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REPORT

on the protection of the European natural, architectural and cultural heritage in rural and island regions
(2006/2050(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Nikolaos Sifunakis

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the protection of the European natural, architectural and cultural heritage in rural and island regions (2006/2050(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 151 of the EC Treaty,
- having regard to the UNESCO Convention of 16 November 1972 concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,
- having regard to the Council of Europe Convention of 3 October 1985 for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada),
- having regard to the Council of Europe Convention of 16 January 1992 on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valetta),
- having regard to the European Landscape Convention of 20 October 2000 adopted by the Council of Europe (Florence),
- having regard to the Council of Europe Framework Convention of 27 October 2005 on the Value of the Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro),
- having regard to its resolutions of 13 May 1974 on the protection of the European cultural heritage¹, 14 September 1982 on the protection of the European architectural and archaeological heritage², 28 October 1988 on the conservation of the Community's architectural and archaeological heritage³, 12 February 1993 on preserving the architectural heritage and protecting cultural assets⁴ and 16 January 2001 on the application of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in the Member States of the European Union⁵,
- having regard to Decision 508/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 February 2002 establishing the Culture 2000 programme⁶,
- having regard to the European Parliament's position of 25 October 2005 at first reading with a view to the adoption of Decision No .../2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Culture 2007 programme (2007-2013),
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,

¹ OJ C 62, 30.5.1974, p. 5.

² OJ C 267, 11.10.1982, p. 25.

³ OJ C 309, 5.12.1988, p. 423.

⁴ OJ C 72, 15.3.1993, p. 160.

⁵ OJ C 262, 18.9.2001, p. 48.

⁶ OJ L 63, 10.3.2000, p. 1.

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A6-0000/2006),
- A. whereas the cultural heritage is a major element regarding the identity and historical development of the peoples of Europe,
- B. whereas 'cultural heritage' encompasses both tangible and intangible elements, which are constantly enriched by the cultural and creative contributions of each successive generation,
- C. whereas the cultural heritage includes both the architectural heritage and the natural heritage marked by man's way of living in time and place,
- D. whereas the European Union is dedicated to the task of promoting and conserving cultural diversity and quality of life and protecting the environment,
- E. whereas conservation of the numerous elements of cultural heritage provides a foundation for further social and economic development and thereby enhances environmental protection, employment opportunities and European integration,
- F. whereas the cultural heritage is of particular importance in rural areas which, while making up 90% of Europe's territory, are feeling the effects of abandonment, dwindling populations and economic stagnation,
- G. whereas Europe's islands, in particular the smaller ones, have largely succeeded in preserving unaltered their original configurations and their considerable cultural heritage requires suitable support, protection and promotion,
- H. whereas it is important to conserve and develop not only monuments but also other elements of cultural creations which shape and make possible suitable living conditions for today's inhabitants of the EU,
- I. whereas the European cultural heritage in its entirety, independently of its European, national or local dimension, of fundamental value to European citizens,
- 1. Calls on the Council to recognise explicitly the contribution made by the cultural heritage to European integration in terms of European identity and nationality, sustainable economic and social development, intercultural exchanges and cultural diversity;
- 2. Calls on the Commission, in drafting its legislative proposals, to implement effectively the horizontal clause of Article 151(4) of the EC Treaty with regard to culture, considering in depth the implications of the proposed legislation for culture and the cultural heritage with a view to ensuring that measures to promote them are embodied in all European Union policies;
- 3. Takes the view that the cultural heritage must be regarded as an indivisible whole requiring the adoption of joint protective measures;
- 4. Stresses that sustainable development presupposes an integrated approach to the cultural,

natural and architectural environment in both urban and rural areas while calling for particular attention to be given to the European cultural heritage in rural areas;

