



Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Heritage, Namur 22-24 April 2015

Intervention

Opening remarks

The European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations (E.C.C.O.) is delighted to participate at this the 6th Conference of Ministers responsible for Cultural Heritage and welcome the proposed Declaration of Namur. Our Confederation celebrates its 25th anniversary next year, and represents 23 organisations from 22 countries across Europe. This amounts to a membership of approximately 6000 professional conservator-restorers working within Europe at the moment.

The aim of E.C.C.O. has always been to support the care and preservation of cultural heritage for society through high standards in the practice of conservation-restoration. This informs all our activities and relationships, our educational and legislative endeavours. The Professional Guidelines and a Code of Ethics, which E.C.C.O. has developed, are the standard in the European conservation-restoration world. These documents direct principled interventions of conservation and restoration to cultural heritage. A fully delineated framework of professional competences determines levels and types of knowledge and skill that are required for professional practice; these in turn support the learning outcomes for a discrete education and training to a Masters degree qualification equivalent to level 7 on the European Qualifications Framework.

Working towards mutual recognition and parity amongst our members, it is obligatory that these core documents are officially recognised in our member organisations' statutes.

On Partnerships

Defining conservation-restoration contextualises how society understands and values the resource that is cultural heritage in direct relation to its appropriate care and sustainable use. Conservation-restoration is part of the analytical discourse around cultural heritage. In the spirit of the Faro Convention, E.C.C.O. sees conservation-restoration as contributing to and being part of the critical dialogue on heritage values, authenticity, contested heritages, public participation, and heritage stewardship. E.C.C.O. also sees itself as the nexus or fulcrum point between the profession on the one hand and the care and preservation of cultural heritage on the other and as this care is in the general public interest.

These considerations inform the networks and collaborations that E.C.C.O. fosters to promote understanding and the exchange of information and knowledge. We liaise closely with the European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education ENCoRE, we have had a delegate on the Council of Europa Nostra and many of our members are active in ICOMOS. We have a long working relationship with ICCROM and formalised it in a Memorandum of Understanding signed

last month. This MoU seeks to promote conservation-restoration at European level and has its beginnings in earlier work. ICCROM supported E.C.C.O. in a previous initiative with the former steering committee of the CoE, CDPATEP to develop a Recommendation and Charter on conservation-restoration.

Recognising the centrality of cultural heritage to our European and national identity, it is important that a common political and legal culture develops guiding principles for its usage and care. In this sense standards in the practice of conservation-restoration are essential given that the conservator-restorer is legitimately charged to intervene and possibly effect changes to that cultural heritage. Such guiding principles should govern the work of professionals and to a larger extent involve them in the continuously negotiated process of identifying, defining and managing cultural heritage. This in turn would lead to better understanding and engagement with the public and volunteering communities in the processes of care.

E.C.C.O. welcomes the recognition and emphasis that is given to conservation-restoration within the cultural heritage discourse that has taken place here over the last two days. E.C.C.O. welcomes the Namur Declaration which provides a clear statement of intent and point of reference for the development of strategies which support and promote cultural heritage as a resource critical to our social and economic wellbeing. We thank Mr Bruno Favel, President of CDCPP, for his acknowledgement of E.C.C.O. and the work of conservation-restoration. In turn E.C.C.O. is very conscious of the work of CDCPP as it contributes to European policies for the care and sustainable use of cultural heritage.

In any discussion on cultural heritage E.C.C.O. would like to achieve consensus at European level on what exactly conservation-restoration means and entails. By extension E.C.C.O. argues that the quality of conservation-restoration interventions depend on the provision of a discrete education so that the appropriate competences are acquired.

We would very much appreciate if the Council of Europe would continue to consider the development of a Recommendation and Charter within the work of the new steering committee CDCPP. Should CDCPP decide to address such a Recommendation, perhaps it could be elaborated within an effective legal framework for the integrated conservation of heritage as discussed in Point 4.2 of the Declaration of Namur. E.C.C.O. would like to offer its expertise in the elaboration of any such strategies arising out of this Declaration and thank the Council of Europe for the opportunity to participate here today.