

*European Recommendation for the
Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage*

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This proposed Recommendation has been drafted by

**E.C.C.O.,
European Confederation
of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations,**

with the participation of

**ENCoRE,
European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education**

and the support of

**ICCROM,
International Center for the Study
of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property**

Introductory report
into the draft European recommendation
on the conservation-restoration of cultural heritage

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Cultural heritage helps to define European identity. It is a fundamental expression of the richness and diversity of European culture. An irreplaceable witness of the past, the protection of our cultural heritage presents a common interest to European states, which must ensure it is passed on to future generations.

In order to fulfil this responsibility, each state has set up specialist institutions and services and adopted a legislative framework under which cultural goods, recognised for their historic or artistic value, or according to other patrimonial criteria, are subject to a legal regime which can provide in particular for their conservation-restoration.

Some cultural goods lie outside this system of protection or have not yet been recognised according to criteria proposed by national standards or laws. These goods are no less part of the cultural heritage, the conservation-restoration of which it is important to ensure in accordance with principles which guarantee the quality of action taken and the continuity of this heritage.

But the analysis of the legal systems of protection of cultural heritage and the registering of situations confronting professionals in conservation-restoration reveal serious gaps which may compromise the effectiveness of the principles of protection set out by these legal systems and the quality of the conservation-restoration services and work.

1. Conservation-restoration of cultural heritage

a) Definition

Conservation-restoration contributes to the preservation and dissemination of knowledge of cultural property for the benefit of present and future generations, with regard to their historic and aesthetic significance, their physical integrity, their contexts and social use.

Conservation-restoration includes every action or measure, direct or indirect, in connection with a cultural good or group of goods, developed and carried out in order to satisfy the dual aim of preserving and disseminating knowledge about cultural heritage.

b) European issues

In Europe, the definition and implementation of standards for protecting and conserving cultural heritage come first and foremost under the responsibility of the state. Each state formulates its own conception of national cultural heritage, in terms of its history and the cultures present in its territory.

This national reality imposes itself on conservators-restorers and can have a direct effect on the practice of their profession. This effect will be all the stronger if the heritage is public property or burdened by protection easements under national law relating to cultural heritage. The geometry of the legal framework for conservator-restorer services thus varies according to the legal qualifications of the cultural heritage on which they are being carried out. Following this principle, the importance given to conservation-restoration by national legislations is directly dependent upon the status of the cultural property: protected/unprotected and/or public/private property.

	Public property	Private property
Legal protection easements or measures (implemented under national law)	Standardised conservation-restoration intervention / Control by public authorities responsible for heritage	
Unprotected heritage (no legal protection measures)	Standardised conservation-restoration intervention / Control by the public property system	No control on conservation-restoration of unprotected cultural property

Furthermore, European community law issues standards which have a direct effect on the practice of the profession of conservator-restorer. These standards relate primarily to systems of recognition of diplomas and qualifications as well as to conditions drawn up by states for entering and practising the profession.

The profession of conservator-restorer of cultural heritage is thus confined within this ambivalence: entry to and practice of the profession are determined by community regulations, whereas the status of cultural heritage at which they are directed, and the standards of conservation-restoration are governed by national provisions, controlled by states and are likely therefore to vary greatly by country. In other words, the professional environment – professional qualifications, entry to and practice of the profession, are greatly affected and determined by European community law, while the conditions for carrying out work on cultural property, which are part of the cultural heritage of the state, are largely determined by national laws.

The provisions of community law which apply to conservators-restorers in relation to their professional qualifications, entry to and practice of the profession are of a general nature. At present,

they do not therefore provide for any special rule which takes into account the specific nature of conservation-restoration of cultural property. Furthermore, the diversity of national principles of protection and conservation of cultural heritage does not favour the adoption of intervention protocols common to the states which would recognise the role, functions and contribution of conservators-restorers in the process of preserving cultural heritage.

