



**EUROPEAN CENTRE
FOR BYZANTINE AND POST-BYZANTINE MONUMENTS**

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**THE THESSALONIKI CHARTER
FOR THE PROTECTION OF BYZANTINE HERITAGE MONUMENTS**

INTRODUCTION

The Thessaloniki Charter concerns the protection of monuments which are products of Byzantine culture -and its interaction with other traditions-, with regard to their intangible content, design, and construction, and which were built on the former territories of the Byzantine Empire or in regions of other states, employing the artistic design and construction principles of the Byzantine tradition.

This includes a total of cultural goods from late antiquity to the dissolution of the Byzantine Empire including monuments subsequent to this period, built in regions where Byzantine cultural traditions continued beyond the Byzantine presence.

The geographical area, to which the Charter refers, extends around the Mediterranean basin and the Black Sea region, spanning three continents. The territories of the once-vast empire today form part of the territories of many states, comprising different ethnicities, cultures, languages, religious and political ideals and different views and practices in relation to the assessment and the integral protection of cultural heritage.

1. Considering the monuments of the Byzantine heritage, as defined above, an integral part of the civilizations that developed around the Mediterranean basin and the Black Sea, valuable material evidence about the history of this turbulent region and commonly shared cultural goods for the peoples living in this geographical area,

2. Considering that the monuments of the Byzantine heritage comprise a distinctive and shared cultural entity, with common typology, morphology, conception, construction and function, which determined artistic creation for a millennium and influenced civilization for an even greater period,

3. Having ascertained the need for collection, systematization and specialization of the existing general conservation principles, on the basis of the particular needs for the protection of this cultural entity,

4. Noting the lack of a unified framework of protection principles among states with Byzantine heritage monuments in their territories,

5. Underscoring, therefore, the need for a more effective protection in combination with a more complete study of their particular features, and the problems created by their contemporary use and function,

6. Recognizing the need to raise the awareness of the peoples' of this region of their common Byzantine heritage in order to collaborate for the preservation of their common

cultural heritage and historic memory, while simultaneously strengthening interstate collaborations and intercultural dialogue,

7. Identifying the risks posed to Byzantine heritage monuments in certain regions due to civil, ethnic, and international conflicts,

8. Recognizing the need to promote the contribution of Byzantine heritage monuments as ingredients for sustainable development, education, and quality of life,

9. Highlighting the fact that the Byzantine heritage monuments are an inseparable part of world cultural heritage and that, although these monuments at the present time belong to countries with different historical pasts, they must, nonetheless, retain their rightful place within the successive presence of cultures, on an equal footing with monuments belonging to other eras, religions, and cultures.

10. Keeping in mind the internationally-accepted principles for the protection of monuments, specifically:

- The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, The Hague 1954

- The 2nd Protocol of the Hague convention, UNESCO 1954

- The Venice Charter, 1964

- The Convention of Illicit Trafficking, UNESCO 1970

- The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris 1972

- The Recommendation concerning the Protection, at National Level, of the Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris, 1972

- The Declaration of Amsterdam, 1975

- The Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas, Nairobi, 1976

- The Resolution concerning the adaptation of laws and regulations to the requirements of integrated conservation of the architectural heritage (76/28), Council of Europe 1976

- The Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, Granada 1985

- The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, Valetta 1992

- The Nara Document on Authenticity, 1994

- UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects. Rome 1995

- Convention for the protection of underwater archaeology, UNESCO 2001

- The ICOMOS Chart: Principles for the analysis, conservation and structural restoration of architectural heritage, 2003

- The ICOMOS Principles for the Preservation and Conservation/Restoration of wall paintings (2003)

- The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO 2003

- The European Landscape Convention, Florence 2004

- The Convention on the value of Cultural Heritage for Society, Faro 2005

- The Declaration on the conservation of the setting of heritage structures, sites and areas, Xi'an 2005

- The Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, including a glossary of definitions, 2011

