

Recommendation on action in aid of certain declining craft trades in the context of craft activity (81/13)

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 1 July 1981 at the 335th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe.

1. Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of facilitating their economic and social progress;
2. Having regard to Recommendation 895 (1980) of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe on the future of small and medium-sized businesses in Europe, particularly paragraphs 9 and 10.v;
3. Having examined with interest the conclusions adopted by the Congress on Craftsmanship and Conservation held in Fulda (Federal Republic of Germany) in 1980 under the auspices of the Council of Europe;
4. Considering that craft trades, as a production or service activity characterised by the craftsman's direct, manual and personal participation in a creative capacity, are a feature of the economies of all member states;
5. Noting that changing tastes and technological progress, while having influenced the development or transformation of certain craft activities in the direction of their adaptation to new requirements, nevertheless threaten the existence of one group of traditional craft trades which are the last repositories of particular highly skilled techniques and practices and have helped to shape the artistic and cultural heritage of the countries of Europe;
6. Believing that economic and social considerations justify the taking of measures to support and encourage any craft activities which, furthermore and in certain environments, are capable of helping to further economic growth and absorb unemployment;
7. Further considering that the need to protect the quality of personal life also militates in favour of measures to preserve those craft trades that perform an irreplaceable function in the social and cultural life of the community;
8. Being of the opinion that although, because of the diversity of national circumstances, these crafts vary from one country to another and so require different measures to suit the particular problems arising, it is nevertheless possible to lay down general guidelines for the efforts needed to preserve these activities;
9. Considering that the need for prompt action to assist endangered craft trades cannot be dissociated from the implementation of a whole range of medium and long-term measures aimed at ensuring that the crisis through which many trades are now passing will not deteriorate in a few years' time;

10. Considering that such action may involve adapting measures already in force in each country for the benefit of craft trades as well as taking new initiatives, and that member states should therefore be left free to choose the operational instruments best suited to their own circumstances.

Recommends that the governments of member states should:

A. Ensure that in their policies in favour of craft trades, while aiming to create and maintain economic and social conditions conducive to the balanced development of craft activities as a whole, they give special consideration to the revival of endangered crafts which require high technical and professional skill and whose preservation is of primary importance, in particular those which:

- a. contribute to creating and preserving the artistic heritage,
- b. are related to popular traditions or the needs of country life,
- c. are necessary to the preservation of a specific quality of life;

B. Base these policies on the following principles:

- a. suitable action must be taken to maintain the quality of the work traditionally associated with such crafts,
- b. the survival of craft trades depends upon the existence of conditions such as to enable craft trades, if necessary through appropriate aid, to remain active on the goods or service markets, with constant adaptation to changing conditions of supply and demand,
- c. the protection of any craft activity requires that equal attention be paid to its social and economic aspects and to the artistic aspects deriving from the craftsman's creative contribution;

C. Take, in co-operation with the trade organisations and socio-cultural associations concerned, all suitable measures to give effect to these principles, such as those listed in the appendix (Part A) to this recommendation;

D. Entrust the implementation of measures of preservation and revival, where not carried out by other authorities or services, to a body having a qualified staff and flexible structure so that it can act promptly and effectively as required, in accordance with the criteria laid down in the appendix (Part B) to this recommendation;

E. Encourage craftsmen and young apprentices in their countries to attend the courses organised by the European Centre for the Training of Craftsmen in the Conservation of the Architectural Heritage, which has been operating in Venice since 1977 on the initiative of the Council of Europe and with the co-operation of European and national institutions and organisations, as well as courses organised by similar specialised centres set up in several member states.

Appendix to Recommendation No. R (81) 13

A. Measures recommended for Implementing the principles set out in section B of the recommendation

i. Direct support for the declining crafts referred to in section A of the recommendation:

specialist craftsmen could be given commissions under public works schemes such as those for the restoration of historic monuments and districts;

the authorities could encourage private patronage and make more systematic use of it themselves;

some of the money for public building could be earmarked for decoration by craftsmen, as is already the case in some countries;

craftsmen could be encouraged to form groups, particularly for the joint purchase of materials and the expansion of their marketing arrangements;

urban development schemes should give particular consideration to the maintenance or re-establishment of craft activities in the historic centres of towns;

the setting up of display and sales centres and craft workshops in tourist areas could be encouraged;

as an exceptional measure, for crafts which have a very long tradition of highly skilled work and are of historic interest, the founding of conservatories to preserve and transmit the relevant techniques and skills should be envisaged.

ii. Other measures for ensuring the survival of craft activities:

a. a campaign to inform public opinion, especially through the mass media, should promote a sense of the dignity, value and socio-economic importance of handicrafts; the prospects for employment and personal fulfilment offered to young people by the craft trades should be identified and publicised; appropriate measures should be taken to arouse and develop a spirit of enterprise in young people;

b. in the educational sphere, general instruction should include introductory courses in handicrafts for all schoolchildren from the earliest age; technical training should include greater practical instruction in handicrafts, alongside and on an equal footing with theoretical instruction; to this end, without prejudice to compulsory schooling and general education, provision should be made in the case of young people with proven ability, for:

- increased use of master craftsmen as teachers,
- training in craft workshops;

c. as part of vocational training policy, full credit should be given for instruction in craft workshops; this should be achieved by:

- making suitable arrangements, in accordance with national legislation and practice, to encourage craftsmen to act as instructors by giving them the necessary legal and educational status,
- supporting this policy by the simplification of administrative procedures and the provision of appropriate resources, for example, by grants to master craftsmen and

apprentices, as well as by action in support of young craftsmen who have set up their own firms,

- arranging programmes for further technical and/or artistic education for craftsmen,
- making arrangements so that in specific circumstances qualifications gained by experience may be recognised as equivalent to qualifications gained by study in school;

d. in the social and fiscal fields, charges should be more satisfactorily apportioned between craft firms, where manual work is of paramount importance and industrial firms, which make greater use of mechanisation; similarly, as regards direct and indirect taxation, the possibility of granting relief, preferential rates or exemptions to craft firms should be considered, in the interest of their increased competitiveness; it would also be advisable to devise simplified administrative procedures to make craft firms easier to manage;

e. in the commercial sphere, the strict application of international trade agreements should be ensured for the sake of free competition which is often distorted by various factors such as the low reward for labour in some countries; where the promotion of trade is concerned, group exports should be encouraged, together with participation by craft enterprises in national and international events (exhibitions, fairs, etc.), which they could not easily attend on an individual basis because of their small size.

B. Measures whose Implementation might be entrusted to the revival and stimulation body referred to in section D of the recommendation, in co-operation with any other relevant organisations

a. supplying technical and artistic assistance and advice to craftsmen, in particular to young ones who have set up their own firms, in connection with production, management and marketing;

giving direct or indirect aid to firms and/or guaranteeing loans for which they apply;

supplying all types of information relating to crafts, including statistics, namely:

- to the authorities,
- to craftsmen,
- to the general public, with the help of all the media;

encouraging further training, in particular by awarding grants to craftsmen who have no other means of acquiring it;

ensuring the protection of original work and providing quality control of craft products by awarding, where appropriate, a quality mark or label or a certificate of origin to products or a certificate of merit to craftsmen;

promoting quality of craft products by means of exhibitions and competitions.