2. A common political and legal culture in conservation-restoration

The material conservation of cultural property and, in the same way, the passing on of cultural heritage to future generations depend on the expertise and competence available to carry out the conservation-restoration work. This work includes in particular diagnostic examination into the state of conservation, preventive conservation, remedial conservation (stabilisation, consolidation, disinfestation), restoration (cleaning, resticking, replacement and integration of missing elements), documentation (collection, recording and organisation of written and visual information on cultural heritage).

The intervention work is carried out with the aim of ensuring the continuity of European cultural heritage. However, in the field of conservation-restoration, the degree at which this intervention is taken into account by national legislation, assuring the recognition and protection of cultural heritage, remains different and variable.

Moreover, awarding of the professional title of conservator-restorer depends on conditions and levels of training which vary among the states. Without interfering in the community system for recognising diplomas and training, it would appear essential that states should be asked to develop higher levels of specialised training in conservation-restoration.

The development of such training is the natural extension of the greater interest which the state accords its heritage.

Whether it is in the context of taking into consideration conservation-restoration intervention measures or in the field of training professionals, it is important that guiding principles are determined which should govern the work of professionals in the processes of conservation-restoration, and to a larger extent involve them in the continuous process of defining and managing cultural heritage.

These guiding principles must spread a common culture of conservation-restoration of cultural heritage, the protection and conservation of which enriches European cultural heritage. Therefore, the conservation-restoration of cultural heritage defined and practised according to principles common to the European states should guarantee the value and the potential of the cultural heritage, as a resource for long-term development and for quality of life in a society which is constantly evolving.

3. Draft recommendation on the conservation-restoration of cultural heritage

This draft recommendation is in line in particular with an institutional process to, on the one hand, reinforce the recognition of the specific nature of conservation-restoration professions within cultural and training policies as well as in the standards aimed at preserving European cultural heritage and, on the other hand, to spread these principles among states.

The draft European recommendation on the conservation-restoration of cultural heritage in Europe therefore develops essential elements, of an ethical or deontological nature, on which the discipline is based and which the states are invited to incorporate in their national legislation regarding the protection of cultural heritage.

The draft recommendation develops, in the field of conservation-restoration of cultural heritage, the concept of integrated conservation. The states are thus invited in particular to consider conservation-restoration becoming an integral part of the planning of projects relating to cultural heritage and that it should be taken into consideration as soon as these projects are drawn up.

The draft recommendation comes within the scope of the regulatory framework developed by the Council of Europe in relation to the conservation and preservation of the cultural heritage. It implements a partial extension of the principles of the framework convention on the value of cultural heritage for society, signed in Faro on 27th October 2005. It also links with the resolutions adopted at the European Conferences of Ministers responsible for Architectural Heritage (*resolution relating to the economic impact of heritage conservation* adopted at the 2nd European Conference of Ministers responsible for Architectural Heritage, held in Grenada on 3rd and 4th October 1985 ; *resolution on the priorities of a pan-European project for cultural heritage*, adopted at the 3rd European Conference of Ministers responsible for architectural heritage, held in Valletta on 16th and 17th January 1992 ; *resolution on cultural heritage, as a factor of lasting development*, adopted at the 4th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Architectural Heritage, held in Helsinki on 30th and 31st May 1996).

The objective of this recommendation is to form a reference text and to propose common standards which, based on the principles recognised by conservation-restoration professionals, assume political and legal value. The recommendation is addressed to governments, inviting them to adapt and develop their legislation and their national regulations according to the terms of the recommendation and the annexed charter.

This deontological charter on the conservation-restoration of cultural property, annexed to the recommendation, reinforces the scope of the latter. The charter was drawn up in cooperation with ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property).

The charter defines the role and scope of conservation-restoration in relation to the historical, aesthetic, spiritual and social values and meanings of cultural property, seen both in their physical

integrity and in relation to their context. It determines the degree of need for intervention and the constraints which are imposed when the conservation-restoration protocols are implemented. The charter thus mentions in particular that conservation-restoration must take into consideration the needs linked to the social uses of cultural heritage.