- The Burra Charter 2013,

herewith is presented the general framework of principles and recommendations within

which all concerned in the protection and management of byzantine heritage monuments should act. These recommendations, which of course do not replace knowledge derived from in-depth analysis and study of each particular monument through interdisciplinary cooperation or the study of specialist scholarly literature, may be grouped as follows:

- A. Recommendations for the protection of byzantine heritage monuments.
- B. Recommendations for the restoration/conservation of byzantine heritage monuments.
- C. Recommendations for the management/enhancement of byzantine heritage monuments.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF BYZANTINE HERITAGE MONUMENTS

All states encompassing byzantine heritage monuments bear the responsibility for their safeguarding, preservation, protection, and restoration.

A. I. OBJECT OF PROTECTION

The entirety of Byzantine heritage monuments (hereafter 'monuments'), regardless of their religious or ethnic origin and identity, is the object of protection of this Charter, namely:

1. Individual monuments and their infrastructure, equipment, architectural or other decoration, together with their surroundings. These comprise not only those exquisite creations that constitute landmarks in the history of architecture and art, but also any buildings and structures of social, cultural, scientific, historical, archaeological, technical or symbolic significance.
2. Architectural complexes together with their surroundings, such as monasteries, sketes, cells, hermitages, agricultural or industrial complexes, palatial or administrative complexes, cemeteries etc.
3. Settlements such as historic cities, villages, and neighborhoods, regardless of their degree of preservation, together with their spatial environment, their constructions and their premises.
4. Works of fortifications and infrastructure, such as aqueducts, cisterns, baths, fountains, quarries, roads, bridges, harbor facilities, etc.
5. Archaeological sites together with their wider surroundings.
6. Religious sites of various communities, historical landscapes, gardens, parks, sites presenting anthropogeographic interest, which attest to the evolving relation between individuals or communities with their natural environment.

A. II. IDENTIFICATION-INVESTIGATION-DOCUMENTATION

Each state, within the framework of preserving the material remains of collective memory, is responsible for the survey, identification, research, and recording of its cultural heritage from all eras. Documenting, recording, and archiving monuments is an essential prerequisite for policy-making, and the planning and implementation of programs of protection, conservation, restoration, and management.

As Byzantine heritage monuments, as defined in A.I., constitute a cultural entity belonging today to different states, each state should record and include them in its catalogue of protected monuments.

Their recording should be carried out with an up-to-date digital inventory program, which can be shared and used by all interested states. The shared inventory program ought to be adaptable, expandable, economical, user-friendly, and web-accessible.

A. III. LEGISLATION

Apart from being an individual moral obligation, the protection of monuments is also a collective public responsibility, which thus demands that states adopt an appropriate legal framework and secure the requisite resources for the monuments' protection.

The above-mentioned legal framework needs to:

1. Be founded on the principle that monuments of all eras and all cultures constitute a universal heritage.
2. Guarantee the protection of both the material essence of monuments, and their intangible character, with emphasis on *in situ* preservation.
3. Prevent any destruction, damage or alteration to monuments, historical ensembles and their surroundings.
4. Outlaw the use of monuments for any military purpose.
5. Guarantee the preservation of monuments, their conservation, and, when required, their restoration, or protection from possible natural or human threats, while in the case of monuments on the verge of collapse, provide for immediate intervention to avoid these.
6. Foresee procedures for inspection and approval for intervention on monuments, historical ensembles, and their surroundings.
7. Provide for the prosecution of anyone responsible for the destruction, damage, or alteration to a protected monument and, in general, of anyone violating existing provisions for the protection of cultural heritage.
8. Ensure temporary protection for newly revealed cultural remains, including those not yet listed, until the time they come under legal protection.
9. Encourage the implementation of "integrated conservation" by making cultural heritage property part of contemporary social life. In order to implement an "integrated conservation" policy, the responsible authorities should establish a legal framework for the protection of monuments which is harmoniously integrated with relevant provisions on regional and urban planning and development policy, so as to place the protection of monuments on a broad and sound basis.
10. Provide for financial incentives and tax reliefs for the protection and restoration of monuments, encouraging private initiative and sponsorship.
11. Impose strict measures against illegal excavations and illicit trafficking.

