



Recommendation 1851 (2008)¹

Crafts and cultural heritage conservation skills

1. Conservation of cultural heritage depends on a wide variety of skills. These range from basic traditional and contemporary construction techniques to scientific analysis and project management. These different skills must be identified, personnel trained and the whole team organised to work together in planning and executing conservation projects.

2. Essential for the success of such conservation projects is assurance of support in terms of funding and interest. This is necessary at all stages, including follow-up and proper provision for maintenance.

3. The skills involved in conservation can be very specialised and the materials, such as stone from specific quarries, seasoned timber, thatch or slate, difficult to procure. Much can be gained from European level co-operation in terms of expertise and material and the pooling of knowledge and know-how.

4. Conservation has been threatened by the disappearance of appropriate skilled labour or of understanding of the use of traditional materials such as lime. Increasing recognition of the value of manual skills is therefore to be welcomed. The integration of manual with intellectual aspects of conservation should be encouraged in all training courses.

5. In line with its [Recommendation 1621](#) (2003) on the promotion of art history in Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly believes that architects and planners should be aware of traditional skills, techniques and materials and take account of them in restoration projects.

6. This should be an exciting process, attracting younger and more dynamic people, and with better regard to gender balance, but also involving the experience and interest of older generations. It is part of the living process of conservation and appreciation that enables our heritage to survive in a meaningful manner. It applies to the built heritage of buildings and bridges, of gardens and landscapes, to the movable heritage of paintings, sculpture, musical instruments and books, and to the moving heritage of land vehicles, boats and aircraft.

7. The Assembly underlines the importance conservation projects can have for the local and regional crafts industry and economy.

8. Sustainability and energy efficiency have to be added as new factors in conservation. Fire and safety regulations are rather more controversial, for example requirements for emergency exits and disabled access in historic buildings or deck heights in traditional sailing ships. Workshops in these areas could be valuable.

9. The Assembly is pleased to have been associated with the setting up in Venice in 1977 of a European centre for the training of craftsmen in conservation of the architectural heritage and has followed with interest, with concern and now with renewed enthusiasm the development of this pilot project. It calls on the Committee of Ministers to give Council of Europe recognition to the new European centre for heritage crafts and professions in Thiene (Italy), and foster the development of other international initiatives such as the training centre for the rehabilitation of the architectural heritage in Avignon (France), the training centre for heritage skills in Görlitz (Germany) or the international built heritage conservation centre in Bontida (Romania).

10. The Assembly was also involved in the creation in 1987 of the European Foundation for Heritage Skills, the aim of which was to embrace all heritage skills. It calls on the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to ensure clarification of the legal status of this institution with a view to enabling it to pursue the aim of developing a European network on heritage skills and providing it with practical and visible information in addition to the Council of Europe databases on the cultural policies of member states known as Herein and the Compendium.

11. The Assembly would wish to give craftsmen and professionals information to allow them to judge the merits of particular products and materials and to pierce the arcane secrets of the ancient guilds. Public-private co-operation is important to ensure that conservation is carried out to the best possible standards and the market must be opened up. The private sector, including owners interested in managing or doing work themselves, should not be excluded from this partnership. The Committee of Ministers should encourage an open and informed debate on conservation principles and practice, techniques and products and on how to assess them.

12. The Assembly would also like to see further concerted action between government, private and voluntary sectors in developing the skills and expertise necessary for heritage conservation, including maintenance and operation. It welcomed the setting up in 1992 of the European Association of Architectural Heritage Restoration Firms (AEERPA), but calls for much wider involvement of responsible restoration companies and for the promotion, in particular, of their establishment and development in central and eastern Europe.

13. Finally, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers initiate a full survey of national conservation skills provision in conjunction with the European Union, with the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and other specialised agencies and professional bodies, as also with NGOs, with a view to the development of a Europe-wide strategy for the concerted management of heritage conservation involving craftsmen, architects and planners and including recognition of professional qualifications.

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 28 November 2008 (see [Doc. 11761](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Baroness Hooper). See also [Resolution 1638](#) (2008).*