

**Conclusions of the Meeting in Thessaloniki
10-11 December 2006**

***World Heritage of Southeast Europe: Co-operation in the management of
cultural sites and landscapes.
A follow-up to the Periodic Reporting Exercise for Europe***

Evaluation of the results of the Periodic Reporting Exercise for the countries of the Southeast Europe regional group: Strengths and weaknesses, suggestions for the future

This meeting aimed at the exchange of views and ideas between the national coordinators (focal points) and government officials of the countries belonging to geographical areas that are different from those defined by the World Heritage Periodic Reporting. Specifically, Turkey and Greece belong to the Mediterranean group, while the remaining countries that participated belong to the Southeast Europe regional group. The meeting aimed at combining the follow-up to the periodic reporting exercise for World Heritage properties in Southeast Europe with the grouping of countries participating in the initiative of UNESCO for Southeast Europe since April 2002. The region of Southeast Europe currently encompasses 51 inscribed sites, 92 sites included in the Tentative Lists and 1 property in Danger (Medieval Monuments in Kosovo, Serbia). According to the detailed analysis and assessment presented by Mrs. Rössler, the review for the countries of Southeast Europe has shown that it is necessary:

1. To elaborate the statements of outstanding universal value;
2. To prepare the necessary statement of significance for all sites lacking one (old inscriptions);
3. To improve co-ordination in funding;
4. To encourage the participation of the local community;
5. To hold specialised seminars (workshops) and to prepare special handbooks with instructions;
6. To enhance co-ordination between research foundations working on World Heritage;
7. To develop a management plan for all sites lacking one, considering that only 18 sites out of the 51 inscribed in the area covered by the meeting possess such a plan;
8. To improve communication between governments, the local society, World Heritage Centre and UNESCO.

9. To achieve a balanced representation in the Tentative Lists of those types of heritage that is not adequately represented (e.g. natural, industrial, cultural landscapes);

1st session - Management of Tentative Lists: Strengthening regional cooperation through the exchange of knowledge and experience

Conclusions

- Regular periodic revision and harmonisation of the tentative lists is encouraged so that: a) to comply with the Operational Guidelines of 2005, and b) to achieve a balanced representation of all types of heritage (natural, agricultural, industrial, cultural landscapes);
- Co-operation for the promotion of transboundary, transnational nominations (e.g. Prespes lake, between Albania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece) and serial nominations;

Proposals

- Improvement and extension of co-operation between national coordinators (focal points) for the revision of the Tentative Lists and for contact between the states, involving regular meetings and internet communication;
- Meetings of the Southeast Europe regional group with the Mediterranean group;
- Conservation and enhancement works and, if possible, development of a preliminary management plan for the sites and landscapes on the Tentative List, so that starting the inscription process can be facilitated;
- UNESCO should include in its website the files of the sites on the Tentative Lists, as such a publication can be used for comparisons by countries wishing to establish new files or improve already submitted ones;

2nd session - The participation of the local community and the strategies for cultural tourism as factors in social cohesion and economic development

Conclusions

Cultural tourism is a pressing issue for all countries of Southeast Europe. It is nonetheless certain that it has not been adequately developed, as no solid policy exists. The concept, the aim and the content of cultural tourism probably ought to be elaborated, along with the definition of target groups;

It is necessary to adopt not only quantitative, but also qualitative criteria, to take into consideration the eventual damage to monuments, caused by overvisitation, to ensure long-term benefits for the local society and nation state so that social cohesion is strengthened, to highlight the special character of each monument and, finally, to enhance its protection. Cultural tourism can contribute to the promotion of education, to familiarization with and respect of cultural diversity, to conscious enjoyment of the cultural property and to improvement of the quality of the citizens' every-day life;

Proposals

- Sensitisation of the population to the importance of World Heritage with educational programmes designed for students, but also for special types of audiences, with the simplified publication of monuments, the distribution of information material in schools, hotels and large companies and most importantly by placing the World Heritage Emblem at the sites, as well as on the relevant information material linking tourist publications and websites (after permission by the World Heritage Centre);
- Use of the heritage sites for low-impact events of educational or artistic character that address wider social strata;
- Implementation of specific measures for the development of sustainable tourism, which will boost the local and regional economy without harming or degrading the sites and their setting (thematic tourism, cultural routes etc);
- Organization of a seminar with the participation of the World Heritage Centre on the processing of the above proposals and the co-ordination of activities that will result from such proposals

3rd session - Best practice in cultural heritage management and protection. Presentation of a case study

Conclusions

It is necessary to establish a code of conduct for conservation and restoration interventions, as well as for the uses that can be and are allowed to be accommodated in the monuments of Southeast Europe, so that their historic essence and authenticity is preserved;

Proposals

- Conduct of seminars with the participation of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies that will address the preparation of management plans for the monuments, the processing of the code of conduct and the search for best practices in terms of interventions and uses;
- Organization of a meeting for the presentation of the legislative framework governing the protection of monuments in each country and for the exchange of views on alignment with the international legislative framework;

In conclusion, it is evident that in the last few years there are considerable activities in our region both in terms of bilateral programmes and international meetings. It is therefore necessary to ensure good co-ordination and regular supervision of these initiatives so that solid results can be achieved.

General Conclusions

1. Disseminate results of Periodic Reporting and of this meeting to site managers and national authorities and keep them interested in Periodic Reporting and follow-up;
2. Follow-up on specific issues as soon possible and comply with deadlines (name changes, boundary modifications, statements of significance etc.);
3. Encourage site managers and local/regional authorities to prepare management plans and inform UNESCO in case assistance, expertise or twinning is required;
4. Carefully analyze existing national Tentative Lists, review potential transboundary and transnational sites and contact other State Parties concerned; envisage subsequently joint activities for the harmonization of Tentative Lists (e.g. expert meetings on specific themes or potential serial nominations);
5. Cultural and ecological tourism can be a tool for enhancing World Heritage conservation: best practice examples should be shared in the region as well as pilot projects in tourism management;
6. World Heritage is a source for cultural identity and on-site activities can link intangible and tangible heritage for the benefit of long term conservation, education and awareness raising;

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