

## **STRATEGY**

### **FOR IDENTIFYING, PRESERVING, SUSTAINABLY USING AND PROMOTING CULTURAL CORRIDORS OF SOUTH EAST EUROPE**

#### **Regional forum**

#### **“Cultural Heritage and Communications, a New Vision of South East Europe” Opatija, Croatia, June 1, 2006**

The guiding principles and general commitments of the Varna Declaration, adopted at the regional forum “Cultural Corridors of South East Europe” (Varna, 20-21 May 2005) reflect the political will of the countries in the region to preserve and use in a sustainable way their cultural heritage, both as an expression of cultural diversity and identity, and as a resource for human development and quality of life, but as well as for a sustainable dialogue in the region of South East Europe And the European area.

The Heads of states and other leaders and representatives from South East Europe, gathered in the Regional forum in Opatija, acknowledging the continuing support of UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, welcome this Strategy for identifying, preserving, sustainably using and promoting the *Cultural Corridors of South East Europe*.

**The strategic goal is to identify, preserve, sustainably use and promote *Cultural Corridors of South East Europe*, as a regional network to stimulate cultural, economic and social development, to discover new opportunities for better understanding each other, due to the widened and shared knowledge of the cultural heritage.**

The *Cultural Corridors of South East Europe* corresponds to trans-national axes of cultural connection and dynamic cultural exchange over time. They provide opportunities for co-operation in protecting and raising awareness of the cultural heritage of South East Europe, and for promoting cultural connections and sustainable economic development, which respect the cultural and patrimonial values. They foster understanding, intercultural communication, collaboration and growth, binding together national and local initiatives by public and private sector participants.

The Strategy for *Cultural Corridors* has been created by the ongoing expansion of the European Union and the political will for regional cooperation, as well as the UNESCO *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972), *Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage* (2001), *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003) and *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (2005), as well as the Council of Europe *Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe* (1985), *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage* (1992), *European Landscape Convention* (2000) and *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (Faro, 2005).

The Strategy was inspired also by the main principles, announced in the Varna Declaration, which are as follows:

- a) The region is developing a new confidence and capability, creating common space for dialogue, exchange and agreement, in which culture plays an increasingly important role;

- b) The rich cultural heritage of South East Europe is an essential element of the global cultural diversity; it makes a vital contribution to the European and regional identity, especially in the context of the European integration;
- c) The cultural heritage of our countries constitutes an invaluable resource for sustainable cultural, economic and social development, particularly through an innovative approach to cultural tourism in the spirit of the International Cultural Tourism Charter (ICOMOS 1999) and Recommendation (98) 4 of the Council of Europe on the cultural routes and the best practices, related to it and applied by the European Institute of Cultural Routes, Luxembourg;
- d) The protection, presentation and interpretation of the intangible and tangible cultural heritage should foster mutual understanding and respect for the heritage of others;
- e) The knowledge society, and information and communication technologies, have created opportunities for strengthening the role of cultural heritage in fostering dialogue both within the region and beyond it;
- f) Revealing and making accessible the cultural heritage of South East Europe will highlight the importance of the region and its contribution to the cultural heritage of the world;
- g) The historical links and axes of the inter-cultural dialogue and the exchange of ideas, beliefs, knowledge and skills, as well as the cultural goods and expressions, have given rise to a unique network of cultural corridors and cultural routes of South East Europe, which deserve to be identified, preserved, sustainably used and promoted and accessible for everybody.

These principles require a new vision for South East Europe, in which its cultural heritage is considered to be a universal language, which reflects the cultural diversity of the region and stimulates the intercultural dialogue.

**The specific objectives are:**

- A. *To identify the network of cultural corridors and the objects, values and manifestations that define them; and to accumulate knowledge about them in an integrated information network.*
- B. *To preserve the cultural potential of the corridors and the sites, monuments and objects of the non-material heritage related to them.*
- C. *To sustainably use the cultural corridors to facilitate exchange and cultural dialogue and to stimulate economic growth and inflow of investments, especially by cultural tourism, that respect the cultural and patrimonial values and the cultural diversity.*
- D. *To promote the cultural corridors and the sites defining them, and to form a new image of the region as a space of dialogue, exchange and accord, in which culture plays a role of increasing importance.*
- E. *To develop existing regional networks, consisting of national and international experts, in order to fulfil these four strategic goals.*

The practical tasks and activities for the implementation of the above-mentioned goals should be defined in an Action Plan, prepared by the experts of these regional networks, taking into account the national priorities and ongoing co-operation with international organisations. The Ministers of Culture of the region are invited to adopt this Action Plan.