



EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT (EUR-OPA)

Recommendation 2009 - 1 of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents, adopted at its 57th meeting in Dubrovnik, Croatia (15-16 October 2009), on Vulnerability of Cultural Heritage to Climate Change

The Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA),

Noting that extreme weather events are expected to increase in frequency and intensity in the next decades as a result of climate change;

Recognising that climate change is an important threat to cultural heritage, likely to increase in the coming years;

Conscious that the foreseen changes in temperature and rainfall in Europe and the whole Mediterranean Region will affect the conservation of the cultural heritage, and that rising temperatures, increased or decreased humidity and the frequency of floods, forest fires, coastal erosion, landslides, heat waves, droughts, sea level rise and change in groundwater patterns will have consequences on the stability of historical buildings, integrity of archaeological sites and conservation of materials and collections that may result if their further deterioration or ageing;

Conscious that the deterioration and, in some cases, loss, of cultural heritage would have negative consequences for European and Mediterranean societies, in particular because of its value as a source of identity and livelihood;

Noting that the preservation of existing heritage structures and traditional building materials and methods have advantages in terms of carbon footprint over building new structures and producing new materials;

Mindful of the global dimension of this problem and of the responsibilities of European and Mediterranean states at the world scale, as signatories of numerous international treaties, agreements and strategies within the United Nations system and the Council of Europe;

Recognising that landscapes form part of cultural heritage, but conscious that the effect of climate change on landscapes requires a more specific approach, given the relevance of their biological, environmental and agricultural components;

Recommend Member States to:

1. assess the risk to cultural heritage from climate change, including sites, building and objects that may be affected both by climate-related events and/or by gradual change in environmental conditions;
2. identify those cultural assets at higher risk and evaluate necessary preventive and adaptation measures;
3. promote the adoption of emergency planning for those sites most vulnerable to events such as floods, landslides, coastal erosion and extreme weather-related events;
4. assess the potential impact of mitigation measures, such as renovation of buildings for improved heating efficiency, on cultural heritage;
5. promote at the national level inter-agency cooperation on climate change and cultural heritage, integrating heritage concerns into disaster risk-reduction policies;
6. encourage international cooperation on vulnerability of cultural heritage to climate change, favouring research, action and synergies among international organisations in this field and promoting exchanges of knowledge and experiences within member states and also with other non-member states;
7. integrate as appropriate cultural heritage into the adaptation policies to be promoted at international climate change negotiations;
8. promote training among heritage professionals aimed to recognise and deal with climate change impacts of cultural heritage;
9. foster the inclusion of the appropriate courses within education institutions on the science and management of cultural heritage in a context of climate change;
10. promote and support research on the effects of climate change on cultural heritage, including adaptation and prediction strategies, in particular on :
 - a. vulnerability of materials to climate change;
 - b. development of tools to monitor and manage change;
 - c. effects of lowering water tables and coastal erosion on archaeological sites and built heritage;
 - d. increase in bio-deterioration risk for cultural assets;
 - e. economic evaluation of heritage loss and degradation as a result of climate change
11. encourage local and regional authorities and people with responsibility on managing cultural heritage to be aware of the risks to sites, buildings and objects from a changing climate.