

Culture without borders: Cultural heritage management for local and regional development

Recommendation 462 (2021)¹

1. Cultural heritage includes assets inherited from past generations which people identify with and value as an expression of their own knowledge and traditions and as a legacy that enhances cultural identity. It is subject to continuous change and transformation while also aiming to retain the cultural significance of what exists.

2. As recognised by the UNESCO Conventions on the [Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage \(1972\)](#) and on the [Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage \(2003\)](#), it has a double character which consists of tangible and intangible assets. The first refer to artefacts produced, maintained and transmitted intergenerationally in a society and the second, to practices, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities recognise as part of their cultural heritage. As highlighted by the UNESCO [Convention on the protection and promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions \(2005\)](#), cultural heritage also has an economic dimension.

3. The Council of Europe (“the CoE”) takes note of the great value of cultural heritage as a means to promote diversity and dialogue across its member States. By encouraging opportunities to access heritage, it aims at fostering a sense of identity, collective memory and mutual understanding within and between communities. In the last decades, the CoE has produced landmark documents on the subject, such as The European Landscape Convention [CETS No. 176\(2000\)](#) which promotes the protection, management and planning of the landscapes, and The Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society of the Council of Europe (also known as the “Faro Convention”) [CETS No. 199\(2005\)](#) which emphasizes the important aspects of heritage as they relate to human rights and democracy.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly (“the PACE”) and the Committee of Ministers, have adopted several Recommendations to member States related to cultural heritage, respectively [Recommendation 2149 \(2019\)](#) on “The value of cultural heritage in a democratic society”, and [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)1](#) on the “European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st century”.

5. Building on the above, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”), has contributed to the subject, adopting resolutions, namely [Resolution 202\(2005\)](#) on “Intercultural and inter-faith dialogue: initiatives and responsibilities of local authorities” and [Resolution 379\(2015\)](#) on “Jewish cemeteries: the responsibility of local authorities” concerning local and regional authorities’ role in the protection, preservation, enhancement, management and maintenance of burial sites as part of local history.

¹ Discussed and adopted by the Congress on 17 June 2021, 3rd sitting (see Document CG(2021)40-22, explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: Eirini DOUROU, Greece (R, SOC) and Barbara TOCE, Italy (L, SOC).

6. In its priorities for 2017-2020, the Congress reiterated its intention to promote intercultural dialogue and preserve cultural and architectural heritage at the local and regional level as a means to implement the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Targets 8. 9 and 12.b of the Agenda refer to the need to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism, including through local culture and products, and to the need to develop suitable monitoring tools in this area. Target 11.4 highlights the need to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

7. New digital technologies, the increasing environmental and climate-related risks and the massive changes to social life brought about by urbanisation, "over-tourism", globalisation and hypermobility have an impact how cultural heritage is perceived and necessitate the production of new tools and instruments to implement appropriate policies at all levels of government.

8. They also require cultural heritage policies to be adapted and transformed in order to assist economic and sustainable development and tourism in European cities and regions and to promote intercultural dialogue, aiming for social cohesion. A change of paradigm is needed which addresses the lack of bottom-up and inclusive governance schemes, inequalities and territorial differences between regions and city areas, the lack of data and indicators beyond strict economic considerations and the lack of efficient tools for the preservation of the intangible aspects of urban or rural landscapes.

9. In light of the above, the Congress calls on Council of Europe member States to:

a. promote an understanding of cultural heritage as an all-inclusive concept, bringing together tangible heritage objects as defined by the official authorities and intangible practices, knowledge, skills and experiences lived in communities;

b. continue to invest, support and promote cultural heritage, recognising it as an economic and social catalyser and a powerful tool for the sustainable development of society as a whole, acknowledging its potential for anchoring a European identity in concrete territorial landscapes, and as a means for reconciliation of diverging historical narratives;

c. support and provide guidelines to local and regional authorities for developing participatory governance as a means to achieve the structured and systematic inclusion of all stakeholders and civil society in developing strategies and policies for cultural heritage, including migrant populations and marginalised or disconnected communities, keeping in mind that cultural heritage management must be guided by the basic principles of local democracy, aiming for inclusion, diversity and respect for fundamental rights;

d. adopt and implement cultural heritage policies by integrating the care, protection and proper use of heritage in all related programmes and actions, with particular emphasis on educational programmes and school curricula, raising awareness among children and young people on cultural heritage as a medium linking the past and the future, recognising that heritage is a dynamic process and involving local and regional authorities in shaping and implementing these policies;

e. promote cultural tourism, recognising its beneficial nature from an economic point of view, in order to support the development of regions and urban areas, adopting at the same time a "responsible tourism" approach, based on lessons learned from cities suffering under "over-tourism" and in light of the challenges and changes brought on by the impact of crisis situations (climate change, refugees and migrants, COVID-19), particularly in urban areas;

f. mobilise resources (academic and administrative) and cooperate with local and regional authorities to develop both quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure the impact of cultural heritage that can showcase its cross-sectorial impact at all levels of governance and raise awareness of the benefits that investment in cultural heritage can bring across a wide range of policy areas;

g. support and reinforce major European initiatives on cultural heritage financially, developing a good governance framework followed with appropriate indicators.

10. The Congress invites all member States that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society of the Council of Europe (also known as the "Faro Convention") and the European Landscape Convention.