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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL  
ORGANIZATION

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD  
CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Twenty-fifth session

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**Information document : European Parliament resolution on the application of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in the Member States of the European Union (2000/2036(INI))**

**The Committee may wish to take note of the Resolution of the European Parliament adopted in 16 January 2001 with regard to the implementation of the Global Strategy in the European Region, as well as the protection of the World Heritage Sites.**

## **The European Parliament,**

- having regard to the EC Treaty, and in particular Articles 151 and 5 thereof,
  - having regard to the motion for resolution tabled by Rosa Miguélez Ramos on the recognition of the cultural heritage status of city walls in the EU (B5-0362/1999),
  - having regard to its earlier resolutions of 13 May 1974 on the protection of the European cultural heritage, 14 September 1982 on the protection of the architectural and archaeological heritage, 28 October 1988 on the conservation of the Community's architectural and archaeological heritage and 12 February 1993 on preserving the architectural heritage and protecting cultural assets,
  - having regard to Decision 2228/97/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 October 1997 establishing a Community Action Programme in the field of cultural heritage (the Raphael programme),
  - having regard to Decision No 508/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 February 2000 establishing the Culture 2000 programme,
  - having regard to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by the UNESCO General Conference on 16 November 1972,
  - having regard to Petition 776/1999,
  - having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport and the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy
- A. whereas heritage is a key element in our societies' identity and historical development, as is shown by the etymology of the French *patrimoine* from the Latin *patrimonium*, meaning a joint asset comprising land and house, which the owner takes over on the understanding that he will maintain it and pass it on undivided to his descendants,
- B. having regard to the importance of cultural and natural heritage both as an economic factor and as a factor in social integration and citizenship,
- C. whereas the EU has committed itself to working towards the development of an open and diverse cultural area shared by the peoples of Europe, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, the promotion of a legal framework favouring cultural activities and guaranteeing respect for cultural diversity,
- D. whereas the "Culture 2000" programme, the only programme in operation with effect from 2000 in the cultural sector, has been opened up to joint activities with the relevant international organisations in the cultural sphere, such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe,
- E. having regard to the inestimable and irreplaceable value of cultural and natural heritage, which underlies many existing international conventions, recommendations and resolutions, including the abovementioned 1972 UNESCO Convention,
- F. whereas 208 sites within the European Union have so far been placed on the World Heritage list, as follows: 6 in Austria, 8 in Belgium, 2 in Denmark, 5 in Finland, 26

in France, 24 in Germany, 16 in Greece, 2 in Ireland, 33 in Italy, 1 in Luxembourg, 7 in the Netherlands, 10 in Portugal, 35 in Spain, 11 in Sweden, 20 in the United Kingdom, and finally 1 site belonging jointly to France and Spain and 1 site belonging jointly to the Holy See and Italy,

- G. whereas there are 690 classified sites in the world, 208 of them in the European Union, which thus accounts for 30% of all World Heritage Sites,
- H. whereas, of these 208 sites in the 15 countries of the European Union, 192 are cultural, 11 natural and 5 mixed, and whereas there are fewer natural sites in Europe than in the rest of the world, where they are already under-represented,
- I. whereas in 1994, in the context of the global strategy adopted by the World Heritage Committee, a number of imbalances were identified on the World Heritage List, including the over-representation of the European continent in relation to the rest of the world, the over-representation of historic towns and religious buildings as compared with other categories, the over-representation of Christianity in relation to other religions and beliefs, the over-representation of historic periods in relation to prehistory and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and finally the over-representation of "elitist" as opposed to vernacular architecture,
- J. whereas the widening of the notion of heritage has led to the identification of new types of heritage assets such as factories, machines, lost trades, and even local recipes, and whereas that widening must not exclude any type of asset which may be classified as belonging to cultural heritage, such as lighthouses or underwater heritage, for example,
- K. whereas the notion of cultural and natural heritage should embrace the preservation of linguistic diversity including notably regional and minority languages,
- L. whereas it is important to guarantee the representative nature of the World Heritage List, and whereas only the political will of the signatory States can guarantee that this is achieved,
- M. whereas the tentative lists make it possible to assess the value of sites proposed for inclusion and to reduce the imbalances on the World Heritage List,
- N. whereas "conservation professional" is not yet a recognised trade in any of the Member States in terms either of training or of access to the profession,
- O. whereas the European Convention on the countryside, which is currently being ratified, is intended to create a European countryside label and may possibly lead to the creation of a list of European landscapes,
- P. whereas the inclusion of a site on a list implies responsibility for maintenance of the site, and whereas under the terms of Article 29 of the abovementioned UNESCO

Convention, the State parties to the Convention are to prepare regular reports on the legislative and administrative provisions which they have adopted and other action which they have taken for the application of this Convention, together with details of the experience they have acquired in this field,

Q. whereas it is important to preserve the cultural heritage of many developing countries, and whereas problems exist in those countries with the recognition, description and conservation of cultural assets,

