

Recommendation 1621 (2003)¹

The promotion of art history in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The visual arts constitute a cornerstone of European culture stretching from the prehistoric to the contemporary, enriched in recent times by the moving image and the new technologies.
2. This heritage has been the object of constant intellectual and political debate. It has been a source of delight for many and an incentive to creativity. It is closely bound up with notions of identity on different levels. It is an important testament to the diversity of European culture. It is also an area of significant economic activity (commissioning of works of art, the art trade, tourism).
3. Appreciation of artistic diversity can lead to greater European understanding. Art can also be used as propaganda and can be a source of division and intolerance. Iconoclasm unfortunately still has a modern parallel in the targeting of political and religious monuments today.
4. The artistic heritage is also increasingly exposed to the negative effects of globalisation (over-simplification and concentration), to commercial exploitation or to destruction from neglect or for alternative development.
5. These forces must be contained. But unfortunately those employed in the protection, conservation and study of the heritage are in general inadequate for the task, being too few in number, often poorly paid and unequally trained. While the situation varies greatly throughout Europe and is currently of especial concern in the countries in transition, there is in general insufficient recognition of the need for better career structures for those involved.
6. The Parliamentary Assembly believes that it is important for member states to pay attention not only to the conservation of the artistic and architectural heritage and the skills needed to conserve it, but also to the promotion of understanding of this heritage on the level of the public, the professions concerned and the political authorities.
7. The Assembly welcomes the contribution already made by the Council of Europe to promotion of awareness of the cultural heritage, notably through the Council of Europe Art Exhibitions, the European Heritage Classes and Heritage Days, the European museum awards and the European cultural itineraries. It recommends that the Committee of Ministers continue to support these activities.
8. It also recommends that the Committee of Ministers promote art history in Europe by asking member states to take measures to:

in academic institutions

- i. support study and research in art history by ensuring that there are sufficient practitioners employed in museums and universities;
- ii. encourage international contacts between art historians, especially for those in countries in transition;

1. (see [Doc. 9881](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr O'Hara). Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 8 September 2003



- iii. develop codes of good conduct for the employment of the service of academics in the identification and attribution of art objects; and in a wider perspective
- iv. give consideration to the management of the career structure of art historians both within academic institutions and in art history-related employment;
- v. promote co-operation with other academic disciplines and links between art history and vocational higher education in the arts and design;
- vi. encourage and support conferences and meetings for the wide range of practitioners in art history both within and between member states;

in museums

- vii. sponsor and support art exhibitions, both large and small, and co-operate in the loan and exchange of exhibitions and items for inclusion in exhibitions in each other's museums and galleries;
- viii. promote open debate on art and art historical subjects;
- ix. encourage good practice in involving art historians and the public in dialogue on their collections (permanent and temporary);
- x. encourage museums and galleries of modern and contemporary art to link their collections with the wider historical perspective;

in the field of conservation

- xi. encourage and promote co-operation between art historians and those responsible for the education of conservators to ensure the best standards of conservation and environmental control of monuments and sites;
- xii. consider the development of European standards for conservation training and conservation work;

in tourism

- xiii. encourage their tourist industries to associate art historians in the preparation of cultural itineraries and enable foreign, trained professional guides to accompany tourist groups;
- xiv. encourage the development of cultural itineraries that illustrate art historical themes;
- xv. encourage the development of alternatives to the most well-known sites and collections so as to relieve the pressure on these sites and broaden public appreciation and the economic benefits of tourism;

in the art trade

- xvi. encourage academically and professionally recognised diplomas for those employed in art auctions, art evaluation for insurance, and the art trade in general as well as those concerned with policing the illegal movement of art;

in schools

- xvii. ensure that the basic curriculum includes an introduction to the history of art and looking at art as well as to artistic expression;
- xviii. promote in schools the study not only of indigenous art but also of the art of the regions of Europe and world art in a European context;
- xix. encourage and develop educational visits to museums, galleries, monuments and sites;

in general

- xxii. promote the enjoyment and understanding of art by the general public in specific ways, including increasing access to monuments, sites and art collections.