5. Stresses also that particular attention should be given to the protection and promotion of the natural and architectural heritage of Europe's island areas;
6. Takes the view that action taken in rural and island areas must take into consideration the following principles:
 - a sustainable balance between population and environment,
 - an integrated approach to traditionally agricultural areas,
 - participation by the local populace in the drafting and implementation of policies and alignment between their views and decisions made by the central authorities;
 - ongoing dialogue with social, private and voluntary organisations actively involved with the cultural heritage,
7. Urges the European Union, the Member States, the local authorities and cultural, non-governmental organisations to take action to protect and rehabilitate Europe's cultural heritage, particularly small traditional communities, and raise public awareness of its importance;
8. Considers that the factors to be taken into account in order to develop this particular sector, with due regard to the subsidiarity principle, must include:
 - a systematic survey of the rural heritage,
 - the creation of a legislative framework to guarantee its protection, incorporating incentives for the conservation of traditional buildings and communities and for measures to ensure that new buildings activities are compatible with nearby historical buildings and with the local architecture,
 - financial assistance for the restoration of local monuments and the continuation of traditional farming methods,
 - comprehensive restoration of traditional habitats and traditional forms of architecture, involving the proper use of modern materials and the incorporation of modern fixtures in traditional structures in such a way as to avoid detracting from their character,
 - conservation of local know-how and traditional professions,
9. Calls on the Member States and regional and local authorities to provide where necessary incentives for the demolition or modification of buildings out of tune with and detracting from, the particular architectural character of the community or locality in which they are situated or with the natural environment and surrounding buildings;
10. Calls on the Member States, in cooperation with the Commission, to promote the protection and conservation of their cultural heritage through the structural funds and

existing LEADER +, URBAN II and INTERREG III initiatives which will in the forthcoming financial period (2007-2013), be incorporated in the new political cohesion and common agricultural policy financial instruments;

11. Calls on the Member States to bear in mind that financial incentive strategies must involve coordination between central and local authorities and other local bodies and institutions (not forgetting that much of the listed heritage is religious in nature) while seeking to protect and improve the natural and cultural environment of the localities concerned;
12. Calls on the Member States to encourage and support the development of sustainable alternative tourism, giving priority to small traditional communities with the assistance of Community financial instruments such as the European Regional Development Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Fisheries Fund etc.;
13. Calls on the Commission, within the framework of existing Community programmes, such as the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, to promote measures to support craft, applied arts and professional activities, particularly those in danger of disappearing and necessary for proper restoration and conservation of the architectural heritage;
14. Calls on the Commission and Member States to encourage training for professionals specialised in the use and management of space, architecture, building restoration and repair and related activities, so as to conserve the particularities of the cultural heritage while bringing them into line current needs; calls in addition for measures to improve training for craftsmen and suppliers of traditional materials and for the selection of methods involving their continued use;
15. Calls on the Commission, within the framework of the 7th Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013) to support efforts to develop new tools, techniques and methods for the conservation of the cultural heritage;
16. Calls on the Commission and Member States not to provide Community funding for projects which will demonstrably result in destruction of valuable parts of our cultural heritage;
17. Calls on the Commission, within the framework of existing Community programmes, to adopt measures to facilitate greater accessibility and encourage small companies, traditional crafts and trades and local traditions and customs, independently by a large-scale campaign to promote villages and communities within the Member States, so as to contribute decisively to the development of the local economy and the rural exodus;
18. Calls on the Commission to promote the sharing and exchange of experiences in this field through international conferences and meetings;

19. Calls on the Commission, principally within the framework of the Culture (2007-2013) programme to give partner networks in the various Member States the opportunity of implementing multiannual projects to promote fully restored traditional communities, with a population of say, less than 1000;
20. Considers that such measures will make it possible to organise cultural activities seeking to develop the cultural heritage of these communities with the more long-term aim of strengthening cooperation between traditional communities in Europe and enabling them to develop their specifically local cultures together with their European dimension;
21. Wishes for the future development of an action in favour of small, traditional communities along the lines of that instituting the cultural capitals;
22. Considers that the 'European Union Cultural Heritage Prize' administered by 'Europa Nostra' is a valuable initiative which should be followed up in future; considers that, in this connection a new category of awards for the best overall restoration of a traditional community should be introduced to encourage those communities which have managed to conserve all or part of their traditional configurations to step up their efforts in this direction;
23. Welcomes the recent proposal within the framework of the Council for the compilation of a European cultural heritage list and calls on the Commission to support it; takes the view that in this context, particular importance should be given to the local cultural heritage of rural and island areas, taking account also of the intangible aspects of the cultural heritage; takes the view that candidate countries must also be invited to participate in this initiative;
24. Calls on the Council and Commission to promote a 'European Cultural Heritage Year' so as to make the European public more aware of the importance of taking the necessary measures to promote their cultural heritage;
25. Calls on the Commission and Member States to cooperate with the Council of Europe with a view to further promoting traditional communities and the architectural heritage in rural and island areas as part of the 'European Cultural Heritage Days' initiative so as to make the European public more aware of the value of local architectural monuments;
26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Council of Europe.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. Towards a comprehensive European Union cultural heritage strategy

The European Union will have achieved a common European identity when its citizens are convinced that they share the same culture. It is therefore essential for European Union policies to give priority to recognition of the common natural and architectural cultural heritage and its consequences for future generations as part of a shared history and a source of inspiration for the future.

