

Resolution 916 (1989)¹

Redundant religious buildings

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having noted the report of its Committee on Culture and Education on redundant religious buildings ([Doc. 6032](#)), and welcoming in particular the preliminary survey of the situation in all European countries ;
2. Aware of the very considerable number of religious buildings throughout Europe that no longer fulfil their original function and are therefore vulnerable through neglect to demolition or inappropriate transformation ;
3. Noting that this continues to be the result of historic factors such as population shifts, changes in religious practice and habits, or even the construction of new buildings for religious use ;
4. Recalling the Council of Europe's statutory duty to safeguard the ideals and principles which are the common heritage of member states and to which religious buildings bear witness ;
5. Asserting also the importance of freedom of religion and religious expression, as set out in Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights ;
6. Pointing out that religious buildings are often of architectural and historical significance, and recalling its longstanding concern for the integrated conservation of this heritage and to ensure a future for our past ;
7. Believing that, when a religious building is no longer viable as such, efforts should be made to ensure a future use, whether religious or cultural, as far as possible compatible with the original intention of its construction ;
8. Noting that a church or any other major religious building is often the focal point and central feature of a community and a local landmark, and believing that sufficient time and encouragement should be given to such communities to rediscover a common interest and future role for such buildings ;
9. Recalling by way of example that the European Centre for Training Craftsmen began in Venice in a former religious building, the Scuola di San Pasquale ;
10. Welcoming the successful examples throughout Europe of the preservation and protection of redundant religious buildings, through their sensitive adaptation to new uses,
11. Calls on the responsible authorities (Church, government and local) to co-operate with interested organisations and experts with a view to :
 - 11.1. taking effective measures to preserve redundant religious buildings and secure wherever possible their appropriate future use ;
 - 11.2. consolidating (in compatible computerised form) surveys of redundant religious buildings, of their architectural and historical significance, and of their current use, and regularly updating such surveys which should also reflect contemporary interest and include nineteenth and twentieth century buildings ;

1. Assembly debate on 9 May 1989 (3rd Sitting) (see [Doc. 6032](#), report of the Committee on Culture and Education, Rapporteur : Mr Rauti). Text adopted by the Assembly on 9 May 1989 (3rd Sitting).



- 11.3. ensuring effective protection for the survival of the original fabric and fittings of such buildings pending future readaptation ;
- 11.4. avoiding, except in cases of exceptional architectural, historic or commemorative interest, the preservation of religious buildings as ruins ;
- 11.5. promoting projects for reuse and readaptation which are not incompatible with the original function of the building and do not cause irreversible alteration to the original fabric ;
- 11.6. providing funds or tax benefits for the restoration, repair and maintenance of religious buildings, whether in use or redundant, in order to ensure they are not abandoned ;
- 11.7. encouraging a more imaginative use of existing religious buildings ;
- 11.8. assuring the supply of appropriate building materials, and encouraging the research, crafts and support work necessary for the continuous upkeep of religious buildings ;
- 11.9. encouraging the inclusion of redundant religious buildings in the redevelopment of cultural itineraries throughout Europe, and ensuring that the proceeds of cultural tourism are channelled into the preservation of the buildings tourists visit.