The recommendation and the charter annexed to it are indissociable and together are aimed at creating a pan-European framework in the field of conservation-restoration capable of promoting a dynamic process for implementing principles guiding the recognition and protection of cultural heritage in Europe.

RECOMMENDATION ON THE CONSERVATION-RESTORATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Committee of Ministers, in virtue of article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to bring about a closer union among its members, particularly in order to protect and implement the ideals and principles that are their common heritage;

In view of the European Cultural Convention signed in Paris on 19 December 1954, notably article 1;

In view of the Convention for the Safeguard of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, opened for signature in Granada on 3 October 1985, recognising that the architectural heritage constitutes an «irreplaceable expression of the richness and diversity of the cultural heritage of Europe, an inestimable testimony of our past and shared by all Europeans», notably its articles 6, 8, 10 paragraph 2, 17 paragraph 3, 18 and 19;

In view of the European Convention for the Protection of the Archeological Heritage (revised) signed at Valletta on 16 January 1992, underlining that «responsibility for protection of the archaeological heritage falls not only on the State directly concerned, but also on all European countries, in order to reduce the risks of degradation and promote conservation, in supporting exchanges of experts and experience», notably its articles 3 paragraph i-b), and 4 paragraph ii;

In view of the framework-Convention of the Council of Europe on the value of cultural heritage, signed at Faro on 17 October 2005, highlighting the «value and potential of well-managed cultural heritage as a resource for sustainable development and quality of life in a society in constant evolution», notably its articles 1, 9 and 11b ;

In view of the resolutions of the 2nd European conference of ministers in charge of architectural heritage, held at Granada on 3 and 4 October 1985, notably Resolution no. 3 regarding the economic impact of heritage conservation;

In view of the resolutions of the 3rd European conference of ministers in charge of architectural heritage, held at Valletta on 16 and 17 January 1992, notably Resolution no. 3 regarding the priorities of a pan-European project for cultural heritage;

In view of the resolutions of the 4th European conference of ministers in charge of architectural heritage, held at Helsinki on 30 and 31 May 1996, notably Resolution no. 2 on cultural heritage, factor of sustainable development;

In view of these previous recommendations:

Recognising that cultural heritage constitutes not only an irreplaceable expression of the wealth and diversity of European Culture, but also a resource for sustainable development and quality of life in a society in constant evolution;

Considering that interventions on cultural heritage must act with respect for its integrity and not compromise its intrinsic values;

Judging that the conservation-restoration of cultural heritage is one of the essential factors in ensuring its transmission to future generations;

Observing that specific questions of conservation-restoration must be borne in mind when Member States are defining global policies for the protection and safeguard of their cultural heritage;

Underlining that high-quality interventions on cultural heritage can only be ensured through systems of professional qualification including continuing professional development as the basis for recognition of the people, firms and organisations in charge of conservation-restoration

Noting that cultural heritage must be protected and safeguarded by implementing, where necessary, appropriate conservation-restoration treatments and/or preventive measures guaranteeing long life to cultural heritage and the respect of its values,

Recommends to the governments of the Member States:

- to refer to the principles contained in the charter annexed to this recommendation when developing juridical standards that define and organise conservation-restoration, as well as the implementation of conservation-restoration strategies for their cultural heritage;
- to guarantee the quality of conservation-restoration work by making sure that conditions of access to and exercise of the profession of conservator-restorer are incorporated in the framework of a system recognising advanced professional qualification, based on the level of studies in conservation-restoration (university or recognised equivalent) and on the quality of acquired professional experience;
- to encourage and to support the development of specialised higher education in conservation-restoration that closely unites the teaching of theoretical and practical subjects.
- to include the conservation-restoration of cultural property into the measures that comply with the objectives of integrated conservation of cultural heritage;
- to consider that conservation-restoration is an integrated part of project planning involving cultural heritage and should be taken into consideration from the outset.
- to adapt their national legislation and orient their conservation-restoration policy for cultural property following the principles declared in the present recommendation;
- to take, with the support and collaboration of the professional organisations concerned, all appropriate measures to assure the implementation of these principles, established by the present recommendation.

