



RIGA, 12-13 MARCH 2015

JOINT STATEMENT

Participants of the international conference “Heritage, Contemporary Architecture and Design in Interaction” which is being held within the framework of the Latvian Presidency in the EU Council in Rīga on March 12 and 13, 2015,

Building on the conclusions of the previous presidencies, recalling The Riga Charter on Authenticity and Historical Reconstruction in Relationship to Cultural Heritage (2000) and examining the essential interaction of heritage, contemporary architecture and design,

Recognising that

- Cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, helps to ensure the overall memories of societies, emphasising outstanding values from all times in terms of ensuring the quality of life;
- Care and management of cultural heritage is an interdisciplinary phenomenon;
- The concept of cultural heritage has become much broader, moving from individual architectural, artistic and historical works to a broad approach towards protecting, and, when appropriate, continued use of, the historical environment including its cultural, natural and social values;
- Each period of European history is marked out by its own architecture and design responding to the circumstances and social needs of the time, so that high quality and sensitive design can ensure sustainable, harmonious and inclusive development of society, creating an inspiring environment for present and future generations;
- There is a common European dilemma between development and conservation and the opportunity to resolve this is through appropriate architecture and design solutions;
- The future well-being of cultural heritage is possible only with dialogue in the professional environment at all levels from European to local and extensive consultations with the public;

Call upon international, governmental and municipal bodies, communities, planners, business people, owners, heritage professionals, architects and designers to:

1. Promote human centred approaches to contemporary creativity and innovation in the historic environment by creating bridges between cultural heritage, contemporary architecture and design to preserve the identity and history of every location in Europe while facilitating sustainable and high-quality living environments for people;
2. Focus increasing attention on the preservation of original cultural and historical values, because original elements are of the highest value and evidence of cultural diversity. The destruction of an original element means that society loses a component of the heritage that can never be recovered. Replicating buildings or architectural styles is acceptable only in exceptional circumstances;
3. Recognise that contemporary environmental design in public space has not only functional meaning, but should also confirm the most delicate aspects of social culture, attitudes and opportunities;
4. Promote contemporary creative innovation in architecture and design to emphasise and strengthen original and authentic tangible and intangible cultural values so as to present these more convincingly to the public including sustainable and quality tourism for all;
5. Ensure that decisions on any major changes are based on ethical principles, balanced cultural and historical analysis, justified policies for sustainable development and responsible long-term spatial visions, basing any change to cultural heritage on proper assessment of its values, including technical approaches and materials. To ensure a harmonious environment and to avoid conflict situations, contemporary architecture and design should respect the specific qualities and the typical spatial relationships of the area, the scope and nature of construction, and traditional materials while not excluding innovations that create added value for the spatial environment;
6. Emphasize that the co-existence between cultural heritage, contemporary architecture and design is delicate, needing to recognise meaningfully and respectfully the values created over time. Sensitive and high-quality contemporary architecture and design can offer added value, where shape, colour, materials and technologies create a dialogue. Such architecture and design should take into account demographic change by increasing seamless accessibility to places, buildings, products, services and systems. Dialogue about proposals must include people affected by the proposals as well as professionals;
7. Use all means, including the proposed European Heritage Year 2018, to facilitate and strengthen the awareness of cultural heritage and the principles outlined in this statement, as well as architecture and design, at every level of education and including in the framework of life – long learning.