A.IV. PROTECTION THROUGH REGIONAL, URBAN, AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

Monuments and historical ensembles are directly linked to the location they were built in and their surroundings, be they natural or human made. Consequently, alterations to their immediate—and occasionally, wider—environment through the execution of major public or private works alters this close relationship, causing aesthetic impairment as well as diminishing their value as historical sources. Furthermore, there are numerous cases of material damage caused by atmospheric pollution, vibrations, or disturbance of the ecosystem due to some

activity affecting the environment.

Therefore, a legal framework or special programs of conservation, restoration, re-use and enhancement cannot ensure the effective protection of both the tangible, as well as the intangible character of monuments; cultural heritage management must be an integral component of general planning and development policies, on a regional or urban scale.

The public authorities charged with the protection of monuments should collaborate closely with the services responsible for the environment, regional and urban planning, and development policy, as well as with local governments. This collaboration should be present during the research, planning and decision-making phases, as well as during the implementation of the studies. Furthermore, through a sustainable approach, the conservation, restoration, and use of existing buildings will determine the construction of new ones.

Specifically, the following are recommended:

1. Studies involving the environmental impact of public and private projects and the decisions resulting from these should perforce take under advisement the existence of Byzantine heritage monuments together with their surroundings within the context of a cultural continuum.

2. The obligation to include in the budget of major development works:

- a. The cost for carrying out archaeological investigations in the area, which should precede planning, so that their results can be taken into consideration for planning purposes, and
- b. The cost of protection, conservation, and enhancement of those monuments eventually uncovered.

3. The establishment, around monuments or monumental complexes, of protective zones, where appropriate conditions and limitations regarding uses and building activity are imposed, with the following objectives:

- a. The protection of the natural and human made environment.
- b. The preservation of the diachronic relation between a monument and its environment.
- c. The reduction to the absolute minimum of risks threatening the material existence of the monument.
- d. The preservation of accompanying buildings, even if these are not justifiably labelled as protected monuments in themselves.
- e. The enhancement of monuments and their function as landmarks.
- f. The facilitation of visitors' access to monuments, providing as well for their protection from unreasonable traffic.

4. Protective zones must be clearly designated with their limits made known to the responsible planning authorities as well as to the public. The areas covered by these zones depend on the particular features of each monument and the morphology of its surroundings.

5. The drafting and enactment of a protection plan primarily for monumental ensembles, such as historical cities, sectors of cities and historic sites, should have as its aim the protection of their material being, the preservation of their historical character, and the totality of their material, or tangible, and intangible characteristics.

The following in particular should be maintained:

- a. The urban fabric.
- b. Relations among buildings, open spaces, waterscape and landscape.
- c. The volume and form of buildings as determined by their scale, structure, materials, and

morphological features.

d. Relations between the protected monumental ensembles and the natural or human made environment.

e. Historical phases.

f. The flora and in some cases, fauna, when dealing with a historical landscape.

In cases where the addition of a new building is required, the new structure(s) should respect the existing urban organization, and above all the quality, scale and value of the urban fabric. The introduction of modern elements is acceptable if these are harmoniously integrated into the whole.

The protection plan should rely on comprehensive recording and an analysis mainly of archaeological, historical, architectural, technical, constructional, sociological and financial data, in order to identify buildings in need of protection. It should furthermore establish the basic guidelines and actions that should be taken into consideration at the legislative, administrative, and financial levels.

New functions and infrastructure networks required by contemporary life should be adapted to the particular features of heritage sites. Specifically, it is strongly recommended that vehicular traffic abide by strict regulations and parking areas be organized in such a way as to avoid altering the image of the monumental ensemble or its surroundings.

