Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2488 (2023)[1]

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe: a platform for intercultural dialogue

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly underlines the importance of cultural heritage for achieving greater unity among Europeans. At a time when European societies face new and profound challenges, cultural heritage has yet again become a crucial element for the reconstruction of a peaceful and democratic society, and a key element in the processes of sustainable development and promotion of cultural diversity.

2. Through the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18, 1954), adopted in the aftermath of the Second World War, and the four subsequent heritage-related conventions, including the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199, the "Faro Convention", 2005), the Council of Europe has developed and broadened the understanding of cultural heritage and established close links between heritage, human rights and democracy.

3. The Assembly considers that the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe offers a very practical means of implementing Council of Europe policies on the value of cultural heritage for the widespread promotion of cohesive societies, intercultural dialogue and the right of access to culture among people and across regions in Europe. The 48 certified cultural routes connect local heritage with a broader historic exchange of ideas and skills across Europe and encourage collaborative grassroots initiatives which give people a sense of ownership and pride in their local heritage as an element of a broader European common heritage.

4. The Assembly therefore recommends that the member States of the Council of Europe:

4.1. join the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe;

4.2. sign and ratify the Faro Convention;

4.3. present cultural heritage as a positive element in forming cohesive yet diverse societies;

4.4. encourage a diversity of views on history, with a wide range of heritage sites illustrating ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity;

4.5. put in place national strategies involving all levels of governance, with a view to sharing the knowledge of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme and, more specifically, to supporting and promoting the certified cultural routes;

4.6. support associations of cultural routes in co-operating and expanding their work with regional and European networks whose activities are rooted in common causes in order to attract support and encourage diversity by building cross-cutting thematic networks or broader geographical networks that cover macro-regions such as the Mediterranean Basin.

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee*, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 3 March 2023 (see Doc. 15710, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Mr Andries Gryffroy).
See also Recommendation 2249 (2023).

5. Considering that local and regional authorities have a significant role to play in this field, to enshrine the principles of the Faro Convention in their policies and to actively promote their implementation, the Assembly recommends that local and regional authorities:

5.1. adopt a strategic approach to sustainable development, the economy and tourism at the local level and, in particular:

5.1.1. recognise, and actively seek to raise awareness of, the close link between cultural routes and the values of sustainability, democracy and human rights;

5.1.2. integrate cultural routes into a wider strategy for local tourism and sustainable economic policies, also covering rural areas away from the main tourist attractions as an alternative to mass tourism;

5.1.3. create a platform for discussion to engage local partners from the education, research, tourism and local economy sectors in the promotion of cultural routes and their associated values;

5.1.4. involve local partners, including associations of cultural routes, in developing a common strategy and determining local tourism offers;

5.1.5. foster local community involvement in the work of cultural routes and, in that respect, provide training to local people, volunteers, tour operators and those in the private sector concerned with tourism to explain the principles of the Faro Convention and build their capacity to actively engage in projects based on these principles;

5.1.6. develop partnerships with associations of cultural routes, providing them with administrative and financial support, and uphold grassroots initiatives, to ensure the viability and continuity of existing cultural routes and their established partnerships;

5.1.7. develop international partnerships with local and regional authorities abroad that share the same routes and themes;

5.1.8. financially support and take part in annual exchanges organised by cultural routes;

5.2. pay more attention to the positive interconnections between cultural routes, intercultural dialogue and education, which mutually reinforce each other and, in this respect:

5.2.1. emphasise that heritage is not just monumental, but also uncomfortable, dissonant, humble;

5.2.2. ensure continuity of political engagement of local and regional authorities to support heritage and cultural routes projects, namely when dealing with controversial and/or dissonant heritage, but also when cultivating a nuanced and constructive public debate and an understanding of this heritage locally, and to alleviate taboos, prejudice and division;

5.2.3. in co-operation with State authorities, encourage universities and schools to explore and analyse the historical context of dissonant heritage and support educational exchanges in this field;

5.2.4. promote artistic projects to create links between cultural heritage and contemporary culture, as a creative means of addressing sensitivities and emotions that are associated with dissonant heritage;

5.3. tap into the potential of innovation and digitalisation to promote local heritage and increase the outreach, visibility and sustainability of cultural routes and, in this respect:

5.3.1. encourage partnerships to document and explain local heritage through multimedia, repositories and museums; share and ensure visibility of information on local platforms, including those of local authorities, tourism boards, museums and other partners in the private sector;

5.3.2. provide targeted support to associations of cultural routes to develop, in digital format, interactive tours of dissonant heritage, which could help to remove prejudices and be an incentive to visit in person, by spurring online visitors' understanding and curiosity;

5.3.3. introduce Smart Ways (pathways bringing together heritage, communities and services to provide a sustainable tourist itinerary) and interpretation centres, in which service providers meet visitors in hubs along the route where the tourist itinerary can be explained and understood.

6. The Assembly invites the European Union to co-operate with the Council of Europe to support the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme, in particular within the framework of the European Heritage Label initiative, and to develop targeted European Union funding programmes for cultural routes based on clearly established criteria, including the promotion of the key principles in the Faro Convention.

7. The Assembly invites countries having observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly to join the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.