The conservation and promotion of the cultural heritage must be considered as integral to the European Union's overall objectives as set out in Article 2 of the EC Treaty.

The European Union must also adopt a comprehensive approach to the cultural heritage so that provisions to uphold it are included in all policy areas.

The Article 151(4) of the EC Treaty states '*that the Community shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of this Treaty in particular in order to respect and promote the diversity of its cultures*'. This effectively means that culture must be considered across the board in connection with all European Union policies. This is particularly important with regard to the cultural heritage which, by its very nature, must be taken into account with regard to agricultural, regional, environmental, research, education and other European Union policies.

This horizontal clause of the Treaty is the key to effective action by the EU institutions to protect and conserve the cultural heritage.

When the Commission draws up legislative proposals its Directorate-General for Education and Culture must accordingly give greater consideration to their impact on culture and the cultural heritage so that the horizontal dimension of culture is put into practice in a more correct way in all European Union policies.

2. Recognition of the cultural heritage of rural and island areas

The report seeks to stress the specific nature and the importance of the European natural and architectural cultural heritage, in view of the numerous benefits to be derived in social, environmental, and economic terms and for European integration.

More specifically, the report seeks to pinpoint the challenges arising in connection with this lesser-known aspect of the cultural heritage, that is to say European cultural heritage of rural and island areas, which require greater protection, giving particular attention to small traditional communities.

Almost 90% of the territory of the enlarged Europe is made up of farmland containing precious wildlife reserves and cultural assets. Despite this, many policies regarding rural areas fail to reflect sufficiently their specific nature and their actual needs. Rapid urban growth has not only economic but also environmental, social and cultural implications, affecting the

cultural heritage of rural areas, which remain an important part of our collective European memory and a source of creativity.

The current trend is to target the most promising manifestations of our cultural heritage, that is to say the finest monuments, the best conserved old cities and major historical and archaeological sites. While their continued conservation is essential, similar attention must also be given to promoting Europe's rural and island areas, in particular small traditional communities.

However, this valuable cultural heritage is constantly being undermined by social and technological progress, modern farming methods, unbridled economic exploitation and property development and human indifference.

It is therefore essential to be aware of the importance of a natural way of life and the need for long-term management of the cultural heritage in rural areas to improve the quality of life of all European citizens.

Effective policy in this area must be based on the following principles:

- a. sustainable balance between the population and the environment,
- b. an integrated approach to traditionally agricultural areas, transcending circumscribed sectoral concerns and involving consultation between the central authorities and local populace,
- c. participation of the local populace in drafting and implementing policies and alignment between their views and decisions taken by the central authorities.

3. Protection and promotion of the cultural heritage in rural and island areas

The specific proposals contained in this report seek to ensure that the European Union, the Member States, the local authorities and non-governmental cultural organisations take specific measures to safeguard and develop Europe's natural and architectural cultural heritage, particularly in rural and island areas and small traditional communities.

Its proposals include the following:

- a systematic survey of the cultural heritage in rural and island areas
- the drafting of a legislative framework to conserve it,
- funding for the restoration of local monuments and continuation of traditional farming methods,
- comprehensive measures for the restoration of traditional communities original architectural configurations, remedying any previous interventions running counter to this purpose,

- training for professionals involved in the use and management of space, architecture, the restoration of buildings and related activities in how to conserve the specific nature of the heritage while meeting present-day needs,
- training and support for craftsmen and suppliers of traditional materials and the use of methods facilitating their reutilisation.

4. Actions at European Union level

Given the inadequate funding earmarked for Community cultural programmes, additional appropriations must be sought from other Community instruments to safeguard the cultural heritage.

Greater attention should therefore be given to the cultural heritage, which should be fully integrated into European Union policies and financial instruments, including the common agricultural policy and cohesion, research and cultural policies etc.