A. V. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES – EXCAVATIONS

The responsible authorities of each state have a responsibility to:

1. Determine the boundaries of archaeological sites and their respective protective zones with accuracy.

2. Impose the inspection of earthworks and subsequent possible rescue excavations in all public and private construction projects carried out in settlements and regions with documented or anticipated underlying archaeological strata, which date to the Byzantine period.

3. Provide for the implementation of legal procedures authorizing and monitoring excavations and archaeological research in general, ensuring the employment of specialized personnel and the adoption of scientific practices that use, whenever possible, non-destructive methods.

4. Establish reserve research zones at archaeological sites as investigation areas for future generations.

5. Prevent any illegal and unjustified removal of Byzantine archaeological evidence or artifacts.

6. Forbid the uncontrolled destruction of Byzantine phases and layers in order to investigate and uncover earlier phases during excavations.

7. Promote systematic publication of excavation findings and results as well as their dissemination to the wider public.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RESTORATION – CONSERVATION OF BYZANTINE HERITAGE MONUMENTS

The preservation of the architectural heritage is achieved, in practice, through the conservation of material and restoration; the latter, besides dealing with technical and ethical

issues of preservation, should include a long-term protection strategy.

B. I. GOALS – PRINCIPLES

1. Any intervention on a monument should be thoroughly documented.
2. The goal of restoration is to reveal, preserve, and highlight aesthetic, historical, and other values of a monument and is based on the respect for its original and authentic characteristics.
3. Notable additions of all period phases should be respected, since the purpose of restoration is not to return the monument to its original form. Cases where a proposal for the restoration of a monument entails the restoration of its original form are extremely rare.
4. The assessment and decision to remove later phases of a monument, including decoration, rests not only with the restorers, but must have the approval of responsible institutions and, in special cases, national or international scientific conferences.
5. Restoration stops when guesswork begins. Beyond this point, any work considered necessary for consolidation, aesthetic, practical, functional or any other reasons must be differentiated from the original architectural composition.
6. For historical reasons, reconstructed parts should be differentiated from the authentic parts of the work, in order to be recognizable. The differentiation must be such that the unity and aesthetics of the monument are not affected. Interventions should be reversible.
7. The reconstruction of large parts of buildings, for which there is insufficient documentation, should be avoided. Reconstruction of small sections, which may be considered important for the protection and enhancement of a building's values, or in order to offer an opportunity for proper use, may be acceptable in exceptional cases, provided that it is based on adequate documentation and scientific studies. Reconstruction of an entire monument should be avoided.
8. In principle, attachments to monuments should not be allowed. Only by exception, and with permission from the responsible institutional authorities, can they be accepted as necessary for the proper use and management of the monuments, provided that they respect the monument and do not disturb the balance of its composition and its relation to its surroundings.
9. A monument is inseparably linked to the historical framework it represents and the place where it was built. Thus, its displacement or transportation should be avoided. These be acceptable in exceptional cases such as a monument's rescue from imminent destruction.

B.II. STUDIES – INTERDISCIPLINARY COOPERATION

The preparation of a comprehensive study by an interdisciplinary group is a prerequisite for the restoration of a monument; responsible authorities and bodies of experts should review and approve the study before it is implemented. This restoration study includes a comprehensive analysis of the monument, processing of the resultant data, a proposal for intervention, conservation, eventual use, monitoring and maintenance.

During the process of analysis and proposal-making, the restoration study should examine in detail the monument as a whole and in relation to its surroundings. Specialists from all relevant fields, including scholars dealing with the Byzantine heritage, coordinated by a relevant conservation and restoration expert on issues of Byzantine culture, should participate in the drafting of the document.

The value of the architectural heritage of the Byzantine civilization, like that of every other civilization, is not determined solely by external form and stylistic elements, but is strongly linked to the integrity of all compositional, structural, and construction components. Therefore, the goal of any intervention on a monument includes the restoration of its structure, which will ensure both its protection, as well as the safety of its users and visitors.