1. Considers that the over-representation of European sites on the World Heritage List can be explained partly by the major worldwide influence which Europe has had on the development of civilisation, and its effective heritage-conservation work, but also partly by the very way in which the selection criteria were defined, based on a mainly monumental approach defined by reference to a European concept of heritage, and also by the fact that less-developed countries were unintentionally but automatically penalised by the constraints of preparing application files;
2. Recommends the Member States to encourage non-European countries to complete the lists of their natural and cultural heritage assets and to provide appropriate practical assistance to those countries under UNESCO;
3. Condemns the alarming and devastating plundering of archaeological finds which is occurring in many such countries and calls on the Member States to use all the means available to them at both national and Community level in order to stamp out the growing illegal trade in such finds within the countries of the European Union;
4. Calls on the Member States of the European Union to reconsider their Tentative List in the light of examples such as the exhaustive topic-based list of heritage resources adopted by the United Kingdom;
5. Considers that it would be useful for a meeting of the Council of the relevant ministers to be held to effect this harmonisation;
6. Considers that the Member States of the European Union might be encouraged to study with the Council of Europe the possibility of a European heritage classification system, based on common definitions and identification systems, making it possible to identify cultural, linguistic and natural heritage sites which are of more than mere national interest and to accord such sites a recognisable European label, a classification which could help highlight the diversity and wealth of European heritage while stressing its common character;
7. Calls on the national authorities of the Member States and the respective local government bodies to constrain any development initiative in regions with a vulnerable cultural and natural environment to protect the treasures of cultural heritage and the balance of the natural environment in each region;
8. Regards natural, architectural, urban and rural heritage as an indivisible

whole, requiring the drawing up of joint protective measures;

9. Ask that when proper models of sustainable development and sustainable towns are being developed and approved, architectural, archaeological, natural and cultural heritage both in urban and rural settings be included;
10. Considers that young people, who are the Union's future, can perform an important role in protecting the cultural and natural heritage of the Union, and that the Commission and the Member States should therefore support young people's voluntary activities in this sector;
11. Calls on the Commission to implement all possible forms of cooperation and consultation with UNESCO and the Council of Europe, while respecting the specific features of each institution and avoiding duplication;
12. Calls on the Commission to simplify consultation between Member States' representatives, so as to reach common positions in the various bodies of the Council of Europe and UNESCO;
13. Calls on the Commission, Council and especially the Member States to ensure compliance with Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment<sup>(7)</sup> (EIA Directive) and to implement rigorously the provisions of Article 3 and Annexes I and II thereof with regard to the assessment of the impact on cultural heritage of certain public and private projects, demanding that it be afforded the same respect as other non-renewable resources;
14. Considers that, when environmental policies are being implemented, the visual impact on artistic heritage and the countryside must be taken into account; believes that, in this context, as stipulated in Article 3 of the Directive, attention should be drawn once again to the importance of all public or private projects being accompanied by the corresponding impact assessment, in particular an assessment of the visual impact and impact on the landscape;
15. Calls on the Commission to define and develop the variables and indicators which make up urban cultural heritage;
16. Calls on the Commission to draw up a study on the situation of "conservation professionals" in the Member States, so as to encourage the latter to organise the profession at various training levels with mutual recognition of diplomas with the aim of ensuring the quality of heritage restoration work;
17. Calls on the Commission within the framework of training programmes to devote particular attention to arts and crafts and to take practical measures to preserve and transmit rare professional skills in this field to future generations;

18. Calls on the Member States to promote the establishment of regional training centres in the field of the protection, conservation and promotion of cultural and natural heritage;
19. Calls on the Commission to assist, within existing programmes, developing countries which are facing problems with the recognition, description and conservation of cultural assets;
20. Calls on the Commission to promote, by means of specific measures within existing programmes targeting businesses, initiatives seeking to support crafts, particularly those whose existence is threatened, which are essential to the proper restoration and maintenance of heritage;
21. Calls on the Commission to strengthen programmes to aid the training of professionals working in the field of conservation of cultural heritage, in the belief that increased restoration of places of interest and improved care of our heritage might provide a sound basis for the promotion of new jobs in the European Union;
22. Approves the fact that 34% of the total budget earmarked for the "Culture 2000" programme has been allocated to heritage in the broad sense: intellectual and non-intellectual heritage, moveable and immovable heritage (museums and collections, libraries, archives, including photographic and audio-visual archives relating to cultural works), archaeological and underwater heritage, architectural heritage and all cultural sites and landscapes (cultural and natural properties);
23. Calls on the Commission, before approving projects financed by the Structural Funds, to examine the impact they may have on the cultural and natural heritage in the Member States of the Union;
24. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to study, in cooperation with UNESCO and the Council of Europe, the viability of an international legal and fiscal framework, which would facilitate forms of sponsorship relating to the conservation of cultural and natural heritage;
25. Considers that a task force comprising representatives of the European Parliament, the Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO could be set up for this purpose;
26. Calls on the Member States to contribute to the dissemination of information and the publication of discussion documents on experience gained and research undertaken in connection with the conservation and restoration of cultural, linguistic and natural heritage;
27. Draws particular attention to the irreparable damage being done to our archaeological heritage by the building of high-rise buildings on ancient remains and points out that development is not incompatible with the

protection of archaeological sites and their restoration to the public;

28. Points out that rural heritage is a tapestry of landscapes, sites, habitats and specific areas, such as wetlands and ancient forests and hedgerows, and calls on the Commission and Council to enforce directives and promote good practice in this area; similar attention should be paid to Europe's mountain areas, whose importance has already been recognised in the Alpine Convention;
  29. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that no public or private project undertaken on Community territory is supported by Community funds if it is shown that its completion would entail the destruction of valuable cultural, historical or artistic heritage;
  30. Calls on the Commission to speed up the consideration and investigation of complaints which it receives regarding breaches of the EIA Directive, as well as infringement proceedings, where appropriate, with a view to guaranteeing protection for cultural heritage which may be under threat;
  31. Calls on the Member States to encourage, from primary level upwards, the raising of pupils' awareness of aspects relating to the protection and preservation of cultural, linguistic and natural heritage;
  32. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, the governments of the Member States, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.
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