



Recommendation 1484 (2000)¹

Management of cathedrals and other major religious buildings in use

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Cathedrals and other major religious buildings are amongst the most significant constructions of the European architectural heritage. With them are often associated a wealth of works of art and furnishings. In most cases they possess a significant historical past and in certain cases this past embraces different religions.
2. These buildings are particularly vulnerable because of their size, richness, antiquity and tourist frequentation. Their fabric is at the mercy of environmental pollution, storm damage and potential earthquake.
3. The cost of the proper maintenance and repair of such buildings often far exceeds the resources of the present religious community that uses them.
4. Some arrangement must therefore be reached between the religious authorities and those concerned (at local and national levels) with the conservation of the cultural heritage. Different models exist – from mediaeval associations such as the Œuvre Notre-Dame in Strasbourg to the modern maintenance service of the Dutch Monumentenwacht. Further partnerships should also be sought in civil society, with interested non-governmental associations and with the tourist industry.
5. The religious communities have very different attitudes to the physical heritage. Some (such as the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches) regard the buildings and their contents as sacred. Others (such as most Protestant Churches) are very much open to multifunctional use of the premises. These differing attitudes should be respected for major religious buildings that are still in use.
6. In its earlier work on memorials ([Recommendation 898](#)) and redundant religious buildings ([Resolution 916](#)), the Assembly concentrated on the physical aspects of the cultural heritage. More recently it has drawn attention to the relationship between church and state ([Recommendation 1396](#)). The Assembly feels, therefore, that it is most appropriate that the religious dimension be recognised as part of the cultural heritage in the context of the present “Europe, a common heritage” campaign.
7. This campaign involves the whole of Europe. The Assembly is aware of the revival of religious interest in former communist countries and in the moves to restore religious property to the Churches. It is concerned that due consideration be given in this process to allocation of responsibility for conservation of the fabric of the major religious buildings that are of cultural importance. Where possible and appropriate, the return of historic buildings should be accompanied by the return of the estates that used to service them.
8. Religious communities should for their part build on their long traditions of love of beauty and fine craftsmanship, music, welcome to pilgrims, hospitality, to inaugurate a new form of tourism based on an understanding of spirituality and the role that intangible values have in the cultural heritage.
9. There is room for solidarity as well as partnership. Countries and religious traditions with more experience and resources should assist those that are less endowed.

1. See [Doc. 8826](#), report of the Committee on Culture and Education, rapporteur: Mr Eversdijk. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 9 November 2000.



10. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

10.1. examine the various models for the maintenance, conservation and repair of major religious buildings still in use in Europe and draw up a code of good practice for their effective management while recognising the rights and responsibilities of the religious communities;

10.2. organise from time to time conferences at which experience in the management of cathedrals and other major religious buildings in use can be exchanged, and promote the creation of a database on that subject;

10.3. ask the governments of member states to:

- a. ensure that adequate and appropriate lists are drawn up of major religious buildings and sites of cultural and historical importance (according to the general criteria applied for monument listing);
- b. draw up conservation plans for each major religious monument or site in consultation with the religious authorities involved;
- c. encourage partnerships between the religious authorities, local interest groups, conservation firms and tourist organisations and co-ordinate such initiatives on a broader national basis;
- d. draw on the code of practice and encourage the multifunctional use of religious buildings wherever appropriate;
- e. make sure that adequate funding is available and control provided for the proper maintenance of the major religious monuments.