Council conclusions on architecture: culture's contribution to sustainable development

(2008/C 319/05)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. HAVING REGARD TO:

— the Treaty establishing the European Community,

— the Council Resolution of 12 February 2001 on architectural quality in urban and rural environments (¹), which affirms that architecture is a fundamental feature of the culture and the fabric of life of each of our countries,

— the Council conclusions of 24 May 2007 on the contribution of the cultural and creative sectors to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives (²), which point out that cultural activities and creative industries, including architecture, play a critical role in boosting innovation and technology and are key engines of sustainable growth in the future,

— and the Council Resolution of 16 November 2007 on a European agenda for culture (³) which, further to the Commission communication of 10 May 2007 (⁴), brings out the cross-cutting role of culture.

2. TAKING NOTE OF:

— the renewed European Union Sustainable Development Strategy (⁵), adopted by the European Council of 15 and 16 June 2006, the overall aim of which is to identify and develop actions to enable the EU to achieve continuous improvement of quality of life both for current and for future generations, through the creation of sustainable communities able to manage and use resources efficiently and to tap the ecological and social innovation potential of the economy, ensuring prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion,

— the Leipzig Charter on sustainable European cities, adopted on 24 May 2007 by the Ministers with responsibility for urban development (⁶), which underlines the importance of building culture and calls for the adoption of an integrated urban development approach covering the economic, social, ecological and cultural aspects of towns and cities, on the basis of cooperation between the different tiers of administrative and political responsibility and between public and private sector actors.

3. WELCOMING:

— the work of the European Architectural Policy Forum on issues of architectural quality and sustainable development.

(¹) OJ C 73, 6.3.2001, p. 6.
(²) OJ C 311, 21.12.2007, p. 7.
(³) OJ C 143, 10.6.2008, p. 9.
(⁴) 9496/07 + ADD 1.
(⁵) 10117/06.
(⁶) http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/download_docs/Mai/0524-AN/075DokumentLeipzigCharta.pdf

4. POINTING OUT THAT:

— architecture, as a discipline involving cultural creation and innovation, including a technological component, provides a remarkable illustration of what culture can contribute to sustainable development, in view of its impact on the cultural dimension of towns and cities, as well as on the economy, social cohesion and the environment,

— architecture is also an example of the cross-cutting nature of culture, being affected by a number of public policies and not just cultural policies.

5. CONSIDERING THAT:

— Europe's towns and cities today face major challenges: demographic change and its implications for urban sprawl, environmental issues and climate change mitigation, maintaining social cohesion, particularly against a background of economic and cultural change, and the protection and development of architectural and cultural heritage,

— the way to respond to those challenges is by means of sustainable urban development, a creative, integrated approach under which culture, economics, social affairs and the environment each play an equally important part,

— sustainable urban development means:

— paying particular attention to architectural quality and diversity as aspects of cultural diversity, to heritage conservation and enhancement and to the individual identity of natural or urban landscapes,

— contributing to the management of projects to use and convert land and buildings, in particular industrial wasteland, control energy resources in the context of climate change and reduce pollution,

— reflecting, through innovative approaches to architecture and urban planning, developments in population lifestyles, particularly issues of mobility and demographic change, as well as objectives of social cohesion, social mix, intercultural dialogue and civic involvement,

— encouraging high-quality architectural creation as an economic stimulus and tourist attraction for towns and cities,

— architecture can play an integrating and innovative role in implementing sustainable urban development, in particular by:

— reconciling the sometimes differing requirements of building and landscape conservation and contemporary creation or of inhabitants' legitimate aspirations and controlling urban sprawl,

— contributing, by its diversity, quality and creativity, to the urban population's cultural enrichment and quality of life and to the economic, commercial and tourism-related vibrancy of towns and cities, in particular by serving as a breeding ground for small and medium-sized businesses,

— sustainable urban development, lastly, provides an opportunity for creation, innovation, renewal architectural styles and the reappropriation and reinterpretation of traditional practice.

6. NOTING WITH INTEREST:

— initiatives by many European towns and cities, in particular as European cultural capitals, to use culture and especially architecture as a major means of regeneration,

— the emergence of creative towns and cities, whose sustainable urban development is based on new competitive factors, including urban infrastructure quality and interaction between culture and industry.

7. CALLS ON MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE AND WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

— make allowance for architecture and its specific features, in particular its cultural aspects, in all relevant policies, especially in research, economic and social cohesion, sustainable development and education policies,

— devise for architecture, apart from technical standards, an approach involving overall economic, social, cultural and environmental objectives,

— encourage innovation and experimentation in sustainable development in architecture, urban planning and landscaping, particularly within the framework of European policies or programmes and when commissioning public works,

— improve knowledge of the architectural sector and its contribution to sustainable development, particularly in terms of statistics,

— raise public awareness of the role of architecture and urban planning in the creation of a high-quality living environment and encourage public involvement in sustainable urban development,

— consider the feasibility, in cooperation with professionals and in the light of experience in a number of Member States, of an annual European architecture 'event',

— work together to ensure that these conclusions are acted upon and take stock of their implementation in 2012.

8. CALLS ON MEMBER STATES TO:

— endeavour to have architecture play an integrating and innovative role in the sustainable development process, beginning with the design stage of architectural, urban planning, landscaping and rehabilitation projects,

— help develop the economic growth and employment potential of architecture, as a creative, cultural industry,

— promote education in architecture and heritage, and in the living environment, in particular through artistic and cultural education,

— promote the initial and further training of architects, urban planners and landscapers as regards sustainable development,

— highlight architecture in implementing the European Year of Creativity and Innovation (2009),

— where appropriate, apply the open method of coordination for culture.

9. CALLS ON THE COMMISSION TO:

— take architecture into account in preparing its Green Paper on cultural and creative industries,

— involve networks of public and private-sector architectural experts and practitioners, such as the European Architectural Policy Forum, in work and consultations on issues and/or matters relating to architecture,

— in cooperation with those networks and the European network of schools of architecture, encourage:

— the provision of information and sharing of good practice and research among architects, developers and users,

— the training of young architects, urban planners and landscapers in sustainable development, promotion of their work and access for them to public or private Commissions.