

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 474 (2021)¹ Culture without borders: cultural heritage management as a tool for local and regional development

1. Cultural heritage is a broad concept which 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 aims to retain the cultural significance of what exists in the context of continuous change and transformation.

2. As recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Conventions concerning the [Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage \(1972\)](#) and for 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 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 Organisation has produced landmark documents on the subject, such as the Council of Europe 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 emphasises 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 PACE [Recommendation 2149 \(2019\)](#) “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 \(2005\)](#) “Intercultural and inter-faith dialogue: initiatives and responsibilities of local authorities” and [Resolution 379 \(2015\)](#) “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.

6. Local and regional authorities play a major role in determining how the past shapes the present and the future of their cities and regions. Their policies and actions related to cultural heritage, engaging with diverse communities within and across borders, reconciling conflicting narratives, boosting the economic strength of their territories to achieve higher living standards and bringing different stakeholders together will contribute to improving sustainable economic development, social inclusion and participatory governance.

7. In its priorities for 2017 to 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.

8. In light of the above,

a. considering that cultural heritage creation, preservation and promotion are part of local and regional competences and that local communities are bearers of heritage values as custodians of the survival of cultural diversity, as recognised by the above-mentioned conventions;

b. taking into account the advent of digital technology, the increasing environmental and climate-related risks and the massive changes to social life brought about by urbanisation, globalisation and hypermobility, which have an impact on how cultural heritage is perceived and handled;

c. cognisant of the need to adapt and transform cultural heritage policies in order to assist economic and sustainable development, urban regeneration and tourism in European cities and regions and to promote intercultural dialogue, aiming for social cohesion by involving local citizens and improving co-operation with disconnected communities;

d. mindful of the responsibility that falls on local and regional authorities to take measures in terms of acquiring information and improving their knowledge base, developing policies, taking action and networking to promote and preserve cultural heritage, highlighting emerging issues (such as climate change, “over-tourism” or public health emergencies) for which it is urgent to produce new tools and instruments or more actively implement policies on the basis of existing studies;

1. Debated 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/G/PD) and Barbara TOCE, Italy (L, SOC/G/PD).

e. mindful also that in order to overcome the current European identity crisis, action needs to be taken on the basis of pluralist and diversified cultural heritage management tools, created and deployed by local and regional governments in co-operation with professionals and citizens;

f. recognising that youth engagement is important in protecting and safeguarding cultural heritage and promoting cultural diversity as a vital element of preventing violent extremism and that young people are powerful peace builders;

g. acknowledging that 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. the Congress calls on local and regional authorities of its member States to:

a. promote an understanding of cultural heritage as an all-inclusive concept, bringing together tangible heritage objects as defined by the public 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 as a powerful tool for the sustainable development of society as a whole, 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 and that social inclusion harnesses our diversity as a fuel for small business formation, creativity and innovation;

c. promote sustainable cultural tourism given its beneficial nature from an economic point of view to contribute to the development of European regions and urban areas while at the same time adopting a “responsible tourism” approach, based on lessons learned from cities suffering from “overtourism” and in light of the challenges and changes brought on by the impact of crisis situations (climate change, refugees and migrants, Covid-19 pandemic) in all localities, but particularly in urban areas;

d. adopt and implement cultural heritage policies by integrating the study, care, protection and proper use of heritage in all related policies, programmes and actions such as urban planning, public spaces and educational programmes, monitoring their sustainability and connection to existing projects;

e. develop both quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure the impact of cultural heritage that can showcase its cross-sectoral impact at regional and local governance level, in order to raise awareness of the benefits that investment in cultural heritage can bring across a wide range of policy areas;

f. reinforce participatory governance as well as the structured and systematic inclusion of all stakeholders and civil society, including migrant and marginalised or disconnected populations, in developing strategies and policies for cultural heritage, in close co-operation with the work carried out by public agencies and professionals at local and regional level, providing them with training and research tools and focusing on reinforcing local capacity building for cultural operators and artists;

g. raise young people’s awareness of the importance of heritage diversity, its conservation, enhancement and transmission, giving them a chance to voice their concerns and to become involved in the protection and promotion of the common cultural and natural heritage, supporting their engagement and participation, and co-creating with them projects that will contribute to exchanges and sustainable local and regional development;

h. acknowledge cities as main players of cultural diplomacy, supporting and fostering the development of networks of diaspora/migrant communities for cultural heritage co-operation and contribute thereby to realising the potential of cities as international cultural actors;

i. reinvent public spaces as platforms for cultural heritage, favouring their communal function to counteract the increasing dominance of their commercial function, promoting them as platforms for collective expression, democratic discourse and problem solving;

j. rethink contested heritages in Europe, by encouraging public debate, welcoming different historical perspectives and reconstructing the discourse around these issues in order to help to decrease conflict escalation;

k. make effective use of cultural heritage management at local and regional level to develop remote and peripheral areas as a means for achieving territorial justice, to save remote areas from the negative spiral of deindustrialisation, desertification and marginalisation;

l. develop new city networking initiatives within Europe and expand the current European Capital of Culture programme to other countries to encourage sharing of cultural influences and bridging cultural heritage programmes;

m. create university networks for European cultural heritage, given that they work closely with local and regional authorities and are well connected with the local communities, and are important players for the implementation of projects and initiatives aiming to use heritage as a tool for promoting and sharing the core values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law;

n. join the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe networks that cross their territories and promote local cultural heritage, sustainable cultural tourism and community participation from a pan-European perspective.