



Recommendation 1485 (2000)¹

Disused hospitals and military buildings

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly recalls its [Resolution 916 \(1989\)](#) on redundant religious buildings and notes that other types of building are also threatened with obsolescence, whether for technical reasons, in the case of hospitals, or because of the restructuring of the armed forces in the case of military barracks and installations.
2. The Assembly points out that in most European towns these establishments, along with disused administrative and judicial buildings, form a significant part of the historic heritage. Although not all of them can be saved, some of these great public buildings deserve to be preserved.
3. Many former hospitals, orphanages and hospices were housed in splendid buildings, which can now be regarded as historic monuments. However, they are not only important for aesthetic reasons, but also because of the role they played in the actual formation of towns and in the development of urban sociability. Even today, they continue to bear visible witness to long-standing solidarity shown towards the sick and the poor.
4. However, technical progress is increasingly difficult to accommodate in buildings hundreds of years old, some even dating back to the Middle Ages. In most cases, it is only possible to install operating theatres that meet current standards or individual bedrooms and bathrooms by making fundamental alterations that are entirely inappropriate to the architectural features of these buildings.
5. Meanwhile, military barracks and installations are not only of great architectural interest, but also have a distinct historical dimension, testifying both to civil liberties and to a community's or a nation's desire to defend itself. Many of them also bear the mark of sovereign powers, whether royal or feudal, and of the vicissitudes of history.
6. Similar problems arise with the conversion of military barracks and installations. Moreover, the general reduction in the number of active servicemen means that many huge military complexes are becoming redundant.
7. One of the Council of Europe's tasks is to safeguard the common heritage of its member states. However, the Assembly is aware that the general public will only appreciate the preservation of these buildings if expenditure on restoration is aimed at making them suitable for activities that are socially beneficial.
8. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers organise from time to time conferences, at which experience of the restoration of these buildings and their conversion for the benefit of society can be exchanged, and promote the creation of a database on this subject.
9. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite member states to:
 - 9.1. carry out, as quickly as possible, a general survey of hospitals, hospices, orphanages and other care or charity institutions, military buildings and installations and administrative and judicial buildings, which are of historical or architectural significance;

1. See [Doc. 8827](#), report of the Committee on Culture and Education, rapporteur: Mr Legendre. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 9 November 2000.



- 9.2. include nineteenth and twentieth century buildings in this survey and not only older constructions;
 - 9.3. ensure effective protection of the original structures and furnishings of such buildings pending their future conversion;
 - 9.4. make building conservation and conversion part of local planning strategies, with a view to preserving buildings that warrant protection and avoiding the construction of new buildings whenever a disused building can be converted for socially beneficial activities without detriment to its historical and architectural features;
 - 9.5. provide funds or tax concessions for the restoration, repair and maintenance of these buildings, as well as effective legal protection when they are owned by, or when ownership is transferred to, private individuals;
 - 9.6. encourage the production of traditional building materials and the learning and handing down of the crafts and architectural skills required for the restoration of these buildings;
 - 9.7. encourage the inclusion of hospitals and military buildings with historical or architectural significance in European cultural itineraries, and ensure that the proceeds of cultural tourism are channelled into the preservation of the buildings visited by tourists;
 - 9.8. associate the local population with rehabilitation by informing them of the importance and interest of such action.
10. The Assembly welcomes the Europa Nostra Prize for the conservation and enhancement of Europe's architectural and natural heritage, one of the four criteria for the award of the prize being precisely the "restoration of old buildings for new uses, whilst preserving their original character".