Charges the General Secretary of the Council of Europe to transmit the present recommendation to the States that are not parties to the European Cultural Convention.

The charter annexed to the present recommendation forms an integral part of it.

CHARTER REGARDING THE CONSERVATION-RESTORATION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY,

annexed to the recommendation on the conservation-restoration of cultural heritage.

1. Objectives of conservation-restoration

Conservation-restoration contributes to the safeguarding and understanding of cultural property benefiting present and future generations, in its aesthetic and historical meanings, its physical integrity, its context and its social uses.

2. Definition of conservation-restoration

The term ‘conservation-restoration’ means any direct or indirect treatment or measures that are planned and carried out on cultural property, following the objectives defined in point 1 of this Charter.

3. Treatments and Measures in conservation-restoration

Conservation-restoration is a coherent, coordinated, integrated and systematic process of studies and activities that include planning, treatment and measures intrinsic to preventive conservation, remedial conservation and restoration, as well as documentation of each phase in this process.

- a) The planning process encompasses historical, technical, scientific and feasibility studies to determine objectives and methodologies, in the establishment and evaluation of proposed conservation restoration work.

A diagnostic examination is intrinsic to the process as it determines the constituent materials of the cultural property, enables an assessment of its condition, identifies previous alterations – their nature, extent, and causes – leading to treatment recommendation.

- b) Preventive conservation consists of indirect actions on cultural property with the purpose of avoiding or delaying its deterioration.

Preventive conservation is an indispensable part of handling, use, transport, climate control, storage and display of cultural property.

- c) Remedial conservation is direct intervention on cultural property in those cases where it is so fragile, or its deterioration is so rapid that it is at risk of being lost.

Remedial conservation mainly consists of interventions to stabilize, consolidate and disinfect.

- d) Restoration consists of direct intervention on cultural property, which due to past alterations or deterioration, has lost part of its meaning. Restoration is a complex ensemble of actions

aimed at facilitating the appreciation, the understanding and the utilisation of the cultural property. Most often, it modifies the appearance and state of the cultural property.

Restoration can include actions such as cleaning, re-adhering, and the reconstruction and integration of missing parts

- e) Documentation consists of collecting, recording and organising all written and visual information on cultural property including its condition, treatment and measures as previously described in a), b), c) and d). It includes the justifications for conservation-restoration decisions. This documentation is integral to the cultural property and its conservation-restoration.

4. Principles of conservation-restoration

All interventions must respect the following principles:

- a) Conservation-restoration must respect the aesthetic, historic, spiritual and social meaning of cultural property and take into consideration both its physical integrity and context.
- b) The products, materials and procedures used must not harm cultural property nor pose an unjustifiable risk to the environment and people. The methods and operational mode as well as the materials used, must not compromise – as to the extent possible – any future examinations, treatment and analyses.

Method and materials must also be compatible with the constituent materials of the cultural property. Conservation-restoration treatment should be governed by the principle that all treatments are reversible.

Should a reproduction, copy or cast of a cultural object be contemplated, the procedures implemented should not involve undue damage to the original.

- c) Conservation-restoration must consider the social-usage requirements of cultural property. Should social usage of cultural property appear to be incompatible with its preservation, the owner or juridical body responsible for it must be advised of the fact.
- d) Conservation-restoration planning must be an interdisciplinary process between the conservation-restoration specialist in charge of the project, and other responsible stakeholders.

The responsibilities of these different individuals or organisations must be established and shared according to their professional qualifications.

This charter is annexed to the recommendation on conservation-restoration of cultural heritage.