

The Document of Vienna 1-12-1998

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Introduction

On 30 November 1 December 1998 a European conference was held at the Akademie der bildende Künste in Vienna. It was the closing event of the so-called FULCO project (A Framework of Competence for Conservator-restorers in Europe). The outcomes of this meeting were laid down in this "Document of Vienna", that was unanimously adopted. It represents the present consensus in the European conservation-restoration community on verifiable professional standards for conservator-restorers and a number of related issues.

The FULCO-project gratefully acknowledges the support of :

- the European Commission/DG X
- the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
- the Akademie der Bildende Künste In Vienna, Austria
- the Austrian Ministry of Science and Transport
- the Austrian Ministry of Education and Culture

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Background

General

The participants at the Vienna meeting reconfirm and recognise the importance of the landmark documents produced so far for conservation-restoration, such as the Charter of Venice (1964), the ICOM-CC Definition of the profession (1984), the E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines (1993/4), the UNESCO Cultural Heritage Definition (1996), the ICOMOS Guidelines for education and training in the conservation of monuments, ensembles and sites (Colombo, 1993) and the Document of Pavia (1997).

As these documents form the basis of our actions, they are considered to be of permanent importance for the present and the future.

Factual

The origin of the FULCO project is to be found in the Amsterdam workshop "Centres of Excellence" ¹. Following this, the Document of Pavia, among other important recommendations, expressed the need to develop a definition at European level of the full range of professional competence of the conservator-restorer ².

The FULCO project dealt with one aspect of this recommendation and has proposed a draft framework of competences for discussion at Vienna ³. This project was undertaken as a means of contributing to the safeguarding of the cultural heritage. It is part of an ongoing process of discussion and development. The paper produced for the Vienna meeting has served as a stimulus for discussion and has encouraged the participants to identify a number of key issues that need to be addressed. Although the issues relating to professional standards are complex and difficult, thinking on them has undoubtedly been moved forward. There has been recognition of the need to further the process of harmonisation of quality, across the whole professional network. There is also a need for greater transparency in the conservation-restoration field, both inwards amongst the profession of conservator-restorer itself and outwards towards all other parties involved.

Issues

The participants of the meeting in Vienna, 30 November - 1 December 1998, recognised that, in some circumstances and some countries, a framework of competences has proved to be of value. However, further development at a European level of the definitions of the professional competences should be closely linked to the implementation of the following main and urgent recommendations, based on the document of Pavia:

1. the legal recognition of the profession of conservator-restorer at the European level (Pavia, 4th Consideration) ;
2. the harmonisation of conservation-restoration education at university level or recognised equivalent (Pavia, Recommendations 1, 3 6) ;

Further steps must include the publication of a common glossary to aid in communication (Pavia, Recommendation 12).

Furthermore, the participants of the Vienna meeting have identified the following new issues :

3. the need for clarification of "university level and recognised equivalent" ;
4. the need to analyse the different legal frameworks for regulating the safeguarding of the cultural heritage in European countries ;
5. the need to analyse the conservation-restoration process in its context, which means identifying each methodological step and all parties involved at each step ;
6. the need to progress from guidelines and recommendations to effective, common criteria of evaluation of activities which aim to safeguard cultural heritage, on the basis of consensus documents ;
7. the need to identify the different parties involved in conservation-restoration and their distinctive roles ;
8. the need to encourage dialogue between professional bodies and :
organisations and institutions ; commissioning bodies ; regulators and those who own or are responsible for cultural heritage, in the interests of safeguarding our cultural heritage.

Agenda for the future

The participants of the Vienna meeting strongly recommend to the European Commission and other relevant authorities that they should support any initiatives able to address the above issues which are carried out in association with E.C.C.O. and other professional bodies concerned.

Any further development at European level of the definition of professional competences of the conservator-restorer must be led by the profession itself.

- Issue 1 will be coordinated by E.C.C.O.
- issues 2 and 3 will be coordinated by ENCoRE, in association with the CONBEFOR project.
- The development of the glossary will be initiated the Technological Educational Institution of Athens (TEI), Department of Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art.

Notes

1. Report on the European Workshop 'Centres of excellence', 15-16 May 1997, Amsterdam, P.46, 2.c.
2. Document of Pavia, 21 October 1997, Recommendation 4.
3. F U LCO, a framework of competences for conservators- restorers in Europe. A discussion -paper for the Vienna meeting by Kate Foley and Steph Scholten, 16 October 1998.

4. Greece is the first European country to have legally recognised the conservation-restoration profession at the highest educational level: Law 2557/1997, Official Gazette of the Hellenic Republic NO 271, article 9, Special provisions.

The Vienna Document was signed by all participants :

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Annexe to the Vienna Document 1 December 1998

Working Glossary for the Vienna Meeting

[commissioning body / clients]

any body or person who orders (commissions) conservation-restoration work and allocates funds for it

[professionalisation]

the process of becoming a recognised profession

[regulator]

any public sector / state organisation which has the authority to establish rules for conservation-restoration

[accreditation]

accreditation is the process of admitting members to a profession

[registration]

is the listing of individuals based on given criteria

[recognition]

is the formal acknowledgement of a profession by the state or the EU

[professional network]

all the professional actors involved in the process of conservation-restoration

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