



Recommendation 880 (1979)¹

Conservation of the European architectural heritage

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recalling the European Charter on the Architectural Heritage, promulgated in 1975 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, in which they declared that Europe's unique architecture is the common heritage of all her peoples and that they must recognise a common duty to assure its protection ;
2. Recalling likewise the recommendations contained in Resolution (76) 28, regarding the adaptation of laws and regulations for the conservation of the architectural heritage, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 1976 ;
3. Welcoming the report ([Doc. 4300](#)) on the state of the architectural heritage, recently presented by the Committee of Ministers in response to the request made by the Assembly in [Recommendation 681](#) of 1972 ;
4. Observing from this report that Europe's precious and irreplaceable architectural heritage continues to be threatened by neglect, decay, demolition and incongruous new construction, and noting that, while increasing attention has in recent years been paid to this problem, the action being taken is still inadequate and is proceeding much too slowly ;
5. Convinced that, since it is accepted that the protection of Europe's architectural heritage is a common responsibility, all European countries should endeavour as far as possible to apply comparable criteria for the listing of buildings and areas of architectural interest, and should adopt effective legislative, administrative and financial measures for their conservation ;
6. Emphasising the importance of identifying and protecting not only individual buildings, but also whole areas of historic or architectural interest ;
7. Stressing the need to ensure the fullest consideration of the problems of conservation at all stages in town and country planning ;
8. Welcoming the increasing co-operation and assistance of industry and commerce in the conservation of the architectural heritage and, in particular, the recognition of its importance to tourism ;
9. Recalling the appointment by the Parliamentary Assembly of a general rapporteur on the architectural heritage, and welcoming the cooperation accorded to him by the Committee of Ministers and by member governments ;
10. Emphasising the need to enlist positive public support for the measures and expenditure required for the protection of the architectural heritage, and the importance of the role of independent associations in the task of awakening interest and stimulating action ;
11. Noting with satisfaction the repeated assurances given by the Committee of Ministers that they would arrange for the collection and wide dissemination of information on this subject, at both the national and international levels,

1. Assembly debate on 8 October 1979 (15th Sitting) (see [Doc. 4396](#), report of the Committee on Culture and Education). Text adopted by the Assembly on 8 October 1979 (15th Sitting).



12. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :
- a. in the light of the information regarding the present state of Europe's architectural heritage contained in the report presented to the Assembly by the Committee of Ministers (*Doc. 4300*), invite all the governments of member states to take more effective measures to implement the principles and recommendations set out in the European Charter of the Architectural Heritage and Resolution (76) 28, promulgated by the Committee of Ministers, and in particular to ensure :
 - a. that steps are taken without delay to speed up the work of listing buildings of architectural interest in town and country ;
 - b. that efforts are made, through the Council of Europe, to secure as far as practicable the application in all member states of approximately comparable criteria for the purpose of listing ;
 - c. that the numerous areas of historic and architectural interest are identified and designated for appropriate protection ;
 - d. that, where they do not already exist, legal powers are provided for the effective protection of the architectural heritage, and that these will include :
 - 1. power to prevent the demolition or undue alteration of listed buildings ;
 - 2. power to require that the demolition of any building of any kind, or the construction of any new building, in a designated conservation area shall be subject to approval by a competent authority ;
 - 3. power to order the suspension of any construction or demolition work which could adversely affect the architectural or archaeological heritage, whether or not the building or site has been listed ;
 - 4. power to control and, as far as possible, eliminate atmospheric pollution, damaging to the fabric of historic buildings ;
 - 5. power to impose penalties for breaches of the law of sufficient severity to deprive offenders of any benefit arising from their illegal action ;
 - 6. power to order the demolition of buildings illegally erected ;
 - 7. power to require the owner of a protected building to maintain it in a reasonable state of repair, or, if this is not possible, to sell it, at market value, to the appropriate national or local authority or to a private purchaser, who will be subject to the same obligation for maintenance ;
 - 8. powers to restrict outdoor advertising and to control the design of shop fronts in designated conservation areas ;
 - e. that, while it is normally appropriate to entrust to regional and local authorities responsibility for the decisions regarding the protection of the architectural heritage, the national government shall, in cases which it considers to be of outstanding importance, retain the power to amend decisions by regional or local authorities affecting the architectural heritage, including in particular decisions relating to :
 - 1. the planning of new roads in historic towns or in the neighbourhood of historic buildings ;
 - 2. the granting of permission to demolish listed buildings of exceptional quality ; or
 - 3. incongruous new construction in areas of historic interest ;
 - f. that new development is planned with due regard for its effect, not only upon the immediate surroundings, but also upon more distant views and skylines ;
 - g. that, in meeting new needs, planners and architects are encouraged to consider the possibility of adapting old buildings, which can no longer serve their original purpose ;
 - h. that the authorities, at all levels, make much fuller use of the powers conferred upon them for the conservation of the architectural heritage, and that the laws and regulations enacted for this purpose are strictly enforced ;