(a) The common agricultural policy

Rural development has become the second pillar of common agricultural policy in the Community. Measures to improve the environment, landscape and quality of life in rural areas is one of the priorities contained in the Council decision concerning Community rural development strategies (2007-2013).

The Community LEADER+ initiative which will, in the forthcoming financing period (2007-2013), form part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development has greatly contributed to developing the cultural and architectural heritage of rural areas. Similarly the development of rural tourism, which is one of the objectives of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, may also help to conserve and promote the heritage of rural and island areas.

The rapporteur considers that Member States should in future make better use of common agricultural policy appropriations.

(b) Cohesion policy

The structural funds, together with the existing URBAN II and INTERREG III Community initiatives, which will in the next financing period (2007-2013) form part of the new cohesion policy financial instruments, are also making a major contribution to conserving and developing the cultural heritage.

However, the use of the structural funds for cultural heritage projects varies greatly from one Member State to another. Countries such as Greece and Portugal have, under the Community Support Framework launched specifically cultural operational programmes, while other countries have failed to manifest their similar interest.

Member States should therefore be encouraged to use the structural funds to promote their cultural heritage.

(c) *The Culture 2007 Programme (2007-2013)*

The scope and funding of the Culture 2000 programme which has to-date given considerable support to cultural heritage projects are limited. In addition this programme does not finance projects seeking to restore buildings or monuments.

It would therefore be a good idea to explore new possibilities under the new Culture 2007 programme (2007-2013).

Given that partner networks in the Member States are given the opportunity of submitting multiannual projects under the Culture programme, consideration could be given to creating a network of, say, five or more fully restored traditional communities with a population of under one thousand situated in different Member States.

In this case measures could be taken to promote their cultural heritage with a view to increasing cooperation between traditional communities in Europe, enabling them to promote not only their distinctive local cultures but also their European dimension.

5. Cooperation with the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe, through its numerous initiatives, many taken in cooperation with European Union, is playing an important part in conserving the European cultural heritage.

One example of this is the introduction of European Heritage Day, during which monuments and sites normally closed to the public for the remainder of the year open their doors to visitors. In this connection it would be possible to step up initiatives to develop traditional communities and the architectural heritage of rural and island areas so as to make the European public more aware of the value of local monuments.

It is essential for the EU and Member States to take account of the numerous Council of Europe Conventions on the conservation of Europe's cultural, archaeological and architectural heritage and strengthen their cooperation with this body under Article 151(3) of the EC Treaty.

6. Other actions

Finally, Europe's cultural heritage may be promoted through other specific initiatives such as:

(a) the introduction of a 'European Year for Cultural Heritage' with the objective of making European citizens more aware of the importance of promoting their cultural heritage, while making provision for the necessary measures;

(b) In connection with the 'European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage', which is administered by Europa Nostra, a new category of awards could be introduced for the best overall restoration of a traditional community, providing a major incentive for communities which have conserved all or part of their traditional configurations to come forward.

PROCEDURE

Title	motion for a European Parliament resolution on the protection of the European natural, architectural and cultural heritage in rural and island regions
References	(2006/2050(INI))
Legal base	Rule 45
Committee responsible Date announced in plenary	CULT 16.3.2006
Committee(s) asked for opinion(s) Date announced in plenary	REGI 16.3.2006
Not delivering opinion(s) Date of decision	REGI 20.4.2006
Rapporteur(s) Date appointed	Nikolaos Sifunakis 3.10.2005
Previous rapporteur(s)	
Discussed in committee	20.3.2006 29.5.2006 13.7.2006
Date adopted	13.7.2006
Result of final vote	+: 26 -: 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Maria Badia I Cutchet, Ivo Belet, Guy Bono, Marie-Hélène Descamps, Jolanta Dičkutė, Věra Flasarová, Hanna Foltyn-Kubicka, Milan Gaľa, Claire Gibault, Vasco Graça Moura, Lissy Gröner, Luis Herrero-Tejedor, Ruth Hieronymi, Manolis Mavrommatis, Marianne Mikko, Ljudmila Novak, Doris Pack, Zdzisław Zbigniew Podkański, Christa Prets, Pál Schmitt, Nikolaos Sifunakis, Hannu Takkula, Helga Trüpel, Henri Weber, Thomas Wise, Tomáš Zatloukal
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, Nina Škottová
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	
Date tabled	20.7.2006
Comments (available in one language only)	2 substitute members from PPE were present, but only 1 vote was taken into account for the final vote.