

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN THE PROTECTION OF THE HISTORIC AND ARTISTIC HERITAGE

DECLARATION OF MADRID

The activity always displayed by Europa Nostra in protecting the European cultural heritage and spreading awareness of it, reflects the growing recognition by the national associations among its members of the enormous value of this heritage, and also the high level of participation in a movement made up of people with initiatives and love for the Cultural Heritage, and of groups working in its defence. It reveals the efforts of a society in which individuals, groups and governments are working in the same direction, something formerly difficult to imagine in certain countries yet increasingly an established trend and one growing in momentum.

Therefore, Europa Nostra decided at its General Assembly held in Madrid during May 2016, to address the following considerations to all the citizens and institutions of Europe in the hope that they will contribute to deliberations on the great challenges currently facing the protection of the Cultural Heritage and efforts to make people more aware of its importance.

I

SOCIETY AND THE CULTURAL HERITAGE

With the consolidation of democratic and social states in Europe, the public authorities and civil society have become more aware of the importance of cultural assets and the need to protect them, no matter who is the owner, while setting out with greater precision the obligations of such proprietors. Greater education, and the role of cultural institutions and the state in making the Cultural Heritage more accessible, has led to a substantial increase in the appreciation of this heritage, a process expressed in associations and foundations for its defence.

This has led to a convergence between public authorities and civil society that has proved particularly beneficial for European culture and its components, civil society being represented both by associations and by individuals. For more than two centuries the cultural heritage has been protected and can be enjoyed due to this harmony between the State and the citizen. Thus, it is necessary to recognise that social participation in the management and dissemination of the Cultural Heritage is beneficial to improve both, while also leading to a positive spiral of ever more numerous actions in this field.

II

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Conservation of the Cultural Heritage, expressed today in greater sensitivity towards cultural elements, connects with the perspective of sustainability which is particularly necessary as the heritage is at the same time an important factor of economic development. This makes it necessary to manage accessibility with effective techniques of conservation that also avoid its trivialization, making such heritage available for the enjoyment of future generations and favouring policies to increase it and protect it in the long term.

III

THE SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL DIMENSION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Cultural Heritage possesses a social and historical dimension because it offers all human beings the possibility of better understanding their environment and their past, while increasing individual awareness and the capacity to enjoy and comprehend external reality.

IV

INDIVIDUAL APPRECIATION AND COLLECTIVE PROTECTION OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The notion of the collective interest of cultural elements leads simultaneously to individual appreciation and collective protection, leaving space for voluntary work by individuals and contributions by social groups, notwithstanding the action of the public authorities. In this way they both contribute, within the limits of their possibilities, to safeguarding fixed and moveable cultural assets as well as the natural heritage.

V

THE FORMS OF PRIVATE INITIATIVE

Private initiative, whether by associations and foundations or by private owners, already plays a decisive role in heritage management. Private owners make a prominent contribution by making available to society those items they have acquired by inheritance or for their personal enjoyment, administering them within a perspective of public enjoyment and so enriching the collective heritage and sensibility.

At the same time we should notice the increasing importance of apparently modest initiatives that have a real effect on heritage protection. This is the case of crowd funding, which allows private enthusiasts to take part by means of contributions that reflect a high degree of sensibility capable of mobilising the interest of individuals and groups, while at the same time obtaining financial resources for the conservation and restoration of heritage items and spreading awareness of them.

However, the intervention of different types of participant in the management of the Cultural Heritage can lead to problems and conflicts, making it necessary to recognise the context in which they operate. Social participation should be mobilised with appropriate methods while incorporating specialists and experts with the knowledge required to ensure an acceptable outcome.

By reason of the importance acquired in our world by social participation in heritage management, the appreciation, conservation and enjoyment of such heritage may be expected to grow, while of course respecting the

sphere of action of the public authorities. For this purpose the necessary legal structures must be in place.

VI

THE NECESSARY COMPLEMENTARY ACTION OF THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

Notwithstanding the decisive participation of society, the public authorities and administrations representing society as a whole have a clear duty to design and put into effect public policies to protect and increase the Cultural Heritage, while spreading awareness and facilitating enjoyment of it. Social participation cannot replace public intervention and financing, but rather it should act in a complementary manner. However, these public authorities and administrations do not always offer formulae that permit an adequate development of social initiative projects, though such initiatives often generate wealth in the medium and longer term.

This circumstance increases the importance of patronage and sponsorship. The authorities should make a sustained effort to encourage such public-spirited action by means of generous fiscal arrangements that encourage private efforts. Public policies will be more efficacious and more sensitive if society contributes its own ideas, its material and personal collaboration, and if it contributes to the general good by identifying cultural elements worthy of protection.

VII

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN APPRECIATION OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Widespread education for citizens has made it possible for the knowledge of a studious and perceptive minority to be received more widely in society, so encouraging enjoyment and participation. This beneficial effect must not be detained, and the public authorities need to incorporate subjects enabling students to appreciate the Cultural Heritage into school curricula. This incorporation into study programmes is very necessary due to the rapid evolution of the very concept of Heritage, which now has a

transversal view extending to objects and subjects that until recently lacked widespread recognition.

VIII

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Following the example of the great intergovernmental organizations, civil society is taking steps to establish networks of international cooperation in the defence of the Cultural Heritage. This cooperation, as practised by Europa Nostra, should be increased in order to take full advantage of the accumulative effects of joint efforts between persons of different national origin.

IX

CONCLUSIONS

The social and legal recognition of the participation by society in the management of the Cultural Heritage is of particular importance because:

- a) it allows the ever insufficient resources of society and the public authorities to be managed more efficiently for the protection of the historic and artistic Heritage;
- b) it consolidates social awareness of the value of the Cultural Heritage of a community, from the local to the international level;
- c) it provides the public authorities with interlocutors well qualified to identify elements of the Cultural Heritage requiring protection and to help formulate efficacious administrative action for this purpose;
- d) it helps to raise awareness of memory as an expression of a recognisable past that reinforces the identity of the citizens; and
- e) it is complementary to public-sector action and private protection initiatives, so allowing them to interact.

THEREFORE, AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF EUROPA NOSTRA HELD IN MADRID DURING MAY 2016, ON THE PROPOSAL OF HISPANIA NOSTRA, THE FOLLOWING DECLARATION WAS MADE:

- The participation of society in the management of the Cultural Heritage, in the national and international area, is an achievement resulting from the wider spread of culture and from the interest it evokes for both social and economic reasons.
- This trend has generated greater public awareness of history and Cultural Heritage, so contributing to an affirmation of identity and leading to greater appreciation, protection and enjoyment of the historic and artistic Heritage.
- This participation is today a necessary and excellent complement to the obligatory intervention of the public authorities, and this convergence of aims helps to neutralise other interests that do not favour the Heritage.
- Therefore, it is essential to recognise this growing social involvement by establishing appropriate legal and managerial channels permitting this collaboration to increase and become more efficacious in the future.