States that have Byzantine heritage monuments within their territories have the responsibility to avoid imposing safety regulations in effect for modern buildings. Instead, they should establish regulations specially developed so as to secure the monument's static equilibrium and the users' safety with a minimal impact on the monument's cultural and other values. These safety regulations should be drafted by an interdisciplinary team composed of civil engineers, restoration architects, archaeologists, and restorers.

Regarding places of worship, which as a rule receive large numbers of users, extra care should be taken to ensure that static equilibrium and public safety is not achieved at the expense of tangible or intangible values.

B.III. MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

1. A prerequisite for the conservation of construction materials and the restoration of structural elements on a monument is the in-depth knowledge of the characteristics and properties of its materials, the function and behavior of its components and its structural model.

2. Any form of structural intervention to a monument should be preceded by the ascertainment and removal of the causes of wear and damage.

3. The choice between traditional or modern materials and techniques must be determined on a case-by-case basis, considering the compatibility of new materials to existing ones, their impact on the characteristics and values of the monument, and their reversibility and behavior over time. All possibilities for the use of traditional materials should be exhausted before resorting to contemporary ones, whose suitability and effectiveness must be appropriately documented.

B.IV. DECORATION – FURNISHINGS

1. The architectural decorations of Byzantine heritage monuments, including sculptures, reliefs, mosaics, revetments, murals, and other art works and furnishings, which form an inseparable part of the monument, should be preserved in situ.

2. The conservation and restoration of architectural decorations and furnishings requires a special interdisciplinary study, which complements the restoration study of the monument.

3. Regarding Byzantine religious monuments still in use, portable objects of worship are considered elements inseparable from the monument and demand respect, protection, efficient safety measures and conservation. They may be removed from a monument only in exceptional cases when warranted by special circumstances (destruction, fire, theft etc.).

B. V. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

1. The implementation of the conservation-restoration project presupposes supervision by experienced scientists and specialized craftsmen familiar with both traditional and modern construction methods, high-quality materials available on the market, appropriate specialized tools and equipment, and proper organization of construction sites.

2. In cases requiring immediate emergency intervention measures, these should not cause irreversible changes or adverse effects on the monument's values in order to avoid its collapse before restoration work begins.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF BYZANTINE HERITAGE MONUMENTS

The management of the Byzantine heritage monuments aims to highlight their original social, economic, political, religious and cultural historical context, and enable their integration to present society.

Within this framework, local communities, international public opinion and sustainable development should be considered crucial parameters for the proper and effective management of monuments.

The above entails:

1. Their conservation and restoration, in compliance with all the principles set forth in chapter B.
2. The creation of environmental conditions to preserve them and contribute to their historical-critical interpretation, and
3. Their use, under conditions referred to in chapter C.I., aiming at the preservation of historical memory, the dissemination of culture and the sustainable development of their region.

C.I. FUNCTIONS

Determining the use or function of a monument is essential as it:

- Ensures the continuous care, maintenance, and consequently preservation of the monument.
- Integrates the monument into contemporary life and society as an element of its cultural identity, as a landmark, and as a component of its environmental context enhancement.

While desirable, attributing a specific function to a monument requires careful consideration, in order to avoid impinging upon its material existence and its intangible character. For these reasons, the following should be taken into consideration:

1. Continuation of the original function of the monument is preferable, since the monument was created for this use and preserving it contributes to an understanding of its architectural characteristics. Its original function elucidates the building program, architectural forms and construction methods while conveying the intangible character of the building. This choice presupposes that modern operational infrastructure and safety regulations, which might affect the monument's authenticity, are not required.
2. A new function should not infringe on the intangible character of the monument, and it

should not require operational or security infrastructures that would impinge on or alter the original construction.

Therefore, it is recommended that:

- a. The choice of function be made after a thorough analysis of the monument leading to the understanding of both its tangible and intangible values, as well as the contemporary requirements of its use.
- b. Functions whose portable or fixed loads cannot be supported by the load bearing organism of a given monument without serious alterations be avoided.
- c. Functions requiring operating equipment that would affect the authentic characteristics of the monument be avoided.
- d. The infrastructure and equipment necessary for the security and accessibility of visitors (especially people with disabilities) be well integrated into the monument's structure without affecting its authenticity and understanding.

