



EU ENLARGEMENT

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CULTURAL HERITAGE AND EU ENLARGEMENT

Europeans can see shows in the restored Roman theatre in Cartagena, or stay overnight in preserved buildings with strong historical and architectural character in France and Germany. They can marvel at the restored monuments of the Byzantine citadel of Mystras, near Sparta, witness the revival of ancient handicrafts in villages around Cserehát in Hungary, or enjoy concerts by the foundation of early music that Jordi Savall runs in Barcelona. These are just some of the cultural heritage projects that the EU has supported in recent years.

Culture is primarily a matter for individual countries, whether they are Member States of the EU or are preparing to join it. The EU treaty speaks of contributing to "the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore."

This is why the EU supports actions in preserving cultural heritage – including with European Heritage Days, when every September more than 20 million people enjoy access to thousands of rarely open sites and unique events across Europe.

Countries aspiring to join the EU need to demonstrate their readiness to share these objectives. Among the many other conditions they must meet in order to join the EU, they need to have the legal and administrative frameworks in place both for national purposes and for cooperating with other countries and international organisations in preserving cultural heritage. Laws on cultural heritage have to adequately harmonise with planning law, and local construction work needs to be regulated. Countries are required to ratify the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society. Some are preparing strategies on cultural heritage, while the EU is encouraging the extension of cultural heritage programmes and insisting that they take account of minority cultures too. They are also encouraged to take part in the

EU's Culture programme - which encourages national authorities, the cultural sector and EU institutions to work together in promoting cultural diversity and exploring and exploiting cultural heritage as a catalyst for creativity and innovation.

The enlargement countries are rich in cultural heritage. The Roman Amphitheatre in Durrës, in Albania, the Vinča-Belo Brdo neolithic settlements on the right bank of the Danube near Belgrade, and in Turkey the Armenian church of St. George in Mardin and the historic city of Hasankeyf, feature on a list of the 14 most important endangered sites in Europe.

PROTECTING EUROPEAN HISTORICAL SITES – AN EXAMPLE



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- **Name:** Town Hall in Sarajevo
- **Built:** 1892-1896
- Used as a **People's and University Library** 1949-1992, containing approx. 2.5 million titles
- Set on fire and completely **destroyed in 1992** during the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- On **Prioritised Intervention List (IRPP/SAAH)** since 2004
- Later funded through Ljubljana Process with a total of 5 million EUR (IPA 2009/10)
- Restoration works include:
 - reconstruction of **authentic interiors**
 - restoration of painted and plaster **decoration**
 - preservation of **fragments, decorations and wall paintings** in accordance to the reconstruction plan that was conceived and designed by the beneficiary
- Once repaired, this building will be used for the purposes of the public institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as a cultural space.

A wide range of programmes and projects are being backed by the EU, alongside the enlargement process. A pilot project is developing rural tourism around the renovation of Novobërdë/Novobrdó castle in Kosovo*. Joint actions in cultural heritage protection are bringing Croatia and Montenegro together, and restoring the Ottoman fortress of Besac, in southern Montenegro, is intended to promote tourism in the lake Skadar region on the frontier with Albania. In Bosnia and Herzegovina a pilot scheme for preserving and restoring cultural heritage in conflict areas in the Western Balkans is taking place at Stolac, with reconstruction of heritage as a bridge between communities.

But it is not just a question of organising folk-dance festivals and son-et-lumière shows at old castles. Ambassador Dimitris Moschopoulos, Head of the Greek Liaison Office in Pristina, has been helping to develop understanding between Serbia and Kosovo over preserving the religious and cultural heritage of the Serbian Orthodox Church. This is a particularly sensitive exercise, since so much of this Serbian heritage is on the territory of Kosovo. Cultural heritage has taken on a very specific political significance in this context. The EU has made any progress in Kosovo's European integration dependent in part on improving protection of Serb heritage, and the subject has also been discussed in the dialogue that is developing between Serbia and Kosovo. But the process has also been assisted by several projects where the EU has backed restoration and rebuilding of some of the vulnerable sites.

"We have now managed to set up a joint body to move this forward", Dimitris Moschopoulos says, looking back on the three years he has worked on behalf of the EU as a facilitator of the process. "This implementation and monitoring council was proposed years ago, to designate and ensure protection



of zones of special interest. The big challenge – which we have at last overcome – was to obtain participation of the Serbian Orthodox Church, because there had been no contact with Kosovo. Another big challenge was to win participation of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, because that required agreement by all its members – including Serbia. All sides have shown a lot of courage and goodwill, and we have now had three meetings of the council." It has been the discreet diplomacy of Dimitris Moschopoulos and his team that have made it possible for this meeting of minds, with its resonances not just for religious sites but for understanding and mutual respect in what has been a deeply troubled region. Modestly, Moschopoulos insists: "It's really a question of enlightened self-interest. Both sides stand to win. Serbia can ensure preservation of its most important assets. And Kosovo has the chance to show the world it respects the heritage of a neighbour".

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.