



Runnymede Declaration: Promoting and Preserving Europe's diverse Culture and Heritage

Runnymede

2 June 2014

The European Alliance (EA) group at the Committee of the Regions, at its extraordinary meeting in Runnymede (England), held on 2 June 2014, confirmed its commitment to actively contribute to the preservation and promotion of the European cultural heritage, and agreed on the following declaration.

The European Alliance group:

1. considers culture and cultural heritage as a human value, supporting national, regional and local identity, protecting cultural and linguistic diversity, with due respect for lesser used and regional languages; promoting culture and cultural heritage is essential in order to strengthen democratic values in Europe and to contribute to social and economic cohesion;
2. sees European cultural heritage as a dynamic **factor in the showcasing of European diversity**, and recalls its key role in forging a vital sense of identity and a European sense of belonging;
3. recognises that cultural heritage is a very **broad concept** which does not include only tangible artefacts but a wide range of shared values, beliefs, lifestyles and practices which strongly influence our perceptions and our daily lives;
4. stresses that it is of paramount importance to preserve and promote the different **regional** and local **identities** which make the European cultural heritage unique, such as language, folklore and traditions which are endangered by migratory movements and economic globalisation; at the same time acknowledges the huge socio-economic benefits that our cultural heritage brings through activities such as arts, tourism, food specialities, and enjoyment of the historic environment;
5. at the same time, emphasises that respecting regional and local cultural diversities and specificities is a **precondition for democratic accountability**;

6. stresses that it is fundamental that **young people** know their heritage and feel it as part of their identity. In this regard calls for a more proactive approach to promoting European cultural heritage and its diversity among young people and children, while dedicating particular attention to avoid any form of discrimination;
7. draws particular attention to Europe's **endangered cultural heritage and languages**, threatened by the financial crisis and budgetary cuts in the domain of culture, but also by neglect, lack of expertise, large-scale urban development, post-conflict circumstances and conflicting policies;
8. notes that all across Europe there are numerous **insufficiently promoted heritage sites**, such as historical towns and cities, which have considerable untapped social and economic capital;
9. firmly believes that more attention should be dedicated at the policy level to the **potential of cultural heritage to create sustainable growth and jobs**, especially in the tourism industry, and to the multiple benefits this could generate, especially at local level; invites the European Union to respond to the social, political and economic challenges it faces;
10. in this regard, stresses the huge importance of coordinated actions and calls for an **EU-level strategy** for the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in Europe, which would take full account of the need to preserve local specificities while, at the same time, reversing further decline of the heritage in danger;
11. calls for EU support to enable greater **cooperation, exchange of best practices and stimulation of innovative business models** among cultural institutions across the Union, and to introduce more measures in the field of cultural and Heritage sites, which would not only be restricted to Structural Funds;
12. calls for an increased use of innovative **IT tools** for the promotion of cultural heritage in Europe and the creation of networks between cultural institutions and organisations to raise awareness and interest in cultural-historical sites, museums, local and regional languages and traditions;
13. supports the further promotion of excellent initiative such as the **European Heritage Days**. The cultural events organised during the month-long celebration showcase local skills and traditions, architecture and art, as well as seeking to promote mutual understanding among European citizens;
14. instructs its president to forward the declaration to the CoR President, European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council.