

Recommendation on the promotion of craft trades involved in the conservation of the architectural heritage (86/15)

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 16 October 1986 at the 400th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

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

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members with a view to furthering their economic and social progress;

Having regard to the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe opened for signature on 3 October 1985;

Having regard to its Recommendation No. R (81) 13 on action in aid of certain declining craft trades in the context of craft activity;

Considering that in contemporary Europe:

- the growing importance of policies for the restoration and rehabilitation of the architectural heritage means that craft trades are once again a significant factor in economic and social life;
- craft trades and technical skills are as much a part of the European heritage as the works constituting the visible evidence thereof;
- the development of specialist crafts entailing the creation of many jobs may help to revive and stimulate the economy as a whole;
- the future of conservation crafts affords additional opportunities for youth employment and for personal satisfaction;
- the resurgence of the craft trades and the maintenance of high standards of heritage restoration and upkeep depend on a more skilled workforce and improved communication both in the negotiation of contracts and on sites,

Recommends that the governments of member states should, with regard to training, heritage conservation and vocational organisation, implement policies based on the following principles:

A. Providing for the future by improving the training and social advancement of craftsmen

Specialist conservation training is for three main categories of craftsmen: young people intending to take up a craft, craftsmen wishing to retrain or specialise, and specialist craftsmen seeking advanced skills and opportunities to compare experiences. These different needs require different types of training provision. Training should open up career and social advancement opportunities, which are essential to the upgrading of the status of craft trades.

a. Basic training combining theory and practice

- Practical work on conservation sites or training sites or in comparable vocational education workshops forms the centrepiece of initial training in heritage restoration and upkeep. General education and theoretical training are its vital counterpart.
- Training provided in centres outside firms should offer craftsmen advanced courses in specialist crafts. Owing to their specialisation, small and medium-sized firms are not always in a position to provide the full range of occupational skills for a given craft.
- Teachers and instructors should have both practical and theoretical knowledge acquired over several years of conservation work. They should be familiar with the principles of conservation and modern restoration techniques.
- Professional bodies and the authorities should co-operate at all times to adapt training systems to the requirements of the architectural heritage, to economic needs and to the interests of individual workers.

b. Taking the craftsman's specialist skills into account in his terms of employment and the organisation of his career

- Suitable qualifications should be awarded for initial and further training according to the standard of skill attained.
- Duties and wages should take account of any additional skills acquired if genuine career prospects are to be offered.
- Where possible, provision should be made for training leave and grants, as in other sectors, by agreement between the various occupations and the authorities.
- Future site foremen and managers of undertakings should be given special training.
- Further training in the context of in-service training should not only include instruction in traditional techniques but also take into account the contribution of new technologies and the cultural enrichment of individuals.

B. Stimulating the vitality of craft trades and facilitating the performance of contracts

The vitality of craft trades depends both on the maintenance of activity in the member states' free market economics and on better conditions for the performance of contracts and site work.

a. By maintaining the level of activity of craft firms

- The number of orders by public authorities, who are often building owners, directly influences the survival and expansion of conservation firms. The development of craft trades should therefore be given a suitable place in national, regional and local economic planning.
- Incentives to private orders also stimulate the development of firms. Low-interest loans and grants to private owners for the conservation of the architectural heritage keep the market active while providing a source of indirect public revenue.
- Systems combining public and private funds at national, regional or local level are a solution to the wide variety of needs. In particular, cost-sharing among a number of public and private agencies allows work to be carried out in cases where the building owner or user is unable to defray the cost of restoration unaided.
- While highly specialised work must be assigned to particularly well-qualified firms, monopoly situations should be ruled out. The existence of properly qualified small and medium-sized firms is a better guarantee of the conservation of the architectural heritage.

- In certain circumstances suitable financial support by public authorities may be necessary to ensure the continuance of highly specialist undertakings which are vital for heritage conservation but are in difficulty owing to the current low level of demand in their particular field.

b. By developing communication during the contract and on the site

- Every restoration programme should be based on a detailed study and preliminary survey of the building. This study, which should result from co-operation between conservationist, archaeologist and architect, needs to be made before the maintenance and restoration programme is drawn up. Close co-operation between the building owner and architect should be backed by precise planning, a cost estimate and visual material, if possible including models and samples.

- To avoid on-site errors and delays, there should be a proper regular exchange of information for the duration of the works between the various persons concerned.

- In addition to this vertical co-ordination, there should be a more effective horizontal flow of information between the various trades present on the site. An interdisciplinary approach based on proper communication leads to a better organisation of work and also considerable savings.

C. Adapting craft trades to innovation: the choice of materials

As a rule, conservation has recourse to traditional materials. The use of reclaimed materials cannot, however, meet all the needs of restoration. Traditional materials, even if imported, can run short. If replacement materials have to be used, the large number of them on the market and insufficient experience with them can create problems of choice. Precautions must be taken and standards adopted to prevent mistakes detrimental to the heritage.

a. By giving all possible assistance to the survival or reopening of firms producing traditional materials

The relevant national, regional and local authorities should, by maintaining demand and adopting a suitable information policy, assist the survival of firms producing traditional materials.

b. By choosing replacement materials carefully

The trades using such materials should be kept more fully informed about the nature, characteristics and effects of new materials on sale and of their ageing properties.

D. Stepping up European exchanges of experience and personnel

At bilateral and multilateral level, under the auspices of the Council of Europe and, where appropriate, of other specialist institutions, it is important:

a. To intensify exchanges between specialist centres for training in restoration crafts

- Various kinds of specialist training centres are growing up in a number of European countries. A regular exchange of information, experience and persons should be

established between these centres and with the European Centre for the Training of Craftsmen at Venice-San Servolo.

- Regular meetings, under Council of Europe auspices, between instructors from all these centres may facilitate co-ordination of their activities.
- At a high level of specialisation European exchanges of craftsmen in the context of in-service training contribute to the advancement of craft trades and help craftsmen to acquire skills and personal fulfilment.
- Exchanges of young people intending to take up the craft trades used in conservation are also of great value from the European point of view and may take the form of joint courses.

b. To develop exchanges of information

Materials and techniques information centres in the various European countries should be interlinked, particularly those in transfrontier areas with uniform architecture and materials.