



CONCLUSIONS

Conference "the framework Convention of the Council of Europe on the value of cultural heritage for society (Faro, 27 October 2005)", Venice, March 1-3, 2013

The conference on the framework Convention of the Council of Europe on the value of cultural heritage for society has been a crucial moment to disseminate the principles of the Faro Convention and to profoundly brainstorm about its potential and its concrete application.

The main aims of the meeting were to identify concrete actions and measures in order to ensure an effective implementation of the specific objectives pursued by the Convention:

1. Promoting the idea of *Cultural Heritage* not as a goal but as a *useful resource for society*.
2. Recognizing *access and participation* to cultural life as a *basic human right*, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
3. *Broadening the involvement* of the civil society throughout the ongoing process of defining and managing cultural heritage.
4. Recognizing the potential for the sustainable development of the territories, emphasizing the connection between local communities, their cultural heritage and the environment.

The participants recognized at first the need to ensure the dissemination of the principles and values of the Faro Convention at the institutional and political level throughout Europe, in order to ensure the knowledge of the Convention and favour a better cooperation between different stakeholders in the field of cultural heritage.

The need for a deeper understanding of the topics established by the Convention was also stated in order to better define methodologies of its application. This point requires improving national statistical information and creating new measurement tools in order to assure concrete evidence of the contribution of the cultural heritage to human, social and economic development.

Moreover the Venetian event was the occasion for sharing experiences and best practices among some of the most important institutional actors and members of the civil society of both national

and European level. The debate provided some key issues and concrete proposals that could be the starting point for the development of a virtuous process, the so-called “Venetian Process”.

Following the events promoted by the Council of Europe office in Venice, the “**Venetian Process**”, should be an important laboratory to define innovative participative and democratic approaches applied to the cultural field (expanding to other policy fields as tourism or labor) and develop common practices and strategies both of national and European interest.

The first step to be encouraged is the creation of a **Venetian focus group** defining procedures and tools in close dialogue with the city of Marseilles, which offered a practical example of efforts to apply a “Faro approach”. The cooperation between the two cities should be intensified taking into consideration the “European Heritage Forum”, planned in September 2013.

The experience brought by the association “Faro Venezia” raised the awareness about the importance of a widespread engagement of the civil society in the practical actions required. Promoting the diffusion of tools such as the “heritage promenade”, introduced by the “Faro Venezia” association, would be an important means to spread the values of the Convention. In close connection with this, a **widespread network of local clubs and organizations** should be promoted in order to foster the exchange of good practices and ideas between public authorities and civil society. The use of digital technology and social networks should be also encouraged and developed.

A debate is open on the creation of a Venetian **Heritage Commission**, based on the example offered by the city of Marseille. This would be an instrument of public participation in cultural heritage management, between “heritage communities”, public authorities and civil society associations. Within the “heritage commission” might be arranged special committees concerning key themes identified by the local community.

The education and training issues are equally relevant for the development of the “Venetian process”, with the aim of a sound implementation of the provisions of the Convention. Considering a previous experience realized in San Servolo Island by the Council of Europe, the creation of a **European centre for the Arts, crafts and ancient traditions** will be encouraged, in connection with similar European initiatives. A public proposal has been presented by the Marco Polo System GEIE for the Forte Marghera area. The specific objective would be the creation of a European network of Arts and craft training centres.

Recognizing the importance of the preservation and knowledge of the traditional craftsmanship and traditions, new concrete actions were explored. The main proposal concerns **the creation of inventories** to document all the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills embedded in the venetian region. This initiative, which should be held directly by local communities, would prevent the threat of disappearance of such richness. Furthermore, a second list was proposed in order to address the recognition of the need to preserve and promote the “local cultural heritage” **as it is conceived and identified by each local “heritage community”** and which give high value to this specific heritage (which could be different from the heritage identified

by the Minister of Culture or cultural institutions). Both of these inventories provided a relevant instrument of cultural democracy.

Recognizing the value and the potential of cultural heritage for human development, cultural diversity and the promotion of intercultural dialogue, the participants furthermore encouraged the creation and the enhancement of a **European network of cities** to promote the principles of the Faro Convention.

This could end to the realization of as symbolic declaration, **the “Venetian Chart”** drawing the main guidelines and actions to be taken by municipalities and local communities in order to preserve and put in value their heritage as it is seen from the local community point of view. The Chart may be a kind of “Declaration of intent” creating a network of cities supporting the spread of the principles of the Faro Convention and calling the community to actions for the preservation of their proper cultural heritage to future generations, defining innovative procedures and methodologies.