- i.* that, in areas designated for special protection, local authorities are advised to consider action of all kinds to enhance the quality of the environment, including measures :

 - 1. to divert traffic and restrict car-parking ;
 - 2. to create pedestrian areas ;
 - 3. to secure the removal of unsightly overhead wires ;
 - 4. to plant more trees in towns and villages ;
- j.* that, in order to preserve the distinctive character of their towns, local authorities are advised :

 - 1. to endeavour to restore old houses in residential quarters and bring them up to modern standards rather than demolish them ;
 - 2. to subsidise the rents of the restored dwellings, to the extent that public financial resources permit, so as to enable as many as possible of the existing inhabitants to continue to live in them ; and
 - 3. to encourage private persons or companies to purchase and rehabilitate other old buildings, which are not included in the public works programme ;
- k.* that, in the expenditure of public money for the provision of housing accommodation, the responsible authorities are encouraged to allocate substantial funds for the rehabilitation of old buildings, and that in the centres of historic towns such funds shall be on a scale at least equal to those provided for the construction of new houses ;
- l.* that increased financial assistance from public sources is made available :

 - 1. to local authorities, for the maintenance and enhancement of designated conservation areas ;
 - 2. to private owners for the maintenance of listed buildings, by means of grants, loans at low interest rates and tax concessions ; and
 - 3. to donors of funds for architectural conservation, by means of tax relief ;
- m.* that in cases of natural disasters due attention is given to the restoration of the architectural heritage ;
- n.* that consideration is given to the establishment of revolving funds, raised from public and private sources, which will be used to buy dilapidated old buildings of architectural interest, restore them, and then re-sell them, using the proceeds to repeat the operation over and over again ;
- o.* that the protection of the architectural heritage is recognised as a basic element in town and country planning, and is taken into account in the early stages of the planning process, and that, in order to assure effective co-ordination, the responsibility for planning and for architectural conservation is allocated to a single ministry, or alternatively that close administrative links are established between the government departments concerned ;
- p.* that planning proposals affecting the architectural heritage are published, so that independent associations and the general public may have the opportunity to express their opinions before the final decisions are taken ;
- q.* that general educational programmes, at all levels, seek to develop knowledge of Europe's architectural heritage and an appreciation of the importance of preserving it ;
- r.* that, at the national level, information about the conservation of the architectural heritage is collected and disseminated to all concerned - local authorities, professional institutes, commerce, industry, tourist organisations, independent associations, and the media - and that this information shall also be communicated to the Council of Europe ;
- b.* take steps, at the European level, to organise the collection and wide dissemination of information on this subject, and for this purpose arrange for the regular issue by the Council of Europe of a high quality news bulletin ;
- c.* promote the establishment, at national and international levels, of increased facilities for the training of craftsmen qualified to undertake the skilled work necessary for architectural conservation ;
- d.* encourage the development, through official and unofficial channels, of closer co-operation and a fuller exchange of information on this subject, with other countries in Europe and elsewhere in the world ; and

Recommendation 880 (1979)

- e. continue to keep under review the progress of architectural conservation in the member states, and present further reports thereon to the Assembly at regular intervals.