The decision about the function of a monument should be made in cooperation with its owners or its users to ensure their comprehension of the need for restrictive measures due to the characteristics of the monument. Religious communities must embrace the protection and conservation requirements, regarding them as ensuring their historical continuity and preserving their religious traditions.

In case that by virtue of special circumstances a monument cannot accept its intended or other use, it is recommended that it operate solely as a monument open to the public.

C.II. ACCESSIBILITY - VISITORS

For the full integration of monuments into society, accessibility and an understanding of their historical and social function is important.

In order to facilitate accessibility and procure relevant infrastructure, networks should be created to allow visitors—including people with disabilities—to locate, access and connect monuments conceptually. Appropriate road signs and digital applications should be available to help visitors trace designated routes and provide information about the monuments.

Accessibility infrastructure (roads, parking sites, etc) not only facilitates visitors' access but also maintenance work, provided that the monument and its surroundings are respected. Contemporary structures, necessary for access to a monument, should, however, not be prominent.

C.III. MANAGEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HERITAGE SITES

The proper management plan of an archaeological or heritage site entails the preparation of a "Master Plan" by an interdisciplinary team, which, apart from determining the site's boundaries and protective zones, should have the following goals:

1. To study the relation of the archaeological site to its wider region aiming at its integration into general programs of cultural, educational, development, economic, and tourist interest.
2. To design in advance accessibility infrastructure and visitors' facilities in order to protect the archaeological or heritage site and its immediate surroundings from the dangers inherent in uncontrolled tourist development.

4. To identify the needs and problems of the archaeological and heritage site (including excavation research, protection and conservation of the ruins, restoration, enhancement etc.), while making assessments, proposing solutions and imposing priorities.

5. To ensure accessibility; provide information for the public, and organize visitors' routes within the site.

The Master Plan should link nearby archaeological and heritage sites with the view of creating networks of locations of significant historic, ecological, or other interest.

C.IV. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Responsible national bodies should ensure the following:

1. Multi-level international collaboration of international organizations and foundations in various interactive ways, necessary both for updating knowledge in the field of monument protection, as well as for attracting resources and funding for the protection of Byzantine heritage monuments.

2. Encouraging international cooperation on issues related to the mobility of specialists, experts, professionals, students and academic personnel as well as on the exchange of information, good practices, and technical know-how.

3. Promoting international teams of specialists, who will collaborate on studies and interventions on monuments of Byzantine heritage.

4. Encouraging national or international cultural, educational, tourist and development programs for the protection, enhancement and management of Byzantine heritage monuments.

5. Promoting the creation of an international database for the Byzantine heritage monuments and sites.

C.V. RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE OF STAFF

Responsible authorities should:

1. Promote research in the field of conservation, restoration and enhancement of Byzantine heritage monuments through university programs and national research activities.

2. Promote the specialization of personnel professionally engaged in the protection, conservation, restoration and comprehensive enhancement of the national monument heritage and more specifically in matters that concern the scientific management of Byzantine heritage monuments.

3. Support the continued use of traditional techniques, necessary for the conservation of monuments, by providing for the education of craftsmen specialized in conservation and restoration for Byzantine heritage monuments.

4. Encourage the creation of private enterprises specialized in the field of restoration and conservation of Byzantine heritage monuments.

C.VI. PUBLIC AWARENESS

Responsible public authorities should highlight the importance of monuments of Byzantine heritage as integral components of the culture of their states.

For this reason, it is recommended that they:

1. Develop activities whose purpose is to raise public awareness about the values and contribution of monuments of Byzantine heritage to one's knowledge of the past and remind them of the dangers threatening this heritage.
2. Encourage the active involvement of local communities in the protection, enhancement, and management of monuments of Byzantine heritage.
3. Encourage the integration of Byzantine heritage in the educational curricula of schools in order to raise awareness about cultural values.

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