Recommendation 1042 (1986)[1]

Protecting the cultural heritage against disasters

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having noted the report of its Committee on Culture and Education (Doc. 5624) on protecting the cultural heritage against disasters, and the supporting evidence collected in the report ;

2. Concerned at the extensive damage to cultural property caused by such disasters as earthquake, fire and flood, or their consequences, and pointing out that the resulting losses are often irreparable ;

3. Noting that action can be taken both before disasters occur to reduce the risk of damage and in their immediate aftermath to prevent further deterioration to cultural property ;

4. Regretting that insufficient attention is given to taking such action in advance of disasters and that it is too often, as a result, postponed in favour of the natural priority following disasters devoted to saving human lives ;

5. Drawing attention to the need for identifying cultural property at risk (buildings and objects), and preparing plans for protection, conservation and repair, and ensuring the necessary co-ordination for effective intervention ;

6. Noting and welcoming the continuing development of materials and techniques and other protective measures that respect the character of a historic building or are appropriate to the use and nature of the property in question ;

7. Regretting that owners of cultural property, whether public bodies or private individuals, may sometimes be unaware of the steps to be taken to reduce risk, or disinclined, largely for financial reasons, to take such steps ;

8. Believing that ownership of cultural property should include responsibility for protecting that property, and that this responsibility should be shared, on the grounds that it is part of our common heritage ;

9. Suggesting therefore that new legislation be introduced, or existing legislation for the protection of cultural property be amended, so that :

a. listed property carries an obligation on the owner or state to take appropriate steps to protect it from damage from disasters (including fire, and whether or not the building is open to the public) ;

b. insurance cover for damage to other property considered to be of cultural value be conditional on appropriate measures being taken to protect it against such damage ;

10. Aware of the fact that protective measures imply financial cost, but pointing out that this cost is less than that of repair or replacement ;

11. Noting the increasing recognition of the need for international co-operation regarding disasters, and welcoming in particular the inclusion of cultural property in action proposed by the ministers responsible for prevention of and protection against major disasters in Southern Europe ;

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1. Assembly debate on 19 September 1986 (12th Sitting) (see Doc. 5624, report of the Committee on Culture and Education). Text adopted by the Assembly on 19 September 1986 (12th Sitting).

12. Welcoming the growing extent of work relating to this subject by international bodies, national research institutions and government departments concerned with the management of cultural property, and calling for greater co-operation on the European level in research, training and the exchange of experience in the field,

13. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

a. invite the governments of member states : i. to ensure that contingency planning on disasters includes provisions for the protection of the cultural heritage ; iii. to encourage a greater awareness of shared responsibility for the protection of the cultural heritage against disasters ; iv. to support action on as wide a European level as possible where this relates to the protection of our common cultural heritage and in a spirit of European solidarity ;

b. invite the governments of member states and the European Community :

1. to give consideration to introducing, or amending, legislation or directives extending theappropriate obligatory protective measures so as to include all cultural property ;

2. to allow for subsidies, tax incentives or assistance with insurance premiums for the taking of such measures ;

c. include protection of cultural property against disasters as a protocol in the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe ;

d. initiate, in the cultural heritage and legal fields, intergovernmental activities on the questions raised in this recommendation, and encourage the co-ordination of national research and the exchange of experience at European level.