convention principles, as follows:

- Community involvement and responsibility of local actors in heritage conservation;
- Numerous heritage projects developed, financed, and implemented by civil society actors;
- Civil actors supporting public authorities;

- Less investment and control by public authorities;
- Heritage promotion by local actors;
- Advocacy from local actors to improve the legal framework for the use and conservation of heritage;
- The Viscri Village Council - an informal parliament which brings together all local stakeholders - taking care of the local community needs, promoting voluntary work by the community members and thus facilitating the work of the authorities and their communication with citizens.



An important contribution to these achievements in Viscri/Romania is the constant exchange between the Faro Convention Network members and with the Culture and Cultural Heritage Division of the Council of Europe

In 2014, the Council of Europe conducted a Faro Appreciation and invited Viscri/Romania to become a member of the Faro Convention Network, in recognition of the sustainable way in which local heritage and culture were being valued and used.

In July 2016, a second Council of Europe delegation visited Viscri and four other villages in Transylvania/Romania, which were seeking to achieve the same level of recognition from the Organisation as Viscri. The CoE recommended drafting a social contract/agreement for the village of Viscri that could in future be adapted to other places in Europe.

In August 2016, the first version of the Social Contract/Agreement for the village of Viscri was drawn up.

In Viscri, the Social Contract/Agreement is the result of an ongoing participatory process and includes tangible proposals from the community and shared values, visions, and applications. The sustainable economic development that the local community in Viscri has experienced over the past 30 years is based on a high level of solidarity and co-operation between community members. This Social Contract/Agreement has allowed them to reflect the idea of the pluricultural community and the development of existing and new activities. It has also helped them to draw up a common framework of regulations, including the integration of new village residents.

5. Next steps



Mr Matjaž Gruden, Director of Democratic Participation at the Council of Europe expressed his special thanks to the Romanian authorities for the willingness and efforts to organise the fourth regional seminar “Faro Convention: from words to action “

The human dimension of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, better known as the Faro Convention, which built on the previously identified concepts of tangible and intangible heritage, primarily addressed the most noble aspects of human rights, thus reminding societies that the right to cultural heritage was as essential as the rights to

equality and freedom of expression. Awareness raising, active citizenship empowered and involved in decision-making process and action for a better quality of life is the real meaning of the title of this seminar.

The Council of Europe and European Commission shared the mutual understanding that cultural heritage must be inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and innovative. Through this collaboration, more and more progress is being made on the need to favour bottom-up approaches – as the recent three signatures and two ratifications of the Faro Convention testified. There was a growing acknowledgement of the Faro Convention’s relevance and benefits for cultural heritage preservation and management as it combined the right to enjoy and benefit from cultural heritage with the responsibility to manage and preserve it.

Mr Matjaž Gruden, in his closing remarks, expressed the wish and hope that Romania will be the 29th country to sign and ratify the Faro Convention.

6. Conclusions



The Fourth Regional Seminar “Faro Convention: from words to action“ offered concrete examples on how the Faro Convention has been implemented in Romania and many other European countries. It showed how the Faro Convention principles have inspired numerous

initiatives from the civil society and local authorities to implement them in a practical way since its entry into force 10 years ago.

A better knowledge of the benefits of the implementation of the Faro Convention principles on all levels of the society and their potential to improve the daily management of cultural heritage would inspire more countries to join, leading civil society organisations to translate these principles from words into actions.

As a former local councillor in Bunesti commune, former Brasov County councillor and president of Mihai Eminescu Trust (MET), which has been developing and implementing sustainable community development projects for more the 30 years, I would like to emphasise the need to highlight even more the benefits of applying the Faro Convention principles for all interested actors:

- A change in the traditional top-down approach in favour of the involvement of the community members and the local actors who have a stake in cultural heritage, facilitating in this way the tasks of the public authorities;
- Ensuring the sustainability of implemented projects as they will have the support and involvement of several local actors;
- Facilitating the implementation of projects that are responding to a real need of the local community;
- Empowering local stakeholders to contribute to updating of the national legislation;
- Creating national networks, inspired by the Faro Convention Network, that facilitate the exchange of experience and finding of partners for projects that apply the Faro Convention principles in different countries.

The presentations delivered by the participants both online and on site and the interesting discussions on specific topics at the Fourth Regional Seminar “Faro Convention: from words to action” created the unique opportunity to share experiences and good practices, exchange on the concerns that authorities may have in supporting the Faro Convention approach to cultural heritage, as well as create possibilities for synergies and future national and international co-operation.